

**THE MISSION OF GOD
THROUGH
THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH:
A Biblical Theology of Ordination –
With Particular Attention to the Ordination of Women**

A Study by the Biblical Research Committee
of the Trans-European Division
of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

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[The Index is interactive. Please click on the heading you want.](#)

A CONDENSED VERSION PRECEDES THE FULL STUDY REPORT

INDEX

PREFACE	7
0 CONDENSED VERSION	8
0.1 TASK.....	8
0.2 PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION	8
0.3 ORDINATION IN THE BIBLE AS PART OF THE MISSION OF GOD	12
0.4 ORDINATION IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH	44
0.5 A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF ORDINATION.....	61
0.6 AN INCLUSIVE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.....	84
0.7 RECOMMENDATIONS	98
0.8 CONCLUDING REMARKS: INTERPRETATION, UNITY, CULTURES, AND THE MISSION OF GOD.....	102
1 INTRODUCTION	109
1.1 TASK	109
1.2 WHAT IS ORDINATION?	110
1.3 METHOD AND PLAN OF PRESENTATION	112
2 PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION	115
2.1 THE BIBLE OUR ONLY CREED.....	117
2.2 A CHRIST-CENTRED VIEW OF THE BIBLE.....	125
2.3 THE INTERPRETER’S OPENNESS, FAITH, KNOWLEDGE AND RATIONALITY.....	128
2.4 THE HUMAN LANGUAGE AND TEXT	132
2.5 ORIGINAL READER – UNIVERSAL READER.....	135
2.6 THE BIBLE AS A WHOLE – THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS	139
2.7 EXEGESIS, EXPOSITION, AND APPLICATION	143
2.8 ELLEN WHITE’S WRITINGS AND THE BIBLE	146
2.9 THE ISSUE OF ‘PLAIN READING’.....	147
3 ORDINATION IN THE BIBLE AS PART OF THE MISSION OF GOD	151
3.1 MAN AND WOMAN AS SERVANTS OF GOD	152
3.1.1 <i>Genesis 1-11</i>	153
3.1.1.1 The Creation of the World (Genesis 1:1-2:4a).....	153
3.1.1.2 The Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:4b-25).	158
3.1.1.3 The Expulsion from Eden (Genesis 3:1-24).	170
3.1.1.4 The Primeval History of Man (Genesis 4-11).	196
3.1.1.5 The Introduction of the Patriarchal Family System.....	202
3.1.2 <i>Servants of God in the Old Testament</i>	209
3.1.2.1 God’s Election of Israel.	210
3.1.2.2 Husband-Wife Relationships.....	212

3.1.2.3	God's Servants and Leaders in Israel.	216
3.1.2.4	Limitations of Women's Public Activity in Israel.....	228
3.1.2.5	Men and Women in the Covenant Community.....	236
3.1.3	<i>Servants of God in the New Testament</i>	238
3.1.3.1	The Mission of Christ.....	238
3.1.3.2	The Headship and Submission Passages.....	240
Ephesians 5:21-33.....		241
1 Corinthians 11:2-16.....		245
1 Corinthians 14:33-40.....		254
Colossians 3:18-19.....		264
1 Timothy 2:8-15.....		265
Titus 2:3-5		280
1 Peter 3:1-7		280
Concluding Remarks on Submission		281
3.1.3.3	Disciples and Apostles.	283
3.1.3.4	Female Disciples and Eyewitnesses to the Resurrection. ...	289
3.1.3.5	The Women in the Johannine Writings.....	296
3.1.3.6	Elders.	300
3.1.3.7	Servants and Ministers.....	302
3.1.3.8	Women as Servants and Ministers in the Church.....	308
3.1.3.9	Women as Apostles.	312
3.1.3.10	The Offices of Elder, Overseer, and Deacon.....	314
3.1.3.11	The Gender of Overseers and Deacons of the Church.	319
3.1.3.12	The Role of Women in the Expansion of Early Christianity	328
3.1.4	<i>Summary and Conclusions</i>	329
3.2	'ORDINATION' IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.....	344
3.2.1	<i>'Ordination' Is Linked to Organised Institutions</i>	345
3.2.2	<i>The Concept of the 'Spirit' in Leadership Appointments</i>	347
3.2.3	<i>Moses' Assistants: Elders and Judges</i>	347
3.2.4	<i>Rites of Consecration, the Priesthood, and the Levites</i>	352
3.2.5	<i>The Absence of Female Priests in Ancient Israel</i>	367
3.2.6	<i>Moses and Joshua</i>	378
3.2.7	<i>Summary and Conclusions</i>	384
3.3	IMPOSITION OF HANDS IN THE BIBLE	388
3.3.1	<i>The Symbol of the Hand in the Old Testament</i>	389
3.3.2	<i>Blessing</i>	390
3.3.3	<i>Sacrifice</i>	392
3.3.4	<i>Purging Blasphemy</i>	393
3.3.5	<i>Consecration of the Levites</i>	393
3.3.6	<i>Appointment of Moses' Successor: Joshua</i>	394
3.3.7	<i>Imposition of Hands in the New Testament</i>	396
3.3.7.1	The Hand of God in the Early Church.	396
3.3.7.2	Blessing and Healing.....	398

3.3.7.3	Baptism and the Holy Spirit.....	399
3.3.7.4	The Case of Hebrews 6:2.....	401
3.3.7.5	The Seven (Acts 6:1-6).	402
3.3.7.6	Barnabas and Paul (Acts 13:3).	402
3.3.7.7	An Elder in Ephesus (1 Timothy 5:22).....	404
3.3.7.8	Timothy (1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6).....	406
3.3.8	<i>Summary and Conclusions</i>	406
3.4	ORDINATION OF SCRIBES IN FIRST-CENTURY JUDAISM	408
3.5	'ORDINATION' IN THE NEW TESTAMENT	415
3.5.1	<i>The Silent Gospels</i>	416
3.5.2	<i>The Origin of Christian 'Ordination'</i>	422
3.5.3	<i>The 'Ordination' Texts</i>	429
3.5.3.1	The Seven Elders-Servants (Acts 6:1-6).....	429
3.5.3.2	Itinerant Apostles (Acts 13:1-3).	440
3.5.3.4	The Apostolic Servant (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6).	444
3.5.4	<i>Women as Servants or Ministers</i>	454
3.5.5	<i>Summary and Conclusions</i>	457
3.5.5.1	Terminology and References to 'Ordination'.	458
3.5.5.2	The Silence on 'Ordination'.	460
3.5.5.3	Appointment for Ministry and Leadership.	461
3.5.5.4	The 'Ordination' Texts.	462
3.5.5.5	Summary on 'Ordination' in the New Testament.	466
3.5.5.6	Women in Ministry.....	467
4	HISTORICAL REVIEW OF CHRISTIAN ORDINATION.....	471
4.1	THE POST-BIBLICAL CHURCH UNTIL AUGUSTINE.....	471
4.1.1	<i>Clement of Rome</i>	472
4.1.2	<i>The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (Didache)</i>	475
4.1.3	<i>Ignatius</i>	478
4.1.4	<i>Hegesippus and Irenaeus</i>	484
4.1.5	<i>Ordo, Ordinare, and Ordinatio in the Roman Empire</i>	488
4.1.6	<i>Tertullian</i>	495
4.1.7	<i>Hippolytus' Apostolic Tradition</i>	498
4.1.8	<i>Cyprian</i>	503
4.1.9	<i>Ministry and Ordination in the Fourth Century</i>	506
4.2	ORDINATION AS A SACRAMENT IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH.....	513
4.2.1	<i>The Code of Canon Law</i>	514
4.2.2	<i>Roman Catholic ordinatio in the Early Middle Ages</i>	520
4.2.3	<i>The Theology of Roman Catholic ordinatio</i>	526
4.2.4	<i>Women's Ordination in the Roman Catholic Church</i>	539
4.3	THE ORTHODOX VIEW OF ORDINATION	541
4.4	ORDINATION IN THE REFORMATION AND SOME PROTESTANT CHURCHES.....	544
4.4.1	<i>The Magisterial Reformers</i>	545
4.4.1.1	Martin Luther.	545

4.4.1.2	John Calvin.	556
4.4.1.3	Martin Bucer.	567
4.4.1.4	Imposition of Hands in the Early Reformed Churches.	568
4.4.1.5	Conclusions.	570
4.4.2	<i>Anglicanism and Methodism</i>	572
4.4.3	<i>The Anabaptist Movement</i>	580
4.4.4	<i>The Baptist Movement</i>	583
4.4.5	<i>The Restorationist Movement and the Christian Connexion</i>	591
4.4.5.1	Restorationism.	592
4.4.5.2	Formation of the Christian Connexion.	593
4.4.5.3	Theology of Ordination.	599
4.4.5.4	Ordination of Women Preachers and Leaders.	606
4.4.5.5	Conclusions.	613
4.5	'ORDAIN' AND 'ORDINATION' IN ENGLISH BIBLE TRANSLATIONS	614
4.5.1	<i>General</i>	614
4.5.2	<i>John Wycliffe</i>	618
4.5.3	<i>William Tyndale</i>	621
4.5.4	<i>The King James Version</i>	623
4.5.5	<i>Conclusions</i>	626
4.6	SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST UNDERSTANDINGS OF ORDINATION	628
4.6.1	<i>The Move to Ordination in Early Adventism</i>	628
4.6.2	<i>Ordination in the Writings of Ellen White</i>	638
4.6.2.1	Notes on Ellen White's Theology of Ordination.	640
4.6.2.2	Ellen White's View of Her Own Ministry.	659
4.6.2.3	Ellen White's View of Ministry and Ordination of Women.	661
4.6.2.4	'God's Helping Hands' – Ellen White's Letter of 1901.	681
4.6.2.5	The Homiletical Exposition of Mark 3:13-15.	690
4.6.3	<i>Ordination in Seventh-day Adventist History</i>	709
4.6.3.1	Ecclesiastical Offices and Ordination.	711
4.6.3.2	The Significance of Ministerial Ordination.	718
4.6.3.3	The Relationship of the Ordained Minister to Other Church Offices (1850-1914).	724
4.6.3.4	Conclusions regarding the Period of 1850-1914.	729
4.6.3.5	Policy Making in 1863-1977.	730
4.6.4	<i>Current Official View of Ordination</i>	732
4.6.5	<i>Aspects of Ordination Rooted in Roman Practices</i>	734
4.7	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	740
5	A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF ORDINATION.....	758
5.1	SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST THEOLOGY OF ORDINATION SINCE THE 1960'S	758
5.2	THE NATURE OF A 'BIBLICAL' THEOLOGY	762
5.3	THE MISSION OF GOD	763
5.4	THE MISSION OF CHRIST	770
5.5	THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH	776

5.6 THE MINISTRY: THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS	783
5.7 THE CHURCH OFFICES: PARTICULAR MINISTRIES AND ORDINATION	792
5.8 SUMMARY STATEMENT	795
6 AN INCLUSIVE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY	798
6.1 THE BIBLICAL TEACHING ON 'ORDINATION'	798
6.2 MEN AND WOMEN AS SERVANTS OF GOD IN THE BIBLE	803
6.3 AN INCLUSIVE MINISTRY IN THE BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF ORDINATION	810
7 RECOMMENDATIONS	813
8 CONCLUDING REMARKS: INTERPRETATION, UNITY, CULTURES, AND THE MISSION OF GOD	818
APPENDIX A: The Research Task Defined by the GC-BRI (May 1, 2012).....	825
APPENDIX B: Bible Study: Presuppositions, Principles, and Methods.....	828
BIBLIOGRAPHY	835

PREFACE

The present study was prepared between June, 2012, and November, 2013. The research and writing of the text was done by Bertil Wiklander. Drafts were discussed and amended by a subcommittee consisting of the following members:

Pastor Audrey Andersson, TED	Pastor Janos Kovacs-Biro, TED
Dr Jan Barna, Newbold College	Dr Laurence Turner, Newbold College
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The version endorsed by the subcommittee was sent to the full TED Biblical Research Committee for comments and reactions. This body involved an expansion of the subcommittee with the following members:

Dr Radisa Antic, The Ellen G. White Study Centre/Newbold College
 Dr Kai Arasola, Finnish Union
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The text was completed early November, 2013. With the Committee's approval, it was passed on to the TED Executive Committee – B. Oestreich (EUD) and A. Stele (GC) did not participate in the work on the text or the recommendation to the TED Committee. In its Annual Council meeting on 18 November, the TED Executive Committee voted unanimously in a secret ballot to approve and recommend the Report to the GC Theology of Ordination Study Committee.

Many have assisted us in various ways. Our thanks go especially to Pastor Gavin Anthony (Ireland), Librarian Lynda Baidam (Newbold College Library), Dr Roland Karlman (U.K.; formerly the Ellen White Estate), Dr George Knight (U.S.A.), Dr Richard Müller (Denmark), Dr Jaap Oppedijk (Leiden University, the Netherlands), and Pastor Rainer Refsbäck (Sweden). The research benefitted from papers presented to the Theology of Ordination Study Committee in January and July, 2013 (available at adventistarchives.org/study-commissions-and-committees).

We thank God for his blessings in our work and pray that this study will prove valuable to the Church as it addresses the issue of Ordination.

St Albans, 3 November, 2013,
 The Trans-European Division Biblical Research Committee

CHAPTER 0

CONDENSED VERSION

0.1 TASK

The present study is a biblical and historical study of ordination developed within the Trans-European Division Biblical Research Committee (TED-BRC). Based on a decision by the General Conference Session in 2010, the task was commissioned in October, 2011. It was initially defined in general terms as a study of the theology of ordination and its implications for church practices. Divisions were asked to report their study to their Annual Council in the autumn of 2013, which would review the study and recommend it to the GC Biblical Research Institute Director for consideration by a Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC).

More detailed directions were given on May 1, 2012: ‘The nature of the assignment will require studying first the Theology of Ordination and secondly, based on the developed Theology of Ordination, the issue of Women’s Ordination.’ A comprehensive list of methodological, biblical, historical, and practical (ecclesiastical) topics related to ordination were suggested, and these may be found in Appendix A of the present study. They indicate that *the GC-BRI has requested an all-encompassing study of ordination and ministry, hence the size of the present study.*

The index of the full study gives an idea of the nature and scope of our research.

0.2 PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Chapter 2 in our study outlines the principles of biblical interpretation we believe the Church should apply in dealing with a theology of ordination. These principles have also guided our work. We summarise them here:

1. The principle of *sola Scriptura* is fundamental for the life and work of the Church. Therefore, it is also fundamental for the issue of ordination. However, this study will show that it is difficult to demonstrate that the current practice of ordination in the Church is founded on Scripture alone.

2. The seminal study by Jan Barna on *Women’s Ordination in Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (2012) has demonstrated that the principles of biblical interpretation by proponents and opponents to women’s ordination determine the

outcome of their understanding of the Bible. The present study is based on the presuppositions, principles and methods of the Rio Document 1986 (Appendix B) and the Creation, Fall, and Re-Creation principles of interpretation.¹

3. When the Bible is silent, or vague, or explicitly states very little, the principle advocated by James White should be considered by the Church: 'All means which, according to sound judgment, will advance the cause of truth, and are not forbidden by plain scripture declarations, should be employed'.² It needs to be underlined, however, that *the conclusions of our study are not based on this principle*. It rather offers a way out for the Church to deal with the ecclesiastical issue of women's ordination.

4. We accept the principles of interpretation emerging from the Protestant Reformation and have provided a detailed explanation with references concerning (a) the Bible and the Bible Only; (b) the Totality of Scripture; (c) the Analogy (or Harmony) of Scripture; and (d) 'Spiritual Things Spiritually Discerned'. In addition, we advocate the principle of 'Christ as the Lord and Content of the Bible'. Under the mission of God (i.e. the Great Controversy, the Plan of Redemption), 'Christ as Lord' provides the overarching theological framework of *the Bible as a whole*. It has two parts, one is (a) *ontological* and the other is (b) *missiological, ecclesiological, and eschatological*:

(a) *Ontological*: The cross of Christ has revealed the nature and essence of God. As God's servant, Christ accomplishes God's aim of having communion with man in the sanctuary of a new earth and a new heaven (Rev. 21:1-5).

(b) *Missiological, Ecclesiological, and Eschatological*: As the head of the church, Christ is calling the church to serve him and work with him in carrying out his mission. Ordination must therefore be understood as *the process by which Christ calls, equips, and inducts believers to ministry for the purpose of accomplishing the mission of God, as it is revealed in the Bible as a whole and specifically defined in Revelation 21:1-4*.

5. In biblical interpretation, humility and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit are necessary prerequisites to steer human reason. However, human reason is an *a priori* condition for being able to read and have at least a rudimentary understanding

¹ See, for example, J. Moskala, 'Back to Creation: Toward a Consistent Adventist Creation – Fall – Re-Creation Hermeneutic', 2013.

² J. White, 'Making Us a Name', 1860, pp. 180-182 (emphasis supplied).

of the *language* of the Bible at all, for it includes our command of language and the mental process of understanding the meaning of texts. We therefore apply these principles: the interpreters/church (a) need to be equipped with ‘a sincere desire to discover and obey God’s will and word rather than to seek support or evidence for preconceived ideas’ (Rio Document); we (b) need to be *aware* of our preconceived ideas on ordination and *recognise* how these ideas flow from wider systems of thought dominating our respective mental environments, so that we may achieve an *open mind* to what the Bible says; we (c) need a *sincere desire* (not a dogmatic entrenchment or obstruction) to *discover* God’s will in his word, rather than using the word to support already held, preconceived, views; and we (d) need to *obey* God’s word and boldly make the *changes* prompted by its teaching.

6. The biblical text is a blending of divine and human through inspiration. It needs to be approached (a) through a balanced assumption of what a text is and how texts in human language normally function as they convey meaning, and (b) the process of understanding needs to be steered by the overall theme of the Bible as a whole and by the constant illumination of the Holy Spirit who inspired the authors.

7. The biblical text has an *original* meaning (for the historical, original, and intended readers) and a *universal* meaning (for all times). The former needs to be captured by an informed and spirit-driven *exegesis* in view of the Bible as a whole. The second is obtained by an *exposition* that retrieves the principles embedded or stated in the biblical text.

8. The biblical text must be taken *as a whole*. While there is significant unity between the Old and New Testaments, there are also distinct differences. The fulfilment of the Old Testament in Christ has done away with the temple and the offerings, and Christ has instituted the new Israel, where the priesthood of all believers is based on the cross (Christ as servant of God) and the resurrection (Christ as Lord under God). ‘Ordination’ in the Old Testament is therefore not mandatory for Christians, but ‘ordination’ in the New Testament is. The principles in the Old Testament that are explicitly advocated in the New for ‘ordination’ would, however, if evidenced, be relevant to the church.

9. For practical reasons, we distinguish between exegesis, exposition and application of a biblical text:

Exegesis considers the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts of the Bible, and analyses the meaning of words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, longer

sections, books, and the Bible as a whole. Attention is given to the meaning of sayings in their appropriate literary, social and situational *contexts*. This is commonly known as *close reading*, which means ‘the deliberate, word-by-word and phrase-by-phrase consideration of all the parts of a text in order to understand it as a whole’.

Exposition identifies the universal statements and principles that are explicit or implied in the text, which is obtained by reading the text with the eyes of the modern-contemporary reader, especially with a purpose of nurturing faith and teaching biblical doctrines.

Application is the transfer of principles and statements of belief from the biblical text to the doctrinal and practical organisation of the Church.

10. In regard to the role of Ellen White’s writings, the Bible remains the final authority, the only creed of the Church, and ‘only the Bible is the trustworthy record of God’s acts in history’. However, through her spiritual gift, Ellen White casts light on the biblical significance and meaning of ordination, which Seventh-day Adventists must not ignore. Her historical role as the Lord’s Messenger in the formation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1844-1915 gives her a central role in defining the essence of our faith and life.

11. For the devotional reading of the Bible, Ellen White recommended a ‘plain reading’ of the biblical text. She emphasised the importance of removing obstacles to faith in God and encouraged the readers to trust the promises of God in his word. However, she also recognised that some scriptural passages are not clear, and that behind the words of the Bible there is an additional significance that must be discovered. In reflecting on Christ as ‘the truth’ she said that ‘His words are truth, and they have a deeper significance than appears on the surface’. Therefore, she advocated ‘close reading’ and ‘careful thought as to the meaning of the sacred text’:

But the most valuable teaching of the Bible is not to be gained by occasional or disconnected study. Its great system of truth is not so presented as to be discerned by the hasty or careless reader. Many of its treasures lie far beneath the surface, and can be obtained only by diligent research and continuous effort. The truths that go to make up the great whole must be searched out and gathered up, ‘here a little, and there a little.’ (Isaiah 28:10).³

We believe the present study will demonstrate that a ‘plain reading’ of the Bible is not sufficient to explain the complex and at times elusive patterns relating to ‘ordination’.

³ E. G. White, *Education*, 1903, p. 123.

0.3 ORDINATION IN THE BIBLE AS PART OF THE MISSION OF GOD

We find significant value in allowing the Bible to speak to us with its own voice and its own concerns regarding how the Seventh-day Adventist Church should function. We therefore need to establish the biblical perspectives within which the authors organise their arguments and instructions, such as: (a) the core biblical themes of the biblical writers; (b) their specific teachings about the theme of God's New Testament people, the church of Christ; and (c) their thematic and specific view of the church (ecclesiology) that explains its mission and 'ordination' as part of that mission.

The key to establishing those perspectives is *the core theme of the Bible as a whole*: 'God, his nature, will and purpose' – he is the point of departure in Genesis 1:1, continues to be the centre throughout the Bible, and his grace in Jesus Christ is shared with all his people in Revelation 22:21. The Bible refers to this theme in active terms, such as (a) 'the kingdom or reign of God' (Ps. 90-106; Mark 1:14-15); (b) 'the love of God' (John 3:16); and (c) 'the presence and communion of God with his creation' (Rev. 4:11; 21:1-4).

Each of these themes is however connected with *an opposite force*, with darkness and evil, which challenges God within the theme of 'the Great Controversy': note, for example, (a) the cry for vengeance by God's people upon the wicked and evildoers in Psalm 94 (and elsewhere in Psalms); (b) the conflict between the salvation of those who 'do what is true and come to the light' and the judgement upon 'all who do evil and hate the light' in John 3:16-21; (c) and the cosmic conflict between God and Satan described in Revelation which results in God's ultimate victory and salvation of his people (Rev. 4-22).

Within the context of God being Who He Is (cf. Ex. 3:13-14) and his battle and ultimate victory in 'the Great Controversy', another related theme that may be traced in the Bible from beginning to end is 'the Plan of Redemption' (note e.g. Gen. 3:15; John 3:16; Rom. 8; 1 Cor. 15; Rev. 21-22). It focuses on God's faithfulness, love, and care for his people and aims to re-establish the broken relationship between God and man.

All these themes are central in Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the Bible as a whole. For practical reasons, however, we will refer to them as ‘the Mission of God’, which is an inclusive and profoundly biblical theme. It provides a thematic ‘room’ within which we may understand how the biblical authors organise their instructions regarding the people of God and ‘ordination’ (this idea is developed further in chapter 5).

A. Man and Woman as Servants of God

The Bible as a whole gives paramount importance to the sovereign kingship of God, and to men and women being his ‘servants’ or ‘ministers’. We present, therefore, an extensive exegetical study of how this concept is developed in the Bible, with particular attention to the issue of gender (chapter 3). Our biblical study is summarised here:

1. Man and Woman Equally ‘Ordained’ as Royal-Priestly Servants or Ministers of God. According to Genesis 1:1-2:4a (3.1.1.1), from the beginning, God commissions (‘ordains’) man and woman as equal royal-priestly servants and ministers under his oversight in a world alluded to as a sanctuary and dwelling-place of God. Being created in the image of God, man and woman have dominion over the created world; they represent God to the world, and function as mediators. They are already the ‘royal priesthood’ which God will establish in Israel (Ex. 19:5-6), in the Christian church (1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10), and in the end-time church which carries on in the new heaven and the new earth (Rev. 1:5-7; 5:9-10; 20:3; 21:1-22:6). Having dominion over the world implies being fruitful, increasing, and filling the earth with human descendants, and, for this purpose, God *blesses* man and woman.

2. Husband and Wife Paired as Equals in the Sanctuary of the Garden of Eden. Genesis 2:4b-25 (3.1.1.2) confirms and develops the fundamental parity between man and woman established in Genesis 1. This passage deepens the relational and intimate aspects of marriage implied in the blessing and the charge to be fruitful and increase in 1:28. While joined in marriage ‘as one flesh’, the environment in the Garden of Eden is in more detail marked as a sanctuary where God lives with the humans. Thus, the *priestly* role of man and woman, while related in marriage, is still implied. They are equal servants or ministers of God. This is God’s ideal in Eden. And this is the ideal he revives in Israel, in the Church, in the

end-time Remnant Church, and it continues into the new earth as an eternal divine order.

Genesis 2:4b-25 provides *no evidence* whatsoever of an inferiority of woman to man. A point by point study of arguments that have been adduced in favour of an alleged divinely-ordained hierarchical view of the genders shows that the biblical text in Genesis 2 does not express such a view. Before the Fall, man and woman are fully equal, related in a cooperative interdependence, and without the slightest hint of a headship of one over the other. They share the headship over their mutual relationship, the Garden of Eden, and the world, under God's authority, and function as his royal-priestly servants or ministers. The creation of the woman functions, however, as a climax in the creation story and the fact that she is 'built' from 'man', rather than being 'made' of 'dust', underlines her perfection. There is a mutual interdependence between man and woman which becomes intimate in marriage, where the two are described as 'one flesh'.

3. Change and Continuity after the Fall. The human Fall recorded in Genesis 3 (3.1.1.3) *changes* the conditions of life for the humans as God's royal-priestly servants, *but God and his mission remain the same.*

Guilt and shame change the relationship of humans to God and each other. They now know good and evil, which transcends their humanity, and they can therefore no longer serve as mediators in the Eden sanctuary, so they are expelled from the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:22-24). But their mediatory role continues on earth, although it now requires mediation and atonement also for themselves (3:21; 4:1-2).

Man (husband) and woman (wife) have refused to accept their dependence on God, so they now become dependent on their material origin. The wife's punishment is that she will experience pain in childbearing and childbirth, and she will be dependent on her husband from whom she was taken. The husband's punishment is that he will eat of the cursed ground 'by the sweat of his face' and the ground will yield its food only by his painful toil with it. Thus, he becomes dependent on the ground from which he was taken. Humans will live only a limited time and will return to dust.

However, God is still committed to uphold his blessing upon male and female (Gen. 1:28), created in his image, and he demonstrates not only justice in dealing with their transgression but also care and provision to reduce their misery. In particular, God rearranges his mission. He gives the promise of human salvation

from evil by ‘the woman’s seed’ (3:15). He safeguards the marriage relationship, so that the woman’s pain in childbearing and childbirth, and the man’s painful toil with the ground, will not threaten but protect ‘the woman’s seed’ (3:16). Thus, through the generations of new human beings, men and women, God carries out his mission.

God also indicates by dressing man and woman with animal skins that their priestly function in the Garden of Eden should continue after their expulsion into the world without God’s visible presence (3:21). The animal skins symbolise both a priestly role for man and woman but also that humans must live while paying the price of their transgression. God’s command not to eat the fruit in Eden was connected with the injunction that humans would die if they transgressed the command. The price of death is now symbolised by animals that are to be sacrificed in the place of man (note the important concept in Gen. 9:4-7). Thus, in Genesis 3, the election of Abraham as the father of the people of Israel and the priestly sanctuary service are prefigured, however in a veiled way which is understood only later, in Genesis – Deuteronomy. In the light of the New Testament, of course, these hints are finally fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He is the ‘woman’s seed’, the final sacrifice for human life, and the high-priest who makes his people, men and women in the church, his priestly servants or ministers in the mission of God.

4. The Meaning of Genesis 3:16. This significant passage should be read in the context of the mission of God in the Bible, of Genesis 1-3, of God’s judgement as well as his caring provision, and with close attention to the nuances of meaning in each Hebrew term. The preferable translation is:

- a. I will greatly increase your pain in childbearing;
- b. with pain you will give birth to children;
- c. yet your longing will be for your husband;
- d. and he will be responsible for you.

The internal logic of these four phrases is that (a) the pain in childbearing and childbirth may prevent procreation in that the woman may seek to avoid her pain and will be in great need of support during childbearing and childbirth; (b) thus, acting as a caring provider, God introduces an antithesis (‘yet’) in 3:16c: the wife’s (positive) ‘longing’ for man will safeguard human procreation, and the husband’s responsible provision and care for her will alleviate the burden of childbearing and childbirth. The sense of ‘rule over’ for *mashal* *be* in the Hebrew text of 3:16d is not the only sense in

the semantic range of the word. As some examples from Genesis show, the sense is best taken in this context as ‘be responsible for’, ‘take charge of’, or ‘care for’.⁴

Consequently, there is no hierarchic or ontological ordering of the status of man and woman in Genesis 3:16. The relationship defined here concerns husband and wife in the marriage relationship, not man and woman in general. The egalitarian status of man and woman – as royal-priestly governors and servants of God (Genesis 1:26-28) and as husband and wife in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2-3) – continues, although with serious restrictions caused by the punishment of woman and man. This punishment does not affect their ‘ontological’ nature as male and female, but it affects life and the roles of giving birth (wife) and providing food from the ground (husband). The Old Testament contains no indication that Genesis 3:16 was understood and applied as a divine injunction that man was to ‘rule over’ woman or as a divine prohibition against a woman being the ‘head of men’ in public or communal life. The examples of women in leadership roles in the Old Testament are recorded without any criticism or disapproval whatsoever. Genesis 3:16 is about protecting God’s mission to bring salvation through ‘the woman’s seed’, his agents of salvation in the world, which includes, firstly, Israel and, finally, Christ and the church

4. The Priesthood of Cain and Abel. God’s investiture in the Garden of Eden of man and woman as priests (Gen. 3:21) is *followed* by the story of Cain and Abel. Thus, besides their procreation, the first activity of the humans after the expulsion from Eden is to offer priestly sacrifices (Gen. 4:1-5). Cain and Abel, the two first-born humans, serve as priests giving offerings to God for their sins, but only Abel’s offering of animals is regarded by God (4:2-5). God’s corrective action of replacing the humans’ clothing of leaves with clothing of skins, implies that the shame and guilt associated with their nakedness cannot be sufficiently covered except by the shedding of blood of an animal. This is in Genesis 9:4-6 linked to the rationale for animal sacrifices as a substitution for the death of man which he merits on account of his transgression (2:17). Thus, the first act of the firstborn human beings is to offer sacrifices. Linked to this is a discussion about right and wrong offerings and how humans deal with sin (4:6-7).

5. The Priesthood of Noah as a Prefiguration of Israel and the Church. The priesthood is then *confirmed* by Noah on behalf of all humanity after the Flood,

⁴ For the argumentation in support of this reading and a full exegesis of the passage, see 3.1.1.3.

when he builds an altar to the Lord and offers burnt-offerings of the clean animals (8:20). This act is a *prefiguration* of the mediating ministry of the male priests in the Israelite sanctuary, *explaining* the basis for (a) God's election of all men and women in Israel as a kingdom of 'priests' (since God provided both man and woman with the priestly investiture in Eden), and (b) (God acting through) Christ's calling of all his believers, men and women, to be his 'priests' in God's mission to save the world.

6. The Corruption of Humans. Human life after the Fall is outlined in broad strokes in Genesis 4-11 (3.1.1.4). However, while genealogical lists mention 'sons and daughters' being born, not one single woman is mentioned by name, but the generations are named after the father. In all the book of Genesis, and in the Bible as a whole for that matter, there is however no instruction preserved from God to do so. In principle, God may use human cultural concepts to achieve his mission; he concedes many things that humans do and want, but he incarnates his plan in human shape and moves on towards his ultimate goal. The conclusion is therefore that patriarchy is a result of human sin, a part of the corruption of man described in 6:5: 'The Lord saw ... that every inclination of the thoughts of [man's] heart was only evil all the time'.

7. The Patriarchal Family Line. The patriarchal line is a consequence of sin which was incorporated over a long time in the traditions that Moses and his assistants used in creating the Genesis text before us. Only with the story of Terah and Abram in 12:27-32, do we meet wives identified by name together with their husbands, which puts the focus on family relationships and procreation in fulfilment of God's promises.

8. God's Calling of Israel. Israel's calling by God to be a 'priestly kingdom' and a 'holy nation' has to do with his wish to be with his people and to be their God, which is God's mission from creation until the new heaven and the new earth (Ex. 19:5-6; 29:42-46; Rev. 21:1-4). Since the whole earth is his, he is the Sovereign God and King, and, therefore, his people are a kingdom and a holy nation through the presence of God, which is administered by the people, the priests, and servants or ministers. In the story of God meeting his people at Sinai (Ex. 19-20), there is no difference between men and women. They are all priests and ministers in God's mission to the world. However, there is a special class of 'priests' associated with the sanctuary (19:22, 24), and special circumstances made this necessary in Israel.

9. God's Servants in the Old Testament. While the wife submits in practice to her husband's 'headship among equals' in the home, and the same principle is implied in laws and precepts, this does not bar women from positions of influence, leadership, and authority over men in the covenant community. Thus, the predominant patriarchal structure of Israelite society did not exclude women from positions of influence, leadership, and even headship over men. The leadership roles of Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and others, which are found in the Old Testament, are much fewer than those of men, but the fact that they are evidenced in the Bible shows that *the Bible does not prohibit women from being given leadership roles*.

Women serve in Israel as leaders and ministers for God particularly when Israel is *in transition* and not settled with the central city of Jerusalem and its temple. When Israel was socially institutionalised with a temple and a complex organisation involving priests and Levites, women tended to be excluded from leadership involvement. However, women's leadership roles become *more prominent and acceptable in the prophetic movement and in the wisdom circles*. Women serve as spiritually endowed prophetesses, wise women, and spirit-filled 'servants of the Lord ... whom the Lord calls' (Joel 2:28-32). Thus, the resistance against women in leadership comes rather from men in the human patriarchal setting than from God in his divine and spiritual setting. This point would of course also apply to Ellen White's ministry among Seventh-day Adventists, confirming that God's call to men and women transcends the human social customs and structures.

Women were leaders as judges before the institution of the kingdom, and they continued to function in various roles: as consecrated Nazirites who were doing duty for the Lord, as prophetesses, queens, and bodies of wise women.

The selection of canonical writings in the Old Testament Bible was clearly not made with the purpose of highlighting the role of women in the Israelite society. Yet, the Old Testament contains books with female names and with female leading characters (Ruth; Esther), books where women have a central role (Judges 4-5; Song of Songs), and portions of Scripture written by women (e.g. Ex. 15; Judges 5; 1 Sam 2). In addition, recent studies suggest that in biblical times more women held positions of power and authority than a mere surface reading of the texts may suggest.

10. Limitations for Women's Public Ministry in Israel. There were clear limitations for women in ministry and leadership in the Old Testament (3.1.2.4). None

of them was *instituted* or *commanded* by God, but they were part of the Near Eastern culture of the people of Israel, and God accepted to work out his mission through them by ‘incarnating’ his purposes in human form. Besides the *ritualistic* reasons associated with the sanctuary and the priesthood, the people of Israel came out of a Nomadic family context, where *patriarchy* was the predominant norm. The divine promises of a multitude of descendants (cf. the Messianic promise of salvation by the woman’s seed in Gen. 3:15) relegated women primarily to the roles of wives and mothers, while the male line of descent through the firstborns was seen as the carrier of the communal life through generations. However, while the patriarchal socio-cultural setting held women back from leadership roles for practical reasons, God calls and equips women in a charismatic way to offices as judges, prophetesses and Nazirites. Thus, God – who originally created man and woman equal as governors and priestly mediators of the world – occasionally ‘breaks through’ the obstacles of human patriarchal customs and uses women as preachers, teachers and leaders. Thus, women called by the Spirit of God transcended these cultural obstacles, demonstrating that there is no prohibition in the Old Testament against female ministry and leadership, but rather positive examples of an acceptance of women in these roles.

11. The Mission of Christ through the Church. In the central phase of God’s mission, he commissions Christ, who calls the church to be a kingdom of priests and servants of God in order to bring the gospel to the world by proclamation, witnessing and various kinds of ministry. Thus, ‘servants’ or ‘ministers’ are spiritually called by Christ and when this call is recognised by the church they are put to work. This happens through a spiritual commissioning rather than ‘ordination’ in the sense that we are accustomed to today. According to Jesus Christ, the kingdom of God is internal and lives in every Christian rather than being attached to institutions. Therefore, the Spirit of God calls, equips, and sends the servants of God in the church, i.e. men and women, through an inclusive ministry. This is why ‘ordination’ is almost non-existent in the New Testament. Since Christian service or ministry, including the functions in the church for which individuals may be biblically ordained, is *commissioned by God and Christ through the Holy Spirit*, it is the unique prerogative of God to determine whom he chooses. It is therefore what God says in his word, the Bible, which determines how the principle of gender may apply to service and ministry, not our own cultures. If our culture is not compatible with what

the Bible teaches about male and female equality, the church may wish to carefully consider how it protects the integrity of the gospel by ensuring the respect of outsiders. If our culture is compatible with what the Bible teaches about male and female equality, this should not be blocked by other parts of the church where this compatibility does not yet exist. Through the apostle Paul, the Bible teaches that 'I have become all things to all people, so that I might by any means save some' (1 Cor 9:22). This teaches the principle of adaptation to different circumstances for the sake of God's mission to save people for him. It is primarily God's mission that matters, not our opinions or policies.

The role of the church – consisting of servants or ministers who have themselves been called by God to serve him, and who therefore are working under the same call and spiritual authority as men and women being considered for ordination – is merely to *recognise and confirm* what God has done. Thus, *the calling that matters for ordination is the calling of God*. The endorsement of the church is merely a practical matter that makes the ordination public and communicates the church's approval in the situational and cultural setting in which the gospel is to be shared.

12. God's Servants in the New Testament: Husband and Wife. Our detailed exegetical study of all the passages that say something about female submission and male headship resulted in consistent and clear conclusions (1 Cor. 11:2-16; 14:33-35; Eph. 5:21-33; Col. 3:18-19; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; Titus 2:5; and 1 Peter 3:1-7). These may be summarised as follows:

(a) All passages were written in a socio-cultural setting where women (or wives) were – in the interest of propriety – restricted in holding public offices or even speak at assemblies. This was the case both in specifically Jewish settings and in the wider Graeco-Roman environment. Deeply rooted social norms of shame and honour governed these restrictions.⁵ The apostolic authors, therefore, were understandably concerned not to overtly challenge the established norms of propriety which would prevent the gospel from being accepted. The New Testament statements that limit women's public role are all part of a mission strategy which

⁵ See J. H. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew*, 1998; B. J. Malina, *The New Testament World*, 2001, pp. 27-57; J. H. Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor in Roman Philippi*, 2005.

seeks to win as many as possible for Christ in a society that gave limited room for women in public life.

(b) All passages referring to female submission in the life of the church may be understood as concerning *the wife-husband relationship in marriage*. Some of them are driven by a concern for order in church services (particularly in Corinth due to the issue of speaking in tongues), but all of them are determined by the value of female propriety in relationship to ‘their own’ husbands, who were – by culturally determined rules – dishonoured if a wife behaved inappropriately according to the accepted codes of conduct.

(c) However, there is also room for some nuances, in that there were also specific situations when ‘women’ could provide issues of order, decency and honour. Thus, some passages address particular issues in the local church, where women were teaching and behaving according to pagan or Gnostic ideas that contradicted the Scriptures in regard to childbirth and motherhood, the truth of the gospel, and the accepted rules of male/female propriety. This would naturally disturb the internal peace of the church and bring ridicule on the gospel.

(d) No passage explicitly states, as God’s command, that a woman may not function as a servant or leader in the church. We shall consider in a moment the numerous examples of women in ministry and leadership according to the New Testament.

Regarding the New Testament concept of ‘submission’, we found that the universal biblical principle is that all Christians submit to each other as Christ has submitted himself to God for our salvation. This principle overrules the patriarchal model of the wife being submissive to her husband. The New Testament mentions this only in contexts where it was important to the church to maintain culturally accepted decency for the sake of order, for safeguarding the impact of the gospel on outsiders and reverence for God in worship.

13. God’s Servants in the New Testament: Disciples, Apostles, Elders, and Servants/Ministers. The New Testament reveals a fundamental emphasis on the *divine* appointment for ministry and leadership, directly through Jesus Christ (Mark 3:14; Luke 6:12; John 15:16; Acts 26:16; 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11), or God himself (Acts 1:21-26), or the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:1-3). It has a predominantly *charismatic* view of ministry and leadership and stands free from an institutionalised

view. (This is in some ways modelled already by the Old Testament passage on God's 'ordination' of the elders of Moses in Num. 11.)

The few examples of 'ordination' in the New Testament are triggered by practical needs as the church grows and expands, showing, perhaps, some dependence on contemporary Jewish practices known to all Jewish converts and/or suggesting a use of scriptural models in the Old Testament, which are rearranged and adapted to the needs of new Israel. Even when the imposition of hands comes to the forefront, when a special issue in church life is to be addressed (e.g. Acts 6:1-6), the criterion for the function of leadership is that the candidate is filled with the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 13:1-3; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6).

There is no clear structure of ministerial leadership offices in the New Testament. Ideally, all members of the early church are 'servants or ministers (of God or Christ)' and are filled with the Holy Spirit. Greek terms like *doulos*, *diakonos*, and *hyperetes* are used as general terms for 'servants or ministers', although at times with certain nuances. The term *apostolos* refers initially to the twelve, appointed by Jesus, but later, in the ministry of Paul, this term becomes more general and refers to a charismatic, prophetic-apostolic office, directly based on a divine call, and from there it spreads to 'apostles (of Christ)' in general who are being sent on a mission from place to place. This function disappears altogether in post-biblical times and 'the apostles' become the collective word for the authoritative biblical revelation from Christ to his church which is known and handled by 'apostolic succession' for which ordination is required. *But this is a later development, not attested in the Bible!*

In the New Testament church, there is a council of apostles and *elders* in Jerusalem that seems to have had some general authority. It seems that the family of Jesus had a role to play here, but this disappears when they passed away. The Jerusalem council leads out in the apostolic council according to Acts 15, where doctrines and policies are decided. Generally, this body has some influence on Paul as an itinerant apostle, but Paul himself ranks the direct call from God as more important and is not in complete submission to this body (Gal. 1:15-2:10). But there are no signs of clearly defined offices or ceremonies of appointment or 'ordination'.

There are signs of an organised local church leadership, however. Two offices occur, although we don't know what their duties were: (a) the office of the 'overseer, bishop' (*episkopos*) which at least partially overlaps with that of the 'elder' (*presbyter*)

(1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:6-9), and (b) the 'servant, deacon' (*diakonos*) (1 Tim. 3:8-13). Both are mentioned among the recipients of Paul's letter to the Philippians (1:1). It is very possible that this dual local church office has been modelled after the Jewish synagogue. However, there is no evidence in the New Testament that any of these offices were connected with a ceremony of 'ordination' involving imposition of hands. Thus, in the two instances where elders are appointed, no reference to imposition of hands is made (Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5). No example of 'servants, deacons' being 'ordained' in such a way exists either.

The conclusion, therefore, is that the predominant New Testament (Pauline and Lukan) view of ministry and leadership in the church gives a strong emphasis on the divine appointment and the charismatic gifts of God for service. In the area of rites and ceremonies linked to the appointment and induction to an office, however, it is flexible and varied and no firm ritual form has been established. For this, we need to wait until Hippolytus' Roman Apostolic Tradition (ca. 200 A.D.).

14. God's Servants in the New Testament: Women as Disciples, Eyewitnesses, Servants/Ministers, and Apostles. We found a strong emphasis on women, too, as 'servants or ministers' (*douloi, diakonoi*). This is exemplified with Mary the mother of Jesus, the prophetess Anna of the tribe of Asher, Mary of Magdala, Martha and Mary of Bethany, the Samaritan Woman, and the disabled woman called the 'daughter of Abraham'.

We found significant evidence of the central and primary role of women as eyewitnesses of Jesus death, burial, empty tomb, and resurrection. Many women followed Jesus as disciples and servants all through his public ministry, and they are named (Luke 8:1-3). These women are *the only witnesses to the death, burial, and empty tomb of Jesus*, for the male disciples fled or went into hiding (Luke 23:27-30, 49, 55-56; 24:1-12; Matt. 27:57-61; 28:1-15; John 20:1-18). In terms of *evidence*, therefore, these women are *fundamental to Christian faith* in that only they could witness to Jesus' death on the cross, that he was buried where he was buried, and that this burial place was empty on the Sunday morning. Moreover, these women are *the first disciples to meet the risen Lord*. And they are the first to be 'ordained' in words and blessing by God to proclaim the gospel of Jesus' resurrection to the other disciples and the eleven apostles. There are good reasons to believe that this divine commission led these women to proclaim the gospel of the resurrection to many others, even before the male apostles were able to do so.

The women were present as Jesus gave his disciples the Great Commission (Mark 16:1-19), and they were also included in the hundred and twenty who met constantly for prayer (Acts 1:12-14), who appointed Matthias as the twelfth apostle (Acts 1:21-26), and who received the power of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost which led to the birth of the church (Acts 2:1-47). The women were included in the quotation from the prophet Joel, which Peter used in his sermon, that God would 'pour out his Spirit [in the last days] on his servants, both men and women' (Acts 2:18).

We found that the entire Gospel of John gives a picture of the disciples around Jesus in which original and loving women played a variety of unconventional roles which the Fourth Evangelist presents as approved by Jesus and his followers, despite grumblings from some men. These women are not dependent on husbands or other male authorities, nor are they seeking permission for their activities from male officials. They demonstrate remarkable originality in their relationships with Jesus and extraordinary initiative in their activities within the community. They are the privileged recipients of three of Jesus' most important self-revelations: (a) that he is the Messiah, (b) that he is the resurrection and the life, and (c) that his glorification is complete and its salvific effects given to his disciples.

Thus, in the Gospel of John, women represent the body of the followers of Jesus in expressing their faith (Martha), accept God's salvation through Jesus (Mary Magdalene), and function as witnesses to the gospel (Samaritan Woman, Mary Magdalene).

Besides the main role of the 'beloved disciple', two women in John have roles held by Peter in the synoptic gospels: Martha as confessor of faith and Mary Magdalene as recipient of the first resurrection appearance and the commission by the Lord as an apostle who is sent to the church and its leaders.

The openness to and endorsement of women as disciples of Jesus and leaders in the Fourth Gospel suggests that the sources of Jesus' involvement with women were received and accepted without restrictions in the early Christian environment where John wrote his gospel and where it was being read. This has preserved to us significant material that was not recorded in the three Synoptic Gospels.

Further, we found that women who were named functioned in the early church as 'servants and ministers'. As members of Christ's body, men and women were

admonished to 'live as servants of God' in the 'royal priesthood, holy nation, and people belonging to God' that constitute the church (1 Peter 2:4-12, 16), and to 'serve' (*diakonein*) through prayer, love, hospitality and speech, so that each one would be serving others according to the gift of grace received, as good stewards of the grace of God in its various forms' (1 Peter 4:10-11). We found many named examples of this 'service/ministry', which we have specified and described in some detail.

We found that women were a major force in the growth of the Christian church and we considered numerous references to women working as evangelists and heads of house churches, using their household as a basis. Thus, the prominence of women in church work as widows, teachers and prophets may be reconstructed on the basis of the biblical evidence.

'Ordination' of a ministerial servant was not established in the New Testament. Instead, men and women were 'ordained' *charismatically*, in much the same way as Ellen White considered herself charismatically 'ordained'. Thus, the appointment by God, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the use of the gifts of the Spirit in its various forms for serving and ministering to others, were open to women as well as men. And the women used every possibility that their times and social customs allowed them to use, in order to make the church grow and thus bring glory to God.

15. God's Servants in the New Testament: The Gender of Overseers and Deacons. Our study of the qualifications for overseers, elders and deacons in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9 shows that the principle implied is that *the qualifications of the overseer are motivated by the mission of God to the world and serve to build trust and acceptance of the gospel of Christ among outsiders*, so that God's mission of salvation is successful. This is, consequently, an important principle that needs to be considered in a theology of ordination.

Reading these passages requires an understanding of the major difference between the culturally conditioned views of the status and role of women in Ephesus during the first century and modern 'western-type' societies. In first-century Judaism and Christianity, the offices of overseers and elders were strictly reserved for males. Ephesus was a Graeco-Roman city with a Jewish minority. The Jewish institution of elders went back to the patriarchal customs of letting the first-born male represent the clans and families in Israel. The Graeco-Roman and Jewish customs of using

'overseers' (*episkopoi*) reveal that this could be both a general term for anyone who had the responsibility of a 'protective care' or 'supervisory' function, and a technical term for specific office holders like 'state officials or governors'. The Graeco-Roman and Jewish laws as well as the common cultural values of the society had created a situation where 'women had, in comparison to men, a clearly restricted access to various political, economic, and social resources of public life'.⁶ Thus, 'women were generally excluded from holding public office as senators, equestrians, decurions, or judges, as well as subordinate positions'.⁷ Particularly the inferior legal status of women prevented them from functioning as rulers and judges,⁸ which were functions included in the offices of both overseers and elders. Although the concept of 'the new Roman woman' grew in importance during the time of the Roman Empire, bringing an emancipation of women and a reduction of patriarchal values, the New Testament reflects the early period (the first century), and we see only possible signs of the new Roman woman as a factor raising issues against which Paul pleaded for order and submission in Corinth and Ephesus.

In view of the general socio-cultural norms, therefore, it would not be surprising if there was no female 'overseer' in Ephesus when 1 Timothy was sent to the church there. In addition, there were specific conflicts in that church at the time in which women had a dominant role and where women's superiority to men, among other things, was taught. Despite these *ad hoc* circumstances, the plain text in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 provides a gender-inclusive description of the qualifications of the local church overseer, for the masculine forms refer both to males and females.

What may have been the right thing to do in Ephesus in the first century was determined on the grounds of how well it served the mission of God and helped build the church and promote the gospel among Graeco-Roman outsiders. However, applying this principle in the modern context of egalitarian societies means that women and men should serve on equal terms as overseers in the church. Gender discrimination is considered a great evil and injustice in these egalitarian societies today, and, by preventing women from serving as pastors and leaders on the basis of 'ordination' as we practice it today, we violate the biblical principle that is

⁶ E. W. Stegemann & W. Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 1999, p. 364.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 365.

⁸ See K. Thraede, Article 'Frau', in: *Reallexicon für Antike und Christendom*, vol. 8, 1972, pp. 197-269; cf. E. W. Stegemann & W. Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 1999, p. 369.

embedded in the descriptions of the qualifications of overseers and deacons in the Bible.

16. The Priesthood of the End-Time Church. The priesthood of man and woman established at Creation (Genesis 1-2) and confirmed in Eden after the Fall (3:20) is essential according to the book of Revelation for the end-time church – in the church's service to God on earth (Rev. 1:6), in the ministry of Christ (Rev. 5:9-10), and in the new heaven and earth (Rev. 5:10; 20:6; 21:1-22:6). The passages in Revelation 5:10 and 20:6 explicitly resume the theme of man and woman as *priests* and *rulers* of the earth in Genesis 1-3: in the context of (a) the sacrifice and blood of Christ which fulfils God's promise of salvation by 'the seed of the woman' (Gen. 3:15), and (b) the priestly mediation instituted in Eden for men and women which is continued in humanity by Cain and Abel, by Noah (Gen. 3:20; 4:1-7; 8:20-8:17), and in the old and the new Israel. John hears in vision the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders singing a hymn to Jesus Christ in heaven: 'By your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; you have made them to be a kingdom of priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth' (Rev. 5:9-10; 20:6). Thus, in a biblical theology of ordination, *the priestly role of man and woman in Creation, and in what survives of it after the Fall in the world of human sin, needs to be kept clear.*

B. 'Ordination' in the Old Testament

As God carries out his mission in the world through Israel, his work becomes closely involved with human concepts which develop in the course of history. God becomes engaged with human culture, language, customs, rituals, and laws. God's mission stands above human concepts, but he accepts to work with them as a temporary tool to accomplish the love and faithfulness of his people, to keep them close to him, and to save them from evil and destruction.

Our study of 'ordination' in the Old Testament may be summarised as follows:

1. As God leads the people out of Egypt and forms a covenant community named 'Israel' through the leadership of Moses (Exodus-Deuteronomy), institutions and offices are regularised. A 'nation' among other nations in the world is called to function as God's servant. This means institutions. Thus, Moses appoints assistants, both judges and elders. These are all male, based on the patriarchal custom of the

firstborn male being the head of the clan or tribe. No 'ordination' is mentioned here, but God alone performs the act of placing Moses' spirit on the seventy elders. However, Miriam takes part in the leadership of the people, proving that female gender is not an obstacle to leadership, but familial ties within the Levitic-Mosaic family overrules the gender issue.

2. In regard to terminology, the Old Testament uses a wide range of expressions for 'appointment' to an office. The general technical term for 'appoint' is Hebrew *paqad* which is an international word rooted in royal administration. The technical term for 'appointing or consecrating' a priest is *mille' yad*, 'fill the hand of', which has an uncertain etymology and origin, but possibly refers to the giving of part of the sacrificial offerings to the priests themselves. The rite of imposition of hands is referred to by various expressions, primarily *samak yad 'al*, which presupposes a leaning upon with some pressure, and is also used for laying hands on the sacrificial animals or a blasphemer before he is executed. Other expressions are *sim*, *shit*, or *natan yad 'al*, which are common terms for 'put' or 'give'.

3. In the sanctuary service, priests and Levites are consecrated. The rituals focus on removing ritual impurity and consecrating men for service in the sacred area of the tabernacle/temple. The Levites alone experience imposition of hands by the people at their induction. This is explained by the Levites being the people's *representatives* in replacing the firstborn among the people as God's special possession. Thus, imposition of hands is not a standard feature in priestly 'ordination', but is used when there is a need to *duplicate* or create a *substitute* for somebody else. The 'ordination of the Levites is not repeated through history, but only the ritual cleansing before assuming office.

4. Women could perform two of three duties of the priests, namely: (a) didactic and administrative functions; and (b) prophetic functions. They were consistently excluded from cultic functions, i.e. serving as sacrificial priests in the sanctuary, which makes Israel unique in the ancient Near Eastern environment. The reasons for this are several: (a) the woman's repeated ritual impurity due to the blood flow connected with her menstrual cycle and childbirths (but it should be noted that men could also be excluded from the sanctuary services, due to 'impure' discharges), (b) the need to avert pagan influences from priestesses who were involved in sacred marriage and temple prostitution among the surrounding peoples, (c) the old patriarchal tradition of the male elder of the family and clan having a

priestly role which was transferred to the priesthood of the sanctuary, and (d) reverence for the woman's role of giving life, which did not lend itself to the function of slaughtering animals and handling offerings.

5. Moses inducts Joshua as his successor upon God's command and instructions, but this is a unique act for a unique office which is not repeated. Imposition of hands is a key ingredient in the ceremony. By this act, Moses conveys upon Joshua some of his 'authority, honour' (*hod*) or 'spirit of wisdom'. It is not clear in the text if Moses' imposition of hands automatically conveys this 'honour/wisdom', or if it is merely a symbolic act that demonstrates Joshua's endorsement by Moses, or if the transfer of Moses 'honour/wisdom' is God's work (since Moses acts fully in compliance with God's commands). It is clear, however, that Joshua is selected by God, because he already has the 'spirit'. It is also clear that Moses is seen as a unique spiritual leader, because he is the only man who had talked to God face to face (Num. 12:6; Deut. 18:5, 18; 34:10). Thus, the act recorded on Joshua's 'ordination' is non-repeatable, and it was not followed by any recorded acts of 'ordination'.

6. The 'spirit' (*ruakh*) is involved in Moses' appointments of the seventy elders and of Joshua. There is some fluidity in the referential meaning: 'power, ability, knowledge, wisdom'. It either comes explicitly and directly from God (prophetic and charismatic concept), or it is conveyed by God in connection with or following the ritual of laying on of hands, but nothing is stated that leads us to understand it as a magical rite that controls or automatically conveys the 'spirit of God'.

7. The nearest we come to 'ordination' in the Old Testament are the inductions of the seventy elders, the Levites, and Joshua's appointment as Moses' successor:

(a) In the *appointment* of the seventy elders, a *charismatic* rather than a ritualistic understanding of induction to office is displayed, where God is the only agent, not Moses or any other human.

(b) In the *consecration* of the priests and the Levites, a *ritualistic and 'sacramental'* concept of induction is applied. Thus, attempts to exclude women as 'priests' in the history of the Christian church have often been closely linked with sacramental interests and attempts to strengthen the authority and status of leaders, and, consequently, those attempts have often drawn on the priestly and levitical 'ordinations', as we will see in the patristic material (especially Irenaeus, 4.1.4) and

as is obvious also in parts of the contemporary discussion. The levitical 'ordination' includes the idea that imposition of hands (no prayer), which is referred to in Hebrew as *samak yad 'al*, is a symbolic way of expressing the creation of a *substitute* – the Levites replaced the first-born and represented the Israelites. This also occurs in Moses' 'ordination' of Joshua. Although the Levites may have had other duties, too, such as teaching and administration, the 'ordination' recorded is clearly focusing only on their ritual purity for serving in the sanctuary.

(c) In Joshua's 'ordination' by Moses, a *civil* and *priestly-political* concept is applied. Joshua is 'ordained' by Moses who is asked to transfer some of his 'authority and honour' to Joshua by *samak yad 'al* (no prayer). This is based on Moses' unique role as the only man who had talked to God face to face. Joshua's duty is to be a civil, military and spiritual leader as Moses is taken away and the people are to enter Canaan. This 'ordination' is therefore not repeated in the Old Testament. It is a unique event and is conditioned by Moses' special status and Israel's decisive challenge on the other side of the Jordan River.

8. No consistent ceremony of 'ordination' is found in the Old Testament. With imposition of hands it occurs only in the unique cases of the Levites and Joshua. Since these two 'ordinations' aim at creating a *substitute* (Levites replacing the firstborn Israelites and Joshua as a substitute for Moses), no prayer is involved. The creation of a substitute is a conferral of personal qualities or some authority by a personal decision and is not a spiritual event which requires blessing. However, in the few examples of 'ordination' in the New Testament that exist, prayer is included (Acts 6:1-6: 13:1-3). Together with the fact that neither the Levites' nor Joshua's 'ordination' is mentioned in the New Testament, these observations suggest that Old Testament 'ordination' is not applicable to Christian ordination.

C. Imposition of Hands in the Bible

The imposition of hands was a gesture used for many different purposes in both the Old and the New Testament: (a) blessing; (b) confession of sins and cleansing in sacrificial rites; (c) removal of the effects of the crime of a blasphemer; (d) forgiveness of sins and receiving the Holy Spirit at baptism; (e) forgiveness of sins and restoring an elder to office; (f) forgiveness of sins and healing; and (g)

appointment, consecration and induction to an office or a task with specific responsibilities.

The 'hand' is associated in the Bible with rich symbolism. Drawing on general insights regarding this symbolism, the 'laying on of hands' applied in various situations may imply a conveying of presence, strength, power, authority, removal of sins and defilement of a person, and vicarious representation. However, there is no explicit statement in the Bible that defines the imposition of hands along these lines.

Based on our study so far, the key texts in the Bible for an understanding of the imposition of hands in appointments are found in Numbers 8:5-26 (Levites), Numbers 27:12-23 and Deuteronomy 34:9 (Joshua), Acts 6:6 (the seven); Acts 13:3 (Barnabas and Saul), and 1 Timothy 4:14 and 2 Timothy 1:6 (Timothy). These passages are linked to a total of five cases in the whole Bible. We summarise here our study:

In the Old Testament, the imposition of hand(s) (*samak yad/yadim*) is part of some kind of 'ordination' only in the consecration of the Levites and the induction of Joshua:

1. In the case of the congregation of Israel laying their hands on the *Levites* (3.2.4; 3.3.5), this gesture transmits three things:

(a) The people's obligations to be holy and pure before God, and to serve him, are transmitted to the Levites who thus represent and serve the people and God; (b) the act also transmits to the Levites their status as substitutes for every firstborn in Israel, which belonged to the Lord; (c) the transmission of a recognition of the Lord's appointment of the Levites for service is implied.

All this, however, takes place in a ritualistic and cultic context and is deeply rooted in Israel's history and the ceremonial parts of the Mosaic Law.

2. In the case of Moses imposing his hand on *Joshua* (3.2.6; 3.3.6), it transmits:

(a) A spirit of wisdom in leadership skills and Moses' personal support; (b) the congregation's acceptance of and obedience to or support of Joshua's leadership role; and (c) a validation of God's gift of the Spirit and the talents that the Spirit provides, together with a promise of God's continuing presence and support.

It is important to note that *there is no laying on of hands for succession in the Old Testament*. The Levites did not appoint or 'ordain' more Levites. The office was hereditary. New Levites would however be installed through consecration, not by

themselves, but by the high priest. Neither did Joshua appoint a successor. There is no evidence that a pattern of office was established by Moses in 'ordaining' Joshua. The essence of Joshua's 'ordination' lay in its temporal and historical significance.

The occurrences of the imposition of hands in the context of appointments in the New Testament are not only very scant, but they explain very little of the significance of the practice. Above all, the Gospels are silent on 'ordination' by the imposition of hands and this silence continues until Acts 6 (3.5.1).

Thus, the teaching of the Bible on the imposition of hands in 'ordination' is very limited, and the few New Testament references are not clear in important ways: no church office is involved; the significance of the act of laying on of hands is not explained; and there is no unambiguous reference to the body that performs the act of the imposition of hands – the congregation, or a select group, or both. A plain reading will not help, but only by a careful interpretation of the passages in their context can we hope to reach some understanding.

However, a focus on some sort of *authorisation* for leadership can be discerned, and this is linked to a *confirmation* of God's designation of the appointee by the Holy Spirit. When the act takes place in the presence of the congregation (Joshua, Barnabas and Paul), or is performed by a group of leaders (apostles, prophets and teachers, elders), the idea of making the appointment publicly known and endorsed by the congregation may perhaps be present, but whether or not this is an intentional feature is not explicitly stated in the biblical text. The individual authorisation of Timothy by Paul in 2 Timothy 1:6 stands out, but the passage does not state any of the external circumstances when the act was performed.

The imposition of hands in the early church may be simply an act of blessing, not necessarily 'ordination'. In order to speak of a formal 'ordination', we need to connect it with the Jewish scribal ordination, but this is uncertain because of our scant knowledge of the practice in first-century Judaism, and especially by the fact that Jewish ordination did not include prayer, while the early Christian examples of imposition of hands related to leadership did (Acts 6:6; 13:3). The local church customs of having a 'presbytery' of elders (1 Tim. 4:14), an overseer and a servant (1 Tim. 3:1-13), may have been taken over from Judaism, but it is not clear if first-century Judaism included 'ordination' of elders and local synagogue leaders, and the New testament is silent on this, too. What is clear, however, is that there are no

magical biblical formulas for the ministry of the church. Imposition of hands has no power in itself. It is only used by God when it is done in agreement with his word.

D. Ordination of Scribes in First-Century Judaism

In a brief survey of Jewish scribal ordination, which was contemporary with the New Testament, we draw the following conclusions:

Jewish scribal ordination signified mainly a linking of the ordinand with the succession from Moses and authorised him to assume the teaching chair, which meant that he would now share his Moses-wisdom. 'Ordination in early rabbinic Judaism had become a rite administered to rabbinic scholars on the basis of intellectual proficiency, qualifying them for authoritative judicial and religious office. With "ordination", the number of scholars increased – as did their status. As those who interpreted both Torah and tradition, the rabbis became mediators of the will of God to all Israel.'⁹

We noted particularly that the scribal ordination also functioned as a merit for serving as a 'judge' and 'elder', and that the 'Seven of a City' was understood as a small Sanhedrin which handled local matters and was subordinate to the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem.

There was a reluctance to accept 'God's Spirit' as being involved in the *semikah* ('imposition [of hands]') and it was not accompanied by prayer, mainly because it was a matter of a succession of an office and by the imposition of hands the older scribe reproduced a part of himself in the younger scribe, which was a matter of ritual and decision, and not of a divine blessing.

The important element in *semikah* was the connection with Moses who spoke face to face with the Lord (Num. 12:8), and the central passage of Moses' appointment and installation of Joshua. The scribes believed that Moses imparted some of *his* wisdom to Joshua in ordination, and that through *succession* they also received some of this God-given Moses-wisdom. In some contexts, two passages from the Torah were combined, viz. the imposition of hands on Joshua by Moses (Num. 27:22-23; Deut. 34:9) and the selection of the seventy elders, whom God (no human) 'ordained' by the Holy Spirit (Num. 11:16-17, 24-25).

⁹ M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, pp. 24-25.

E. 'Ordination' in the New Testament

What is the role of 'ordination' in God's mission to grant all authority to Christ, who has called the church to bring the gospel to the world, and who gives gifts and appoints the members of the church for various kinds of leadership service? In section 3.5 we have sought answers to this question in the New Testament.

While the New Testament is clear on God's Mission to the world, the Church, the Ministry, and the appointment for Ministry, it has very little to say about 'ordination' through the imposition of hands. What it does say is either difficult to understand with certainty or it refers to 'ordination' for tasks and functions that do not correspond to the office of the gospel minister in modern Seventh-day Adventist terminology. It seems to concern unique and local needs to deal with temporary issues.

With Christianity, God brings fundamental changes in his mission of salvation, namely: (a) the Israelite sanctuary is replaced by the ministry of Christ, based on his accomplished sacrifice, and (b) Israel, the Abrahamic-Mosaic covenant community, is replaced by the new Israel, the church, based on the new covenant in the blood of Christ. These changes make it necessary to disregard the Old Testament passages as directly authoritative for Christian 'ordination'. And as interpreters, we have no right to make free combinations of texts that originally meant something very different from what we may want them to say in our modern situation.

The possible allusions made in Acts 6:1-6; 13:3; and 2 Tim. 1:6 to the passages concerning the Levites (Num. 8), the appointment of elders (Num. 11), and Moses appointment of Joshua (Num. 27), must be seen with the eyes of the authors of Acts and 2 Timothy, thus enlightening us at the level of the New Testament text. *If we were to adduce in Seventh-day Adventist church practice biblical instructions on 'ordination' directly from the Old Testament passages, we would run the risk of contradicting the New Testament application of those texts, placing ourselves above the inspired New Testament authors.*

It should be noted, finally, that, judging from the Bible, only one of two options may apply: (a) either we judge from what is stated explicitly, and then neither Moses, nor the twelve, nor the apostle Paul were 'ordained' by imposition of hands; they all had a spiritual, charismatic office, directly appointed by God, which brings their ministry into the category of a prophetic ministry and which supersedes any office to

which one is inducted by ‘ordination’, or (b) their ‘ordination’ is not mentioned in the Bible, which means that the authors deemed it as being of no significance. In either case, any modern-day Bible reader referring to biblical ‘ordination’ – be it male or female – should do so with great care and humility. The Bible does not make any big issue out of it, certainly not in the New Testament.

1. Terminology and References to ‘Ordination’

The New Testament does not support the use of modern technical terms like ‘ordain’ or ‘ordination’, which are terms with a Latin root that came into the Christian church from the pagan Roman Empire and the adaptation of the Roman Catholic Church to Roman customs and practices (4.1; 4.2).

The Greek terms used in the New Testament vary greatly and are common terms for ‘put’ or ‘place’ or ‘make’, which may sometimes be rendered ‘appoint’ in view of the context. The following terminology has been noted:

poieo, ‘make’ (Mark 3:14) ;

eklegomai, ‘choose’ (Luke 6:12; John 15:16);

ginomai, ‘become’ (Acts 1:22);

cheirotoneo, ‘raise the hand (in a congregational agreement)’, ‘appoint’ (2 Cor. 8:19; Acts 14:23);

tithemi, ‘place, set’ (1 Tim. 2:7);

kathistemi, ‘cause to be, appoint’ (Titus 1:5);

epitithemi, ‘place, set’ (Acts 6:6; 13:3; cf. the noun *epithesis* in 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6; Hebr. 6:2)

None of these are technical terms for ‘ordination’ in the New Testament. The verb *cheirotoneo* later on became the Greek technical term for ‘ordain’ in the post-biblical era (4.1.7), and is still used even within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Greece for ‘ordination’, but it does not have a firm or dominant function in the New Testament where it occurs only twice and in slightly different contexts (Acts 14:23; 2 Cor. 8:19). The cases where the act of induction to a task is referred to with certainty and including the imposition of hands are only four: Acts 6:6; 13:3; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6.

The clear impression from a careful exegesis of these passages, however, is that ‘ordination’ in our terms today does not occur in the New Testament, certainly

not if we approach the biblical text in a literalistic way. In the Gospels, the ministry of Jesus demonstrates an absence of 'ordination' or imposition of hands for induction to a task, which continues in Acts 1, where the twelfth apostle to replace Judas is appointed without any reference whatsoever to 'ordination' or imposition of hands.

There are possibilities, of course, (a) to read more into the various passages than what is made explicit, and (b) to take different passages out of their context and connect them and thus provide each of them with a new context that they do not have in the Bible (cf. the 'proof-text method'). The former may be a method of biblical interpretation that we adopt when we seek understanding or make historical reconstructions. The latter may be used for spiritual edification. However, when we speak of the Bible as the Word of God, as our only creed, seeking doctrinal clarity or providing the biblical foundation for a church practice such as 'ordination, we need to proceed with full respect for what the Bible says and what it does not say.

The predominant impression, however, is that selection and appointment for a leading role in the church is a spiritual event, directly initiated and carried out by God, Christ, or the Holy Spirit. There would have had to be some kind of acknowledgement by the church of this calling, as Paul, for example, was called by Jesus but also accepted by the church as 'a herald and an apostle and a teacher' (2 Tim. 1:11; cf. 1 Tim. 2:7).

What we see is that Paul eventually submitted his calling and ministry to the judgement of leaders in Jerusalem (Gal. 1:13-2:10), and that he often had to argue with the churches concerning full acceptance of his ministry (e.g. 1 Cor. 3-4). However, the submission of his ministry to the leading 'pillars' in Jerusalem seems to have been partly informal (Gal. 1:18-24) and partly incurred by a revelation (Gal. 2:2). At first, after his conversion, noting that 'God had set me apart before I was born', he makes a point out of 'not having conferred with any human being' and of 'not going up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me' (Gal. 1:15-17). Thus, the spiritual authority directly from God is the cornerstone in Paul's understanding, rather than an institutional one. His meeting after three years with Peter and James, the brother of Jesus (Gal. 1:18-24) is informal, and when he finally, after fourteen years, goes up to Jerusalem, it is because of a 'revelation', not a church order. God is actively leading his ministry. In one section of his report to the Galatians, he says about the central leaders:

Galatians 2:6 And from those who were supposed to be acknowledged leaders (what they actually were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality) – those leaders contributed nothing to me. (NRSV)

From this it is possible to conclude that there was no central authorisation or 'ordination' of ministers in early Christianity attested by the Bible, and that even Paul did not assign authority to them, only to God who 'shows no partiality'.

2. The Silence on 'Ordination'

There is a total silence on the laying on of hands for the purpose of 'ordination' in the Gospels and Acts 1-5, until the appointment of the seven in Acts 6. Thus, the evidence of the Gospels is that Jesus did not use this sign in appointments and the apostles carried this heritage with them after the ascension. Jesus taught servanthood, not hierarchy, and he explicitly criticised the titles and institutions associated with the scribes.

Consequently, the early Christians did not recognise 'ordination' as legitimate, in keeping with Jesus' teaching and example. The earliest leadership was based on (a) family ties with Jesus, or (b) belonging to the appointed twelve disciples who were among the eyewitnesses to Jesus resurrection, or (c) direct divine appointments based on the gift of the Spirit. In none of these cases was 'ordination' needed (and it is therefore not attested).

As the church began to grow in Jerusalem and Antioch, and practical issues arose, some *ad hoc* improvisations were made but they did not lead to an established practice. Thus, the practice in Acts 6:1-6 is unique and occurs in a very particular situation for the young church – there is no evidence that it was made into a formal pattern that was followed by others across the growing Christian world. Paul and his associates, and Peter, John, and James either did not use it at all, or did not make any reference to it in their letters.

Where Paul gives (limited) evidence of the imposition of hands (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6), he seems to be referring to customs in the local church with a Jewish precedence (*semikat zeqenim*) and the adoption and blessing of his apostolic representative, Timothy. Thus, there is in fact no evidence that the early Christians recognised the existence of ordination *per se*, certainly not as it is practised today in Christianity.

The 'ordination' in Acts 6:1-6 (collective action), and perhaps also the act in 2 Timothy 1:5 (individual action), come closest to the kinds of ordinations for the gospel ministry, local elders and deacons/deaconesses that we are applying today in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. But there is no example of this threefold division of offices, and no passage in the Bible gives a literal and clear record of 'ordination' in this modern sense.

There is therefore no explicit biblical text that commands or illustrates ordination as it is practised by the Seventh-day Adventist Church today. There are perhaps certain principles that can be deduced from the biblical texts, but these depend on a rather complex process of interpretation and are not easily identified – thus, consensus on those details may be very difficult to achieve.

3. *Appointment for Ministry and Leadership*

The New Testament reveals a fundamental emphasis on the *divine* appointment for ministry and leadership, directly through Jesus Christ (Mark 3:14; Luke 6:12; John 15:16; Acts 26:16; 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11), or God himself (Acts 1:21-26), or the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:1-3). It has a predominantly *charismatic* view of ministry and leadership and stands far from an institutionalised view. (This is in some ways modelled by the Old Testament passage on God's 'ordination' of the elders of Moses in Num. 11.) The examples we have in the New Testament are triggered by practical needs as the church grows and expands, showing dependence on contemporary Jewish practices known to all Jewish converts and/or directly drawing on the scriptural models in the Old Testament, which are rearranged and adapted to the needs of the new Israel.

There is no clear structure of ministerial leadership offices in the New Testament. Ideally, all members of the early church are 'servants or ministers (of God or Christ)' and are filled with the Holy Spirit. It is God, or Christ, or the Holy Spirit who calls or appoints the special minister who is a leader. Paul gives lists of functions in the church: (a) appointed by God in 1 Corinthians 12:28-30: apostles, prophets, teachers, workers of miracles, workers of healing, workers of forms of assistance, workers of forms of leadership, speakers in various kinds of tongues, and interpreters of tongues; (b) gifted and appointed by Christ in Ephesians 4:11: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers; (c) gifted and activated by the

Spirit (1 Corinthians 12: speakers of wisdom, speakers of knowledge, healers, workers of miracles, prophets, discerners of spirits, speakers in tongues, and interpreters of tongues). In describing the church, Paul is consistently describing it as one body but with various gifts and functions to serve in providing acts of prophecy, service or ministry, teaching, exhortation, generosity, leadership, compassion (Rom. 12: 6-8). All these functions – which reveal considerable variation – are connected with gifts of God, calling by God, and appointment by God. The exceptions are few (3.5.5.3).

4. The ‘Ordination’ Texts

The passages we considered were those in which explicit reference is being made to imposition of hands for an induction to a church office or a specific task. These are: Acts 6:1-6; 13:1-3; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6. The New Testament also makes reference to ‘imposition of hands’ in 1 Timothy 5:22 and Hebrews 6:2, but we found good reasons for excluding them here, since they do not seem to relate to appointments for office.

Judging purely from the extant writings in the New Testament, no male disciple, servant, or apostle was ‘ordained’, and the imposition of hands for ‘ordination’ of men was not conducted for any of the church offices applied in the church today, such as the gospel minister, the local church elder, or the deacon/deaconesses.

The only examples we have of ‘ordination’ for a church office concern (a) the seven who assisted the apostles, but their exact function is uncertain (Acts 6:1-6); (b) Barnabas and Paul, who were sent to Asia Minor on a mission journey (Acts 13:1-3); and (c) young Timothy, who was blessed and adopted as Paul’s ‘son’ (representative) and ‘servant’ (2 Tim. 1:6) and who may perhaps have received the imposition of hands by the presbytery in Ephesus, although it is more likely that he did not (1 Tim. 4:14) – Timothy’s functions in Ephesus according to 1-2 Timothy are perfectly in keeping with his authority from Paul as Paul’s representative.

5. Conclusions on ‘Ordination’ in the New Testament

The New Testament church introduced the antecedents of ‘ordination’ at a crucial moment of its early history, as a response to the questioning by the Jerusalem

Sanhedrin of the Christians' authority to preach the risen Christ (Acts 6:1-6). However, for some decades, pragmatic concerns influenced the practice and we see how the imposition of hands was used for various purposes, for assistant apostolic leaders (the seven), for authorised missionaries (Barnabas and Paul), and for apostolic 'servants' (Timothy).

While 'ordination' is very sparingly reflected in the New Testament, the offices in the church slowly took shape. At the beginning, the leadership of the twelve and the family of Jesus was undisputed, but already with Paul a change took place. Paul counted himself an apostle, but based on Christ's personal and direct calling in a vision. This charismatic apostolate had followers, and as the church grew they needed assistants whom they authorised for various functions in local churches. All along there were 'teachers and prophets' appearing, either as local or itinerant ministers.

Following the Jewish model of local elders in synagogues and cities with the central Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, the church began with a council of elders and apostles in Jerusalem and local church elders in each city.

In the course of the fast growth of the church, it became necessary to institute formal and resident offices in the local churches, the 'overseers, bishops' (*episkopoi*) and the 'servants, deacons' (*diakonoi*). At first, the *episkopoi* seem to have been identical with the 'elders, presbyters' (*presbyteroi*), or, possibly, the *episkopos* was the leader of the presbytery and thus could have both titles of 'elder' and 'overseer'.

While these offices are mentioned in the New Testament and the qualifications for holding such offices are carefully laid out, there is no clear record of ordinations for these offices. The destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 removed the central function of the Jerusalem elders and apostles, and the family of Jesus, and by this time few apostles were still alive. The church moved on and developed, however, across the entire Roman Empire. In order to keep order, defend itself against heresy, and appeal to the Roman society, it became more and more institutionalised according to pagan Roman concepts. At the end of the first century, however, there is no record of a uniform, clearly defined set of offices or an ordination procedure, but we may assume that local variations were considerable.

6. Women in Ministry

No example is found in the New Testament of an imposition of hands involving a woman to confirm her role as a servant or minister of God. This circumstance is however not proof that it did not happen in the early church, for the writings of the New Testament canon were collected and approved on other grounds than those of providing historical evidence for the 'ordination' of men or women. Moreover, women who are mentioned as servants or ministers in the New Testament (3.1.3.8) may well have been confirmed by prayer and imposition of hands, but no such record has survived.

More importantly, however, 'ordination' in the New Testament is not the ordination we are accustomed to in our modern times. In the New Testament, especially in Luke and Paul, it is completely overshadowed by a *charismatic* concept of 'ordination', which comes from God, or Christ, or the Holy Spirit, or all of these. There is no instruction or definition in the New Testament regarding 'ordination' – neither for men, nor for women, except for a repeated emphasis on their spiritual calling. The two clear instances of an imposition of hands in congregational settings, in Acts 6:1-6 and 13:1-3, are not 'ordinations' for any known office and both have the character of unique *ad hoc* initiatives that were not repeated.

According to the New Testament practice of appointments for ministry, therefore, the crucial factor is, for both men and women, if they have received spiritual gifts for leadership in some sense and a calling and appointment by Christ. It is on this 'playing-field' that the 'ordination' of men and women needs to be evaluated in the New Testament.

Thus, we have found ample evidence of women being 'ministers' based simply on the calling of Christ, like the twelve, and Paul, and other 'apostles' (none of them had been 'ordained' by the imposition of hands). Men and women are therefore *equals* in ministry, because they all serve God and Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. And this is, in fact, a return to the initial order of things in the Garden of Eden (3.1).

When an induction to a ministry by the imposition of hands occurs, it is *connected with known Jewish practices* at the time of the New Testament church. These practices centred on the role of the 'elder', going back to the Old Testament patriarchal view that the elder was the firstborn male of each clan (applied in 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6). In the appointment of the seven as apostolic servants or elders (Acts 6:1-6), the model may have been the Jewish practice of the 'Seven of a City'

which functioned as judges delegated by the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, but it is improbable that the function of judge in Judaism was accompanied by ordination (3.4; 3.5.2; 3.5.3.1). Thus, *the fact that no women are included in these ceremonies is only something to be expected*. Women were never part of the patriarchal Jewish ceremonies of scribal 'ordination'. We may add to this the general social norms regarding the restricted sphere of women in the Graeco-Roman society at the time. Considering these historical circumstances, it is rather *remarkable how prominent women are in the New Testament as disciples, servants and apostles*.

The work of the Spirit in the New Testament church challenges and overrules the patriarchal view. Many women were involved in ministry, based on Jesus' inclusion of women in his ministry and the subsequent work of the Holy Spirit in the early church from Pentecost. It is this primary work of the Spirit that is the vital reason why formal 'ordination' ceremonies are hardly evidenced and applied in the New Testament canon. *They were not needed at the time*. What was needed was the work of God, through Christ and the Spirit, and the demonstration of God's power in the ministry of his servants.

We have seen in some detail that women have several important *functions* in the New Testament (relevant parts of 3.1.3). For example, the Gospel writers keenly included female exemplars or 'role model' characters in their writings about Jesus. They present both female and male exemplars for the reader to imitate. However, in comparison, the twelve disciples are imperfect examples. We have also named and described numerous female servants and ministers that have crucial and fundamental roles as primary eyewitnesses in the New Testament, without whom the Christian faith could not have been sustained.

Paul instructs the church in Corinth that it is the Spirit that 'allots to each one individually just as he chooses' (1 Cor. 12:11). 'To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.' (12:7; 8-11). It is God who appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, and various kinds of tongues' (12:28). The gift of the Spirit and the appointment by God – nothing else is mentioned as relevant – can only be acknowledged by seeing the fruit of the work of an individual, be it man or woman. That gender is no hindrance for ministry has been demonstrated in the Bible (3.1), in the history of the Christian Church (chapter 4) and of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in particular (Ellen White and others).

When Paul instructs the church in Ephesus that ‘each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift’ (Eph. 4:7; NRSV), this is *inclusive* language, embracing men and women in the church. He then continues, saying that ‘the gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers’ (4:11). The issue of gender is nowhere mentioned and consequently irrelevant, and instead Paul defines the *purpose* of the gifts and appointments for different functions: ‘to equip *the saints* for the work of ministry, for building up the *body of Christ*, until *all of us* come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ’ (4:12-13; emphasis supplied). Again, this is *inclusive* language: the work is by all and for all, but Christ assigns the gifts and the functions. A few verses further on in the same chapter, Christ is defined as ‘the head’ – no other head in the church is mentioned but Christ – ‘from whom *the whole body*, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as *each part is working properly*, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love’ (4:15-16). ‘The whole body’ means men and women who are mutually submitted to each other, and are submitted to Jesus Christ as his servants and ministers.

If this ‘whole body’ is ‘tied together by every ligament with which it is equipped’, it recognises and does not shut out others from the ministry of Christ, but allows the head of the Church, Christ, to decide who is worthy of serving him. As the whole body ‘clothes itself with Christ’, ‘there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus’ (Gal. 3:27-28). Unity in the church will not be achieved unless all recognise others’ equal right to serve the Lord, also as ministers and leaders.

This is the new Israel that the prophets foretold in the Old Testament. Joel 2:28-29 was quoted by Peter on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the believers: ‘Upon my servants (*douloi*), both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy’ (Acts 2:18). The prophet Isaiah foretold a new Israel where God will call men and women¹⁰ ‘priests (*kohanim*) of the Lord’ and ‘ministers (*meshartim*) of our God’ (Isa. 61:6), which are offices which required ‘ordination’.

¹⁰ Note Ellen White’s application of this passage to all men and women workers in the church who serve as God’s helping hands’ (4.6.2.5).

And this means to return to the Garden of Eden, where men and women were equal as God's servants as they mediated his glory to the world and served him as priests and ministers. This is why men and women are 'priests', servants, and 'rulers' in John's end-time vision of the church (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6) as it goes through the last struggles on the way to the new heaven and the new earth.

0.4 ORDINATION IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

The central conclusion of our review of ordination in the history of the Christian church is that Christian tradition after the New Testament has deviated from the teachings of the Bible. Ordination in the Bible has not been understood, taught, or heeded. A reform of ordination that brings it closer to the teaching of particularly the New Testament and is informed and guided by the theme of the Bible as a whole will assist Seventh-day Adventists in living up to its creed: the Bible, and the Bible alone. As this will be decisive in the end-time conclusion of the conflict between God and his Enemy, it needs urgently to be implemented in the area where ordination functions: the full and inclusive release of all 'servants and ministers' of God in bringing the gospel to the world and fulfil the task of the church in God's great mission.

1. The Biblical Background

The New Testament speaks in very simple terms about church offices and 'ordination' (3.1.3; 3.5). Church leaders such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers were appointed or called by God and equipped with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In the local church, a model emerges which resembles the Jewish diasporic synagogal system with an 'overseer' (*episkopos*) and a 'servant' (*diakonos*), and with a body of 'presbyters/elders' (*presbyteroi*) in charge of the administration of the local church organisation. There is no record of overseers or servants being 'ordained', but there are hints at some form of appointment of 'presbyters/elders' in local churches. The concept of 'ordination' associated with the English term is, however, not found in the Bible, but emerges in the second century in the Christian church as this originally foreign concept in Christian thought is taken over from the administrative, cultic, and legal terminology of the Roman Empire.

2. The Post-Biblical Church

In the early church of the apostolic fathers, a development begins which culminates in the medieval hegemony of the Roman Catholic Church:

(a) The 'appointment' (*cheirotonia*) for office (i.e. the New Testament concept) becomes 'ordination' by the introduction of Roman (Latin) terminology;

(b) A clear distinction between the ordained clergy and the laity is adopted, which threatens the biblical doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and which derives from the classification of Roman society, both population and officials, according to 'orders';

(c) The bishop becomes hierarchically the supreme office and only the bishop gets the power to ordain, while the biblical two offices (overseer/elder, servant) expand to three (bishop, elder/priest, deacon);

(d) In his ordination, the bishop is ranked as part of an unbroken apostolic succession from Christ, which at first has to do with the appropriate transmission of true Christian teachings and later becomes a status or rank of 'holy order';

(e) The models and practices of ordination in the Roman civil and religious administration are transferred to the church, at first by Tertullian and Cyprian to 'contextualise' the church in the Roman culture, then through Constantine's elevation of the church to being the state religion; and finally through the rediscovery of the *corpus iuris civilis* ca. 1200, where the administrative and legal material of pagan Rome was preserved;

(f) Ordination becomes a 'sacrament', which is a Roman term for a pledge or commitment to an 'order' and with the addition of the doctrine of the transubstantiation, ordination becomes a rite that makes the bishop/priest a sacrificial priest who performs the sacrifice of Christ and distributes his merits (salvation) to the world;

(g) Ordination becomes an act which conveys spiritual power, divine grace, and a *character indelibilis* to the ordinand and changes him once and for all.

In view of these and many other profound changes, the historical conceptual baggage of the term 'ordination' is considerable.

3. Roman Catholic Ordination

Ordination in the Roman Catholic Church became a procedure of ceremonial appointment applied to higher orders of church offices. It became an act of 'officiation', i.e. an induction to or instalment in a particular office. Each ordination – of the bishop, presbyter (gradually referred to as 'priest'), or deacon – was a conferral of a defined status, spiritual power, and ecclesiastical authority. In all these respects, the church was strongly influenced by the pagan Roman practice of ordination for magisterial and sacerdotal orders, through concepts and terminology introduced by Tertullian and Cyprian. The church was seen as presided over by Christ as high priest according to the Old Testament passages of ritual consecration of priests and Levites. Clement and Irenaeus had applied models of ordination to Christian ministry that were originally integrated with the temple theology in ancient Israel. Cyprian expanded Tertullian's concept of the Christian 'priest' as the Roman *sacerdos* by developing the theology of priesthood through a large-scale application of the Old Testament priestly language to the ministry of a Christian pastor. The Apostolic Constitutions (375-380 A.D.) codified this priestly understanding of ordination. The personal authority of Moses, which was transferred to Joshua, was also used as a basis for conferring spiritual power to the ordinand by imposition of the bishop's hands. Ultimately, this *resulted in a wide separation of the clergy and the laity in the church*, which violates the New Testament teaching of the priesthood of all believers, but which had antecedents in pagan Rome and its distinction between *ordo et plebs* ('order and the people'). The first ordination ceremony along the lines briefly outlined here is described in Hippolytus' Roman ritual from around 200 A.D.

4. The Reformation

In the Reformation, ordination lost its sacramental status and was liberated from Roman ecclesiology. However, through the political dependence of the Reformers on civil authorities, ordination *continued* to function as a means to regulate authority in the state-church coalition. It *continued* to be used by the state to govern the people and preserved the gap between clergy and laity. It *continued* to preserve an authoritative body of leaders inducted by ordination, because of fears for the doctrinal and organisational unity of the church. Since ordination no longer conferred a *character indelibilis* on the ordinand, the power of the clergy centred less on him

personally, and more on his function as an authority on the Word. Thus, the theological education of the minister became a central concern, as a means of equipping him for ministry. The theological knowledge became a power that was used in the authoritative position to which ordination inducted the appointee.

The historical material reviewed in the present chapter reveals that *the breach with Rome was not consistent in the Reformation*. This conclusion should not come as a surprise to Seventh-day Adventists. We see ourselves as part of the continuing reformation of the Christian Church, and we have many examples of how the Protestant Reformation was incomplete. To the doctrines of the Sabbath and state of the dead, among others, we may also add the theology of ordination. Luther recognised that it is *not ordination* which creates or validates the office, but *the appointment*. If this simple biblical recognition had been further explored with an open mind in seeking to understand the Bible (not proving already held views), an abundant material for guidance to the church would have become apparent, as we have seen in chapter 3.

5. The Protestant Churches

While the theology of ordination changed in the Reformation, many elements of the practice of ordination did not. As a popular and visible ceremony that all could see, it lived its own life, and its link with the theology of the Bible as a whole was not understood or sought.

Ordination in the Reformation was generally relegated to the area of *adiaphora*, and the biblical support for the continued practice was not stringently heeded. While it was acknowledged that the Bible did not include any commands from the Lord regarding ordination, and merely *fragmentary* examples from the time of the apostles could be adduced with the conclusion that it is 'likely' that they used imposition of hands for ordination, the needs for (a) order, government, unity, and true teaching, and (b) safeguarding the people's respect for the dignity of ministry, resulted in a continued church tradition in which semi-sacramental rituals of ordination with imposition of hands prevailed, inducting ministers or priests to a status and function above the laity.

We noted in Luther's, Calvin's, and Bucer's understanding of ordination, as well as in all the Protestant church organisations that developed after them, that

elements of the practice of ordination from the pre-Reformation era survived and thrived. We noted in some detail how these practices continued in Presbyterianism, Anglicanism, Methodism, and in the Baptist movement. We followed the history to North America in the early nineteenth century when the first indigenous American religious denomination developed, namely the Christians or the Christian Connexion (4.4.5), where James White and Joseph Bates, and many more of the pioneers were members during the Millerite era.

In a separate section, we studied the peculiar translation of the ordination passages in the Bible in the King James Version (1611) and its enormous influence (4.5). The reliance on the Catholic tradition of ordination and terminology in this thoroughly 'Anglican' translation of the Bible influenced Protestant churches for centuries.

6. Ordination in Seventh-day Adventism

James White was baptized in the Christian Connexion in 1837 at sixteen years of age and ordained as a minister in the same church in 1843 when he was twenty-one. He would have brought along the following ideas about ordination into the Millerite movement and the Sabbatarian Adventism:

1. Ordination was based on congregational approval and done by prayer and imposition of hands (a conference organisation might also have had a say, if there was one).

2. Ordination was not a condition for preaching and teaching, for that gift was given by the Spirit of the Lord, i.e. the 'ordination by God'. Formal ordination by the church through prayer and the imposition of hands gave the *authority* to administer the New Testament ordinances of baptism and holy communion, and to act as a leader with the authority received by knowledge of the word of God and a character that reflected the life of Christ. Much of this has roots in Calvin's ideas and Reformed Protestantism.

3. Ordained ministers were perceived as a guarantee for church order and unity, and, therefore, they became the formal protectors of true biblical teaching and preaching.

4. Ordination was performed by the already ordained ministers and elders. This included a 'succession' of spiritual authority conferred on the ordinand, which separated clergy from laity.

5. While James White would have been familiar with the occurrence of female preachers in the Christian Connexion, even women being ordained, he may not have had a determined view regarding the ordination of women as ministers. Because of the view that the Spirit would equip both men and women to speak, preach and teach the Word of God, however, this circumstance would not prevent him from accepting as appropriate his wife Ellen's messages from the Lord.

Ordination was introduced among the Sabbatarian Adventists mainly to bring order, unity, and to protect the teaching of the Word in the 1850's. James White underlined that 'men who are called of God to teach and baptize should be ordained or set apart to the work of ministry by the laying on of hands'. He denied that the church has power to call men to ministry, or that ordination makes them ministers of Jesus Christ – this is only in Christ's hands. He refers to 'the order of the gospel' (i.e. the authority of the Bible) as the only reason for ordination and its *practical* motives emerging from *the current needs of the mission* of the Sabbatarian Adventist movement, namely, 'the spiritual good of the flock' and the unity of the church.

James and Ellen White's view of ordination in the early 1850's may be summarised as follows:

1. The use of the term 'ordain' is based on the King James Version, and there is a clear reflection of the practice of ordination in the Christian Connexion where James White had been ordained in 1843.

2. The New Testament is the sole source of biblical guidance for ordination. The Old Testament consecrations for the priesthood are completely ignored.

3. Ordination is based on a biblical 'gospel order' established by God in His Word and by Christ in His church, which, if the church follows it, will bring blessings, unity, fellowship, love, and strength to the church. It will, above all, protect the church from false and divisive teaching and forward the work of mission.

4. The fundamental condition of ordination is that of being called by God and Christ. The church does not have the power to *call* members to ministry, and neither the ordination ceremony nor the status of being ordained *makes* them ministers of Jesus Christ.

5. The qualifications of an ordinand are extremely important.

6. The manner of ordination is 'being set apart to the work of the ministry by the laying on of hands' (the only quoted texts are 1 Timothy 4:11-16 and 2 Timothy 1:6; KJV). The ritualistic or 'sacramental' aspect of imposition of hands is explicitly abrogated. The acceptance of imposition of hands, besides being found in Paul's letters to Timothy, may also be explained by the circumstance that ordination was a known, firm institution in the churches that the Adventists had left. In fact, simple ordination ceremonies seem to have been in use among the Sabbatarian Adventists already for some time when James White wrote his article by the end of 1853.

7. The imposition of hands is done on behalf of the whole church which in this way gives its approval of the ordinand's qualifications for ordination, recognises the ordained minister as a representative and spokesperson of the church, and sympathises with him and includes him in prayer.

8. There are no references to biblical passages regarding the headship of males as opposed to females. By the quotation of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and the comments made on this passage, it is implied, however, that an ordinand is thought of as a male. However, although he comments on each detail in this passage, James White makes no reference to the phrase 'the husband of one wife'. Instead, the lengthiest comment is made on the ability to 'rule your own house' as a condition for ordination, thus suggesting that the ability to govern while being blameless is the key ingredient here. (Note our exegesis of 1 Timothy 3:1-13 in 3.1.3.11.)

In the history of ordination in the Seventh-day Adventist Church after 1863, the basic practical and Bible-based model of James White remained as a core model. It was however embellished by ecclesiological presumptions and practices from the denominations and sects which the Sabbatarians had left. This led to an inclusion of practices that had an incomplete biblical support and derived from the Protestant traditions regarding ordination which, in important respects, preserved elements of the Roman Catholic practice. This has been summarised by David Trim as follows:

(a) 'The Seventh-day Adventist understanding of what ordination signified, both in general, and in the particular context of ministers, *developed relatively quickly* and then remained remarkably stable and consistent for at least the first half of our history.'

(b) 'It is notable that early Adventists did not theorize that much about ordination; *their theology of ordination to some extent has to be worked out from*

their practice. Because of this, where our pioneers perpetuated attitudes and practices of other churches it is not always clear when they had first subjected them to scrutiny and decided to keep them because they were biblical, and when they simply were continuing in the ways they had been brought up to think and act.

(c) 'In the 1850s, to be sure, Adventists gave *sustained critical attention to Biblical passages on organization*. But there is less theoretical evidence for why their practice evolved in the ways it did after 1863 and for the actions taken by GC Sessions of the 1860's, '70's and '80's. *Our founders were not impervious to the prejudices of the time and they may have not always realized how much they had inherited from the Christian past.*

(d) 'One response to the history whose contours I have sketched out would be to say that *it is not Biblical* – or rather, is *only incompletely Biblical*.'

Thus, we noted (in some detail) elements in the Seventh-day Adventist history of ordination that revealed a reliance on Christian tradition rather than the clear teaching of the Bible (4.6.3; 4.6.5). This happened because ordination was treated as a practical rather than a theological issue. A reform of ordination that brings it closer to the biblical teaching will assist Seventh-day Adventists in living up to our creed: the Bible, and the Bible alone. As this will be decisive in the end-time conclusion of the conflict between God and his enemies, this reformation needs to be implemented urgently in order to bring a full and inclusive release of all 'servants and ministers' of God in bringing the gospel to the world and fulfill the task of the church in God's great mission.

7. Ellen White's View of Ordination

Ellen White's view of ordination (4.6.2) may be summarised as follows:

1. God and his mission. God's nature and mission are the fundamental theological elements in her understanding of the Bible. God's *plan of redemption* is 'the central theme of the Bible, the theme about which every other in the whole book clusters' and 'the unfolding of this wondrous theme' is 'the burden of every book and every passage of the Bible'.¹¹ Our proposal that a theology of ordination should be founded on the concept of the Mission of God (the Great Controversy, or the Plan of Redemption) is therefore in harmony with Ellen White's view.

¹¹ E. G. White, *Education*, 1903, p. 125.

2. The church as the priesthood of all believers. God's nature and mission determines her view of the church. The church is 'God's representative and agent of mission in the world'.¹² This role is intimately connected with *the priesthood of all believers*. All members of the church represent God and function as his agents of mission to the lost world. They are called by God, equipped with his Spirit, wisdom and skills, confirmed by and before the church as servants of God and representatives of the church for the salvation of the world and witnessing to the universe – all this being part of God's great mission.

Together, the formally ordained minister and the non-ordained church members represent (a) God, whose intention is to demonstrate his justice, love and grace to the universe, and (b) Christ, who in his dual nature unifies the divine with humanity and binds the family on earth together with the family in heaven. Thus, God's justice and love will be vindicated by his called-out people, reflecting his original intent in creating humans in his image, as man and woman, and in restoring the harmonious partnership by man and woman as equals.

Men and women do the work of gospel ministry most efficiently and credibly by working *together* as 'God's helping hands': 'Every man and every woman has a work to do for the Master' (4.6.2.4). In gospel ministry, therefore, gender is not the issue, but the personal consecration to God and the commitment to serve him in his mission: 'Who can better represent the religion of Christ than Christian women, women who are earnestly labouring to bring souls to the light of truth?'

Every Christian is intrinsically 'a priest for God'. In a spiritual sense, and formally through baptism, every Christian is 'ordained' by God to this 'believer priesthood'. Formal ordination by the church is not a condition for serving God in ministry. 'Profession and position is nothing', but being filled with the Spirit and character of Christ are the needed requirements for being a gospel minister (4.6.2.4).

Ellen White's general view of ministry includes all believers. The 'ordination' for this ministry is from God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Within this general ministry, special ministries could also exist, such as Ellen White's own prophetic ministry. Other special ministries could include women, even the gospel ministry, being formally marked by the laying on of hands.

¹² Id., *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1911, p. 9.

3. Women to be ordained by the laying on of hands. A careful consideration of the context in which she wrote her famous statement in 1895, that women should be ordained by the laying on of hands, shows that she is referring to gospel ministry in large cities and according to Luke 14:12-14, not merely how we today would define the work of a deaconess.¹³

However, this does not overshadow her view that, for the ordained gospel ministry, the ordination by God is more important than the ordination ceremony. Formal ordination is an external means of public appointment for a position of trust which conveys the church's authority and *confirms* God's call and Christ's authority which have *already been given*. Thus, an implication of Ellen White's view of ordination is that the decision on ordaining women may be made by the church. God and Christ has already called and equipped women for ministry. What is missing is the church's formal endorsement of what God has done.

4. Mobilising the whole church. Having worked closely with her husband James during the early years when formal ordination was introduced as a means of establishing gospel order, Ellen White later on became more and more silent on the formal ordination that sets a person apart for a special service on behalf of the church. She accepted it (at a time when women did not even have the right to vote in political life), but gives primary attention to *mobilising all members for the mission of God* and warns the church not to 'tie any hands' in God's mission. *The work is enormous and the time is short – so release women as workers and ministers!*

5. The structure of the church needs to be adaptable. Ellen White articulated the need for the church structure to be *adaptable* and at the service of the church as God's representative. Commenting on the situation outlined in Acts 6:1-6 and the conflict arising in regard to the distribution of food, she pointed out that 'the apostles must now take an important step in the *perfecting of gospel order* in the church, by laying upon others some of the burdens thus far borne by themselves'.¹⁴ The 'perfecting of the gospel order' occurred when 'the apostles were led by the Holy Spirit to outline a plan for the better organisation of all the working forces of the church'.¹⁵ Thus, ordination as part of gospel order might well be *changed*. She says:

¹³ See 4.6.2.3, point 11.

¹⁴ E. G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1911 p. 89 (emphasis supplied).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

[The] organisation of the church in Jerusalem was to serve as a model for the organisation of churches in every place where messengers of truth should win converts to the gospel. Later in the history of the early church, when in various parts of the world many groups of believers were formed into churches, *the organization of the church was further perfected*, so that order and harmonious action might be maintained.¹⁶

This quotation indicates that changes to the organisation of the church (as in a new ordained ministry) were made *as new needs were recognised*. Thus, the early Adventist church organisation had not achieved a static rigidity. The earlier organisational structure could be 'perfected' if, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the church thought it needed to be modified. This understanding of the adaptability, or the further 'perfecting' of the organisational structure of the church, gives an important explanation of how early Seventh-day Adventists viewed the development of their model of church governance: the *perfecting of gospel order* was a recurring principle in the development of the church structure.

From Ellen White's understanding of the principles of (a) order and harmony and (b) the need for being adaptable to new needs, we believe that 'the church can determine, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which ministries are beneficial and who is to function as an officer of the church'.¹⁷ *Thus, the ordination of officers becomes a function of the church rather than the church being a function of the officers.*

6. Qualifications for ministry ordained by God. According to Ellen White, the ordained ministry has a God-ordained purpose. For this reason, she also cautioned that an ordained minister should be carefully selected and gave strong emphasis on the qualifications for being formally ordained.

The primary and most important requirements are being called by God and spiritually 'ordained' by Christ. Here she sees no difference between men and women. Rather, in some respects, she elevates women as being superior to men. As she talks about the further personal abilities, she says:

They must be thinking men, men who bear God's impress and who are steadily progressing in holiness, in moral dignity, and in an understanding of their work. They must be praying men.¹⁸

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 91-92 (emphasis supplied).

¹⁷ D. Fortin, 'Ordination', 1998, p. 122.

¹⁸ E. G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 5, 1885-1909, p. 549.

Ellen White believed that each of these capacities is present also in women. What holds the women back is the common understanding in society and in the church that it is inappropriate for a woman to serve as the head in a position of authority. Ellen White accepted this view, but she did not teach it as the will of God, except in some situations when she applied it to the home and the marriage.

7. Women ministering in the home and in the public sphere. Ellen White held *two views of women in ministry*: (a) one is *in the home*, where the married woman is formally submitted to her husband who is the head of the family, but where mutual humility is the better rule, and (b) one is *in the church*, where any woman is submitted to Christ as head of the church, working side by side with her male colleagues, or husbands, or brothers and sisters in the faith. Ellen White made significant efforts to clarify that, even a married woman with children may still combine this role with an active, fruitful and God-given ministry. She believed that, if married, women should *combine* homemaking with ministry, and that there are unmarried women who also have a task in ministry (4.6.2.4).

8. The significance of formal ordination. Ellen White's definition of ordination is altogether pragmatic: 'it is a public recognition of divine appointment and an acknowledged form of designation to an appointed office'.¹⁹

Thus, the church gives authority to the ordained minister to preach the gospel, and to act in its name in organising new local churches. Since only the church can authorise a believer to perform its rites, it does confer authority upon some chosen individuals through the ordination ceremony. Thus, the imposition of hands is a ceremony that serves the purpose of the church, and it is the church, guided by the Holy Spirit, which ultimately decides who is to be given authority through ordination.

Ellen White held the view that 'the authority of an ordained minister is derived from God and conferred by the church'.²⁰ God gives authority to teach the faith; the church gives authority to act for the church. Again, we see here the connection of her two understandings of 'ordination' – as a work of God which equips a believer to preach and teach the Word, and as a work of the church which is formal and sets believers apart for special services to the church.

Ellen White also maintains that, as a Christian, an ordained minister has not only authority to perform duties for the church (ministering to the church), but also

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ D. Fortin, 'Ordination', 1998, p. 126.

holds *divine* authority to preach and teach the gospel and serve as God's ambassador. However, this divine authority is fundamentally related to being part of the priesthood of all believers and is not conveyed by ordination.²¹ This function is, so to say, God's ordination of all believers for mission, witnessing and evangelism.

Ellen White allowed for the church to decide on whether some people, other than 'pastoral gospel ministers', should be set apart by ordination for other ministries. We have seen that the Seventh-day Adventist Church decided that besides pastors, local church elders and deacons should be ordained. However, Ellen White went further than that and recommended that people should be ordained by the imposition of hands *for various kinds of ministries*. The theological basis for this view was (a) *the priesthood of all believers*, and (b) the belief that the church organisation was *adaptable to new needs of mission*.

9. The insufficiency of a formally ordained ministry. A key element in Ellen White's thinking was her conviction that the ordained pastoral ministry was *insufficient* to fulfil God's commission to the church and that God, therefore, is calling believers of all professions to dedicate their lives to his service. *The mission of God is the overarching principle, not the traditional rite of ordination*.

Thus, we detect in her thinking on ordination (a) elements of *urgency* in view of the impending coming of the Lord and the vast task of global mission, of (b) calling for greater *efficiency* by mobilising all the people of God to fulfil his mission and mandate to the church, and of (c) branching out in a *variety of ministries* to benefit from expertise, experience and giftedness.

Ellen White grasped the vital point in the Bible that the rite of the imposition of hands was used *for many different purposes*, such as blessing, healing, baptism and being set apart for official functions as well as particular commissions. Thus, ordination in Ellen White's understanding is not by any means exclusively reserved for induction to the pastoral gospel ministry, but it is an expression by the church that sets people apart for a divinely assigned ministry, indicated by the ordinand's faithfulness, ability and character, as well as spiritual gifts and divine appointment. The implications of this view are significant.

Consequently, 'the church can branch out into different kinds of ministries to meet the needs of the people'. Thus, for example, she argued in favour of the

²¹ Ibid.

ordination of male and female medical missionaries. The work of the medical profession was seen as an effective means of proclaiming the gospel and, for that reason, medical missionaries should be ordained for ministry.²² Thus, Ellen White makes an analogy between the ‘sacred setting apart’ of the medical missionary and the minister of the gospel. Since the role of the physician is one of function rather than status in the church structure, there is no implication here of a gender issue, but, if accepted as a principle, male as well as a female physicians would be ordained in the same way. Denis Fortin says: ‘To sacredly set apart a medical missionary is viewed as a form of “ordination” in which the church acknowledges the blessings of God upon the chosen individual and serves as a means of strengthening the dedication of the worker in his service for God.’²³

10. Ordination of women for the gospel ministry. Ellen White favoured that women in gospel ministry be also set apart by prayer and the imposition of hands, in other words, that *women in gospel ministry be ordained for their task*. Her fundamental reason for supporting the setting apart of women as medical missionaries is in keeping with her view on *the adaptability of church structures and orders* to meet new needs in *accomplishing the mission of God*, which is part of his plan of redemption in the context of the Great Controversy and the soon coming of the Lord. Fortin describes her view in these terms: ‘Under the guidance of God, the church can and should branch out in its methods of labour by setting apart in ordination Christians serving in various ministries.’²⁴ Thus, in making the following statements, Ellen White instructed the Seventh-day Adventist Church that God is leading the Church in this direction and that it is God’s will for the Church to ‘branch out’, to be strengthened and to be built up by ordination of women who labour in the gospel ministry:

*There are women who should labour in the gospel ministry ... We need men and women who understand the reasons for our faith and who realize the work to be done in communicating truth, and who will refuse to speak any words that will weaken the confidence of any soul in the Word of God or destroy the fellowship that should exist between those of like faith.*²⁵

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

²² E. G. White, *Evangelism*, 1946, p. 546 (emphasis supplied).

²³ D. Fortin, ‘Ordination’, 1998, p. 127.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

²⁵ E. G. White, *Evangelism*, 1946, p. 472 (emphasis supplied).

the necessities of the poor. *They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands.* In some cases they will need to counsel with the church officers or the minister; but if they are devoted women, maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in the church. *This is another means of strengthening and building up the church. We need to branch out more in our methods of labour. Not a hand should be bound, not a soul discouraged, not a voice should be hushed; let every individual labour, privately or publicly, to help forward this grand work.* Place the burdens upon men and women of the church that they may grow by reason of the exercise, and thus become effective agents in the hand of the Lord for the enlightenment of those who sit in darkness.²⁶

Ellen White's view of women's ordination to the gospel ministry seems to be that, on the one hand, she was 'very cautious' and 'never encouraged church officials to depart from the general customs of the church in those matters',²⁷ and, on the other hand, she never stated, as far as we know, that women should not be ordained; in fact, she seems to have become increasingly favourable to spiritual and gifted women's involvement in the ministry and mission of the church, especially towards the later part of her life.

Her cautious attitude is perfectly understandable in view of the conventional gender roles at the time and the ecclesiastical structure developing in the Seventh-day Adventist Church (4.6.3). Her primary focus would be on spiritual unity within the church and efficient mission to the lost. Issues of female ordination could possibly have damaged both internal unity and led to loss of trust in the gospel among unbelievers at the time. How sensitive she was on this point, although the issue related to dress reform, is revealed by this statement:

No occasion should be given to unbelievers to reproach our faith. We are considered odd and singular, and should not take a course to lead unbelievers to think us more so than our faith requires us to be.²⁸

It is clear, however, that in several statements she opens the door for women to do ministry and even to be set apart by the imposition of hands. This topic has already been comprehensively explored by others, and we have summarised their findings in our full study (4.6.2.3). In brief, she issued the following advice:

1. She often and always positively used the term 'ministry' with reference to women.
2. She underlined the need, legitimacy, and divine mandate for women in ministry.

²⁶ E.G. White, 'The Duty of the Minister and the People', 1895, p. 434 (emphasis supplied).

²⁷ See the correspondence between Ellen White's secretary, Clarence Crisler, and Mrs. L. E. Cox, March 12, 22, and June 16, 1916 in Ellen White, *Daughters of God: Messages Especially for Women*, 1998, pp. 253-255 .

²⁸ E. G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 1, 1885-1909, p. 420.

3. She provided role descriptions for women in ministry.
4. She recommended supporting roles for women in team ministry.
5. She recommended that women would minister as teachers.
6. She referred to 'women who should be engaged in the ministry'.
7. She recommended that women could serve as pastors.
8. She talked about 'women who should do pastoral labour'.
9. She referred to women as 'pastors to the flock of God'.
10. She stated in no uncertain terms that women are 'adapted to the successful management of the Church'.
11. She recommended, for certain forms of gospel ministry, especially work in the big cities and evangelism as defined by Christ in Luke 14:12-14, that women be 'set apart by prayer and laying on of hands'.

The following additional comments to this list deserve careful attention:

1. The combined talents of both men and women are essential for the highest success in the work of the ministry. Therefore the ideal is *team ministry*, especially by husband-and-wife ministerial teams.

2. The list of *roles open to women in gospel ministry* embraces a wide range of job descriptions and vocational options, including preaching, teaching, pastoral care, evangelistic work, literature evangelism, Sabbath School leadership, chaplaincy, counselling, and church administration.

3. Ellen White believed that the spiritual gifts of *pastoring and teaching* (Eph. 4:11) are given by the Holy Spirit to *both men and women*, and some women possess gifts and abilities for the 'successful management' of churches. (We would add here the recognition that men and women may have 'good administrative powers'.)

4. Her most strongly worded recommendations regarding women in ministry was that self-sacrificing wives who join their husbands in team ministry should receive wages proportionate to the time they devote to ministry. The issue of fair pay for every ministerial wife who chooses to devote herself to ministry rather than to some other profession was certainly a higher priority with Ellen White than ordination. Yet, her strong denunciations of paying only the male half of the ministerial team are still, with a few isolated exceptions, largely disregarded by the Church. It gives us cause for reflection that decision-makers in the Church assigns great importance to what Ellen White *did not say* about women's ordination to the

gospel ministry, while completely ignoring what she *did say* about fair pay for ministerial wives.

5. Ellen White recommended the ordination of lay women to a local ministry that would meet the needs of the sick, the young, and the poor. She believed that ordination is an ordinance of appointment that may rightly be conducted for both men and women, and this includes prayer and the imposition of hands.

11. Men and women as ‘priests of the Lord and ministers of Our God’. In Ellen White’s view, a woman’s place in ministry is secure. Thus, even if ‘the hands of ordination have not been laid upon her, she is accomplishing a work that is in the line of ministry’.²⁹

In a remarkable letter from 1901 (4.6.2.4), she says that an *unordained* minister (man or woman), who (a) fulfils the ministry of Christ, (b) who is ‘ordained’ by God through the Holy Spirit and ‘anointed’ to preach good tidings, like Christ, and (c) who is ‘consecrated’ by the presence of ‘doing works of love and mercy’, is not only of *greater* value to God and his church than an ordained minister who fails to represent Christ, but is of *supreme* value to the mission of God as ‘his helping hand’. Thus, neither *gender* nor *ordination* of a minister matters. What matters is the full integration of the person in God’s mission through the presence of Christ.

It is in this context of thought that we need to understand her concluding statement in 1901 where she applies God’s promise in Isaiah to men and women who function as God’s helping hand in the ministry of the Church:

Of those [men and women] who act as *His helping hand*, the Lord says, ‘Ye shall be named *Priests* of the Lord; men shall call you the *Ministers* of our God’. (Isa. 61:6).

Ellen White unifies clergy and laity, men and women, and perceives them as *one* in God’s ministry. She invokes his promise through Isaiah as fulfilled when men and women function as ‘*priests* of the Lord and *ministers* of our God’. This understanding is rooted in the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel on the day of Pentecost, which defines the church as one body upon which God ‘pours out [his] Spirit on [his] servants, both men and women, and they will prophesy’ (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:15-21).

Guided by Ellen White’s teachings, the Church must choose its grounds for issuing credentials for the gospel ministry: on traditional grounds of dubious historical

²⁹ E. G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 5, p. 323.

origin, as our study has amply and consistently demonstrated, or on the grounds of what the Bible reveals as the will of God in accomplishing his mission of salvation.

0.5 A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF ORDINATION

The grand story of the Bible has traditionally been referred to within Seventh-day Adventism as ‘the Great Controversy theme’³⁰ or ‘the Story of Redemption’.³¹ For practical reasons, we use here the expression ‘the Mission of God’.³² This allows us to see within the overarching *mission* (of God) both the *mission* (of Christ) and the *mission* (of the church) as part of a dynamic spiritual continuum.³³ Within these biblical themes the individual texts relating to ‘ordination’ can be understood in the context of the Bible as a whole and applied in a biblical theology of ordination.

1. *The Mission of God*

The Bible reveals God as sovereign Creator and Sustainer of the world. Each biblical text may be read as an expansion of this theme.

At the creation, man and woman are co-dwellers with God and perform the functions of priestly and royal ‘rulers’. They are to function as priestly *mediators* of God’s presence and to *rule* as divinely instituted servants (created ‘in the image of God’) who represent God’s good rule towards the created earth. The arrangement of the Garden of Eden resembled the later Israelite sanctuaries (3.1.1.2). We find textual features in Genesis 2 indicating that the Garden is the dwelling place of humans which is attached to Eden, where God is present.

Thus, the Garden of Eden becomes the blueprint for how the whole earth should be – a sanctuary where humans live in communion with God, as described also in Revelation 21:1-4. Commissioned by God as *mediators* of his presence, as ‘priests’, man and woman are also ‘rulers’ who represent the good rule of God before the created earth (Gen. 1:26-28). By their life, work, nourishment, Sabbath rest, marriage and procreation, they are to *mediate* God’s kingship and his presence with

³⁰ Cf. E. G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, 1911.

³¹ Cf. E. G. White, *The Story of Redemption*, 1947.

³² Following C. J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative*, 2006. The concept is now included in the discussions of Adventist ecclesiology: see, for example, J. Moskala, ‘Mission in the Old Testament’, 2013, p. 61, footnote 1; C. Wahlen, ‘Mission in the New Testament’, 2013, p. 82, footnote 3.

³³ As suggested by J. Barna, ‘Towards a Biblical-Systematic Theology of Ordination’, pp. 5-10, 10-12, and 12-16.

his created beings. Man and woman are God's servants or ministers. This is God's ideal.

This ideal is however *narrowed down* in the Bible by at least three turns of events: the Fall, the Election of Israel, and the Kingdom of the line of David.

The First Narrowing of the Mission of God Theme: The Fall (Gen. 3). The Bible introduces a change of the status and condition of humanity who are now unable to provide what was originally expected of them.

The serpent has brought disunity between God and humanity. He convinces them that they are not made for what God told them, because, he says, they are actually equal to God, and, hence, their purpose and mission is higher than what God has ordained for them. As a result, humanity pulls out of God's mission blueprint.

Within this 'secondary context', the mission of God assumes the task of 'undoing the human-divine disunity' by the Plan of Redemption. While human existence continues with pain and toil leading to death, and while God is faithful to his blessing on man and woman and provides them with some limited safeguards (Gen. 3:16-22; cf. 3.1.1.3), God's key mission purpose is to address the power of evil brought by the serpent.

At the very heart of his mission is the purpose stated in Genesis 3:15, where God presents an embryonic statement about 'the woman's seed', an individual representing humanity, at first thought to be the patriarch Israel and his people but later acknowledged and proclaimed as Messiah-Christ and his people.

This promised 'seed' would come from the woman, who is not cursed in the first part of God's sentence of her (Gen. 3:16a-b). The procreation, which has now become central to God's plan, is guarded by the marriage based on the wife's 'desire for her husband' (3:16c) and his 'being responsible for her' (3:16d; cf. 3.1.1.3). Thus, the woman's seed will defeat the serpent (representing the evil power opposed to God), his lies and what he brought to the world. The promised seed will bring back harmony, and God will once again be present in the world. Thus, God's mission is channelled through Adam's and Eve's broken humanity, and God underlines this by dressing them after the Fall in garments of skin, which was the special outward sign of priestly dignity (3.1.1.3).

The theme further develops from Genesis 3 through specific attention being given to 'seed-line' characters that are followed with dogmatic attention from

generation to generation in Genesis 5-11. Starting with Seth (second generation) and going through Enoch (seventh) and Noah (tenth) and eventually ending with Abraham (twentieth). When Abraham appears on the scene, the mission theme becomes more specific once again.

The Second Narrowing of the Mission-of-God Theme: Israel (Gen. 12 and Ex. 19). Abraham will become a nation and is commanded to ‘be a blessing’ to other nations. His mission will be to extend the ‘blessing’³⁴ – an echo of the creation ideal,³⁵ which is also reflected in the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11:10-32, in the table of nations in Genesis 10, and in the blessing of Noah and his sons in Genesis 9:1.

The seed-line, as promised, multiplied over time into the nation of Israel. Their function is no different from Abraham’s or Adam’s and Eve’s. Israel is a collective seed of Abraham and Adam/Eve, and is now operating on a ‘global’ scale as a nation among the nations of the world. They are to de-mask the lies about God, tell the true story of God, share God’s presence and extend his good rule to other nations (the earth is turned into a world of nations in Gen. 10-11). Much later in the history of Israel, through the prophet Isaiah, God would define Israel as being set as a light to the nations (Isa. 42:6; 49:6).

In this perspective, Exodus 19:1-6 becomes theologically significant within the theme of Israel. Here, the people of God are addressed with the same title as Adam and Eve – they are to be a royal priesthood, functioning as ‘priests’ and ‘royals’, just as man and woman were commissioned in the creation.

Therefore, it is no surprise that the theme, reading it from Genesis 1 to the end of Exodus, ends with instructions for building a tabernacle (sanctuary) where God could dwell and Israel could meet him. The seven-fold account of the construction of the sanctuary in Exodus is repeating the seven-fold creation account in 1:1-2:4a, as if it intends to say that God is making a new attempt to live with his people.

Exodus 25:8 forms the climax of this thematic context: ‘And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them’. The message is repeated in Exodus 29:45-46, in connection with the ‘ordination’ of the Aaronic priests in the sanctuary (3.2.4): ‘And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they

³⁴ Gen. 12:1-3; 15; 17.

³⁵ Gen. 1:28; 2:18, 23; 3:15-16.

shall know that I am the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the Lord their God.’ (NRSV)

Israel can now know God at close range and they are to share his presence and good rule. This was the mission goal of Genesis 1 and the blueprint of the Garden of Eden. Israel is now the centre from where God’s grace and good rule will spread to the whole world (envisaged, for example, in Isa. 2:2-4). Theologically, this context frames all that Israel will do, including the specific cultic commission of Levites and the priestly descendants of Aaron,³⁶ who will operate within this thematic and theological context of all Israel being called to serve God as ‘priests’ and ‘royals’.

It is in this thematic context that all God’s provisions for Israel – not just the cultic ones – need to be understood. Thus, the laws (moral, social and health), the formal organisation, the leadership structure, the sacrificial system, the priestly order and its functions, the religious festivals and the tabernacle functions are all meant to keep and teach Israel to be ‘priests’ and ‘royals’ in God’s mission. God’s mission is what matters and leadership office and ‘ordination’ for such office is subject to that. None of these institutions, including the priesthood, have any purpose in themselves, but they function in the light of their wider purpose defined by Exodus 19.

The levitical and Aaronic priesthood is often singled out as the necessary context for ‘priests’. However, the mission of spreading God’s presence and his good rule was not only dependent on them, but *all Israel* was involved in this task. God’s call to do his mission is to a *people*, and the role of their leaders, Levites, priests, and prophets is to serve the people and enable them to function in God’s mission as he wants them to do.

The act of ‘ordination’ to the priesthood, therefore, is not superior to being royal priests as God’s people, but because the mission of God in the world is the superior activity for which God gives all Israel responsibility, it is *an act that serves the people in their servanthood of God for the salvation of the nations and the eradication of evil*. This is also how Ellen White understood ministry and ordination (4.6.2; 4.6.2.4).

The Third Narrowing of the Mission of God Theme: Kingdom (2 Sam. 7).

Within Israel, there is yet one tribe and one family that God will specifically use, and

³⁶ Ex. 28:1-29:46, Num. 8:5-26, 27:12-23 and Deut. 34:9. The duties of the Levitical priesthood included: the teaching of the Law (Lev. 10:11); offering sacrifices (Lev. 9); maintaining the Tabernacle and the Temple (Num. 18:3); officiating in the Holy Place (Ex. 30:7-10); inspecting ceremonially unclean persons (Lev. 13 and 14); they arbitrated in disputes (Deut. 17:8-13) and functioned as tithe collectors (Num. 18:21, 26, Heb. 7:5).

it is not the Levites or the family of Aaron, but the tribe of Judah. From 1 Samuel, the story of this dynasty becomes the central focus of God's mission theme for the rest of the Old Testament.

Although not being the firstborn of the twelve sons of Jacob, the tribe of Judah has prophetically been singled out already in Genesis 49:9-10 as fulfilling a specific function. However, its function becomes activated much later. From the time of Samuel the concepts of 'kingdom', 'king', 'servant', 'son-father' are introduced to specify the theme of God's mission (2 Samuel 7:12-14).

King David and his royal descendants will now spearhead the mission of God. This was not God's original preference, but he conceded to the will of the people, suggesting again that, in pursuing his mission, God accepts human and cultural concepts as long as they work as means of advancing his mission. When they no longer work to accomplish his purpose, he changes them for a better outcome. God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7 alters the direction and language of God's mission theme and we need to listen carefully to catch the drift in the Bible.

The theological perspective of the biblical writers from the first book of Samuel – without exception – is directed towards the royal commissioning of David. Out of his descendants will come the decisive divine-human answer both to the particular (Gen. 3) and overall human task within the mission of God (Gen. 1). The seed of the woman will be a King, an Anointed One ('Messiah', 'Christ'), like David. He will address God as his Father and God will call him his Son, just like David was a son to God and God was his father, indicating a close unity between the king and God. In the logic of the biblical story, David's identity as king and how he rules his kingdom becomes the sign by which Israel will recognise the promised Messianic King.

Thus, it is striking that this king is not a power figure; his kingdom is championing social justice and knowledge of the Lord – but not power. The poor, the needy and the oppressed are not forgotten in his kingdom.³⁷ Whoever will be the ultimate Davidic king, must present these kingdom signs, otherwise he would not be a legitimate king. And all along, through his prophets, God reminds Israel and its kings of their divine role of being 'a light to the nations' (Isa. 42:6; 49:6).

The story of Davidic descendants will become distorted, and the Old Testament prophets will often cry out their condemnations, when the key signs of

³⁷ For example: Ps. 72:1-4, 12-14, Ps. 2:7-8, 12; 89:36-7.

justice and righteousness were not present in Israel and Judah (Zach. 7:9-10). Nonetheless, the specific Davidic commission will not be forgotten and the prophets will also cast a vision of a time when the promises to David will indeed be fulfilled. This fulfilment is a concomitant fulfilment of God's plan through David, Israel and Adam and Eve (Zach. 6:12-13 and Jer. 23:5-6).

2. The Mission of Christ

Of special significance is the umbrella under which the mission of God operates in the New Testament. From the beginning, the theme of the kingdom and its king is emphasised in the Gospels. Jesus is acting as a king who is bringing the promised kingdom to Israel. Thus, there is a specific kingdom Christology in the Gospels, which forms the basis for the New Testament theology of the church, of ministry and its ecclesiastical functions (there are other themes as well, for the New Testament writings were directed also to people outside of Israel, where other themes were more relevant).

The role of the servant of God that Jesus took upon himself in bringing the news of the kingdom of God to Israel, is the role that the new community, the church, will *now* take towards the world. The New Testament functions as a commentary on Jesus' inauguration of the kingdom of God, based on his life, teaching, death and resurrection. The church will *minister* to the world as God's servant, bringing to the world the news of the kingdom of God.

In the New Testament, however, the kingdom mission of Jesus merges with his high-priestly mission – it was common in the ancient Orient and in the Bible to assign priestly functions to the king: sanctified by his anointing and adopted by God, he was a sacred person and was therefore empowered to perform religious functions. As the servanthood of man and woman in creation embraced both priestly and ruling functions, in the same way Jesus is king and priest as God's servant and son. Jesus assumes the role of a 'second Adam' as he restores humanity to what God intended (Rom. 5; 1 Cor. 15). This theme is particularly developed in Hebrews – note especially 1:8; 2:17; 3:1-6; 4:14-10:18.

The levitical and Aaronic priesthood is not the same as Christ's. The 'ordination' of the Old Testament priests was to make themselves ritually pure for the sacrifices and rituals in the temple service, in order to keep Israel internally near

God, while all Israel, as part of the mission of God, was engaged in proclaiming the glory of God to the nations. The inauguration of Christ as High-Priest was his appointment by God through a series of actions culminating in the resurrection, his acceptance of all authority in heaven and on earth, and his being seated at the right hand of God, or entering the most holy in the heavenly sanctuary.³⁸

The breach of the peace in God's kingdom that was caused by human beings has been remedied through Christ's saving mission because of his obedience to God's call. Christ has re-established the kingdom of God on earth, building it afresh, in a better way, namely, upon his victory over evil and death as demonstrated by his life, death and resurrection, and he has been set apart by God as the royal Son of God and High-Priest of his people.

While Christ is keeping his faithful people in close communion with God through his heavenly ministry of intercession, he *appoints and authorises all his followers to minister as priests in God's Kingdom*. Until God completes his mission by the creation of a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21:1-4), the church is God's agent under the *headship of Christ* to complete his mission of salvation to 'every nation, tribe, language and people' (Rev. 14:6).

Thus, in the church and its ministry, Christ is the *head* and all ministers, regardless of gender, are *submitted* to him. A survey of five Bible passages that refer to Christ as head over the church (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:15-16; 5:23; Col. 1:18-19; 2:19) indicates that head, biblically defined, does not mean what it means in the English language. 'Head' is never given the meaning of authority, boss or leader. It describes the servant function of provider of life, growth and development. This function is not one of top-down oversight but of bottom-up support and nurture.

The centrality and primacy of Christian submission is rooted in Jesus Christ. As he emptied himself of his divinity and became like one of us, he was *submissive* until his death on the cross, and it is because of his attitude of submission to God, as a *servant* or *minister* of God, that he was given all authority to the glory of God (Phil. 3:5-11). At his second coming, Christ will *subject* himself to him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to every one (1 Cor. 15:24-28).

The attitude of *submission* is a key element in the mission of God, which runs through the whole Bible. It means that all believers, including those who hold an

³⁸ Eph. 1:22; Heb. 1:2; 3:2; 5:1-10; 6:19-20; 7:28-8:7.

office of some kind of leadership in the church, are simultaneously ‘servants’ or ‘ministers’ of God (in his mission) and Christ (in his mission) and the Church (in its mission). The New Testament teaches that this *ministry* or *servanthood* is the fundamental element of any minister in the Church – note the use of ‘servant’ and ‘slave’ (3.5.3) and the emphatic instruction of Ellen White (4.6.2.4). It does not teach a female submission to men within the sphere of ministry. Any such ‘submission’ in Paul’s letters to the local churches of Corinth or Ephesus relates only to specific issues of order and what was considered appropriate and decent in his time, in the home and the marriage relationship (3.1.3). Submission to all others, i.e. Christ’s attitude of servanthood, is what the New Testament expects of all believers, in particular those who have received the trust and confidence to act as leaders or ‘heads’.³⁹

Ultimately, there is only one relevant version of submission in the church: the *submission* of all servants and ministers to God, which is appropriate in the kingdom of God. Introducing a special theological submission of women to men in the church distorts the full submission to God and is therefore false.

3. The Mission of the Church

The early church understood that Jesus of Nazareth became the resurrected ‘Lord’ and Christ. The result was that, with its new foundations in the risen Christ, the kingdom of God began to take hold in this world, and the church was ‘sent’ to invite the world to accept the kingship of God through the lordship of Jesus (Matt. 28:18-20). The mission of God and the mission of Christ now include the mission of the church.

‘Mission was not made for the church, the church was made for mission – mission of God.’⁴⁰ The church with its functions, ministries and gifts are the means of advancing God’s mission which was already in operation. Consequently, *any minister or ministry in the church is functioning because God wants them, needs them, and calls them.* (This understanding is emphatically maintained by Ellen White.) When the church objects to this or raises obstacles against it, it is acting against God and loses his blessing in its work.

³⁹ See L. Richards, ‘How Does a Woman Prophecy and Keep Silence at the Same Time? (1 Corinthians 11 and 14), pp. 324-326. Cf. Ellen White’s Letter to the Brethren in 1901 (4.6.2.4).

⁴⁰ C. J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative*, 2006, p. 52.

There is an explicit biblical-theological link between the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost by which the *mission* of the church began in Acts 2 and by which Jesus was inaugurated as King in Revelation 5. It is significant that the text of Revelation 5, which speaks about Jesus' inauguration as King with all power, is also the text which mentions the 'sending out' of the Holy Spirit (Rev. 5:6). Thus, the visible reality of Jesus' inauguration and the sending of the Spirit was the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost and the beginning of the Christian mission. The text in Acts 2, which describes the church's experience, also mentions explicitly the inauguration of Jesus as the vindication of what is going on: 'Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear' (Acts 2:33; *NRSV*). This crucial link is confirmed several times in the following speeches by Peter (Acts 5:31-2) and Stephen (Acts 7:55-6).

The theology of the mission and ministry of the church is consequently deeply rooted in Christ. Peter says that 'Jesus as King' is the cornerstone that makes the church into what it is. In the biblical-theological context of Acts 2 and Revelation 5, however, even the Spirit is subordinate to Christ. The Spirit does not operate on his own will or authority. He does not constitute the mission of the church. The Spirit is in the *service* of the new Lord and King. He mediates the presence and the power of Christ to the church and its mission.

An ecclesiology built on Christology and including the theology of ministry, will have at its heart the picture of Jesus as King, and this vision of Christ will mould the church into a community of kingdom-bringers. Jesus is King of God's kingdom based on justice, true love, acceptance, forgiveness and healing both spiritual and physical, and all this springs from *the true knowledge of God*. The church being founded on such Christology will be promote in its message, life, and structures the same foundational kingdom values and message. In this way, it will *extend* God's good rule and his presence in the fallen world, which is founded on power, injustice, and false knowledge of God (cf. the symbol of 'Babylon' in Rev. 13-14, 18). The kingdom-oriented church ministry will model a different way of being a community and indeed humanity (Eph. 2:15). It will actively advocate justice and equality – socially, economically, and with regard to race or gender; it will challenge political and other power players by pointing out that the current leaders, prime ministers, presidents or

monarchs are not in charge of the affairs of the world but that Jesus is the ultimate 'president' or 'prime minister' – that 'Jesus Christ is Lord'.

The passages in Acts 6:1-6 and 13:1-3 therefore mean much more than setting aside servants of God for an *ad hoc* task. They mark decisive strategic steps in God's mission through the church. In Acts 6, the appointment of the seven means that the centre of governance of the church moves beyond the twelve apostles and the family of Jesus located in Jerusalem, which was seen as the throne and dwelling of God, and members of the diaspora with connections in the wider Graeco-Roman world are invited in to lead (3.3.7.1; 3.5.3.1). The kingdom of God is now moving out, more efficiently than before, to the world through the church and its representatives in which God's kingdom is present. The 'ordination' of the seven, therefore, is an important step in the mission of God and his salvation history, not just an appointment for an office. It confirms that God's kingdom in Christ, through the Holy Spirit, is dwelling in the seven and that the borders of this kingdom are being extended to the world.

In the same way, Acts 13:1-3 describes a crucial moment in God's mission, when Barnabas and Saul are authorised by the Holy Spirit and 'extended' from Antioch into Asia Minor to bring the kingdom of God to the Gentiles by the preaching of the Word and establish elders in each church (Acts 14:23). In these vital texts for biblical 'ordination', it is God's mission and the ministry to which a person is called that is central, not the ceremony in itself.

These 'ordinations' signify vital transitions, as God's mission through Israel moves to the church whose high priest is Christ, and is being extended to the world of the Gentiles. To confirm this, the apostle Paul, who plays a central role as Christ's agent of mission in the New Testament church, is called and 'ordained' directly by Christ.⁴¹ *Thus, 'ordination' in the New Testament is not just a matter of authorising a church member to a special ministry in the church organisation, but it is above all God's way of confirming a vital change in his mission to save the world and dwell with his people everywhere.*

As a bringer of the kingdom of Christ, the church will be a community with a mission of true forgiveness, helping and serving love, championing the case of the marginalised, repeating the acts of Jesus. It will bring healing and care to people,

⁴¹ Acts 9; 26:12-18; Gal. 1-2.

just as David did in his kingdom. Such a New Testament community will clearly announce the truth about God and his mission in the Word. 'Your kingdom come; your will be done on earth as it is in heaven' – the prayer of Jesus then becomes a mission prayer for the kingdom of God to be revealed through the church here on earth.

Within the theme of the mission of God and its sub-theme the mission of Christ, we understand both the mission of the church and what the church is. The many images of the church in the New Testament all find their meaning within the mission of God: 'the salt of the earth, a letter from Christ, branches of the vine, the bride of Christ, ambassadors, a chosen race, a holy temple, the body of Christ, a new creation, citizens of heaven, the household of God, and a spiritual body'.⁴²

Within the mission of God, both Christology and Eschatology are fundamental for the mission of the church. Christ as Lord and King is the foundation and head of the church,⁴³ and his death and resurrection have opened up an eschatological perspective for the mission of the church, both among the nations on earth and in time (Matt. 28:18-20).

The Lord and King Jesus Christ has established the kingdom of God and the church is part of it with a mission of being kingdom-builders in the world. God's kingdom in Christ has inaugurated the end of time in an 'already but not yet dimension of time', so the mission of the church to the world takes place with an eschatological awareness which is heightened as signs of the times remind the faithful of the approach of the consummation of the kingdom of God. 'Ordination' in this context is an appointment for service that builds up the church and reaches out to the world with the kingdom of God. It is 'gospel ministry' both within and through the church to the world.

From the perspective of the believer, the church is the body of people who have been reconciled to God and their fellow men – according to the purpose of the mission of God – by accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.⁴⁴ Joining the body of Christ by baptism, the members of his body have partaken of Christ's death. They died with him (Rom. 6:2-11), and they now belong to Christ who incorporates them into his work of mission to the world. They are called to live 'no longer for themselves

⁴² R. L. Staples, 'A Theological Understanding of Ordination', 1998, p. 136.

⁴³ Acts 4:10-12; 1 Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:20; Col. 1:18.

⁴⁴ R. Dederen, 'A Theology of Ordination', 1978, p. 146.

but for him who died and was raised for them' (2 Cor. 5:15, NRSV; cf. Rom. 6:13).⁴⁵ This life in Christ is a service or ministry to Christ (Eph. 6:7; Rom. 15:15-16), which aims at the fulfilment of the mission of Christ which seeks to bring all peoples of the world back to communion with God and thus fulfil God's mission (Rev. 15:1-4; 21:1-5, 24-27; 22:1-5). Thus, ultimately, 'no longer will there be any curse' (Rev. 22:3) and God's kingdom will be restored where 'his servants will serve him' (22:3-5), and the redeemed humanity will 'reign for ever and ever' with God (22:5), fulfilling the intention of the Creator in Genesis 1-2.

In view of the considerations presented here, we may summarise the identity and role of the church as follows:

The church is constituted by those who were reconciled to God and to each other through the saving work of Christ. They were united to Him through baptism (Matt. 28:19), thus becoming citizens of God's kingdom and a royal priesthood whose mission is 'to declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light' (1 Peter 2:9). Consequently, all believers are ministers of reconciliation (Luke 1:2; 2 Cor. 3:6; 5:18, 20), enabled, through the power of the Spirit and the gifts he bestows on them, to carry on the Gospel Commission to bring humanity back to communion with God, their Creator.

4. The Ministry: The Priesthood of All Believers

God's elected people Israel, as a whole, was declared to be for him 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' (Ex. 19:6). This defined the role of Israel in the world. In a sanctuary, priests function as *mediators* and typically represent (a) God to the worshipping community, and (b) the worshipping community to God. In the same way, Israel as 'a kingdom of priests' represents (a) God to the peoples of the world, and (b) the peoples of the world before God. Israel is the collective 'servant of the Lord' (Isa. 41:8-20; 42:1-9; 43:1-55:13) and 'a light to the nations' (Isa. 42:6; 49:6). Thus, the prophetic vision was clear that one day the nations would come and worship the God of Jacob on Mount Zion (e.g. Isa. 2:2-4/Mic. 4:1-3), and this vision is included also in John's vision of the new heaven and earth in Revelation 21:22-22:5.

⁴⁵ Cf. *ibid.*

In the Old Testament order of things, however, not only was a *sacramental* view of ‘priests’ the common standard (linked with the holiness and ritual purity of God and all that belonged to him), but also a *patriarchal* view of ‘people’ (any part of the people was represented by males, particularly the first-born). By God’s will, this order is abandoned in the new and ‘more excellent ministry’ of Christ (Heb. 8:6; cf. 8:1-10:39).

Firstly, Christ has ‘by a single offering perfected for all time those who are sanctified’ (10:14); consequently, he has now abolished the *sacramental* view of priests which prompted the ritual ordination/cleansing of the priests in the Old Testament sanctuary.

Secondly, Christ is ‘the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted through better promises’ (8:6; cf. 8:1-10:39). This new covenant with the house of Israel – which was prophesied by Jeremiah (31:31-34) and explicitly replaces the old (8:8-9, 13) – places the kingdom of God in the minds and hearts of all people: ‘I will put my laws in their *minds*, and write them on their *hearts*, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people’ (8:10), and God adds: ‘And they shall not teach one another or say to each other, “Know the Lord”, for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.’ (8:11).

Consequently, Christ has abolished the *patriarchal* view of ‘people’, for in the new covenant God’s laws are put in all the minds of the people and are written on all the hearts of the people, and that is what determines the covenant relationship by which ‘I will be their God, and they shall be my people’. The emphasis on ‘all’ is carried out emphatically: ‘all shall know me, from the least of them to the greatest’. This means that men and women are on *equal* terms in the people of God and that the ministry of his people is *inclusive*.

As time passed and Israel failed as God’s agent of mission to the world, God took initiatives for a new phase in his plan of salvation. According to Isaiah 61:6, linked to the promised Messiah (Isa. 61:1-2; Luke 4:14-30), all God’s people would again be called ‘priests of the Lord’ and ‘ministers of our God’, and their ministry continues to be for the fallen world of the nations. In ‘his faithfulness’, God will make an everlasting covenant with his people (Isa. 61:8), so that ‘their descendants will be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples’, and ‘all who see them will acknowledge that *they are a people whom the Lord has blessed*’ (Isa. 61:9). In this setting, once accomplished, the people of God will say:

Isaiah 61:10-11 I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed (*hilbish*) me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. **11** For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations. (NRSV)

This prophecy is fulfilled in the Christian Church, where all members are a 'chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light' (1 Peter 2:9-10; NRSV). Men and women without distinction are 'priests' of God in this sense and their primary function is mission to the world.

As the Church moves towards God's accomplishment of his mission, defined and summarised in Revelation 21:1-4, he continues to see men and women as his servants and priests.

John wrote the book of Revelation for seven churches in the province of Asia, and his readers included men and women. He says in Revelation 1:6 that '[Christ] has made us to be a kingdom and priests to *serve* his God and Father'. Thus, Christ has made men and women in the church *ministers* or *servants* of God. Following this declaration, John describes the *Second Advent of the Lord* (1:7).

Again, in his vision, he sees the throne of God in heaven and the Lamb who alone is 'worthy' of taking the scroll and open its seven seals. The worthiness of the Lamb is defined in a song by the four creatures and the twenty-four elders: 'For you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God from every tribe and language and people and nation' (5:9).⁴⁶ All men and women in the church are again declared to have been made by Christ 'a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth' (5:9-10). Priesthood and the position as rulers have been given by Christ to men and women in the church, and heaven endorses it. Jesus urges the church to be faithful and promises to 'give [to the one who conquers] a place with me on my throne, just as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne' (Rev. 3:21; NRSV). Christ has saved men and women and called them to minister and proclaim the kingdom of God (Rev. 14:6-13) until he comes when

⁴⁶ The object of the Greek word for 'ransomed', which is often inserted by the translations ('men' in NIV; 'saints' in NRSV; 'us' in NKJV), is not found in the text: see R. Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 2009, pp. 199-200, 204, 212.

they will rule the world with him as priestly rulers (Rev. 20:4-6). This is finally confirmed in the end-time events:

Revelation 20:6 Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. Over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.' (NRSV)

The priesthood of man and woman in creation, of men and women in Israel, of men and women in the church, will be an eternal institution, as intended by God at the creation. As the New Jerusalem, the sanctuary-city of God descends upon the new earth, 'God will dwell with his people and be their God' (21:3; cf. 21:9-22:5), and they will serve him as priests and rulers. They will have access to the water of life and the tree of life and the expulsion from Eden will be reversed. 'The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; [like God's servant Moses] they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads' (22:3-4, NRSV).

There is a special message here for the Seventh-day Adventist Church: Go back to Creation by bringing men and women into the ministry *on equal terms*, and free the hands of all to take part in the gospel ministry to the world! God's mission is soon to be fulfilled, when he 'dwells with human beings and lives with them, and they will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God' (Rev. 21:3-4).

Before the second coming of the Lord, the kingdom of God is present within the Christian community of faith, and kingdom and temple terminology characterises the role of those involved. Christ is the King under God or the head of the body. The members 'serve' or 'minister' to Christ, each other, and the world, by faithfully performing the mission Christ has commanded them to accomplish. Thus, all believers in the church are 'priestly servants' and 'ministers' who mediate God to the world, and this ministry is the *primary* ministry in the church under Christ. It embraces all:

Galatians 3:26-28: ... for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. **27** As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. **28** There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (NRSV)

This passage confirms the accomplishment of God's mission to bring man and woman back to their calling at the creation. Each of the terms 'Jew or Greek', 'slave or free', 'male and female' refers to the *reversal* of the consequences of the Fall:

(a) 'Jew or Greek' restores the falling apart of the peoples and nations according to Genesis 10-11 (caused by sinful humans), and confirms the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham in 12:1-3.

(b) 'Slave or free' restores the introduction of slavery in Genesis 9:18-27 (caused by sinful humans), and confirms the fulfilment of God's delivery of Israel from slavery in Egypt according to the book of Exodus.

(c) 'Male and female' (note the use of the Greek *kai*, 'and' only here) restores the introduction of a patriarchal form of life in Genesis 4-11 (caused by sinful humans), and confirms the fulfilment of God's original intentions for man and woman, as priests and rulers in Genesis 1-2.

The curse in Genesis 3 is reversed: (a) the enmity between 'the serpent's seed' and 'the woman's seed' (Gen. 3:15) is reversed by 'Jew and Greek' now being one in Christ; (b) the curse of the ground (Gen. 3:17-19) which requires painful toil and hard work to obtain the means of sustenance, and which has caused the division among men into slave and free, is overcome in Christ; and (c) the originally unintended dependence of woman upon man and man upon the ground (3:16-19) has been abolished and both of them together are now dependent on Christ (God).

And all this is a fulfilment of God's promise in Jesus Christ that 'the woman's seed' in Genesis 3:15 would bring salvation from the sin and evil that the serpent brought into the world.

Implied in Christ being King is the concept of him being the High-Priest of his people. This refers to several aspects of the work of Christ:

- (a) The atoning sacrifice brought by Christ who gave himself on the cross;
- (b) The mediating ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary by which the benefits of his sacrifice are being kept active and recognised in God's kingdom;
- (c) The calling of the people of Christ to be 'built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ' (1 Peter 2:5; *NRSV*).

This *priestly* aspect of the church, of Christ and his servants, is joined with the *royal* aspect of the kingdom of God. The passage in 1 Peter 2 continues: 'But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.' (1 Peter 2:9-10;

NRSV). The kingdom terminology of 'royal priesthood' and 'holy nation' is part of the mission of God and is now connected with *proclamation* in the world and not with sacrificial atonement for sins; thus, we find here the calling to 'proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light' rather than 'to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ'. But both the royal and priestly aspects are held together, being based on God's call to Israel according to Exodus 19:5-6, where his people were keeping God's covenant, including offering sacrifices to God, while being his own possession among all peoples, and while 'all the earth is his'. As God once set Israel as a light to the nations (Isa. 42:1-7; 49:6; 51:4; 60:3), he is now setting the Christ and his church as a light to the nations (Luke 4:16-21; John 1:1-9; Acts 13:47; 26:22-23; Eph. 5:8; 1 Pet. 2:9).

The church is described as a 'royal priesthood' in 1 Peter 2:9-10. However, 'while the priesthood of the entire community of faith is thus affirmed, no church officer of any kind is designated as a priest in the New Testament'.⁴⁷ This is because the church has only one Priest-King, namely, Christ. Thus, as pointed out by Staples, 'the writer of Hebrews, in referring to the "better sacrifice" of Christ, which was offered "once and for all" (Heb. 10:10-14), makes it clear that the priesthood of the Old Testament has been fulfilled and brought to an end. Christ, the new priest (Heb. 7:15, 17), has taken up his office and is now the "one mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5).'⁴⁸

The significance of this is that 'while there remains a continuity in God's purposes for Israel and the church, *priests of the Old Testament and ministers of the Christian church perform widely different roles*. Neither the church nor any priest/minister stands in the position of a mediator between God and human beings. Christ is the unique priest and mediator, and all who believe have "access to God with freedom" through him (Eph. 3:12). This is the basis for the Protestant doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. All Christians are priests in the sense that they have direct access to God.'⁴⁹ And it is this access to God that enables them to serve him and each other, and to proclaim the gospel to the world. Here, the Bible makes no distinction between man and woman.

⁴⁷ R. L. Staples, 'A Theological Understanding of Ordination', 1998, p. 138.

⁴⁸ Ibid. (emphasis supplied). Cf. R. Dederen, 'The Priesthood of All Believers', 1998, pp. 10-16.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

While being directly relevant for the subject of ordination, the spiritual *gifts*, *ministries* and *operations* (see 1 Cor. 12:4-13; cf. Rom. 12:4-8; Eph. 4:11-13) also receive their theological significance from the broader biblical perspective. Within the broader context of the Old Testament, spiritual gifts appear to have the same significant functions as the various institutions which God had put in place to build up and edify Israel for its mission. Equally, in the New Testament, while there is no formal Old Testament organisation, no leadership structure or sacrificial system, no priestly order or functions, no religious festivals or tabernacle functions, which were all used to provide edification and nurture of Israel, there is now the provision of *gifts*, *ministries* and *operations* to provide edification for God's new people in Christ. The 'gifts' become *the means* which support the mission and the ministry of the church. Traditionally, however, the gifts that have been treated as having relevance are those exclusively held by those appointed for ordination and the rest of the body of Christ was left unrecognised.

However, just as in the Old Testament the priesthood had not replaced Israel's 'royal priesthood' mission, so in the New Testament the spiritual *gifts*, *ministries* and *operations* do not replace the mission of the 'priesthood of all believers'.⁵⁰

What is this then saying to the church? It suggests that not only specific ministries and gifts may need official recognition, but the church as a body needs to confirm and affirm each member's particular function within the 'royal priesthood', so that it is clear to all that the individual acts on behalf of the body of Christ. The *form* of this recognition is not stipulated in the New Testament, but some formal practice of 'ordination' would belong here.

When it comes to *laying on of hands* as the immediate theological context for ordination, it has been pointed out that only about five New Testament texts out of twenty-five, where the phrase appears, technically refer to some kind of 'ordination' in the sense of initiation to a task or office.⁵¹ In most of these passages, the context for the act of ordination by imposition of hands is that the ordinand is known for

⁵⁰ J. Barna, 'Towards a Biblical-Systematic Theology of Ordination', 2013, p. 18.

⁵¹ Acts 6:6, 13:3, 1 Tim. 4:14, 5:22 [?] and 2 Tim. 1:6. Cf. 3.3.7; 3.5.3.

'fullness of the spirit'.⁵² The New Testament thus contains a formal recognition of individuals who were seen by the community as 'full of the spirit'.⁵³

In the Old Testament, laying on of hands was widely practiced in different contexts and with different significance; it was certainly not limited to inductions to office but was a general symbolic sign of conferring or transmitting something (3.2; 3.3). Given this background, what is transmitted in ordination is the church's *recognition* and *confirmation* of the gift of the Spirit and the *commissioning* or *appointment* to a church function. However, this is where the church failed in the past, for it neglected the priesthood of all Christ's servants who are members of the body, and ordination by the imposition of hands became an exclusive limiting of the recognition or commissioning to a few uniquely gifted individuals, while the rest were spectators. This may be remedied by applying the biblical thematic context of God's mission to the actual imposition of hands, which we base on the examples we have in some New Testament passages. All are priests and ministers in the church of Christ. All are ordained by the Holy Spirit and are recognised and commissioned by Christ. The church needs to find a way to acknowledge this, maybe at baptism, at holy communion and foot-washing, or in some other permanent event in its life. If prayer for God's blessing and the imposition of hands is used for one kind of function as servant/minister, it can be used for all. If it is used for all believer/servants in their general priesthood/servanthood, it can also be used for particular functions without this without bringing a separation of an elite class from the body. The Spirit is the same behind the calling to various services in the church, and the ceremonies of recognition and appointment in the church should reflect that.

In the Old Testament, Joshua (Num. 27:12-23) and the Levites (Num. 8: 5-26) are mentioned as being involved in 'ordination' ceremonies with imposition of hands, but they were not the only ones who received the commission for God's mission. Similarly, we must see the specific New Testament commissioning ceremonies in light of the larger theme of the mission of the church. The New Testament mission is given to all who make up the church, all who are given the 'royal priesthood' title and the resulting (co)mission.⁵⁴ All are responsible for God's mission, and the church must beware not to lose that pervasive sense of responsibility and calling by limiting

⁵² Acts 6:3, 5; 13:2; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6; cf. Num. 27:16, 18, 20; Deut. 34:9.

⁵³ J. Barna, 'Towards a Biblical-Systematic Theology of Ordination', 2013, p. 17.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

the work of mission to a few ministers just because they are ordained (this was Ellen White's ardent message – 4.6.2.4). Ordination has historically threatened and sometimes even destroyed the Christians' ownership of God's mission (4.1–4.4). The gap between clergy and laity has not only separated ministers from members in terms of status, but it has also made the members passive onlookers, while the ministers, not being able to do all the work of mission themselves, have retreated to the pulpits with sermonising or to the chairmanship of the church committee with administration. A new biblical theology of ordination can and will revitalise the church!

5. The Church Offices: Particular Ministries and Ordination

In order to perform the mission of God (i.e. the mission of Christ), the church has a body of believers, men and women, who are priests and servants/ministers. Since they are many, since mission is challenging and requires training and organisation, the church has a *practical* need to *delegate* to its members specific aspects of its functions.

The New Testament is filled with examples of the dual calling to particular ministries within the church – God's personal call and its subsequent confirmation by the church. 'The call to the ministry is only partly a call from the church. It is also, and first of all, an inward call, an inner assurance on the part of the individual that it is God's will that he/she should make him/herself useful in the role to which the church has summoned him/her.'⁵⁵ Such ministry is bestowed and sanctioned by the process which is sometimes included in the term 'ordination'. It involves divine call, church selection and examination, training, approval by the church body, public ceremony that confirms the appointment and the issuing of written credentials.

Behind the notion of a 'special call' to ministry lie three considerations:

- (a) The basic calling of God to all men effected by Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:1-14);
- (b) The special divine calling of some of the body of Christ to perform a particular ministry (Gal. 1:15-16; Eph. 4:11-16);
- (c) The recognition by the people of God that some have received a special calling, and the commissioning of these to their task (Acts 6:2-6; 13:1-3).

⁵⁵ R. Dederen, 'A Theology of Ordination', 1978, pp. 147-148.

However, ‘there is no formal description of an ordination service given in the New Testament’.⁵⁶ The ordination service, therefore, is based on *our own construction* from principles found in the Bible as a whole. Thus, while many ask for a biblical text that states that women may be ordained for the gospel ministry, the fact is that there is no biblical text that explicitly states that men should be ordained for the gospel ministry. The ordination ceremony fills a practical need of recognition and appointment to a function, but its form is based on a secondary, interpretative reconstruction from the biblical material.

We have seen in great detail in chapter 3 that ordination has its historical background in the Old Testament, maybe mediated by contemporary Jewish practices, maybe directly borrowed and adapted to the needs of the Christian church. Raoul Dederen says:

... in the Old Testament ... the concept of God’s selectivity already clearly emerges. God calls particular people for particular tasks and sets them apart to serve Him. Israel’s history, the selection of prophets, priests, and kings – usually accompanied by an anointing ceremony – the very decision regarding the Incarnation itself, witness to selectivity and election. God commonly called and employed individuals and groups of people to serve Him in a unique fashion. The appointing of the twelve apostles continued this tradition (Mark 3:14). In Jesus’ own words, they “did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you” (John 15:16, RSV). Paul used this word of himself as having been “appointed a preacher” (1 Tim 2:7, RSV). Paul’s call to the ministry was a calling and an appointment by the Lord Jesus Christ, an appointment and a “[setting] apart for the gospel of God” (Rom 1:1, RSV) ...⁵⁷

In view of this, it is possible to speak of ordination as ‘the church’s setting apart a person whom it believes God has called’.⁵⁸ The church cannot call the minister into being, but the church is the authoritative body that can *confirm* the fact that an individual has been called, and give official *recognition* to the gifts God has bestowed upon him/her. This ‘setting apart’ is not to a superior status, above the rest of the church, but rather to service *within* the church, to God (i.e. Christ), the members, and the world. Dederen remarks appropriately:

Ordination is not intended to create categories of Christians or levels of discipleship. The call to membership in Christ’s body is not based in any way on merit; it is simply an undeserved gift of God’s grace. So it is also with the task to serve or to minister. The ministry conferred upon ministers is *diakonia* (service), not privilege or right as such. Arising and functioning within the

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 148.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

corporate priesthood of all believers, it reveals the same cruciform pattern as Christ's own ministry in which it is rooted.⁵⁹

An important question that this raises, however, is: To which functions in the church is ordination needed? There is no explicit guidance in the New Testament that settles this matter. The New Testament reveals a multitude of functions of church leadership (e.g. 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4). In the local church setting, there seems to have been two offices, following the Jewish synagogue practice, namely overseer/elder and deacon. None of these were ordained by the imposition of hands, however, judging from the clear teaching of the biblical text. Not even the apostles, servants/ministers, prophets, evangelists, etc., whether itinerant or locally settled, were ordained, except by God or Christ or the Holy Spirit. The examples of ordination with the imposition of hands in Acts 6:1-6 and 13:1-3 were *ad hoc* events; they were not repeated as far as we can see; they did not induct the appointee to a known office in the church but to functional, temporary tasks. The church therefore needs to decide here if it wants to follow the expressed teaching of the Bible or follow James White's principle of accepting any practice for the promotion of the *mission of the church that does not contradict the Bible and sound sense*.

6. Summary Statement

The Bible reveals God as Creator and Sustainer of the world. The breach of the peace in God's Kingdom that was caused by human beings as they walked away from Him has been remedied through His saving mission, which is to restore everything into harmony with His will.

Christ has established the kingdom of God on earth, building it afresh, in a better way, namely, upon his victory over evil and death as demonstrated by His life, death and resurrection, and he has been set apart by God as the royal Son of God and High-Priest of his people. While Christ is keeping His faithful people in close communion with God through his heavenly ministry of intercession, he appoints and authorises all to minister as priests in God's Kingdom. As the church (*ekklesia*) that he has called out from the world, its mission is the mission of Christ within the mission of God. Until God completes his mission by the creation of a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21:1-5), the church is God's agent under the headship of

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 148-149.

Christ to complete his mission of salvation to ‘every nation, tribe, language and people’ (Rev. 14:6).

In a world alienated from God, the Church consists of those whom God has reconciled to Himself and to each other. Through the saving work of Christ they are united to Him by faith through baptism (Eph. 4:4-6), thus becoming a royal priesthood whose mission is to ‘proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light’ (1 Peter 2:9, *NKJV*). Believers are given the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-20), called and enabled through the power of the Spirit and the gifts He bestows on them to carry out the Gospel Commission (Matt. 28:18-20).

While all believers are called to use their spiritual gifts for ministry, the Scriptures identify certain specific responsibilities or leadership positions that were accompanied by the Church’s public endorsement for persons who meet particularly the biblical qualification of ‘being filled with the Spirit’ (Acts 6:1-6; 13:1-3; 14:23; 2 Tim. 1:6). Such endorsements were done in various ways; some of them involved ‘the laying on of hands’ (Acts 6:1-6; 13:1-3; 2 Tim. 1:6). Over time, English versions of the Scriptures have used the word *ordain* to translate many different Greek and Hebrew words, but in modern times these terms have been translated from the basic idea of *select* or *appoint* that describes the selection and placement of these persons in their respective functions and responsibilities. Over the course of Christian history the term *ordination* has acquired meanings beyond what these words originally implied. Against such a backdrop, Seventh-day Adventists understand ordination, in a biblical sense, as the action of the Church in publicly recognizing those whom the Lord has called and equipped for local and global Church ministry.

Aside from the unique role of the twelve apostles, the New Testament identifies the following categories of ordained leaders: the elder/overseer (Acts 14:23; Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Tim. 3:2-7; 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:1-5; 1 Peter 5:1) and the deacon (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8-10). While most elders/overseers and deacons ministered in local settings, some leaders, initially called ‘servants’, ‘prophets and teachers’, or ‘apostles’, were itinerant and supervised greater territory with multiple congregations, which may reflect the ministry of individuals such as Timothy and Titus (1 Tim 1:3-4; Titus 1:5). The New Testament also mentions a body of elders, a ‘presbyterate’ as being in charge of the affairs of the local church (1 Tim. 4:14) and this concept is similar to the body of ‘apostles and elders’ that led out in the council at Jerusalem

where central issues relating to all the churches were addressed (15:2, 4, 6, 12, 22, 23). The act of laying on of hands was practised by the presbyterate (1 Tim. 4:14; 5:22; Heb. 6:2; Jam. 5:14), but it is not clear if this act was an ordination to appoint new elders or for blessing, healing, forgiveness, or the laying on of hands at baptism

Based on hints in the New Testament (Acts 6:1-3; 13:1-3; 1 Tim 5:17; Titus 2:15), a practice of ordination has been developed in the Church, by which the Church publicly delegates a representative authority to divinely called individuals for the specific work of ministry to which they are appointed. The New Testament is not consistent in defining the duties of these appointees, but teaching and preaching was involved (Acts 6:3; 1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17; Titus 1:9), as well as anointing, imposition of hands and prayer for the sick (Heb. 6:2); further, leadership (1 Tim. 3:4-5), proclaiming the gospel (2 Tim. 2:11), evangelism (2 Tim. 4:5), planting and organizing churches (Titus 1:5), and looking after the flock and opposing false teaching (Acts 20:28-29). While ordination contributes to Church order, it neither conveys special qualities to the persons ordained nor introduces a kingly hierarchy within the faith community. While there are no New Testament examples of an ordination service, the variety of examples in the Bible of appointments for office include features such as the giving of a charge, the laying on of hands, fasting and prayer, and committing those set apart to the grace of God (Deut. 3:28; Acts 6:6; 14:26; 15:40; 2 Tim. 1:5-12).

Being a servant of God according to the Bible implies dedicating oneself to the Lord and to His Church for a lifetime of service. This comes across in the foundational model of appointment for ministry, namely, Jesus appointment of the twelve apostles (Matt. 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16). The ultimate model of Christian ministry is the life and work of our Lord, who came not to be served but to serve (Mark 10:45; Luke 22:25-27; John 13:1-17). This model is the same for all believers, since all are servants/ministers of Christ. However, this is even more important for anyone who takes on a leadership function in the Church, since it involves setting an example and leading others to be faithful to the Lord.

0.6 AN INCLUSIVE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

In the following, we summarise our conclusions regarding the biblical teaching of an inclusive ministry and ordination without gender distinctions.

1. The Biblical Teaching on ‘Ordination’

A consequence of the Church’s acceptance of the Bible as our only creed is that the Church must decide its practice on women’s ordination, not on the basis of what is culturally accepted in various parts of the world, but on the basis of *God’s purpose in the Bible as a whole*. This was the principle applied by James and Ellen White in the early 1850’s when ordination of ministers was introduced and accepted by Adventists (4.6.1). They referred to ‘gospel order’ and ‘ordination according to Scripture’.

We have demonstrated in this study that, according to Scripture, it is not the *gender* of the servant/minister or the *ordination* of a servant/minister that matters. What matters is the full integration of the person in God’s mission through Christ. Christian ordination is a practical matter that is not commanded or defined in the Bible. This point, too, is emphasised by Ellen White. She said that, in ministry, ‘profession is nothing; position is nothing’ (4.6.2.4), and that men and women, who have the Spirit of Christ and act as his helping hand will be named ‘priests of the Lord’ and will be called ‘ministers of our God’ (Isa. 61:6), in fulfilment of God’s commissioning of man and woman at creation and of his covenant with Israel in Exodus 19:5-6.

The same teaching is expressed by the prophecy of Joel 2:28-29, which the apostle Peter announced was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost: ‘on my “ministers”, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy’ (Acts 2:17-18). The prophesying by the power of the Holy Spirit, in which men and women took part (Acts 1:14; 2:1), led to the conversion of three thousand new disciples, and God’s mission began through the church of Christ.

In our study of the New Testament, we saw that named women were central in Christ’s ministry and that they were the first eyewitnesses to his resurrection and the first to be called by Christ to share the good news (3.1.3.4; 3.1.3.5). Women continued to serve in the apostolic era in the church not only in ministry, but also in leadership positions (3.1.3.8; 3.1.3.9), and there are biblical and historical data demonstrating that women had a vital role in the expansion of early Christianity (3.1.3.12).

There is no 'ordination' of a woman recorded in the New Testament. However, this may not be particularly significant as we recognise how little the Bible actually says about 'ordination':

1. The New Testament has no technical term (3.2.7; 3.5.5.1) for the concept of a process of induction to an office of leadership. 'Ordination' is an English term with roots in the Roman Catholic concept of *ordinatio* or 'orders' (4.1; 4.2), and its origin is in the pagan Roman empirical administration (4.1.5). The New Testament uses several different common verbs meaning 'appoint', which suggests that there is not yet a recognised practice of 'ordination'.

2. There is no general command in the New Testament directed to the Christian church to 'ordain' anybody for a function as leader or servant/minister.

3. Jesus was born and called by God and anointed by the Holy Spirit as God appointed him as his servant (Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; cf. John 1:29-34). No 'ordination' or imposition of hands was involved, only God's words and acts, although Jesus made a point out of 'fulfilling all righteousness' by being baptised.

4. Judging from the Gospels, Jesus did not 'ordain' his disciples, but merely 'made' or 'appointed' them as twelve (Mark 3:14), so they could be with him, proclaim the gospel of the kingdom, and cast out demons. Thus, neither the apostles were formally 'ordained', nor Matthias who replaced Judas, although the process of his appointment to leadership is described in some detail (Acts 1:15-26). Jesus expressed himself on 'taking office' and using titles in ways that strongly opposed the Jewish practice of the imposition of hands for a scribal office (3.5.1).

5. No 'ordination' for the role as apostle is recorded for the apostle Paul, only his personal call and commissioning as a 'minister' by Jesus Christ (Acts 26:15-18; Gal. 1:1; 1:15-2:10; 1 Tim. 2:6; 2 Tim. 1:11) – besides being 'set apart' before he was born and called through God's grace (Gal. 1:15), this is the only divine 'appointment' Paul refers to in his writings. The act performed in Antioch on him and Barnabas was not an 'ordination' for a church office, but a special sending, prompted directly by the Holy Spirit, on a missionary journey by which the church in Antioch extended the kingdom of God. It is not repeatable, but unique.

6. The only appointments with imposition of hands in the book of Acts are:

(a) The selection of the seven in Acts 6:1-6. However, this a unique act that dealt with a special need and is not recorded as a model to follow in the church.

(b) The sending of Barnabas and Saul from Antioch on their first missionary journey to Asia Minor in Acts 1:1-3. However, this was undertaken in answer to an *ad hoc* calling from the Holy Spirit and is not an 'ordination' for an office but a commissioning for a missionary task. Nowhere does the passage indicate that it is a model of 'ordination' for the church to follow.

(c) The 'appointments' of elders in the local churches in Asia Minor are not explicitly accompanied by prayer and imposition of hands (Acts 14:23).

In 1 and 2 Timothy, references are made to plausible 'ordinations' but none can be understood with certainty.

In none of these cases is there any command for the church to 'ordain'. There is no consistent procedure with prayer and imposition of hands, or a charge in a congregational environment.

7. The New Testament speaks only of two offices in the church, the 'overseer' (*episkopos*), who overlaps with the 'elder' (*presbyteros*), and the 'servant' (*diakonos*) (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit; 1:5-8). However, no 'ordination' with the imposition of hands is described or commanded in connection with the qualifications for these offices.

8. The New Testament is very clear, however, that anyone who is to preach the gospel and serve as servant/minister or leader must have a divine call and be filled with the Holy Spirit. The church must find practical ways of examining the candidate and endorsing him/her, but the Bible does not tell us how that is to be done. Perhaps this is an area where James White's rule may work: 'all means which, according to sound judgment, will advance the cause of truth, and are not forbidden by plain scripture declarations, should be employed' (2.1).

Thus, we conclude that ordination, as traditionally practised, is not commanded by the Bible and is not based on a clear biblical teaching.

The appeal to 'gospel order' by James and Ellen White in the early 1850's, which led to the practice of ordination in our church, was an appeal to order in the church based on what the Bible teaches about God, the order and functionality of Christian worship, and how the church can protect its unity and ensure that its preachers, teachers, and administrative leaders have a divine call, a personal commitment to serve, and the trust of the church.

That the church has a practical need for recognising its ministers, their education, Christian character and skills, their spiritual gifts, divine call and personal commitment, and to do so in a public way to demonstrate to the Church that they

have confidence and authority from the Church is obvious. But this is a practical matter, and deciding *how to do so* is a decision that is to be made by the Church on the basis of biblical principles and practical needs, because there is no explicit biblical instruction on this practical aspect. It depends on how one chooses to read the Bible.

The Church issues written ‘credentials’ to an ordained minister, serving as evidence that the minister has the authority of an ordained minister. The act of ordination is a ceremony by which the candidate is encouraged, the Church is publicly announcing its decision, and prayers for the Lord’s blessing are offered. However, the Bible does not explicitly clarify what the imposition of hands means. Using common sense, it is possible to assume that it *points out* the ordinand to the congregation and *shows unity* between the ordainers and the ordinand and *expresses support*. In reading the Bible on imposition of hands, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has not taken it as a sacrament, or a ritual-magical act which prompts God to act, or which confers divine gifts upon the ordinand. It is entirely symbolic, like all the other ordinances that we practice, such as baptism, holy communion and foot-washing.

Thus, it is *not the ceremony of ordination* with the imposition of hands that is the issue when we consider women’s ordination in the Church. The Bible gives many examples of the laying on of hands being used for women for all kinds of purposes (blessing, healing, baptism, etc.), and Ellen White literally proposed that prayer and imposition of hands should be used to appoint women to work in service/ministry (4.6.2.3).

The issue is, rather, if a woman’s gender prevents her from having a position of authority and serving as ‘head’ in some way in the Church family. This makes the issue of male headship and female submission a central point.

2. Men and Women as Servants of God in the Bible

We analysed the main biblical passages relating to the issue of male headship and female submission (3.1). These are: Genesis 1-3; 4-11; Ephesians 5:17-33; 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; 14:33-35; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Timothy 2:8-15; 3:1-13; Titus 2:3-5; and 1 Peter 3:1-7. The main points in our summary (3.1.3) are:

1. According to Genesis 1:1-2:4a (3.1.1.1), God commissions and 'ordains' man and woman as his representatives to have authority over the created world in cooperation with him. Being created 'in the image of God', men and women are equals in serving God.

2. The equal responsibility of man and woman as ministers of God is part of the world order intended in God's creation. Therefore, in Genesis 2:4b-25, the fundamental parity between the genders established in chapter 1 is not changed or contradicted. Instead, Genesis 2 deepens the unity of man and woman by the relational and intimate aspects of marriage implied in the blessing and charge to be fruitful and increase in 1:28.

In no part of Genesis 2:4b-25 (3.1.1.2) did we find evidence to suggest any inferiority of woman to man. A point by point study of arguments that have been adduced in favour of an alleged divinely-ordained hierarchical view of the genders shows that there is no support in Genesis 2 for such a view. Man and woman before the Fall are presented as fully equal, as related in a cooperative interdependence and with not the slightest hint of headship of one over the other.

3. The Fall recorded in Genesis 3 (3.1.1.3) changes the conditions of the humans but God remains the same. The human guilt and shame change their relationship to God and each other; they now know good and evil and are therefore expelled from the Garden of Eden.

God is still committed to uphold his blessing upon male and female (Gen. 1:28). He demonstrates not only justice in dealing with the transgression of the man and the woman but also care and provision to reduce their misery, but above all in order to accomplish his mission through the woman's seed (Gen. 3:15).

Genesis 3:16 is a crucial passage. It needs to be read in the context of Genesis 1-3, in the context of both God's judgment and his caring provision, and with close attention to the nuances of meaning in each Hebrew term. A preferable translation is:

- a. I will greatly increase your pain in childbearing;
- b. with pain you will give birth to children;
- c. yet your longing will be for your husband;
- d. and he will be responsible for you.

In 3:16a-b God gives the sentence for the woman's crime, acting as judge. In 3:16c-d, however, he acts as a caring provider for the humans and balances the

consequences for human procreation, which he had commissioned in Genesis 1:26-28. The passage should be understood in view of (a) who God is, and (b) his mission. Thus, (a) acting as provider and carefully administering the new conditions of human life in order to pursue his mission of salvation, God is being true to his creation of man and woman in 'the image of God', to his commission of male and female as governors of the world, and to his blessing of them both. (b) God's mission requires his safeguarding of the woman's childbearing and childbirth, because of the promise of 'the woman's seed' in 3:15, which envisages the coming of the people of Israel, Jesus Christ, and the church.

There is no hierarchic ordering of the status of man and woman in Genesis 3:16, and the relationship defined there concerns only husband and wife in the marriage relationship, not man and woman in general. In all the Old Testament, there is no indication that Genesis 3:16 was understood and applied as a divine injunction that man was to 'rule over' woman or as a divine prohibition against a woman being the 'head of men' in public or communal life. The examples of women in leadership roles in the Old Testament are recorded without any criticism or disapproval whatsoever.

4. The first activity of the humans after the expulsion from Eden is to offer priestly sacrifices (Gen. 4:1-5). This *continues* Adam's and Eve's priestly investiture with tunics of animal skin in 3:21 which we have analysed in some detail (3.1.1.3). It is later on *confirmed* by Noah on behalf of all humanity after the Flood. It *prefigures* the mediating ministry of the male priests in the Israelite sanctuary, and *explains* the basis for God's election of all men and women in Israel as a kingdom of 'priests', and Christ's calling his believers to be his 'priests' in God's great mission to save the world. God's corrective action of replacing the clothing of leaves with clothing of skin, the latter presuming the shedding of blood of an animal, is in 9:4-6 directly linked to the explanation of animal sacrifices as a replacement for the death of man which he merits on account of his transgression (2:17). The offering of sacrifices of the firstborn humans leads to a discussion about right and wrong offerings and how humans deal with sin (4:6-7). Thus, initially, there is no difference in the priestly roles between male and female.

5. In Genesis 4-11 (3.1.1.4) human life after the Fall is outlined in broad strokes. While genealogical lists mention 'sons and daughters' being born, not one single woman is mentioned by name, but the generations are named after the father.

In all the book of Genesis, and in the Bible as a whole, there is however no instruction preserved from God to do so. The conclusion is that this is therefore a result of human sin, a part of the corruption of man described in 6:5: 'The Lord saw ... that every inclination of the thoughts of [man's] heart was only evil all the time'.

6. The patriarchal line is another consequence of sin which was incorporated over long time in the traditions that Moses and his assistants used in creating the Genesis text before us. Only with the story of Terah and Abram in 12:27-32, do we have wives named together with their husbands, which puts the focus on family relationships and procreation in fulfilment of God's promises.

7. In our study of the relationship between men and women as servants of God in the Old Testament (3.1.2), we found that, while the wife is submitting in practice to her husband's 'headship among equals' in the home, and the same principle is implied in laws and precepts, this does not bar women from positions of influence, leadership, and authority over men in the covenant community. Thus, the predominant patriarchal structure of Israelite society limited but did not exclude women from positions of influence, leadership, and even headship over men.

The leadership roles of Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and others, which are found in the Old Testament, are much fewer than those of men, but the fact that they are evidenced in the Bible shows that *the Bible does not prohibit women from being given leadership roles*. Three observations may be relevant here:

(a) When Israel is *in transition* and not settled with the central city of Jerusalem and its temple, women come to the foreground in leadership roles. When Israel was institutionalised with a temple and a complex organisation involving priests and Levites, women tended to be excluded from leadership involvement.

(b) Women's leadership roles become *more prominent and acceptable in the prophetic movement and in the wisdom circles*. Women serve as spiritually endowed prophetesses, wise women, and spirit-filled 'servants of the Lord ... whom the Lord calls' (Joel 2:28-32). Thus, the resistance against women in leadership comes rather from men in the human patriarchal setting than from God in his divine and spiritual setting. (This point would of course also apply to Ellen White's ministry among Seventh-day Adventists, confirming that God's call to men and women transcends the human social customs and structures.)

(c) The selection of canonical writings in the Old Testament Bible was clearly not made with the purpose of highlighting the role of women in the Israelite society.

Yet, the Old Testament contains books with female names (Ruth; Esther), books where women have a central role (Judg. 4-5; Song 1-8), and portions of Scripture written by women (e.g. Ex. 15; Judg. 5; 1 Sam. 2). In addition, recent studies suggest that in biblical times more women held positions of power and authority than a mere surface reading of the texts may suggest.

8. In our review of the New Testament texts on the relationship between men and women as servants of God (see 3.1.3), we examined in detail all the passages that might say something about female submission and male headship: 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; 14:33-35; Ephesians 5:17-33; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Timothy 2:8-15; Titus 2:5; and 1 Peter 3:1-7. Our conclusions were consistent and clear:

(a) All passages were written in a socio-cultural setting where women were – in the interest of propriety – not allowed to hold public offices or even speak at assemblies. This was the case both in specifically Jewish settings and in the wider Hellenistic environment. However, at least in the Hellenistic environment, this was not a compact prohibition and there were openings for women in public life. These openings were filled by the early Christian church as we review women as God's servants and ministers, and even apostles. The apostolic authors, however, were concerned not to cause scandal which could prevent the gospel from being accepted. The same principle applies today in egalitarian countries, where scandal is caused for the church and the gospel if women are not treated as equals to men.

(b) All passages referring to female submission in the life of the church explicitly concern the wife-husband relationship in marriage. Some of them, therefore, are driven by the concern for order in church services (particularly in Corinth due to the issue of speaking in tongues) and female propriety in their relationship to 'their own' husbands who were – by culturally determined rules – dishonoured if a wife behaved inappropriately according to the accepted codes of conduct.

(c) Some passages address particular issues in the local church, where women were teaching and behaving according to pagan or Gnostic ideas that contradicted the Scriptures in regard to childbirth and motherhood, the truth of the gospel, and the accepted rules of male/female propriety.

(d) No passage explicitly states, as God's command, that a woman may not function as a church leader.

(e) With particular reference to 1 Corinthians 11:3, Christ is not head (*kefale*) for or of the church, which is his body, but he is the head of ‘every man’. An understanding of Christ as *kefale* (‘head’?) in this context must therefore address the question of whether or not the meaning of this word in this passage is consistent with the use of this Greek term in the other references referring to Christ as the ‘head of the church’, or whether or not it has changed to mean something different here. Sometimes, interpreters carelessly infuse the word ‘head’ in this text with its meaning in the English language to obtain the following hierarchical order: God is head over Christ – Christ is head over man – man is head over woman. This top-down vertical chain of command then goes as follows: God – Christ – man – woman.

However, this interpretation is obtained by manipulating the biblical text. In order to make the text say what Scripture does not teach in this passage, its three clauses are taken out of their original sequence and rearranged. The apostle Paul knows exactly how to structure hierarchies in perfectly descending order (see e.g. 1 Cor. 12:28). However, the context of 1 Corinthians 11:3 indicates that he is not structuring a hierarchy here. In keeping with the theme developed in the immediate context, he is discussing the traditional significance of *origination*, and the sequence that links the three clauses is not hierarchy but *chronology*. Therefore, recognising the ambiguous meaning of the Greek *kefale* (‘head’, ‘origin’, or ‘what is primary and prominent’),⁶⁰ the passage as a whole should therefore be understood as follows:

At creation, Christ was the primary originator (*kefale*) of life to human beings, serving as the source of the life of Adam (cf. ‘by him all things were created’; Col. 1:16). In turn, man was the primary originator (*kefale*) of the woman as she was taken from him, serving as her source of life. Then, God was the primary originator of the Son as he was incarnated and came into being in the human world, serving as the source of Christ. When the biblical sequence of the three clauses is not tampered with, the consistent meaning of ‘head’ in this verse is that of a *servant function as provider of life*. And this is consistent with the meaning of ‘head’ in the other five passages that refer to Christ as head of the church.

9. The passage in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 outlines certain qualifications of an overseer and a servant in a local church setting. It is probable that this followed the practice of the Jewish synagogue where there was an ‘overseer’ and a ‘servant’. In

⁶⁰ See the numerous examples and nuances listed in H. Schlier, Article ‘*kefale*’, in: *ThDNT*, vol. 3, pp. 673-674.

our study of this passage (3.1.3.11), we noted that the gender of the overseer is male. Does that mean that the Bible is allowing only males to be overseers? The following points may be made:

(a) In 1 Timothy 3, the listed qualifications are *subordinate* to the overarching *purpose* of ensuring trust among outsiders, both in the overseer and the servant as church representatives, and of safeguarding an acceptance of the gospel of Christ among outsiders. The lists of qualifications both for the overseer and the servant conclude emphatically with references to their reputation among outsiders and warnings against 'falling into disgrace' and exhortations to 'gain a good standing for themselves' (3:7, 13). We demonstrated that being 'the husband of one wife' was a Jewish set phrase in the Ephesian environment which was associated with decent behaviour. It had roots in Old Testament priestly regulations to safeguard the priest's holiness and purity. The phrase could not be used about a female overseer, because a woman could legally not have several husbands and was not entitled to initiate a sequence of marriages if her husband died or divorced her. Consequently, the phrase is irrelevant for determining the gender of an 'overseer'.

(b) The fact that 'being the husband of one wife' is used about *both* the 'overseer' (*episkopos*) and the 'servant' (*diakonos*), while the same author, Paul, also uses 'servant' (*diakonos*) in the masculine form and in a formal office title ('servant of the church in Cenchreae') with reference to a woman (Rom. 16:1), shows that 'husband of one wife' is not an indication that an overseer and a servant *must be males*. If they nevertheless were males in Ephesus ca. 65 A.D., this may well be explained by language conventions and/or local and time-limited circumstances.

(c) The general rule in Hebrew and biblical Greek (influenced by Jewish social conveniences) is that the masculine gender is inclusive of both genders, while the feminine is only referring to a female. This is seen, for example, in the Ten Commandments, where the masculine gender includes females, and in the story of Jephthah (Judg. 11:1-12:7), where his vow to sacrifice 'whoever (masculine) comes out of the doors of my house to meet me shall be offered as a burnt-offering' is followed by his daughter coming out of the house. If there was ever a time when the literal masculine gender would be applied literally, it was in Jephthah's case, but he offered his daughter because the masculine form included male and female.

(d) A respectful and balanced approach to the passage is therefore to say that it provides a model for any overseer, man or woman, provided that the environment of mission is such that either of the two genders is considered 'decent' by the church and the people it seeks to reach with the gospel. A list of the overseer's qualifications in a matriarchal society in India, for example, would not say 'husband of one wife', but 'wife of one husband'. And in egalitarian modern societies where it is an offence to prohibit a woman from leadership, the gospel will be best served by both men and women serving as overseers. The application of the passage needs to be consistent with how we use the Bible as a whole to guide our church procedures. When confronted with a culturally bound practice, it is the underlying biblical principle that matters, as in the case of women covering their heads, the church having offices for driving out demons, or the acceptance of slavery.

In conclusion, there is no biblical warrant for saying that, in general, women are to be submitted to men, and therefore a woman cannot be ordained for the gospel ministry in our church. The passages that do speak of female submission are all related to man's and woman's roles in *marriage*, and, even there, an egalitarian marriage partnership is closest to God's ideal in creation.

The specific female submission in marriage can according to our understanding be attributed to a patriarchal culture which has not been instituted by God. The passage in Genesis 3:16 records divine measures in order to safeguard human life through the woman, so that, although she is punished by an increased pain in childbearing and childbirth, she will still long for her husband and he will care for her. We do not see in this passage any warrant for male headship, but for responsibility, love and care, as beautifully taught in the New Testament in a language appropriate for those times.

Thus, there is no warrant for excluding duly called women from being accepted by the church for a special ministry such as the gospel ministry and for leadership. Since there is no formal description of ordination of servants/ministers in the New Testament church, since there are many examples of women being 'filled with the Spirit' in the New Testament, and many who filled functions in specific ministries, since the mission of God (i.e. Christ) is what the church's mission is all about, since God has not in his Word revealed any prohibitions against women being ordained but rather has endorsed woman from the time of creation, instituting Eve as priest in the sanctuary of Eden besides Adam, and since Christ has made all

believers priests and ministers for him, it is a decision the Church has to make, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to grant women equal rights to ministry.

3. An Inclusive Ministry in the Biblical Theology of Ordination

The theme of the Bible as a whole is God's mission to *save* humans from evil and death, to *restore* his harmonious relationship with them, to *eradicate evil* from the universe, and *create* a new heaven and a new earth where he has communion with humans as their God (Rev. 21:1-4). Christ's mission was to lay the foundation for God's mission, by his life, work and teaching, by his death and resurrection, by his appointment of the church and his commissioning of the church to serve God, each other, and the world.

Thus, Christ has founded his church as an agent of the mission of God. The members of the church can do nothing without Christ. He is their High Priest and they serve him (and God) as priests, or *mediators* between God and the world, in teaching and preaching the gospel, in administration, leadership, and various forms of services. Christ made no distinction between men and women as his servants. This can be traced back to the origin, when God made no distinction between men and women in their capacity to minister in his mission. Man and woman were both serving him as equals in Eden, as priests of God, and God endorsed them in this role even after the Fall by dressing them in skins, which is a symbol of priesthood.

At Sinai when God called Israel as his people, he made them 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' (Ex. 19:5-6), and they were all consecrated to meet the Lord (Ex. 19:14-15, 17). Men and women are 'priests' of the God based on their belonging to the people of Israel.

However, the sanctuary priesthood became reserved for men, for various reasons:

(a) Israel was steeped in the patriarchal culture of their time and place, and God accepted to work out his mission through Israel of that time;

(b) A hereditary priesthood was instituted in the tribe of Levi because of the disobedience of the people and the Levite's faithfulness;

(c) The central function of blood to maintain ritual purity in the sanctuary service disadvantaged women (menstrual blood and blood connected with childbearing and childbirth were considered unclean); and

(d) It was important to avoid associations with ‘holy women’ that were prominent in the widespread temple prostitution surrounding and invading Israel.

However, God continued his mission through Israel, the sanctuary, the kingdom, and his prophets. And all along, he used men and women as his servants. Through Isaiah he announced that one day, through Messiah (Isa. 61:1-2), God would again call men and women ‘priests of the Lord and ministers of our God’ (61:6; note Ellen White’s use of this passage in 4.6.2.4 above). This fulfilled in the church of Christ, which is a kingdom of priests.

The priesthood of man and woman established at Creation (Genesis 1-2) and confirmed in Eden after the Fall (3:21) is essential according to the book of Revelation for the end-time church – in the service to God of the church on earth (Rev. 1:6), in the ministry of Christ (Rev. 5:9-10), and in the new heaven and earth (Rev. 5:10; 20:6).⁶¹ The passages in Revelation 5:20 and 20:6 explicitly resume the theme of man and woman as *priests* and *rulers* of the earth in Genesis 1-3. Revelation does so in the context of the sacrifice and blood of Christ, which fulfils God’s promise of salvation by ‘the seed of the woman’ (Gen. 3:15). The sacrifice for redemption is also continued in the priestly mediation instituted in Eden for men and women and in humanity by Cain/Abel and Noah (Gen. 3:21; 4:1-7; 8:20-8:17). It is then resumed by Abraham and the patriarchs, and by Israel, until the final sacrifice is offered by Christ.

The New Testament gives the impression that men were generally chosen for special ministry as leaders, teachers and preachers. This is in keeping with the patriarchal customs of the time and was often necessary in order to meet the culturally conditioned expectations of propriety and normal behaviour. However, it is clear that Christian women were filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesied and prayed, and held many different roles in the expansion and growth of the church. The church had not formalised its offices, its induction or ordination procedures, and many leaders were simply serving on account of their divine call and spiritual gifts.

The central principle behind the patriarchal concessions in the Bible is the concern for internal unity in the church, which brings respect among outsiders for Christ, the gospel, and the church as his agent. Given the culturally bound ideas of the role of women in society at the time, the role of women in ministry had to be

⁶¹ Cf. B. Wiklander, ‘The Mission of God’, 2009, pp. 284-285.

limited depending on the setting. This is a temporary, historical influence on the wording of the biblical texts, but the Bible as a whole, through Genesis 1-3, Exodus 19:5-6, Isaiah 61:6, 1 Peter 2:9-10, and Revelation 1:6; 5:9-10; 20:3; 21:1-22:5 provides repeated corrections, in order to bring his people back to where he wanted men and women to be from the beginning and in eternity: united and equal in his inclusive service for his mission in the great controversy and the plan of redemption.

Applying the biblical teaching on God' inclusive ministry in the modern context of egalitarian societies means that women and men are to serve on equal terms as overseers in the church. The temporary concessions to patriarchy, however, reveal a principle that is still valid, but in many places in the world today it must be applied in the opposite way. Gender discrimination is considered a great evil and injustice in these egalitarian societies, and by preventing women from serving as overseers, even ordained gospel ministers, the church is putting up a hindrance for the acceptance of the gospel and discrediting the mission of God. A way must therefore be found that allows the Seventh-day Adventist Church to permit a woman to hold an ordained minister's credential, while the church in other parts of the world, where this may not now be appropriate, may choose to restrict such credentials.

0.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of this study in its entirety, we make the following recommendations in an order of priority:

A. TOWARDS A BIBLICAL PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS:

1. *Focus on the Mission of God and All Being Servants for the Salvation of the World.* The entire matter of ordination should be seen and our terminology should be defined in the context of God's purpose for the world as the Creator in Genesis 1-2 and the end-time vision of Revelation 21-22. This will revive the doctrine of the Priesthood of All Believers and the inspired biblical theology of mission, church, and service. It will give a theological foundation for activating all members in mission.

2. Remove the Current Distance between Clergy – Laity and the Levels of Ordination. We recommend that the Church embraces truly biblical principles and frees itself from the continuing dependence on ‘Roman’ practices, for example, by:

(a) Finding ways to visibly include the role of lay people in the ordination ceremony (lay people are theologically included in the idea of the church delegating authority to ordained pastors, and lay people participate in the conference/union committee decisions to ordain a pastor);

(b) Removing any idea of ‘(apostolic) succession’;

(c) Removing the existing distance between clergy and laity, and the idea that the ordained clergy forms a separate class of members who are elevated to a higher status than others;

(d) Removing the levels of ordination between all the different ‘servants’ who work in the church (globally and locally) and applying, rather, one concept of servanthood but with distinctions of duties and responsibilities which are documented in written credentials;

(e) Removing the intricate differences between various levels of ministry, such as the licensed and ordained minister, the licensed minister and the ordained local church elder, the pastor and the local church elder, etc.;

(f) Admitting that there is no biblical command to ordain anyone by the imposition of hands and that there is no consistent biblical formula for how a leader is inducted to office in the Christian church.

3. An Inclusive Ministry. Where it is culturally appropriate, the Church should allow for an inclusive and gender-neutral ministry, which means that credentials will be granted to men and women on equal terms for all offices which require ordination, presently the gospel minister, the elder, and the deacon/deaconess. This means that the Church removes all gender distinctions in its *Working Policy* related to the ministry and thus fulfils the biblical intent of the *Working Policy* BA 55 on ‘Human Relations’.

If this cannot be implemented across the world at the same time, the Church should allow it where unions/divisions request permission to do so. This may mean that the world-wide recognition of an ordination in one country may have to be reworded in the *Working Policy* to the effect that an ordained minister’s credentials are subject to the acceptance of a receiving division/union/conference.

4. Recommendation to the GC Session in 2015. We propose that a recommendation be brought to the General Conference Session in 2015, that it approves a revised policy in which unions, whose constituency meetings in session have voted approval and whose division committee has voted approval, be allowed to maintain an inclusive pastoral ministry which removes all gender distinctions within the work of the church in that union territory.

5. Theology and Practice of Ordination – Education of Members. The Church should continue its development of the biblical theology of ordination. Based on our study, we urge the Church to proceed in considerably more detail than in the brief consensus statement now considered by the Theology of Ordination Study Committee. This should be accompanied by an organised and intentional attempt to educate members regarding the biblical rationale for ordination and what Seventh-day Adventists believe about it in view of the teaching of the Bible, our only authority for life and practice.

There should be an on-going teaching of church members regarding the mission of God, the nature of the Church and ordination. This is especially important for new members who come from Roman Catholic or Orthodox backgrounds. The Roman Catholic Church has extensive catechetical teachings about 'Orders', which is one of seven sacraments and lays the foundation for the priesthood and the right to determine a person's salvation or condemnation. 'Orders' are part of even brief and popular Catholic Catechisms, but in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we say almost nothing about ordination. This deficit has generated bias and unwarranted traditions that have determined members' opinion on both ordination in general and women's ordination. The text of the *Working Policy* is hardly known by members and is even insufficient as it now stands.

B. A REDUCED CEREMONIAL EMPHASIS:

6. Consider the Best Terminology. The Church should carefully consider the wisdom of using the term 'ordination', which is ambiguous and loaded with meanings from the Roman Catholic Church and various Protestant denominations that are not biblical and that are confusing our members who have come to us from other

churches. Its origins in the pagan Roman empirical administration, its laws and idol worship, and in the false Christian theology introduced by Tertullian and Cyprian and others after them, make a Seventh-day Adventist hesitant and uncomfortable about this term. We recommend therefore that terms that are closer to the biblical terminology are introduced, such as ‘appoint’, ‘commission’, ‘dedicate’. If for traditional reasons, it is decided to keep ‘ordination’ as a technical term in denominational language, it should be acknowledged that each language in the world has ways of referring to the concept of ‘ordination’ that does not reflect the English ‘ordination’ or Latin *ordinatio*. For example, Greek Adventists use the common Greek term of *cheirotoneo*, which is found in Acts 14:23. Other options abound in various languages and the Church should acknowledge the wish of a union to choose better terms in the local language than ‘ordination’ or ‘ordain’.

7. Remove Ritualistic and Consecrational Flavour. Seeing how ‘ordination’ is treated in the New Testament – which is where we must find our guidance on Christian ministry – we recommend that the ritualistic and consecrational flavour of the act of ordination, its vague mixture of granting the Holy Spirit or gifts for ministry and ecclesiastical authority be radically toned down and removed from policy and practice.

8. Make the Imposition of Hands Optional. While an installation ceremony is a positive and needed feature in church life, we recommend that the imposition of hands be an optional part of the ceremony. In the New Testament, the apostle, servants/ministers, overseers/elders are nowhere ordained by imposition of hands in clear terms. For these functions, however, there is a clear biblical ground for talking about being ‘appointed’.

9. Emphasis on God’s Blessing and Practical Aspects. We recommend that the emphasis in the ceremony be placed on the *public recognition* of the ordinand, the *church’s confirmation* of the ordinand’s call from God and commitment to serve Christ and the Church, the *Church’s approval of the ordinand* as teacher, preacher and spiritual leader, and the invocation of *God’s blessing*.

10. Review Who Is To Be Ordained in the Church. A special study should be conducted regarding the biblical basis for applying ordination to some offices and not others in the Church. All office holders in the Church are servants of God, but the Bible is not clear on who is 'ordained' and who is not. All officials at local church level and in conferences, unions, and the General Conference can be introduced to their functions when they start. This is practical and encouraging, but the biblical basis for ordaining only the pastor, elder, deacon/deaconess is very scant.

C. SOME OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS:

11. Separate Ordination from Election to an Organisational Office of Leadership. A clearer distinction should be made between the *ordination* (i.e. the ordained minister's credentials) and the *election* of leaders for regular church offices in missions, conferences, unions, divisions, and the General Conference. Ordination for the gospel ministry should be for the ministry of the word (Acts 6:2) and not for administrative positions. If an ordained pastor is elected for a church office of organisational leadership, this is a different task from being a pastor (although some functions may overlap). Holding ministerial credentials may certainly be a merit of one who is elected as a leader, but in its theology and policy, the Church should ensure that the two are clearly distinguished, so that ordination does not automatically imply administrative or organisational leadership.

12. Improve Ministerial Training, Education, Preparation for Ordination, and Clarify Processes, Requirements, and Qualifications. We recommend that, based on the study we submit, the Church sharpens its processes and requirements for pastoral education and training, and develops better means by which the qualifications of an ordinand are examined, evaluated, and developed.

0.8 CONCLUDING REMARKS:

INTERPRETATION, UNITY, CULTURES, AND THE MISSION OF GOD

It has been said that the current debate on women's ordination in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is focused on 'whether or not the Bible *permits* women to be

appointed and commissioned as *elders or pastors*'.⁶² We do not agree that it is that simple.

We believe the current debate is symptomatic of four major needs which the Church cannot afford to ignore, because they are threats to the spiritual well-being of the Church and our end-time mission from God. *We recommend that these areas be studied intensely by the whole Church and that a process of revival and reformation is put in place based on prayer, Bible study, conversation, and mission work, in order to bring us together and on safer ground than today.*

1. The Interpretation of the Bible. Behind the current debate lies, firstly, the fundamental question of how Adventists interpret the Bible concerning ordination.

Jan Barna has pointed out that 'the disagreements about the meaning of texts spring not only from exegetical or theological conclusions but also from prior disagreements about the nature of interpretation'.⁶³ He also says that 'unless both sides make conscious attempts to address the lack of epistemological and critical clarification of their hermeneutical positions, there is every chance that the theological differences between the two camps will remain unresolved'.⁶⁴

The proposition of Barna's research is, therefore, that 'fuller awareness of the problems of hermeneutics may provide a defence against interpretations that may be largely echoes of one's own attitudes or pre-judgements'.⁶⁵ There is in some camps of the Church an 'awareness' of hermeneutics, but it needs to be widened and based on a deeper understanding of the key elements involved. Old presuppositions are no longer enough. New light is needed in the Church to come out of its current dilemma.

An example of how the Church may ignore new light is the study published by Viggo Norskov-Olsen: *Myth and Truth about Church, Priesthood and Ordination* (1990) – one of the most comprehensive Adventist books on ordination and its theology in the Bible and in history. This work would have provided an sufficient basis for a Seventh-day Adventist theology of ordination, but, regrettably, the well-documented and factual findings received very little attention in the world church and in the public debate.⁶⁶

⁶² M. H. Dyer, 'Prologue', in: *Prove All Things: A Response to Women in Ministry*, 2000, p. 9.

⁶³ J. Barna, *Ordination of Women*, 2012, p. 308.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 309.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ In regard to the facts presented and the general outline, V. Norskov Olsen's book reveals a positive influence from Marjorie Warkentin's study *Ordination: A Biblical-Historical View*, 1982.

We therefore humbly request that the General Conference does not quickly bury the research that is reported here and by other divisions, in order to have a quick fix of an uncomfortable issue. The challenge the Church faces on women's ordination will not go away, because it is symptomatic of deeper issues. The challenge will come back in other shapes and forms, until the Church deals with the fundamental matters. And the nature of biblical interpretation is one of them. The Rio Document (1986) is a good starting-point, but it is now twenty-eight years old and needs to be expanded and updated.

2. *The Unity of the Church.* Many contributions in the current debate concern the Church and the society in which it lives and works. Gordon Hyde in his article in 1976 called attention to 'the major reason given for [the elected leadership of the church not feeling that ordination of women to the ministry is advisable at this time]', namely, 'that the whole world field should be united in approving such a step before it is implemented in any part of the world field'.⁶⁷

However, arguments from church unity that favour further delay in permitting women's ordination may have functioned in 1990 and 1995, but they have now lost their validity. The Church faces a situation where several unions have already, or are planning to go their own way with women's ordination. The situation now, therefore, is that disunity is already a fact and whether or not the General Conference Session in 2015 permits some form of women's ordination in divisions where it is deemed appropriate, different practices and readings of the Bible will remain.

Therefore, the Church needs to find other means of building unity concerning ordination than what has been done up to now. We suggest that only a spiritual way which includes balanced education will work. We therefore recommend that the Church stimulates open dialogue about the reasons for the current disunity and shows a way towards how we can live and work together while accepting each other's differences.

3. *The Cultures of the Members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.* One aspect of the issue of church unity is the fact that Adventists read the Bible through a looking glass determined by their culture.⁶⁸ In this context, 'culture' means

⁶⁷ G. Hyde, 'The Ordination of Women', *R&H*, 153:44, 28 October, 1976, p. 12.

⁶⁸ See J. L. Dybdal, 'Culture and Biblical Understanding in a World Church', 1998, pp. 417-436. Cf. B. Wiklander, 'The Boundaries of Contextualization in Mission', 2006, pp. 91-129.

'background, history, language, education, social class, ethnicity, etc.'⁶⁹ Thus, at times, 'theological conflicts are also cross-cultural conflicts'.⁷⁰

That there is a cultural divide within the Seventh-day Adventist Church regarding ordination of women is clear by the debates and votes taking place at Annual Councils and General Conference Sessions. In general terms, many Adventists from egalitarian cultures in North America, Western Europe, and Australia (but not all) tend to support women's ordination – notably seen by the fact that the North American (2004), Trans-European (2010), and South Pacific (2009) Divisions have all voted to request permission to ordain women for the gospel ministry. Many Adventists from Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe (but not all) tend to be opposed.

While many opponents to women's ordination everywhere refer to their reading of the Bible as the reason for their view, they may also be influenced in their reading from particularly two directions: one is the general view of women's roles in their society – where women are still expected to be in submission to men and in some cases the entire social fabric is based on this 'patriarchal' social value. Another is the particular view that women cannot serve as 'priests or pastors' because this is what they have been taught as truth in their Roman Catholic or Orthodox church background. In some cases, a female pastor in these environments may not be accepted with respect by outsiders whom the Church seeks to reach with the gospel.

Proponents of women's ordination may be influenced by egalitarian values permeating their societies and being incorporated in anti-discrimination laws as well as laws that stipulate equal opportunities for men and women in all areas of life. They may also come from societies where the public system provides ample access to child-care and nurseries, enabling women to work in the same way as their male counterparts, while the taxation laws and pension systems are based on the common rule that men as well as women must have an income. In some cases, not having female pastors in this environment will be unacceptable and ridiculed by the outsiders whom the Church seeks to reach with the gospel.

Thus, the Church is divided culturally. All claim to be faithful to the Bible and to be committed to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but, still, the outcome is cultural diversity. This issue will not go away. And the Church now needs to find

⁶⁹ J. Dybdal, 'Culture and Biblical Understanding', 1998, p. 422.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 426.

ways of building bridges across cultures. The issue of women's ordination is one that preoccupies us now. Other issues are waiting around the corner.

One of the aims of the Church since 2010 has been to 'reach across'. Very little progress has been reported, and probably world church divisions were not sure of how to implement the concept, because it was not carefully explained and little guidance was given. In the recent proposal for 2015-2020, the 'reach across' seems to fall away. However, this shows, we think, that *the Church must be more serious, active, and committed to making its members across the world truly cross-cultural and truly tolerant towards cultural diversity*. This is our third recommendation.

When a local church faces cultural differences, it is necessary to sit down together, pray and talk. The same thing needs to be organised by the General Conference in the relationship between divisions and different cultural regions in the world. Dybdal suggests some simple steps:

(a) *Honestly look at ourselves:* We must follow Jesus' teaching according to Matthew 7:3: 'Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?' Tolerance and acceptance is the only Christian way.

(b) *Tell our story and listen to each other's findings:* Hearing each other's experiences and feelings may create empathy and this binds us together as a church family, bound together by the love of Christ.

(c) *Seriously study material that does not support our own view:* Read rational arguments of those who disagree with you. The biblical image of ourselves as a church being one body though we are made up of many parts must be believed, and the word of Scripture experienced: 'If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.' (1 Cor. 12:12-31).

(d) *We must accept the fact that differences need not separate us:* If the issue of women's ordination, and other issues, could be approached with a humility of spirit that truly listens to others and is willing to evaluate its own understanding; if serious prayer and a dependence on the Holy Spirit were as much in evidence as theological debate, then resolution and unity now only dreamed about could take

place in our midst.⁷¹ This is the counsel by Ellen White who said that ‘nothing can perfect unity in the church but the spirit of Christlike forbearance’.⁷²

The biblical example *par excellence* of such an outcome is the Council in Jerusalem according to Acts 15. The Church and the Holy Spirit decided that there would be two ways of being ‘Christian’ – one Jewish Christian that implied adherence to the Mosaic Law, and one Gentile Christian that did not. Thus, ‘on a church-wide, mission-driven issue that was shaped by culture and geography, forced to a head by changing circumstances and the passage of time, where the powerful were advocates for the powerless, where the solution was argued on the basis of equality, not exegesis, where ‘it seemed good to the Spirit and us’, there unity in diversity was the outcome, even afterwards’.⁷³

In the short term, the world church needs to find a way to defuse the current tensions that are resulting in unions going their own way. Ordination in the sense of setting someone apart for ministry by prayer and imposition of hands and accompanied by a formal recognition by the church of the granted authority and responsibilities is already done in the church for various leadership functions – for pastors, local church elders, deacons and deaconesses.

The church may therefore introduce an order by which ordination to the gospel ministry for women is valid in a union, or unions, or a division. The issue in doing so is not the ceremony of ordination, which Ellen White approved for women in principle, but the issue is for what function or office in the church such ordination is made. Thus, the real issue is the credential or authority issued by the employing church organisation. A credential for a woman to serve as an ordained minister in a union, unions, or a division, would not need to have automatical world church approval. It is sufficient for the work of ministry if it is issued in the local union or division. The authority of a locally ordained woman to work in another division would then be determined by that division who would have a choice of either endorsing the credential from the home division or not endorsing it. This would only be a temporary solution, however. In time, and if the Church as a whole is led by the Holy Spirit a more complete unity may be achieved in due course, but as it seems now, it may take some time.

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 431-432.

⁷² E. G. White, Letter 29, 1889.

⁷³ A. Bates (pseudonym), ‘The Jerusalem Council: A Model for Utrecht?’, 1995, pp. 18-23.

4. The Mission of God. The ordination issue needs to be approached in the context of the mission of God. Thus, we have proposed a theology of ordination that is based on the mission of God. This helps us see that ordination does not primarily have to do with our authority or status, but with *God's* authority to call men and women all over the world and in the whole church to serve him in his mission of salvation. If we recognise (a) God's authority to *be God*, (b) God's authority to *create* human beings of both genders to serve him as priests and rulers in order to call the world to worship him and have communion with him, and (c) God's authority to *call* men and women as servants or ministers to build his kingdom in the world, then we will *cooperate* with God to fulfil the end-time prophecy of the book of Revelation:

Revelation 1:5 To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Revelation 5:9-10 You were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; **10** you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth.

Revelation 20:3 Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. Over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him a thousand years.

Like James, the leader of the early Christians, we need to say: 'We should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God' (Acts 15:19). If for the sake of mission, the first church could accept two ways of being 'Christian' with different rules, we, the end-time church, for the sake of mission, should be able to accept two ways of applying the ordained minister's credentials. We believe that, by making this request, we seek to become the church that John saw in his vision: a kingdom of priests and servants of God who have their eyes on the fulfilment of God's mission when he will dwell with them and they will be his people.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Task

The present study has been developed within the Trans-European Division Biblical Research Committee (TED-BRC) in response to a task given by the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (GC). The study focuses on the teaching of *the Bible* in view of the Church's conviction that the Bible is 'our only creed'.

The study was commissioned in October, 2011, by the GC Annual Council. It was initially defined in general terms as a study of the *theology* of ordination: 'Each division is asked to request their Biblical Research Committee to make a study of the theology of ordination and its implications for church practices.' Divisions of the GC were asked to report their study to the Division Annual Council in the autumn of 2013, which would 'review the study and recommend it to the GC Biblical Research Institute Director for consideration by a Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC)'. The TED Annual Council 2013 is scheduled for 18-20 November.

However, more detailed directions were given by the GC Biblical Research Institute (GC-BRI) on 1 May, 2012. The task was considerably amplified: 'The nature of the assignment will require studying first the Theology of Ordination and secondly, based on the developed Theology of Ordination, the issue of Women's Ordination.'⁷⁴ In the same message, a comprehensive and detailed list of methodological, biblical, historical, and practical (ecclesiastical) topics related to ordination were suggested, which the Division BRC's were asked to consider (these topics are presented in Appendix A below). Thus, the study of ordination requested by the GC-BRC is deep and comprehensive.

Another dimension impacting the present study was the *modus operandi* of the TOSC. This committee was initially to receive the reports of the Division BRC's at the end of 2013 and then to create one unified report of the thirteen division reports. However, for practical reasons, TOSC began its work already in January, 2013, and has at this point in time already met twice (in January and July, 2013), with two more meetings being scheduled for 2014. The papers presented so far, as well as the

⁷⁴ E-mail from Artur Stele (Director of GC-BRI and Chair of GC-TOSC), May 1, 2012. Cf. Appendix A below.

papers produced within the Church since 1973, can be accessed at www.adventistarchives.org.

At its meeting in July, 2013, the TOSC voted a consensus statement on the theology of ordination which has been made public. As part of that process, the TED-BRC was asked to share a proposed summary statement for a theology of ordination, which was done in April, 2013. We include our summary statement proposal in 5.8 below, so that the readers can compare it with the voted TOSC statement.

Dr Jan Barna and Dr Bertil Wiklander participate in the TOSC meetings as representatives of the TED-BRC. The present study has benefitted from various papers on ordination at the first two meetings and the ensuing discussions in 2013. We now prayerfully submit this study and the recommendations, trusting that God, who is the Father of all, is leading us by his Spirit to accomplish his will.

1.2 What Is Ordination?

Ordination is a process of selection, training, and induction to functions of leadership which has been practised in the Christian Church for nearly 2,000 years. Today, also within the Seventh-day Adventist Church, many different assumptions and understandings exist, and this tends to confuse and distort the conversation. For example, Marjorie Warkentin says in *Ordination: A Biblical-Historical View* (1982):

All kinds of suppositions about ordination abound. It is thought that Jesus ordained his disciples, that the rite has been practised continuously since apostolic times, that it has scriptural warrant, that it confers on the recipient a special ‘character’ that remains with him or her for life, that it protects the church from heresy, that only the ordained should administer the ordinances, that it transmits ‘grace’ for office, that it does *not* transmit ‘grace’ for office, that it conveys authority, that it conveys nothing whatsoever, and so on.⁷⁵

The research by Gary Macy has documented that ordination was used in the first 1,000 years of the Christian Church in a way completely different from the later practice after the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁷⁶ In the modern world, moreover,

⁷⁵ M. Warkentin, *Ordination: A Biblical-Historical View*, 1982, p. 9.

⁷⁶ G. Macy, *The Hidden History of Women’s Ordination: Female Clergy in the Medieval West*, 2007, pp. 23-48. It is noteworthy that a similar research was reported in the *Review and Herald*, 153:44, 28 October, 1976, p. 3; under the heading ‘Women as Deacons in the First Six Centuries’, the church paper reported that ‘A new Roman Catholic study of the ministerial activity of women in the early church says that during the first 600 years of Christianity women were ordained to the diaconate, but not to the priesthood. They exercised ministries that were catechetical, liturgical, prophetic, or administrative.’

the English term ‘ordination’ is referring to appointments and inductions to many different kinds of church offices, as variously defined by the Christian churches (chapter 4 below). There is a need, therefore, to ensure that the term we use is both clear and free from misleading associations.

The terminological issue is in some ways due to the content of the Bible itself. Equivalents of the English terms ‘ordain’ and ‘ordination’ do not appear in the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Bible. They originated in the Latin and the concept of ‘ordination’ was originally applied in the administration of the Roman Empire (4.1.5).⁷⁷ We will see that ‘ordination’ was brought into the Christian tradition by the post-biblical, so-called apostolic church fathers, especially Tertullian (ca. A.D. 160-220) and Cyprian (ca. A.D. 205-258), and that it became integrated as a sacrament in the Roman-Catholic Church (4.1; 4.2). Moreover, there is no unambiguous biblical definition of ‘ordination’. There is no command to ‘ordain’ in the New Testament – in fact, the passages in the Bible that deal with appointment and induction to office are strikingly few and some of them are ambiguous or incomplete (from our perspective). Judging from what is stated in the biblical text, Jesus did not ‘ordain’ his disciples by a defined ritual, and the twelfth apostle Matthias, who replaced Judas, was not ‘ordained’. Key texts that outline ministers and ministries in the church do not mention ‘ordination’ (e.g. Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4). Thus, there is neither clarity nor unanimity among the inspired biblical authors regarding the theological significance of ‘ordination’, the process of selection of candidates, and the ceremony used within the concept that we have grown accustomed to refer to as ‘ordination’.

We are therefore not comfortable with using the terms ‘ordain’ and ‘ordination’ in the presentation of our study. We do recognise, however, that this study is a service to our church and that its objective is to provide a biblical and theological definition of ordination that may serve the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA). Therefore, following the Church’s formal definition of ‘ordination’, we will generally use ‘ordain’ and ‘ordination’ in the broad sense of ‘being specially called by God and set apart by the laying on of hands for a particular service’.⁷⁸ This includes (a) the divine call and a formal approval by the church, (b) being set apart by prayer and imposition of hands, and (c) the purpose of functioning in a particular ministry. However, in our recommendations (chapter 8), we will propose the use of more

⁷⁷ Cf. N. Vyhmeister, ‘Ordination in the New Testament?’, 2002, pp. 24-27.

⁷⁸ *Seventh-day Adventist Minister’s Handbook*, 2009, p. 85.

biblical terms for 'being set apart' for a special ministry. As a matter of convenience, however, in the course of reporting our study, we will use 'ordain' and 'ordination' (with quotation marks) in two ways: (a) when referring to 'ordain' and 'ordination' in the Bible, and (b) when referring to a specific concept of ordination within a defined Christian church tradition where 'ordain' and 'ordination' are technical terms for that particular concept.

It should be acknowledged at the outset that ordination or induction to an office or ministry may in principle apply to various offices or roles in the church. This is acknowledged by the Seventh-day Adventist Church which currently allows for ordination related to three classes of church functions,⁷⁹ namely:

1. Minister of the Gospel (currently gender specific: males only);
2. Local Church Elder (gender neutral where so decided by a division);
3. Deacon and Deaconess (gender neutral where so decided).⁸⁰

From among the ministers of the gospel, the Seventh-day Adventist Church elects administrative leaders for missions/conferences, unions, the General Conference and its divisions. We wish to underline, however, that the decisions to *ordain* and the decisions to *elect* for such leadership office are two different acts that are normally taken by different ecclesiastical bodies, on different occasions, and for different purposes.

It should also be noted that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has 'ministerial' offices for which no ordination is given: the licensed minister who is on the path towards ordination and the commissioned minister who is not on the path towards ordination. A host of other ministries are cared for by men and women who are not ordained, for example, church administration, institutional work of various kinds (including leadership), departmental work at General Conference, Union and Conference levels, and various functions in the local church. An important aspect of the task before us is to understand the reasons for ordaining some and not others, and in what biblical and theological context our ordination practices become meaningful and relevant.

1.3 Method and Plan of Presentation

⁷⁹ *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 2010, pp. 33-34, 72, 77, 78-79.

⁸⁰ Ordination of Deaconesses is not mandatory and although provided for in the *Church Manual* it is not yet common practice in the world church. It is however applied in many unions in the Trans-European Division.

While our main point of interest is the biblical theology of ordination and how it applies to women in our church, a central purpose of our study was to understand what 'ordination' is according to the Bible. Only on that basis, a biblical theology of ordination may be developed. The method adopted to achieve this was briefly as follows:

Firstly, we applied an *exegetical close reading* of the biblical text,⁸¹ giving full attention to its explicit and implicit information, and its written, situational and cultural context. This reading was however guided by the theme of the Bible as a whole, viz. the Great Controversy, or the Plan of Redemption, which we conveniently refer to as 'the Mission of God', being accomplished through the eschatological events recorded in John's vision in Revelation 21:1-4.

Secondly, our study was facilitated by a *logic of question and answer*, which means the application of a set of probing *search* questions (also called 'heuristic' questions, from the Greek *heurisko*, 'find'). This helped us grasp the meaning of some key 'ordination passages' and offered criteria for comparisons.⁸² The logic of question and answer was set out by the Oxford philosopher R. G. Collingwood:

I began by observing that you cannot find out what a man means by simply studying his spoken or written statements, even though he has spoken or written with perfect command of language and perfectly truthful intention. In order to find out his meaning you must also know what the question was (a question in his own mind, and presumed by him to be in yours) to which the thing he has said or written was meant as an answer.⁸³

The questions applied in our exegesis of some central biblical passages were based on what we found were probable questions in the minds of the biblical authors:

1. What is the theological significance of ordination (e.g. purpose of God, church, ministry of Christ, divine call, gift of the Spirit)?
2. For which office or function is ordination practised?
3. What authority does ordination convey?
4. How is the selection of an ordinand made? Who decides it?
5. What are the qualifications of an ordinand? What about gender?
6. How are the qualifications examined?
7. How is the ceremony of ordination conducted: by whom, where, when, and how?
8. What function does prayer and imposition of hands have in the ceremony?

⁸¹ A good example of a close reading of a narrative text is L. Turner, *Genesis*, 2000; another example on a prophetic text is B. Wiklander, 'The Mission of God and the Faithfulness of His People', 2009, pp. 277-298.

⁸² The concept derives from the logic of question and answer in R. G. Collingwood, *An Autobiography*, 1939, p. 31. For a brief summary, see B. Wiklander, *Prophecy as Literature: A Text-Linguistic and Rhetorical Approach to Isaiah 2-4*, 1984, p. 28.

⁸³ R. G. Collingwood, *An Autobiography*, 1939, p. 31.

We begin our report by defining the principles of biblical interpretation that we recommend to the Church in its ordination study (chapter 2). We have applied the 'Presuppositions, Principles, and Methods of Bible Study' in the so-called Rio Document (Appendix B). However, the GC-BRI asked us to address the question: 'What view of the Bible, exegesis, and interpretation should the Church agree on, as it studies the theology of ordination and the gender issue?' (Appendix A). We have therefore added some explanatory comments on biblical principles of interpretation.

In order to speak intelligibly about ordination and provide a biblical theology of ordination, as well as addressing the issue of gender in ministry, we have included a survey of the biblical view of appointment for leadership and ministry (chapter 3). Much of the content of the ensuing chapters (chapters 4-7) is based on the outcome of this study of the word of God.

In chapter 4 we outline how the concept of ordination developed after the completion of the New Testament writings around A.D. 100. We will see how it became a sacrament in the Roman Catholic Church and how the Protestant Reformation reacted to this view. Special attention will be given to how ordination was introduced in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Ellen White's view of ordination, and the further development until today.

In chapter 5 we present our understanding of the biblical theology of ordination. This is followed in chapter 6 by our understanding of the gender issue in the ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Then, in chapters 7 and 8, we present our recommendations to the Church based on our study as a whole.

We have understood our task to be that of studying ordination in the Bible and bringing a report to TOSC regarding what we have found. We have therefore not engaged in too much discussion of alternative views within the Church. This approach was facilitated by a remarkable consensus among those who took part in our study process, and it was confirmed by a unanimous endorsement of the TED Executive Committee on 18 November, 2013.

CHAPTER 2

PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

The study by Jan Barna on *Ordination of Women in Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (2012) has provided extensive and convincing evidence that the ‘theory’ or ‘model’ of biblical interpretation that is applied by proponents and opponents is a key factor in achieving consensus on the issue of women’s ordination.⁸⁴ Thus, while we believe that a spiritual understanding of the biblical text as the word of God (1 Cor. 2:6-16) is a divine gift to the disciples of Christ through faith (John 16:5-16) and an answer to our prayer for the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:9-13), we also believe that our thoughts and mental presuppositions as readers and interpreters may either block or open the door for the illumination by the Spirit in our study.⁸⁵

We therefore consider the task suggested by the GC-BRI as being most appropriate: ‘What view of the Bible, exegesis, and interpretation should the Church agree on, as it studies the theology of ordination and the gender issue?’⁸⁶ In the following, we propose an answer to this question. We do so, recognising that, at the meeting of the TOSC, 23 July, 2013, Jiří Moskala, Dean of the Seminary at Andrews University, presented a paper on ‘biblical hermeneutics’ with which we are in fundamental agreement.⁸⁷ Moreover, we also recognise and support the so-called Rio Document on ‘Bible Study: Presuppositions, Principles, and Methods’ (1986), which we have included as Appendix B of the present study.

Biblical interpretation is often referred to as ‘hermeneutics’, but we prefer to use here the expression ‘principles of biblical interpretation’. While the term ‘hermeneutics’ may indeed refer to ‘the theory of interpretation’,⁸⁸ it is also used with reference to a ‘general philosophical discipline’ as well as a ‘sub-discipline of those

⁸⁴ J. Barna, *Ordination of Women in Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 2012. This is a slightly revised and printed edition of *Ordination of Women in Seventh-day Adventist Theology: A Biblical and Theological Analysis and Synthesis of the Debate with Special Attention to Hermeneutical Matters*, A Dissertation Submitted to the University of Bristol and Trinity College in accordance with the Requirements for Award of the Degree of Doctor in Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts, September, 2009 (unpublished). For Barna’s point that ordination is a hermeneutical matter, see J. C. Brunt, ‘Ordination of Women: A Hermeneutical Question’, 1988, pp. 12-14.

⁸⁵ For this fundamental circumstance, see, for example, W. E. Read, *The Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy, and the Church*, 1952, pp. 41-62.

⁸⁶ See Appendix A below.

⁸⁷ J. Moskala, ‘Back to Creation: Toward a Consistent Adventist Creation – Fall – Re-Creation Hermeneutic: Biblical-Theological Reflections on Basic Principles of Biblical Hermeneutics Applied to the Ordination of Women’, 2013.

⁸⁸ W. G. Jeanrond, ‘Hermeneutics’, in: *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, 1990, p. 282.

disciplines among the humanities which have a particular hermeneutical concern, e.g. biblical and theological or legal studies'.⁸⁹ Ideas are expressed in these disciplines about the Bible and the process of interpretation⁹⁰ that have limited relevance for Seventh-day Adventist principles of reading, interpreting and understanding the biblical text.⁹¹ Furthermore, we note that 'hermeneutics' is used sparingly in official Church documents and may have an academic flavour.⁹²

Since Seventh-day Adventists hold the Bible as 'only creed',⁹³ the principles of biblical interpretation are fundamental for our task.⁹⁴ Due to the size and scope of our study, however, we must limit ourselves here to issues encountered in our study of ordination. What follows, therefore, is a highly *selective* presentation which by no means claims to provide a theory of biblical interpretation and methods of exegesis. Overall, our study has benefitted from previous Adventist efforts on biblical interpretation,⁹⁵ and in the actual treatment of the texts we have applied principles that we understand to be the consensus of the Church.⁹⁶ As members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we accept the historical-grammatical-theological method of interpreting and understanding the Bible.⁹⁷ We reject the historical-critical method, which excludes the existence of God, doubts the accuracy of the biblical record, and often relies on arbitrary distinctions between early and later parts of the text before us.

The present chapter underlines that the conditions for reaching consensus on the matter of ordination are: (a) *submission to the clear teaching of the Bible*, even if it means changing what has become customary and traditional, and (b) *a valid*

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ For a survey, see *ibid.*, pp. 282-24.

⁹¹ As exemplified, for example, in: *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, G. W. Reid (ed.), 2005.

⁹² It is however used frequently in publications by the General Conference Biblical Research Institute: see, for example *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics*, G. M. Hyde (ed.), 1974; note the articles by Baldwin, Paulien, Caesar, and Pfandl in: *Understanding Scripture*, G. W. Reid (ed.), 2005, pp. 15-26; 245-270, 271-284, 309-328. See also J. Moskala, 'Back to Creation', 2013.

⁹³ For the historical roots of this concept, see 4.4.5.

⁹⁴ Cf. Moskala's point that 'establishing principles of interpretation of the Bible is crucial in order to arrive at an accurate meaning of the Scriptures concerning gender relationships in Christ' ('Back to Creation', 2013, p. 2).

⁹⁵ See particularly R. M. Davidson, 'Biblical Interpretation', 2000, pp. 58-104; *Understanding Scripture*, G. W. Reid (ed.), 2005. For a systematic approach to the Bible and its interpretation from an SDA perspective, as well as 'a biblical hermeneutics', see N. R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena*, 2003, especially pp. 229-385, 519-716. For a practical handbook in exegesis and interpretation, see L. J. Gugliotto, *Handbook for Bible Study*, 1995.

⁹⁶ See the so-called Rio Document 1986 (Appendix B below).

⁹⁷ As outlined in J. Moskala, 'Back to Creation', 2013, pp. 2-16.

method of reading and understanding the Bible and applying it to the faith, life, and mission of the Church.

2.1 The Bible Our Only Creed

Any attempt to reach consensus on Seventh-day Adventist principles of biblical interpretation does well to take the statement of *Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs* as point of departure. Its preamble declares that ‘Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as *their only creed*’, and the first statement concerns the Bible:

The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, *the authoritative revealer of doctrines*, and *the trustworthy record of God’s acts in history*. (2 Peter 1:20, 21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 4:12)⁹⁸

The implied fundamental principle of *sola Scriptura* enunciated here is ‘a principle of religious authority which gained great visibility during the Protestant Reformation’, where it was employed to ‘point to the Bible as the only normative authority for Christian belief and practice’.⁹⁹ This principle was applied by the Reformers and their later followers with varying degrees of consistency. The Seventh-day Adventists had their roots in the radical Protestant and American Restorationist movement where the *sola Scriptura* principle was of paramount importance.¹⁰⁰

Thus, we approach our task in the conviction that valid conclusions for the Church regarding ordination are arrived at primarily by a comprehensive study of the Bible, ‘our only creed’, ‘the authoritative revealer of doctrines’, and ‘the trustworthy record of God’s acts in history’. This means that the nearly 2,000 years old tradition of the Christian church on ordination, including the ca. 160 years old practice in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, needs to be compared with and tested by the Bible as our only creed, and as needed, *changes* should be made accordingly.

⁹⁸ *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 2010, p. 156 (emphasis supplied).

⁹⁹ For a valuable survey of the *sola Scriptura* principle, its intent and motivation, as well as definitions of how it relates to the authority, necessity, clarity and sufficiency of Scripture, see K. Donkor, ‘*Sola Scriptura* Principle and the Reformation’, 2013, pp. 7-12.

¹⁰⁰ See 4.4.5 and 4.6.1 below.

With regard to the issue of 'ordination' in the Bible, however, this raises an important question: How does the *sola Scriptura* principle apply to a practice about which the Bible is rather silent and explicitly states very little?

The relevance of this practical question cannot be ignored. In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, decisions regarding church organisation, including ordination of ministers, elders and deacons/deaconesses, have often been made in our history based to a large extent on practical needs in order to accomplish our mission.¹⁰¹ Good examples of such practical considerations are the conference form of organisation and the representative form of governance that are central to the function of the General Conference. The Church uses these models knowing that none of them are explicitly stated in the Bible. However, our review of the Church's history of ordination¹⁰² will demonstrate that the pioneers who devised our initial view of ordination in the 1850's were abundantly clear that the church organisation, the organised ministry and ordination, had to be founded on *biblical principles*.¹⁰³ Thus, while there are no instructions to ordain gospel ministers in the Bible, we need to identify and understand the biblical principles through which our ordination practices can be truly defined as 'biblical'.

What, then, did the pioneers mean by 'biblical principles'? The English term 'principle' may have various meanings,¹⁰⁴ and it seems that the pioneers also used the term in different ways.¹⁰⁵ We will use 'principle' here as a reference to *a central belief, value or rule in the Bible which is authoritative to Christians and has a place within the overall biblical theology of ordination*.

On what basis, then, can a principle be said to be 'biblical'? Normally, we would answer that it needs to be *explicitly stated or implied* in the Protestant canon

¹⁰¹ R. W. Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant*, 1979, pp. 86-103; 151-165, 267-281. For the issues regarding ordination, see G. R. Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil: The Development of Adventist Church Structure*, 2001, pp. 28-66

¹⁰² See 4.6 below.

¹⁰³ See J. White, 'Gospel Order', 6 December, 1853, p. 173 (see the quotation in 4.6.1). The reliance on biblical principles is advocated by, among others, E. Müller in his article 'Hermeneutical Guidelines for Dealing with Theological Questions', 2012, pp. 1-7.

¹⁰⁴ See *Collins Dictionary of the English Language*, 1982, p. 1163.

¹⁰⁵ As 'a standard or rule of personal conduct', Ellen White makes frequent use of the term 'principle' in her writings. In using it, she may at times imply a related meaning, namely 'a fundamental or general truth or law' which serves as a guide that should be followed. An example is when she says that 'the people of God must move from a settled principle, making it their first principle to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness and then go on from light to still greater light' (id., *This Day with God*, 1979, p. 50).

of the Bible.¹⁰⁶ As James White for the first time among the Sabbatarian Adventists raised the issue of ordination in December, 1853, one such biblical principle was 'gospel order'. He demonstrated in a series of articles in the *Review and Herald* that the Bible clearly spoke about 'order' in the church and that this required formally recognised 'gospel ministers'.¹⁰⁷ He quoted various instances in the *Authorised King James Version* of the Bible, including some instances where leaders in the New Testament were 'ordained' by prayer and imposition of hands.¹⁰⁸ Thus, his view that 'gospel order' required some sort of formally recognised ministerial worker force was clearly 'biblical' in that it was explicitly referred to in the Bible.

However, it is not enough for a principle to be mentioned in the Bible. It also needs to be authoritative for Christians by having a place within the overall biblical theology of ordination. This is the area where the present study seeks to make a contribution.

The search for a theological view of ordination based on the Bible as a whole leads us back to the issue of how we may address principles and practices that are not clearly stated in Scripture.¹⁰⁹ We believe there is guidance on this matter in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

In the context of the move towards a formal church organisation in the 1850's and early 1860's, James White devised a principle that allowed early Adventists to 'make decisions on topics that were not adequately covered in Scripture'.¹¹⁰ In a recent study of this development, it has been noted that Ellen White agreed with her husband.¹¹¹ She said:

The Lord has shown that gospel order has been too much feared and neglected. Formality should be shunned; but, in so doing, order should not be neglected. There is order in heaven. There was order in the church when Christ was upon the earth, and after His departure order was strictly observed among His apostles. And now in these last days, while God is bringing His

¹⁰⁶ Although there are various biblical 'canons' in the history of the Christian church, Adventists have grown accustomed to think of the Bible as existing in only one canonical version. The reasons why our church follows the Protestant canon are however essential. See, for example, G. A. Klingbeil, 'The Text and the Canon of Scripture', 2005, pp. 91-110.

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, J. White, 'Gospel Order', 6 December, 1853, p. 173.

¹⁰⁸ More details are provided in 4.6.1 below.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. E. Müller, 'Hermeneutical Guidelines for Dealing with Theological Questions', 2012, pp. 1-7.

¹¹⁰ We are indebted to George Knight for sharing his manuscript on this matter, which is planned to be published in 2013. Knight's article has the title 'James White Finds the Answer: The Hermeneutical Key that Allowed Early Adventists to Make Decisions on Topics not Adequately Covered in Scripture'. Our page numbering refers to his manuscript.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

children into the unity of the faith, there is more real need of order than ever before.¹¹²

Knight then calls attention to a very significant *change* in James White's principles of biblical interpretation, and he describes this change as follows:

First, [James White] had moved beyond the biblical literalism of his earlier days when he believed that the Bible must explicitly spell out each aspect of church organization. In 1859 he argued that 'we should not be afraid of that system which is not opposed by the Bible, and is approved by sound sense'.¹¹³ Thus he had come to a new hermeneutic. *He had moved from a principle of Bible interpretation that held that the only things Scripture allowed were those things it explicitly approved to a hermeneutic that approved of anything that did not contradict the Bible and good sense.* That shift was essential to the creative steps in church organization he would advocate in the 1860s.

That revised hermeneutic, however, put White in opposition to those, such as J. Frisbie and R. F. Cottrell, who continued to maintain a literalistic approach to the Bible that demanded that it explicitly spell something out before the church could accept it. To answer that mentality, White noted that nowhere in the Bible did it say that Christians should have a weekly paper, a steam printing press, build places of worship, or publish books. He went on to argue that the 'living church of God' needed to move forward with prayer and common sense.¹¹⁴

White's second point involves a redefinition of Babylon. The earliest Adventists had approached the concept in relation to oppression and applied it to the existing denominations. As we saw above, White reinterpreted it in terms of confusion and applied it to his fellow Sabbatarians. By 1859 his goal had advanced to steering the Advent cause between the twin pitfalls of Babylon as oppressor and Babylon as confusion.

White's third point concerned mission. Sabbatarians must organize if they were to fulfil their responsibility to preach the three angels' messages.

Thus between 1856 and 1859 White shifted *from a literalistic perspective to one much more pragmatic.* Why, we might ask, did he make such a move while others among the Sabbatarian ministers remained rooted in their biblical (or, more accurately, unbiblical) literalism? I would suggest that the difference had to do with the fact that he was the one who felt the bulk of the responsibility for the Sabbatarian movement and had to make sure that it prospered in its mission in the real world.¹¹⁵

Later on, in 1859, as James White engaged in a heated debate with one of his opponents, R. F. Cottrell,¹¹⁶ he repeated his principle and wrote that '*we believe it safe to be governed by the following RULE. All means which, according to sound*

¹¹² E. G. White, *Early Writings*, 1882, p. 97.

¹¹³ J. White, 'Yearly Meetings', 1859, p. 68.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ G. R. Knight, 'James White Finds the Answer', 2013, pp. 6-7 (some emphases supplied).

¹¹⁶ Cf. 4.6.3.

judgment, will advance the cause of truth, and are not forbidden by plain scripture declarations, should be employed'.¹¹⁷ Knight makes the comment that 'with that declaration White placed himself fully on the platform of a pragmatic, common sense approach to all issues not definitely settled in the Bible'.¹¹⁸ Later on in the same year, James White also stated that 'every Christian duty is not given in the Scriptures'.¹¹⁹ His pragmatic rule of interpretation was accepted by his wife Ellen and the early Seventh-day Adventists.¹²⁰

In view of this, we advocate the following approach: A theology of ordination must be founded on the Bible *as a whole*. Explicit and implicit biblical *principles* need to be our ultimate guide in mapping out what biblical ordination means. However, in areas where the Bible is silent, or vague, or explicitly states very little, 'all means which, according to sound judgment, will advance the cause of truth, and are not forbidden by plain scripture declarations, should be employed'. Implied in the application of this rule is, however, that (a) a clear distinction needs to be made between the *theology*, which is explicitly and implicitly 'biblical', and the *church practices*, which are applied according to James White's common-sensical and practical rule; and that (b) as far as possible, biblical *principles* should be followed.

James White's rule of interpretation and application of the *sola Scriptura* principle allows the Church to develop a biblical *theology* of ordination based on the explicit and implicit word of the Bible *as a whole*. It also allows the Church to *affirm calling* and put together a *practice* by which special leadership roles in the Church may be recognised through a formal process of appointment and induction. However, above all, it assists the Church in a fundamental way in dealing with the issue of women's ordination to the gospel ministry. On this latter point, George Knight says in his article:

Several concerns directly relate to James White finding the hermeneutical key to issues not conclusively settled in the Bible, particularly those of women in ministry and the ordination of women. The first is that there is no biblical text or texts on either side of the discussion over women that conclusively settle the issues. If there were, the debate would be over.

Second, there are those, of course, who appeal to such texts as 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 as the final answer. However,

¹¹⁷ J. White, 'Making Us a Name', 1860, pp. 180-182 (emphasis supplied).

¹¹⁸ G. R. Knight, 'James White Finds the Answer', 2013, p. 9.

¹¹⁹ It is recorded that James White stated this according to the minutes signed by Joseph Bates (chair) and Uriah Smith (secretary), in: 'Business Proceedings of B. C. Conference', *R&H*, 16:22, 16 October, 1860, p. 169.

¹²⁰ See, for example, E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, 1885-1909, p. 211.

such an appeal not only has its own exegetical issues but is very problematic for Seventh-day Adventists. I demonstrate in another connection that such argumentation merely proves that Ellen White is a false prophet. After all, she spoke publicly all over the place and most certainly had 'authority over men'.¹²¹

The natural fallback argument to that logic is that Ellen White was a prophet rather than a minister. But that response contains the seeds of its own destruction in that it violates the plain words of scripture, which says 'woman' rather than 'every woman except a female prophet'. Here we must ask the question of just how much violence against the Bible is allowed in our attempt to defend a certain, preferred reading of a text.

Given Ellen White's prominence in Adventism, passages such as 1 Timothy 2:11-12 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 had to be addressed early on and continuously in the denomination's history. Up until the time when the ordination of women issue arose, the Adventist response had been consistent. Namely, that the counsel given about women was rooted in the custom of time and place and was not to be woodenly applied in a world in which conditions had changed. Thus, as *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* puts it: 'Because of the general lack of private and public rights then accorded women, Paul felt it to be expedient to give this counsel to the church. Any severe breach of accepted social custom brings reproach upon the church. ... In the days of Paul, custom required that women be very much in the background.'¹²² The Adventist unanimity on the cultural interpretation of the passages, of course, hit a brick wall when the agenda of supporting the validity of Ellen White's ministry ran head-on into the agenda of keeping women 'in their place'. As might be expected, the new agenda of some has led to some interesting exegetical exercises that would have been strange fire indeed to James White, J. N. Andrews, J. H. Waggoner, and the other early Adventists, who consistently supported the cultural understanding of the disputed passages.¹²³

James White's principle is still exercising an impact in our church. The current *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* concludes that the 'church organisation is based on God's principles' and outlines (a) 'the Biblical Basis for Organisation', (b) 'The Importance of Organisation', (c) 'The Purposes of Organisation', and (d) 'The New Testament Model'.¹²⁴ Organisation and 'ordination' in the New Testament are explained through the growing practical needs in pursuing the mission of God:

The Saviour's commission to the church to carry the gospel to all the world (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15) meant not only preaching the gospel but ensuring the welfare of those who accepted that message. This involved

¹²¹ G. R. Knight, 'Proving More than Intended', 1996, pp. 26-28.

¹²² *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, 1957, pp. 295-296.

¹²³ Cf. D. Fortin, 'What Did Early Adventist Pioneers Think about Women in Ministry?', 8 April, 2010. See also, T. N. Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 2011, *passim*.

¹²⁴ *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 2010, pp. 26-28.

shepherding as well as housing the flock, and also meeting relationship problems. Such a situation called for organisation.

At first the apostles constituted a council that directed the activities of the church from Jerusalem (Acts 6:2; 8:14). When the company there became so large that the administration of its practical affairs became a problem, the church appointed deacons to care for its business (Acts 6:2-4).

Later other congregations grew up, not only in Asia but also in Europe, and this called for further organisational steps. In Asia Minor elders were ordained 'in every church' (Acts 14:23). Extension of the work throughout the various provinces of the Roman Empire called for organisation of churches into what might be called conferences (Gal. 1:2). Thus, step by step, organisation grew in the early church. *As needs arose, God directed the leaders of His work* so that, in counsel with the church, they developed a form of organisation that safeguarded the interests of the work.¹²⁵

In this important quotation, we note the phrases 'as needs arose' and 'God directed the leaders of His work'. The Church expresses here the view that organisation and ordination are responses to practical needs arising in the course of time, and that God directed these responses. The New Testament records of this *development* should therefore be a central point of interest in our study.

The integrity of the Church demands faithfulness to its declared conviction that ordination, too, must be settled on the basis of *sola Scriptura*. In principle, this means not being bound by church tradition (in this case both the long tradition of the Christian church from New Testament times around A.D. 100, and the shorter Seventh-day Adventist tradition from ca. 1850 until today). It also means that the present study can only be true to the Bible by temporarily (and perhaps continually) suspending initial and *a priori* assumptions that are not stated or implied in the Bible: e.g. statements on ordination by Adventist church pioneers, decisions by GC sessions and various church committees, and the policies and manuals that are used today to regulate ordination. Our task is not to study the Bible in order to find evidence for our current practices, but to search for an understanding of God's will that may go beyond our current practices. The principle of *sola Scriptura* means that the Bible stands above the Church, and, as we read it as church leaders and members, we must assume the role of being *servants* of God, being called to allow the Bible to 'teach, rebuke, correct, and train' the Church 'in righteousness' so that its members 'may be thoroughly equipped for every good work' (2 Tim. 3:16). The fundamental principle must be, as Ellen White put it, that 'the people of God must

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 28 (emphasis supplied).

move from a settled principle, making it their first principle to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness and then go on from light to still greater light'.¹²⁶

Thus, in the present study of ordination, moving from the settled principle of *sola Scriptura*, we believe it is appropriate to make it our *first principle* to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and then to establish the *biblical principles* that are *authoritative* for the Church because they have a place in the context of the grand narrative of God's mission in the Bible as a *whole*.

In the present study, we will see that much is left unsaid in the Bible about 'ordination'. Thus, by a strict application of *sola Scriptura*, some aspects of ordination may not be possible to settle. In such a case, however, James White's principle of accepting any practice for the promotion of the *mission of the church* that does *not contradict the Bible and sound sense* is useful. This is in itself an implied *biblical principle*:

1. Christ defined faithfulness to the mission of God as a vital part of the mission of the church (cf. Rev. 14:12). This resulted for Paul in practices about which he could say 'I have become all things to all people, that I might *by all means* save some' (1 Cor. 9:22). Using 'all means' that promote God's mission is consequently a biblical principle, as long as it is not contradicted by the Bible.

2. The decision by the young church and the Holy Spirit at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) was not commanded in the Scriptures but did not, in the minds of the early Christian leaders, *contradict* the Scriptures. The purpose of the decision was 'not to trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God' (15:19), to free them from the obligation of following the Mosaic law, and to 'impose no further burden on [non-Jewish Christians] than abstinence from things polluted by idols, from fornication, and from whatever has been strangled and from blood' (15:20, 28-29). The decision 'seemed good' to the gathered church representatives and the Holy Spirit who had expressed himself to them in word and deed (15:28). It is a biblical principle, therefore, to introduce new rules and practices as long as they do not contradict the Bible.

3. Many books in the Bible praise sound sense and call it 'wisdom'. Paul's biblical writings are defined by Peter as written 'according to the wisdom given him' (2 Peter 3:15). Thus exercising wisdom in discerning the will of God is a biblical

¹²⁶ E. G. White, *This Day with God*, 1979, p. 50.

value. To James wisdom was a gift of God (James 1:5), and he defines wisdom as opposed to envy and selfish ambition in that it is 'pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality and hypocrisy' (3:17). The sound sense and judgement of God's people derives from being 'in Christ', 'in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge' (Col. 2:2), and Paul prays for his fellow Christians that they 'may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding' (Col. 1:7; cf. Eph. 1:17). Exercising wisdom or sound sense is a gift of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:8). Thus, using spirit-filled, sound sense in our biblical interpretation of ordination is a biblical principle.

To conclude the argument, the principle of *sola Scriptura* is fundamental. Only what is stated explicitly or implicitly in the Bible as a whole is 'our creed' and 'the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested'.¹²⁷ If, in order to meet the biblical requirement of 'gospel order', however, practices are being used that are not explicitly stated in the Bible, these may be adopted by (a) exercising divinely given sound sense and wisdom, (b) making sure that the practices applied do not contradict the Bible, and (c) applying the purpose of seeking all possible means for the Church to accomplish its mission from God.

The writings of the New Testament, which are eminently important for a study of 'ordination', were written and first read by believers who did not yet have a New Testament to refer to. Their decisions on church order and ordination, being suitable for their times and needs, would have been agreed upon without making reference to explicit or implicit statements in the Bible as we now have it, but (a) they were guided by a strong commitment to God's mission, (b) they ensured that what they brought into the life and practice of the Church did not contradict the Old Testament Scriptures and the teaching of Jesus and the apostles, and (c) they ensured that the spiritual gift of sound sense and wisdom was with them.

2.2 A Christ-Centred View of the Bible

Accepting the revelation of God's will by the Bible alone¹²⁸ connects our church with the Protestant Reformation and its 'foundational principles of biblical interpretation'. These are outlined by Richard M. Davidson as follows:¹²⁹

¹²⁷ *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 2010, pp. 156, 161.

¹²⁸ Cf. N. R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena*, 2003, pp. 166-168; F. Hasel, 'Presuppositions in the Interpretation of Scripture', 2005, pp. 36-37.

A. The Bible and the Bible Only

1. The primacy of Scripture¹³⁰
2. The sufficiency of Scripture¹³¹

B. The Totality of Scripture

1. Inseparable union of the divine and human¹³²
2. The Bible is the word of God¹³³

C. The Analogy (or Harmony) of Scripture

1. Scripture is its own interpreter¹³⁴
2. The consistency of Scripture¹³⁵
3. The clarity of Scripture¹³⁶

D. 'Spiritual Things Spiritually Discerned'

1. The role of the Holy Spirit¹³⁷
2. The spiritual life of the interpreter¹³⁸

We wish to add to this list 'Christ as the Content and Lord of the Bible'.¹³⁹ The view that Martin Luther in some respects may have had a flawed understanding of this principle,¹⁴⁰ and that he is being followed by many evangelical theologians, provides no reason for Adventists to disregard or diminish this fundamental principle. The concept of 'the Bible alone' is closely linked to 'Christ alone'. The Bible is defined by Christ as 'witnessing about him' (John 5:39) and Christ as 'the Word of God' (Rev. 19:11-13). The centrality of Christ in the Bible was also strongly emphasised by Ellen White:

In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary.¹⁴¹

¹²⁹ R. M. Davidson, 'Biblical Interpretation', 2000, pp. 60-68.

¹³⁰ Ibid., pp. 60-61. Cf. N. R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena*, 2003, pp. 668-674; P. M. van Bemmelen, 'The Authority of Scripture', 2005, pp. 75-89.

¹³¹ R. M. Davidson, 'Biblical Interpretation', 2000, pp. 61-62. Cf. N. R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena*, 2003, pp. 663-664; F. Hasel, 'Presuppositions in the Interpretation of Scripture', 2005, p. 37.

¹³² R. M. Davidson, 'Biblical Interpretation', 2000, p. 61.

¹³³ Ibid., pp. 63-64.

¹³⁴ Ibid., pp. 64-65.

¹³⁵ Ibid., pp. 62-63. Cf. N. R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena*, 2003, pp. 674-677; F. Hasel, 'Presuppositions in the Interpretation of Scripture', 2005, pp. 37-39.

¹³⁶ R. M. Davidson, 'Biblical Interpretation', 2000, pp. 65-66.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 67.

¹³⁸ Ibid., pp. 67-68.

¹³⁹ Cf. F. Hasel, 'Presuppositions in the Interpretation of Scripture', pp. 40-43.

¹⁴⁰ See P. Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 1966, pp. 79-81; cf. the cautions in F. Hasel, 'Presuppositions in the Interpretation of Scripture', 2005, pp. 40-43.

¹⁴¹ E. G. White, *Gospel Workers*, 1915, p. 315.

However, what do we mean when we refer to the Christ-centred principle of interpreting the biblical text? We suggest it means the overarching theological framework of *the Bible as a whole* and that it has two parts, one is *ontological* and the other is *missiological, ecclesiological, and eschatological*.

On one hand, 'Christ' refers to his suffering, death and resurrection by which he *reveals* the essence of God as a Being that has all power, even the power of giving his divine life as a substitute for man's life, and thus revealing that his primary concern is to have an eternal, loving communion with lost human beings (e.g. Matt. 28:18; John 3:16; Col. 2:2-3, 9-10; Phil. 2:1-11; Rev. 21:1-5). This is 'the truth as it is in Jesus' (Eph. 4:11-16, 21) which is proclaimed through the gospel.

On the other hand, 'Christ' represents the on-going work of the Trinity, of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who have a mission to complete. *God's mission* is driven by his love and faithfulness to his creation and is therefore not completed until the vision of John in Revelation 21:1-5 has become reality.¹⁴² God's mission is to accomplish the Plan of Redemption in the context of the Great Controversy. Thus, in a Christ-centred view of the Bible, (a) the ontological dimension is that Christ *reveals* the mystery of who God is (cf. 'the mystery of godliness' in 1 Tim. 3:16); (b) the eschatological dimension is that he *accomplishes* God's decisive victory over the enemy, defeating evil, suffering, death, which will be completed at the *coming* of the Lord (cf. 'the mystery of God that will be accomplished' in Rev. 10:7); and (c) the missiological and ecclesiological dimensions are that he *founds* the church which is to be his servant doing his work in the world (cf. the 'profound mystery' of the relationship between Christ and 'the members of his body' in Eph. 5:25-32) until God's mission is accomplished (Rev. 21:1-5). Understood in this way, 'Christ' is central in the kingdom of God from the creation (Genesis) to the new creation (Revelation), and this has a particular bearing on being a *Seventh-day Adventist* with reference to the Sabbath/Creation and the Coming/Advent of the Lord.¹⁴³

Defining a Christ-centred principle of biblical interpretation, therefore, means that the function of Christ in the mission of God and in the context of the Bible as a whole is an authoritative principle. Christ is God's servant in establishing God's aim

¹⁴² For the centrality of this theme in Revelation, see B. Wiklander. 'The Mission of God and the Faithfulness of His People', 2009, pp. 280-281, 298.

¹⁴³ This line of thought will be further developed in chapter 5 below, following Jan Barna, 'Towards a Biblical-Systematic Theology of Ordination', 2013.

of having communion with man in the sanctuary of a new earth and a new heaven (Rev. 21:1-5). As the head of the church, Christ is calling the church to serve him and work with him in carrying out the same aim. *Ordination must therefore be understood as the process by which Christ calls and inducts believers to ministry for the purpose of accomplishing the mission of God.*

2.3 The Interpreter's Openness, Faith, Knowledge and Rationality

There is no statement in the Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs that defines the role of the Church, especially its leaders, pastors, and committees in relationship to reading and interpreting the Bible.¹⁴⁴ An attempt by the Church to remedy the need for guidance in biblical interpretation is however found in the so-called Rio Document on 'Bible Study: Presuppositions, Principles, and Methods', which was approved by the GC Annual Council in 1986.¹⁴⁵ One of the many valuable statements in this document is the following:

The investigation of Scripture must be characterized by a sincere desire to discover and obey God's will and word rather than to seek support or evidence for preconceived ideas.

This principle is of particular importance for a study of 'ordination' in the Bible. The reason for its importance is not only to be found in the fact that the issue of women's ordination has high profile and has been addressed by the Church since 1968 without a permanent solution being yet in sight. Its importance is above all due to the fact that, since the Church developed its view of ordination in the years before 1863, it has not applied ordination to the gospel ministry in the context of a biblical theology of ordination which, to use the words of the Rio document, was based on an 'investigation of Scripture characterised by a sincere desire to discover and obey God's will and word rather than to seek support or evidence for preconceived ideas'. We see the present study as an attempt to move in such a direction.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. B. Wiklander, 'Our View of the Bible: Models of Understanding the Word of God', Paper presented at the Trans-European Division Pastors Council, 22 August, 2012 (unpublished); R. M. Davidson, 'The Role of the Church in the Interpretation of Scripture', 2013.

¹⁴⁵ See Appendix B below.

Another valuable aspect of the Rio Document is the emphasis on the spiritual approach to interpretation, as set forth under the 'Principles for Approaching the Interpretation of Scripture'.¹⁴⁶

When the document states that 'the Bible is not like other books' due to its 'indivisible blend of the divine and the human', it needs to be underlined that, while the Bible is indeed unique, it is always a text in human language, and interpreters need to be more fully aware of what that means in the act of interpretation (see especially 2.4 below).

Concerning the use of human reason, the cautions of the document are well taken. And yet, it should be obvious that the authority of the Bible as a revealer of God's will also depends on our 'norms of justification, rationality, and knowledge ... represented by such entities as reason, experience, memory, intuition, and inference'.¹⁴⁷ Such norms do not necessarily derive from the Bible but from the human brain and the individual social setting of which a human is a part and receives his/her education.¹⁴⁸ Therefore, humility and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit are necessary prerequisites to steer human reason in biblical interpretation.

Human reason is an *a priori* condition for being able to read and have at least a rudimentary understanding of the Bible at all, because it includes our command of language and the mental process of understanding the meaning of texts. This condition for a productive interpretation of the Bible must not be diminished in our efforts to protect the Bible's obvious authority. The Rio Document states well that 'God intends that human reason be used to its fullest extent, but within the context and under the authority of His Word rather than independent of it'. This statement is however referring to the beliefs of the interpreter and assumes that he/she accepts the propositional truth of the Bible texts and ensures that the outcome of the process of interpretation harmonises with that truth. However, the statement does not cover the fact that the 'norms of justification, rationality and knowledge represented by reason, experience, memory, intuition and inference' (W. Abraham) are only in a limited way included in the propositional truth of the Bible and that we therefore need to accept that, while the Bible text 'informs' the reason of the interpreter, the reason of the interpreter also 'informs' the text of the Bible in the process of reading and

¹⁴⁶ Cf. R. M. Davidson, 'Biblical Interpretation', 2000, pp. 66-68; N. R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena*, 2003, pp. 709-711; F. Hasel, 'Presuppositions in the Interpretation of Scripture', 2005, pp. 33-35.

¹⁴⁷ W. J. Abraham, *Canon and Criterion in Christian Theology from the Fathers to Feminism*, 1998, p. 1.

¹⁴⁸ See, for example, D. Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, 2012.

interpretation. If the Bible is to be its own interpreter, a spirit-driven interpreter needs to apply his/her reason to it. Moreover, if the interpreter is to come to the Bible with 'a sincere desire to discover and obey God's will and word rather than to seek support or evidence for preconceived ideas', as the Rio Document rightly says, then he/she needs to *be aware of his/her presuppositions* – including his/her assumed view of the Bible, which is often taken for granted as a given – and *sincerely subject them to unbiased scrutiny*. Only then can the presuppositions be tested by what the Bible says and is, and a more valid approach to interpretation can be found.

Why is it important to say this? Jan Barna's study *Women's Ordination in Seventh-day Adventist Theology* has demonstrated that many Adventist Bible interpreters in the area of ordination have been influenced by an un-reflected, traditional system of interpretation common to American Pietistic Evangelicalism since the 18th century.¹⁴⁹ It has philosophical underpinnings from 'the positivist assumptions of the Scottish Common Sense Philosophy or the objectivist Baconian method in particular but also generally the Enlightenment's rationalistic framework'.¹⁵⁰ This means that it is focussed on the text as an objective entity which provides facts and propositional truth, so that the preferred way of reading and understanding the Bible becomes the literalist approach.¹⁵¹ There is ample evidence that this view was not endorsed or welcomed by Ellen White and her son and assistant Willie White.¹⁵²

Barna further points out that, while Adventist interpreters in the area of ordination tend to have a high degree of confidence that their respective methods of interpretation are rooted in 'the Reformation hermeneutics', the approaches showing affinities with the philosophical common sense thinking and inductive Baconianism 'are rather a deviation from the Reformation'. Barna says:

¹⁴⁹ J. Barna, *Ordination of Women in Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, pp. 286-291.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 269ff., 290-291.

¹⁵¹ Note the comment by R. M. Davidson, that 'the consistent example of the Bible writers shows that the Scriptures are to be taken in their plain, literal sense, unless a clear and obvious figure is intended' ('Biblical Interpretation', 2000, p. 65). This may be important to prevent an exaggerated allegorical or symbolic interpretation. However, as a general statement on the meaning in texts, it is simplistic and confusing, since meaning in texts do not depend on the literal or figurative function of statements, but on the author's communicative intention which may be expressed in entire books or discourses where only a careful contextual analysis may allow the reader/interpreter to understand it. Besides the objective nature of the text, there is also need for an awareness of the process of understanding.

¹⁵² See the collection of material on this matter in G. R. Knight, *Reading Ellen White: How to Understand and Apply Her Writings*, 1997, pp. 105-112.

European Reformations of the 16th century began with questioning the innate rational abilities of humans. The doctrine of sin and depravity was one of their central doctrines. Reformers denied that people had natural moral sense by which they can understand what is true. The doctrine meant that human nature was radically depraved and nothing escaped from the curse of sin, not even the human mind. Reason, rationality and language were equally subject to the limitations of a sinful world as other areas of creation. However, the Scottish Common Sense Philosophy, as indeed the entire Enlightenment movement, begins by assuming just the opposite; it perceives the mind and understanding to be somehow immune from the impact of sin. For Common Sense Philosophy the reader's 'sanctified' understanding is taken for granted provided one has faith and collects the relevant data. In this scheme the reader's horizon or presuppositions are not even considered since it is assumed that every 'sane and unbiased person of common sense could and must perceive the same things'.¹⁵³ The questions of epistemology, language, understanding and pre-understanding thus tend to be marginalised if not completely overlooked by all methodologies being shaped by a greater or lesser degree by common sense assumptions.¹⁵⁴

What is overlooked in the literalist approach is the unavoidable interaction between the text and the reader and the fact that individual statements in written texts receive their true meaning *from their context*. The interaction between text and reader occurs both (a) in the *contemporary* situation when the Bible text is being read, but (b) it also occurred in the *historical* situation of the author writing about the world (revealed or earthly) to his intended readers through the original text in Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek.¹⁵⁵ While we do not advocate an exclusive emphasis on the contemporary reader-interpreter in our principles of interpretation, since this may lead to subjectivity and threatens the authority of the Bible, as many Adventist authors have rightly pointed out,¹⁵⁶ the *interaction* of text and reader in interpretation remains vital. Adventist principles of biblical interpretation cannot ignore the reader, because, as Ellen White puts it: 'A true knowledge of the Bible can be gained only through the aid of that Spirit by whom the word was given'.¹⁵⁷ It is the reader who is aided by the Spirit.

Thus, the Bible reader/interpreter needs to keep in balance the authority of the text, his/her reason, awareness, and scrutiny of any conscious or unconscious

¹⁵³ Quoted from G. M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 2006, p. 111.

¹⁵⁴ J. Barna, *Ordination of Women in Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 2012, pp. 289-290.

¹⁵⁵ See B. Wiklander, *Prophecy as Literature*, 1984, pp. 34-38, 42-43

¹⁵⁶ For example, N. R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena*, 2003, pp. 612, 689.

¹⁵⁷ E. G. White, *Education*, 1903, p. 189.

presupposition, and thus approach the text with an open and receptive mind, to be aided by the Holy Spirit who inspired the Bible authors behind the text.

For a study of ordination in the Bible, this means that the interpreters/church (a) need to be equipped with ‘a sincere desire to discover and obey God’s will and word rather than to seek support or evidence for preconceived ideas’. The interpreters/church (b) need to become *aware* of their/our preconceived ideas on ordination and *recognise* how they flow from wider systems of thought dominating our respective environments, in order to achieve an *open mind* to what the Bible says. The interpreters/church (c) need a *sincere desire* (not a dogmatic obstruction) to *discover* God’s will in his word, rather than using the word to support already held, preconceived, views. Finally, the interpreters/church (d) need to *obey* God’s word and boldly make the *changes* prompted by its teaching – they need to overcome the power of *tradition*.

2.4 The Human Language and Text

An area to which the Rio Document does not give much attention is the matter that has been raised by Jan Barna in his study *Ordination of Women in Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, namely, the theory of language and text. Barna finds that both opponents and proponents of women’s ordination, for example, have weak and more or less deficient understandings of the nature of human language and human production and reception of texts.¹⁵⁸ This is, to be fair, a deficiency in much of past and present biblical scholarship, too, particularly in the historical-critical camp.¹⁵⁹

Why is awareness of the interpreter’s presuppositions on language and text significant? It is because of the unity of the divine and human in the biblical text. Ellen White stated in *The Great Controversy*:

The Bible points to God as its author; yet *it was written by human hands*; and in the varied style of its different books it presents the characteristics of several writers. The truths revealed are all ‘given by inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3:16); yet *they are expressed in words of men*. The Infinite One by His Holy Spirit has shed light into the minds of and hearts of His servants. He has given dreams and visions, symbols and figures; and *those to whom the truth was thus revealed have themselves embodied the thought in human language ... the Bible, with its God-given truths expressed in the language of men, presents a union of the divine and the human ... The testimony is*

¹⁵⁸ J. Barna, *Ordination of Women in Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 2012, pp. 291-304.

¹⁵⁹ As demonstrated in B. Wiklander, *Prophecy as Literature*, 1984, pp. 1-52; cf. E. W. Conrad, *Reading Isaiah*, 1991, pp. 6, 27-33.

conveyed *through the imperfect expression of human language*, yet it is the testimony of God ...¹⁶⁰

Obviously, Ellen White expresses here a view of the Bible which gives as much emphasis on the divine origin and inspiration as it does on the 'human hands', the 'words of men', the 'human language', the 'language of men', and the 'imperfect expression of human language'. Consequently, our biblical interpretation must be based on a comprehensive awareness of the nature of human language and the nature of human texts *as vehicles of communication*, so that we can better understand the biblical texts. While we believe that the Spirit of God guides the prayerful reader, the point of entry into the meaning of the word of God is the text shaped by imperfect human language.

Thus, the divine and the human must be kept in balance, as the Rio Document appropriately states:

The Holy Spirit inspired the Bible writers with thoughts, ideas, and objective information; in turn they expressed these in their own words. Therefore the Scriptures are an indivisible union of human and divine elements, neither of which should be emphasized to the neglect of the other.¹⁶¹

The manner in which we as a church have understood this is strongly reflected in Ellen White's observation:

It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual mind. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the word of God.¹⁶²

We need therefore to apply well-founded theories of language and text,¹⁶³ especially in order to understand how human language works as a means of communication.

A basic distinction in this context is the one between two inter-related levels of language, namely, (a) the language *behaviour* encoded in the text, and (b) the implied language *system*. While the text is before us, the language system shared by the initial users of the text is not. Thus, in order to understand biblical texts, we must connect them with a fluid system of social norms which we are able to grasp only partially, since Biblical Hebrew and Greek are dead languages and exist only in a

¹⁶⁰ E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 1911, pp. 5-7 (emphasis supplied).

¹⁶¹ See Appendix A below.

¹⁶² E. G. White, Manuscript 24, 1886; id., *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, 1958, p. 21.

¹⁶³ See, for example, B. Wiklander, *Prophecy as Literature*, 1984, pp. 26-34, 39-45.

limited number of written texts which are often difficult to date.¹⁶⁴ At several points in the study of biblical ordination, this issue becomes central, for example in establishing the sense of the Hebrew *mashal be* in Genesis 3:16 (commonly translated 'rule over', based on its predominant use in later 'royal' contexts), the meaning of the Greek *kefale*, 'head' or 'origin', in 1 Corinthians 11:3, and the obscure meaning of the Greek *authenteo* in 1 Timothy 2:12 (NRSV: 'have authority over').¹⁶⁵

Further, the meaning of a text is influenced by *external* and *internal* factors. The *external factors* concern, for example: (a) the author (e.g. identity, situation, intention, perception of the attitude of the readers); (b) the readers or receivers (e.g. identity, situation, reaction); and (c) the universe (e.g. its content both in the real and divine worlds, its relationship to the referential nature of the text).¹⁶⁶ The *internal factors* are: (a) 'features', i.e. any explicit or implicit property of the text; (b) the relationship between the parts and the whole of the text; and (c) structure (the Latin *textus* means 'woven fabric') which may be studied at the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic levels of *coherence* of the text.¹⁶⁷

This is an area where the Bible student needs much humility, thoughtfulness, and spiritual guidance, because instructions on the nature of text and language are only in a very limited way provided by the Bible itself.

Based on our knowledge of the functions of human language and texts,¹⁶⁸ we must refute the idea that biblical texts consist of statements with an objective, 'pure', and exclusively propositional content. Instead, we accept the idea that any statement in a biblical text is a dynamic entity of meaning that interacts with its complete literary context (the book or the Bible as a whole) and with the situational context (if it can be determined from the text itself). This is where the work of the interpreter takes on vital importance: the individual statement, or connected statements in the 'weave' of

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 41.

¹⁶⁵ See the further examples in J. Moskala, 'Back to Creation', 2013, pp. 6-7.

¹⁶⁶ B. Wiklander, *Prophecy as Literature*, 1984, pp. 41-44.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 44-45.

¹⁶⁸ See, for example, J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 1978; D. Breuer, *Einführung in die pragmatische Texttheorie*, 1974; R. de Beaugrande & W. Dressler, *Introduction to Text Linguistics*, 1981; M. Gregory & S. Carroll, *Language and Situation: Language Varieties and their Social Context*, 1978; E. U. Grosse, *Text und Kommunikation: Eine linguistische Einführung in die Funktionen der Texte*, 1976; H. F. Plett, *Textwissenschaft und Textanalyse: Semiotik, Linguistik, Rhetorik*, 1975; S. J. Schmidt, *Texttheorie: Probleme einer Linguistik der sprachlichen Kommunikation*, 1976; P. Watzlawick, J. Beavin Bavelas & D. D. Jackson, *Pragmatics of Human Communication: A Study of Interactional Patterns, Pathologies, and Paradoxes*, 1967; T. Wetterström, *Intention and Communication: An Essay in the Phenomenology of Language*, 1977; K. J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge*, 1998.

the 'text', needs to be understood in *context* (cf. 2.9 below). It should be added, however, that we do not see meaning in texts as 'relative to the encounter of text and reader', which would make interpretation a wholly subjective matter where texts are without fixed meanings. Rather, we believe that the meaning intended by the author is 'independent of our attempts to interpret it' and that there are features in the text that allow a far-reaching validity in interpretation.¹⁶⁹

For our study of ordination, this means that each biblical utterance is read as having a potential meaning until it has been understood from the context of the Bible as a whole, the Old or New Testament as a whole, the book as a whole, and the immediate context as a whole. Thus, if Paul states in 1 Corinthians 14:34 that 'women should be silent in the churches', this needs to be understood in light of the entire letter and, for example, the opposite statement in 11:5 that women publicly 'pray and prophesy' and in 14:5 that he would like 'all of you to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy' which included the brothers and sisters addressed in 12:1.¹⁷⁰

2.5 Original Reader – Universal Reader

Adventist literature on interpretation includes comments on the relationship between the meaning conveyed to the original (or intended) reader and the meaning the same text conveys to us today (the universal meaning).¹⁷¹ It is a fact that written texts like the Bible can have countless readers and the outcome of their reading will depend on rules that determine what is 'readable' (or 'meaningful') to him/her, namely, his/her (a) *foreknowledge* (theories, models), (b) *concerns* (knowledge, issues, problems, interests, needs), and (c) the *process* of reading and method of study (logic, criteria, etc.).¹⁷² Thus, we can conveniently distinguish between the original meaning and the universal (or contemporary) meaning(s).

¹⁶⁹ See K. J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in this Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge*, 1998, p. 9 *et passim*. See also E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 1978, pp. 1-23 *et passim*.

¹⁷⁰ See also the examples in J. Moskala, 'Back to Creation', 2013, pp. 8-9.

¹⁷¹ See, for example, E. Müller, 'Guidelines for the Interpretation of Scripture', 2005, pp. 112-113. To some degree, the issue of whether or not Scripture is 'historically conditioned' or merely 'historically constituted' would belong to this area of study: see, for example, K. Donkor, 'Is Scripture Historically Conditioned?', 2006, pp. 2-5.

¹⁷² B. Wiklander, *Prophecy as Literature*, 1984, p. 27.

The original meaning of a biblical text, i.e. the meaning the text was intended to have by its author in its original historical setting is primary.¹⁷³ That is the meaning we seek to arrive at in our *exegesis* of the biblical text.

Some biblical texts will function well if we say that the original meaning is the same meaning that we receive from the text today: it means that the issues that the text addresses are similar or the same as ours. This is the case with many ethical commands in the Bible, where the Bible is often truly ‘transcultural and transtemporal’.¹⁷⁴ There are other texts, however, where the issues are radically different, often due to different *cultural* values that separate the social environment in which the text was written and our social environment today. For example, when Paul reminds Timothy of ‘the gift of God that is in you through the laying on of my hands’ (2 Tim. 1:6), a modern reader would immediately identify this as related to ordination. The original reader, however, would be aware of the fact that laying on of hands could be used for blessing, healing, forgiveness, authorisation, and at baptism, and that, as a ‘senior apostle’, Paul’s act would probably be acknowledging young Timothy as his representative and carrying his personal authority, as would be the case of a father blessing his son or a teacher acknowledging his disciple.

Another reason for the distance between the original meaning and us may be found in the differences in the *situational* context of the original and contemporary readers. This is something our exegesis needs to deal with. Richard Davidson notes, for example, that ‘certain parts of the Old Testament, in particular the ceremonial and ritual laws and the enforcement of Israel’s civil and theocratic laws, are no longer binding upon Christians’,¹⁷⁵ and his significant advice on ‘scriptural controls for determining permanence’ needs to be considered. He also mentions that ‘often in the context of a passage, the Bible provides controls for us to know when it is appropriate to seek for a principle and substitute another way of working out that same principle’.¹⁷⁶

Davidson gives the example of instructions for slaves and their owners (Eph. 6:5-9) and makes the point that these instructions in the Bible ‘are no longer

¹⁷³ The so-called intentional fallacy, as commonly termed by literary critics, may be relevant for literary studies that focus on texts as autonomous entities, but it certainly has no warrant in a communicative approach to texts (see E.D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 1978, pp. 1-23, especially pp. 11-14) or in an exegetical reading of the Bible (see N. R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena*, 2003, pp. 644-654).

¹⁷⁴ See R. M. Davidson, ‘Biblical Interpretation’, 2000, p. 85.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

specifically valid where slavery does not exist'.¹⁷⁷ We might add that the instructions for slaves and their owners in Scripture are clear examples of cases where the biblical text gives ethical instructions in a setting where the social and cultural norms were not only different from Western societies and culture today, but they were wrong and against the will of God. We know they were against the will of God because this is stated elsewhere in Scripture. For example, the principle of the equal value of human beings is clearly enunciated in Genesis 1:27 and Galatians 3:28 (note also the equality of humans in the Garden of Eden according to Gen. 2); in Jesus' teaching, one of the two supreme commandments requires love for your neighbour (Matt. 22:34-40) and Paul explains this rule in terms of 'love does no harm to its neighbour' (Rom. 13:10); slave-traders are condemned as lawbreakers and sinners in 1 Timothy 1:10 (cf. Ex. 21:16); God's liberation of his people from slavery in Egypt provides a divine model for human freedom and dignity for which the Sabbath is a special sign (Deut. 5:12-15); legal provisions in the Mosaic law aimed at the freedom of slaves (Ex. 21:1-3); Paul encourages slaves to gain their freedom if possible (1 Cor. 7:21).¹⁷⁸ Nevertheless, while rejecting the social norms associated with slavery in the biblical texts, we may still understand the biblical instruction given within the culture of those social norms as a temporary provision to preserve order and submit to the successful promotion of the gospel. A similar understanding of the issue of women's ordination will be outlined later on in the present study.

Another example is that of 'circumcision as a sign of belonging to the Jewish community' which 'has been replaced with baptism in the Christian church', where 'the form, rather than the meaning, is modified'.¹⁷⁹ Although it could be argued that the 'form' is not all that has been replaced, because circumcision affected only men, not women, and its meaning was to follow a command to Abraham, while baptism is to follow Christ, we may still apply the analogy of circumcision/baptism to ordination since one biblical *form* of 'ordination' may disappear and another may replace it. However, from the New Testament perspective of Christ being the Lord of a new covenant with better promises, even the old *meaning* of 'ordination' in the Bible may be replaced by a new meaning. Now, if this has happened in the history of the people of God as recorded in the Bible, it would be appropriate to make it happen

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ For a wider study of this topic, see G. Bourne, *A Condensed Anti-Slavery Bible Argument: By a Citizen of Virginia*, 1845.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

even today. In the case of a cultural or situational gap of some sort – which cannot easily be bridged – the method will include identifying the fundamental principles or purposes behind the written text and then transferring them to our modern setting.

An example may be helpful. Leviticus 19:27 (NIV) says: ‘Do not cut the hair at the sides of your head or clip off the edges of your beard.’ This was clearly addressed to the Israelite male when the Lord spoke to Moses and does not apply as a literal command to Christians today. Judging from the context in Leviticus 19 and what we know of Canaanite culture, the command is intended to prevent the Israelite from following the practises in Canaan where almost everything had a link to idolatry. With this understanding, the command still functions as a reminder to remain faithful to the Lord and avoid actions that tempt us to abandon him.

This principle of interpretation will be important as we study ordination, for many details in the theology of ordination and women’s ordination may relate to a different cultural context and different situations and needs. The foundational principle of ‘the clarity of Scripture’ states on one hand that the meaning of the Bible text is ‘clear and straightforward, able to be grasped by the diligent student’. On the other hand, however, it also makes room for deep study of the historical and cultural context of a biblical passage,¹⁸⁰ as well as to ascertain additional and progressive revelation,¹⁸¹ and the larger literary context.¹⁸²

Another matter that should be considered here is the fact that the ‘original’ Bible texts we are to study are written in Hebrew and Greek. We believe that the authority of Scripture is primarily attached to the original texts and caution should be exercised when using translations. We will see later that this is a relevant principle in our study, for the *King James Version* (from 1611) has probably had a significant historical influence on the issue of ordination by translating a number of Hebrew and Greek words that have rather common meanings with the same, specific and technical term ‘ordain’. For example, the KJV states in Mark 3:13: ‘then [Jesus] ordained twelve’, although the Greek text says that he ‘made’ twelve (the NKJV now has ‘then [Jesus] appointed twelve’). Some might ask, for example, to what extent James White’s promotion of ‘gospel order’ in 1853 was influenced by the passages

¹⁸⁰ See, for example ‘The Rio Document 1986’ (Appendix B below) under (4) Methods of Bible Study, item k; E. Müller, ‘Guidelines for the Interpretation of Scripture’, 2005, pp. 116-117.

¹⁸¹ R. M. Davidson, ‘Biblical Interpretation’, 2000, p. 66.

¹⁸² See, for example, *ibid.*, pp. 74-79, 80; E. Müller, ‘Guidelines for the Interpretation of Scripture’, 2005, pp. 116-126.

he quoted from the KJV regarding 'ordination',¹⁸³ although the original Greek Bible text does not express that sense.

We need to bear in mind in our interpretations of the Bible that human language, Hebrew and Greek, is always imbued with the past culture.¹⁸⁴ The vocabulary, the figures of speech, the various forms of reference to values, beliefs and practices, and the style and accepted rules for 'text production', in both Hebrew and Greek, convey meanings and associations that were not necessarily intended by the authors, and good exegesis of the biblical text takes note of that. This does not threaten the integrity of Scripture but enhances it.

Thus, it will be of major importance in a study of ordination to understand the biblical texts primarily in their original setting, both situational and cultural, and then through exposition to deduce the universal principles that apply to our times.

2.6 The Bible as a Whole – The Old and New Testaments

In our view of the Bible, a corollary of the principle of *sola Scriptura* is the principle *tota Scriptura* or the Bible as a whole. This refers to the essential internal unity of the Bible and gives the basis for the principle of the Bible's self-interpretation, that Scripture is explained by Scripture. The unity of the Bible is not so much something that pertains to the *words* of the Bible, which we have seen are not inspired, but as Seventh-day Adventists we believe that the inspiration of *the authors* shaped their *thoughts*, but that they chose how to express them in their own human language (cf. 2.4 above).

An issue of interpretation concerns the principles that apply to the Reformation principle that 'Scripture interprets Scripture'. We agree with Frank Hasel when he says:

To use Scripture as its own interpreter does not mean indiscriminately stringing together various passages of Scripture in a loose 'proof-text' fashion without regard for the context of each passage ... A careful interpreter will take into consideration the immediate context before and after the passage under investigation; the context of the biblical book in which the passage is found, as well as the larger context of all the Bible.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ J. White, 'Gospel Order', 20 December, 1853, pp. 188-190. White quotes Mark 3:14 and Titus 1:5.

¹⁸⁴ See, for example: M. Gregory & S. Carroll, *Language and Situation*, 1978; G.B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*, 1980.

¹⁸⁵ F. Hasel, 'Presuppositions in the Interpretation of Scripture', 2005, p. 38.

Since the Bible is not really one 'book', but sixty-six books written over a time span of about 1,500 years, we should primarily endeavour to interpret each passage from the context of its book, and then relate it to other books. This principle is based on the recognition in human communication that we communicate our intentions and messages in *complete* texts with a beginning and an ending. Unless we have seen the meaning of a verse or shorter passage from the whole of the book, we may miss something. Obviously, for any biblical theology, we also need to consider the meaning of single books in the context of the Bible as a whole.

At this point, we come to another matter that requires consideration, namely the relationship between the Old and the New Testament. This is relevant for our study, because we will see later that there is limited evidence for 'ordination' in the New Testament, while some seemingly 'clearer' examples are found in the Old Testament. The question is, therefore: What should the Church do with the Old Testament evidence for 'ordination' in ancient Israel? Is it relevant, and if so, how?

The unity of the two testaments in the Bible is based on several circumstances:

1. The same God is acting throughout the Bible, and his Holy Spirit has inspired all the authors.

2. There is a grand narrative of the cosmic conflict and God's plan of salvation starting with the creation which runs through the two Bible sections, and both of them make references to the other, the Old Testament by prophecy and Messianic promises, and the New Testament by fulfilment and drawing on the past revelation in the Old.

3. It is clear that the New Testament authors recognised, with Jesus Christ, that the Old Testament Scriptures are God's word and are still relevant. Jesus denies that he has come to abolish the Law and the Prophets and underlines emphatically that he has come to 'fulfil them' (Matt. 5:17-20), and he does so by radicalising their ethical demands (Matt. 5:21-48). The highest ethical principles in Jesus' teachings are found in Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, and on them 'all the Law and the Prophets hang' (Matt. 22:34-40).¹⁸⁶

4. The Old Testament writings were regarded as 'the Scriptures' by the New Testament authors (2 Tim. 3:15); they witness about Christ (John 3:15; Luke 24:27,

¹⁸⁶ Cf. N. R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena*, 2003, pp. 280-284, 713.

32, 45-49; Acts 17:11); they reveal the promises which the New Testament fulfils (Rom. 1:2); they are 'only the shadow of the good things that are coming' (Hebr. 10:1); and they contain vital principles for Christians, laid down both in creation (cf. Matt. 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12), the pre-historical sections, and in the life and history of Israel (Ex. 20; Deut. 5; Matt. 19:17-19; 22:32-40; Rom. 13:8-10).

At the same time, it is abundantly clear that the New Testament perceives a new covenant with God in the blood of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 11:23-26), that the Mosaic Law is not compulsory for all Christians (Acts 15), that the full truth from God is not revealed in the reading of Moses until one returns to Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 3:15f.), and as high priest of the new covenant Jesus has brought a 'change of priesthood' (Heb. 7:11) and 'has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life' (Heb. 7:16), a 'change of the law' (Heb. 7:12), a 'better hope' (Heb. 7:19), a 'better covenant' (Heb. 7:22), and 'the covenant of which Jesus is a mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises' (Heb. 8:6). Hebrews points out that 'if there had been nothing wrong with the first covenant, no place would have been sought for another', and, based on the prophecy in Jeremiah 31:31-34, the conclusion is that 'by calling this covenant "new", he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear' (Heb. 8:7-13). 'Christ is the mediator of a new covenant' (Heb. 9:15). It is clear in Hebrews that the Old Testament sacrificial service in the temple has become superseded by the covenant in Christ and that he has replaced the old priesthood with his sacrifice once and for all (Heb. 9:1-10:18). The Old Testament earthly temple in Jerusalem has no function in the book of Revelation but is replaced by the heavenly temple associated with the throne of God.

The New Testament does not claim acceptance of the priestly 'ordination' laws and ceremonies in the Old Testament, which we will look at later on. Rather, it is a well-known fact that the Greek word for 'priest' – in the Old Testament sacrificial sense – is *nowhere found in the New Testament as a term for an office in the Christian church*. Moreover, when Moses, on God's command, appoints Joshua as his successor to lead Israel by the imposition of his hand, this is an isolated event, a unique historical act, and refers to an appointment for both political and spiritual leadership of a nation, which is nowhere explicitly endorsed or resumed in the New Testament. If these examples were not impacting 'ordination' in the New Testament

Church, there is no reason for the Seventh-day Adventist Church to build its ordination theology and practice on them.

A particular issue in addressing the relationship between the Old and the New Testament is the case when a New Testament author reads and interprets an Old Testament passage for purposes in a new setting in the Christian church and where the outcome is a 'new text' that may imply laying claims to providing the true meaning of the 'old text'. An example is 1 Corinthians 11:7-9, where Paul argues against the disturbances of the good order in public worship and counsels the wives in the church to show respect by being appropriately veiled during the public worship (see our exegetical study in 3.1.3.2 below). Paul says, among other things:

1 Corinthians 11:7-9: For a man ought not to have his head veiled, since he is the image and reflection of God; but woman is the reflection of man. **8** Indeed, man was not made from woman, but woman from man. **9** Neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man. (NRSV)

Paul's New Testament reading of Genesis 1-2 is obviously not reflecting what the Old Testament text actually says (see our detailed study of Genesis 1-2 in 3.1.1 below). Genesis 1 states that man and woman together are created in the image of God, and does not state that only man is the image and reflection of God. Genesis 2 also makes it clear that there is no subordination of the woman by the fact that she was made from man – the passage rather underlines the equality and mutuality between man and woman. When Paul says that 'neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man', he does not give full credit to the fact that the creation of the woman 'for the sake of man' was prompted by man's need of the woman, since without her he was alone, incomplete, and dependent on the woman who finally makes him complete. Paul also seems to 'miss the point' that the woman being created last implies that she forms the climax and completion of creation. The question here is how we handle the differences between the old and the new text, and we will see later on that there are other examples of this issue in the study of ordination (cf. 3.5.3.1).

In order to be true to Scripture, we believe that the old text has precedence in stating its own meaning, particularly since it is in the original language, is complete, and historically older. As is the case with the typological method of interpreting an Old Testament passage in the light of Christ's fulfilment of Old Testament motifs and

passages,¹⁸⁷ the new text does not have precedence over the old, but both are relevant, although in different ways and in different contexts. In the case of 1 Corinthians 11, for example, one must not take Paul's use of some elements from Genesis 2 in his argumentation (against 'Gnostic' women's refusal to veil themselves during public worship) as giving us the 'true' meaning of the old text, but as a new text where selected elements from the old text have been used for a new argumentation. In this new argumentation, the meaning of the selected elements from Genesis 2 may not be in keeping with what the old text says. In the new text, it is rather a question of new thoughts, a different message for different purposes, which are 'dressed' in formal expressions taken from the old text and which have been given a new meaning while 'associating' the listener's/reader's thoughts with the old text. This 'rabbinical' technique of using Scripture functions to assign authority to the teaching of Paul. As we seek to understand the biblical theology of ordination, however, the old text takes precedence, and the new text should be understood in the context of the *behaviour* that Paul seeks to bring about in the church for the sake of order and unity.

A different example shows that this may also work the other way. Luke's description of the 'ordination' of the seven in Acts 6:1-6 seems to be 'filtered' by allusions to 'ordination' passages in the Old Testament which serve the purpose of indicating that God is establishing a new exodus and a new Israel (see 3.5.3.1). Similar observations can be made on the imposition of hands in Acts 13:1-3 and 2 Timothy 1:6. The possible New Testament allusions to the Levites as the people's representatives (Num. 8), the divine appointment of elders who prophesied (Num. 11), and Moses' appointment of Joshua by granting some of his authority (Num. 27) must be seen from the purpose of the authors of Acts and 2 Timothy, who enlighten the reader at the level of the New Testament text. If we were to adduce in Seventh-day Adventist church practice biblical instruction on 'ordination' directly from the Old Testament passages, we would run the risk of contradicting the New Testament application of those texts, placing ourselves above the inspired New Testament authors.

2.7 Exegesis, Exposition, and Application

¹⁸⁷ See R. M. Davidson, 'Biblical Interpretation', 2000, pp. 83-85.

In the interest of clarity and for other practical reasons, we will distinguish in the present study between three approaches to the biblical text: (a) *exegesis*, which is an attempt to *understand* what the text meant to the intended receivers in the original setting; (b) *exposition*, which attempts to determine what the text says to us today; and (c) *application*, which seeks to apply the text to the life and practice of the church.¹⁸⁸

A. Exegesis is both an everyday activity and a specialised discipline of scholarly research. When applied to biblical texts, ‘exegesis’ denotes the ‘reading out’ of the meaning.¹⁸⁹ It includes an attention to the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts of the Bible, and analyses the meaning of words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, longer sections, books, and the Bible as a whole.¹⁹⁰ Particular attention is given to ‘decoding’ or making out the meaning of sayings in their appropriate literary, social and situational *contexts*. This is commonly known as *close reading*, which means ‘the deliberate, word-by-word and phrase-by-phrase consideration of all the parts of a text in order to understand it as a whole’.¹⁹¹

While it is not possible here to go into the depths of methodology, an exegetical study ideally analyses the syntactic (grammatical linkage), semantic (patterns of sense and reference), and pragmatic (functional, communicative) structure of meaning in a text.¹⁹² In so doing, it studies the following aspects of the biblical text:

1. Historical Background, i.e. the six W’s: *Who* (author?) says *What* (the text before us) to *Whom* (intended readers?), *Why* (purpose of the text? what issues is it responding to?), *When* and *Where* (in what historical time and place? in what cultural situation?)?¹⁹³

2. Textual Structure of Meaning, which may be divided into (a) the study of textual components such as words, grammar, statistical occurrences, and literary-

¹⁸⁸ For the distinction between ‘exegesis’ and ‘exposition’, see H. Marshall, *Biblical Inspiration*, 1982, pp. 95-96.

¹⁸⁹ J. H. Hayes & C. R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner’s Handbook*, 1982, p. 5.

¹⁹⁰ See, for example, E. Müller, ‘Guidelines for the Interpretation of Scripture’, 2005, pp. 111-134.

¹⁹¹ M. J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*, 2006, pp. 8-9; a good example is L. Turner, *Genesis*, 2000.

¹⁹² As exemplified in B. Wiklander, *Prophecy as Literature*, 1984, *passim*.

¹⁹³ As explained in J. Moskala, ‘Back to Creton’, 2013, pp. 5-6; for a further explanation from within the study of text theory and communicative text linguistics, see B. Wiklander, *Prophecy as Literature*, 1984, p. 26; note Wiklander’s rewording of the more well-known ‘Lasswell-formula’ for heuristic purposes in textual studies (H. D. Lasswell, ‘The Structure and Function of Communication in Society’, 1948, p. 37): ‘Who or what social groups acted at what point of time by what means for what purpose under what media conditions towards whom or what social groups and with what effect?’

linguistic features like figures of speech; (b) the contextual study, which helps to determine what the textual components actually mean; (c) the study of literary genre,¹⁹⁴ text-type, and accepted patterns of literary structure.

3. Theological Study includes (a) to study ‘the big picture of biblical revelation’; (b) to move from the clear to the unclear texts, from the known to the unknown, from the plain to the problematic passages; (c) to determine if there is a literal or spiritual/figurative meaning (cf. 2.9 below); (d) to determine – often in connection with genre and text-type – if the text is descriptive or prescriptive; (e) to take hold firstly of God’s gift of grace in the Gospel and then the command to what the Gospel implies; (f) to determine what is central and peripheral in the Bible; (g) to study inter-textuality, i.e. how biblical texts intentionally refer to each other; (h) to consider the unity of the Bible.¹⁹⁵

Moskala includes in his paper a list of important dangers and fallacies that must be avoided in biblical interpretation:

1. Selectivity: Avoid using only texts that fit our own preconceived opinion.

2. Inconsistency: Using a text and applying it as prescriptive in one aspect but not others. For example, not allowing women to teach according to 1 Timothy 2:11-12, but at the same time not requiring men to pray with uplifted hands (2:8), or applying Paul’s statement regarding man/husband being the woman’s/wife’s head in 1 Corinthians 11:3-16, while not insisting that all women must cover their heads during worship (11:5-6).

3. Eisegesis: This is to read meanings into a word or a passage which are foreign to the overall point of the context.

4. Failing to recognise personal presuppositions in regard to the issue of ordination as well as the nature of texts and how they should be interpreted.

5. Tautology: Avoiding circular reasoning, for example by starting from one text and reading the meaning of that text into another; then stating that the other text proves what the first text means.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ Note Moskala’s point regarding literary genre: ‘This is an extremely important point, because on this recognition depends the whole approach to and interpretation of the text. A different set of rules applies to the interpretation of parables, and again different ones apply to prophecy ... For example, if 1 Timothy is a polemical letter then one needs to know the arguments to which Paul is responding , and then interpret the text accordingly.’ (ibid., p. 9).

¹⁹⁵ We are using Moskala’s suggestions (ibid., pp. 9-13).

¹⁹⁶ Moskala gives the example of some interpreters who ‘read into Moses’ creation story their own thoughts about the submission of Eve to Adam, thinking that Paul is stating that in 1 Tim. 2:11-12 (thus projecting the

6. Dismissing all difficulties, tensions, and problems: Such challenges in the text should not be overlooked because there is no agreement among the scholars. The study of these difficulties may well open the eyes to crucial keys to the understanding of the passage as a whole.¹⁹⁷

B. Exposition is based on the foundational work of Exegesis and draws on the universal statements and principles that are explicit or implied in the text (cf. 2.4 above). The primary focus is the use of the text for the contemporary reader, especially with a purpose of nurturing faith and teaching biblical doctrines.

C. Application is related to Exposition and is also based on Exegesis. It is referring to the transfer of principles and statements of belief from the biblical text to the doctrinal and practical organisation of the Church.

2.8 Ellen White's Writings and the Bible

Ellen White had a divine gift of thought inspiration and was an outstanding servant in God's hand to guide the life and mission of our church. As Seventh-day Adventists we unite two principles, namely, that (a) her writings are 'a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction',¹⁹⁸ and (b) a consistent application of the Reformation principle of *sola Scriptura*. We therefore express in our Fundamental Beliefs the recognition that Ellen White's writings 'also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which *all teaching and experience must be tested*'.¹⁹⁹ Testing all teaching by the standard of the Bible means that the Bible is seen as the *superior* authority for determining both *theological* and *historical* truth. Thus, we noted that we see the Bible as 'the authoritative *revealer of doctrines* and the trustworthy record of *God's acts in history*' (cf. 2.1 above).

In instances where the Bible is silent or offers scant information – as is the case with 'ordination' in the New Testament – Ellen White's reading of a passage will shed valuable light on its significance. However, if her exposition *adds content* to the passage (which naturally happens in an exposition and application of Scripture), the

submission of Eve in specific functions to Adam into the Genesis accounts), and then they interpret 1 Tim. 2 arguing that this is what Paul says since it is consistent with the teaching of Moses' (ibid. p. 15).

¹⁹⁷ Moskala gives considerable attention to this fallacy and notes examples from 1 Cor. 11, 14, and 1 Tim. 2 (ibid., pp. 15-16).

¹⁹⁸ Fundamental Belief No. 18 in: *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, p. 162.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. (emphasis supplied).

case must be carefully evaluated. Her writings should not be a tool for *changing* the record of facts as conveyed by Scripture. This is the view Ellen White took in principle.²⁰⁰ Only the Bible is the ‘trustworthy record of God’s acts in history’.²⁰¹

We need to be aware of our presuppositions regarding the nature of Ellen White’s visionary experiences, in order not to assign claims to her that she would not make. In regard to visions, at times, she may have seen an event or series of events as they would have actually happened in history – as a prophetic back-tracking into past history. At other times, she may have seen in vision not actual historical scenes but a re-fashioning of a biblical or historical event in order to meaningfully communicate a spiritual lesson in a different time and culture. In our exposition of Ellen White’s description of Jesus’ ‘ordination’ of his disciples in *The Desire of Ages*, we will argue that she applied the latter (see 4.6.2.6). This means that the integrity of her prophetic gift is preserved, that we can understand the point she was trying to make at the time in the history of ordination in our church, and that we can apply her message to our understanding of ‘ordination’ in the Bible.

It was vital to Ellen White and it is vital to the Church that we guard the principle of *sola Scriptura*. The Church has acknowledged this by saying:

We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White are *an addition to the canon of sacred Scripture*. We do not believe that [they] *function as the foundation and final authority of Christian faith* as does Scripture. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White may be *used as the basis of doctrine*.²⁰²

This position of the Church in no way reduces the manner in which Ellen White’s prophetic gift illuminates the biblical text. And as we shall see in some detail in 4.6.2 below, Ellen White had important things to say about the biblical view of ‘ordination’ which we must not ignore.

2.9 The Issue of ‘Plain Reading’

One of the issues raised in the letter from the GC-BRI on May 1, 2012 (Appendix 1) concerns the role of ‘plain reading’ in Ellen White’s writings. This is how the issue was phrased in a letter to the director:

²⁰⁰ See, for example, G. R. Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 1997, pp. 21-29.

²⁰¹ Fundamental Belief No. 1 in: *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 2010, p. 156 (emphasis supplied).

²⁰² ‘The Inspiration and Authority of the Ellen G. White’s Writings: A Statement of Present Understanding’, 1982, p. 9 (emphasis supplied). In the preamble, the Biblical Research Institute states: ‘Although it is not a voted statement, we believe that the worldwide participation in its development makes it a reflection of the views of the church on the topic it addresses’.

What does 'plain reading' mean in the light of Ellen White's counsel that 'The word of God is infallible; accept it as it reads; look with confidence to God; trust him to qualify you for his service' (*R&H*, February 11, 1896)?

Let us first recognise that Ellen White does not refer to 'plain reading' in the quoted issue of *Review & Herald*. What she says is this:

The arm of the Lord is not shortened that it cannot save. His ear is not heavy that it cannot hear. God can and will work through human agencies. He can sanctify the heart, and make the human agent a vessel unto honour. Take the word; read it, consider, pray over it; let it enter into your understanding; let the light flood the soul temple, that you may testify of these things in the churches. The word of God is infallible; *accept it as it reads*; look with confidence to God; trust him to qualify you for his service ... Only believe; walk by faith; not by sight.²⁰³

This statement is made in the context of a report from a camp meeting in Tasmania, where Ellen White took part in a revival among church members who 'had been living in unbelief, doubting their acceptance with God' and to whom 'this distrust had made them miserable'. In particular, she addressed the need to let faith be expressed in ministry and mission to others. Trust in God was therefore her theme, and the statement above is intended to lead the readers to stronger faith in him. It is meant to function in the context of a *spiritual* revival. When she says about the word of God: 'accept it as it reads', she wants to remove obstacles to faith in God and encourage the readers to trust the clearly worded promises of God in his word.

This is, however, not a statement that is relevant for the task of exegesis in order to address theological issues, using the biblical texts in original Greek or Hebrew. It is not a statement that describes the nature of the biblical text. Ellen White was very much aware of the fact that there are scriptural passages that are not clear: 'While some portions of the Word are easily understood, the true meaning of other parts is not so readily discerned'.²⁰⁴ Behind the words of the Bible there lies an additional significance that must be discovered. In reflecting on Christ as 'the truth' she says that 'His words are truth, and they have a deeper significance than appears on the surface'.²⁰⁵

²⁰³ E. G. White, 'The Tasmanian Camp Meeting', 1896, pp. 81-82.

²⁰⁴ Id., *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, 1923, p. 107.

²⁰⁵ Id., *Christ's Object Lessons*, 1900, p. 110.

Ellen White advocates 'close reading'²⁰⁶ and 'careful thought as to the meanings of the sacred text'.²⁰⁷ At times, the Bible requires deep study and deep effort:

But the most valuable teaching of the Bible is not to be gained by occasional or disconnected study. Its great system of truth is not so presented as to be discerned by the hasty and careless reader. Many of its treasures lie far beneath the surface, and can only be obtained by diligent research and continuous effort.²⁰⁸

This means that, while being plain and transparent regarding the grace of God and all that concerns our relationship with him and salvation (2 Tim. 3:15), she says that the Bible is also at times far from plain, unless given 'diligent research and continuous effort'. The Bible text is certainly clear on the essentials regarding God and our reasons for trusting him in faith. But it is not always clear on every point and may require deep study.

Ellen White does, however, show a concern for 'the plain teaching', the 'obvious meaning' or 'the plain words of God'. This emphasis emerges in two contexts:

1. Favouring the 'obvious meaning', the Bible reader should reject the 'mystical, secret, spiritual meaning'. Distortions of the literal meaning may come from people who hide the plain sense by applying symbolic meanings 'not apparent in the language employed'.²⁰⁹ Along the same lines, Ellen White says that 'the language of the Bible should be explained according to its obvious meaning, unless a symbol or a figure is employed'.²¹⁰ The plain teachings of the word of God 'are not to be so spiritualised that the reality is lost sight of. Do not overstrain the meaning of sentences in the Bible ... Take the Scriptures as they read'.²¹¹ Seeking the 'simplicity of truth', readers of the Bible will 'more surely comprehend its deep meaning'.²¹²

2. For the purpose of salvation, readers are to 'cling to the Bible as it reads', refraining from 'criticisms in regard to its validity, and obey the Word'. The counsel to cling to the Bible, taking it as it reads, applies to readers who refuse to accept God's word by criticising its validity.

²⁰⁶ Id., *Education*, 1903, p. 190.

²⁰⁷ Id., 'Search the Scriptures', 1883, p. 625.

²⁰⁸ Id., *Education*, 1903, p. 123 (emphasis supplied); cf. pp. 124, 189.

²⁰⁹ Id., *The Great Controversy*, 1911, pp. 598-599.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Id., *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, 1958, p. 170.

²¹² Id., *In Heavenly Places*, 1967, p. 139.

This advice is undoubtedly sound and any serious Bible reader will do well to heed it. This is not to say, however, that all Bible texts must be understood literally. There are symbolic, metaphorical and even allegorical passages and where that applies, appropriate exegesis will take that into account.

Seeking to understand the plain or clear sense of the text is always the aim of an exegetical reading of the Bible. But this does not exclude deep study of the meaning it was intended to communicate to the first audience. If in such study it becomes clear that there is a *symbolic* meaning which is sustained by the text, then that needs to be accounted for. The literal sense of a text is often the intended one, but not always, and good exegesis seeks to find out which is the best solution.

Another important aspect of the issue of 'plain reading' is that, while a statement may seem 'plain' enough, its full meaning, purpose, reference, genre and type cannot be *understood* unless we know 'the question it seeks to answer'. We refer to the principle advocated by the Oxford philosopher R. G. Collingwood (cf. 1.4 above):

I began by observing that you cannot find out what a man means by simply studying his spoken or written statements, even though he has spoken or written with perfect command of language and perfectly truthful intention. In order to find out his meaning you must also know what the question was (a question in his own mind, and presumed by him to be in yours) to which the thing he has said or written was meant as an answer.²¹³

In order to find the question that the biblical author presumed to be in the intended readers' minds, and to which his text was meant as an answer, we need to study carefully the background, situation and written context within each book. It may well be, at times, that the outcome of such study results in an understanding that goes far beyond the initial plain reading. If so, holding on to the 'plain reading' will distort the meaning and purpose of the biblical text and thus distort the word of God. In order to avoid this fatal mistake, Bible interpreters need to search the Scriptures diligently like the Jews in Beroea (Acts 17:11) and have their mind opened by Christ so they can understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45).

²¹³ R. G. Collingwood, *An Autobiography*, 1939, p. 31.

CHAPTER 3

ORDINATION IN THE BIBLE AS PART OF THE MISSION OF GOD

This chapter is the fruit of reading the Bible *as a whole*. The reading followed a *spiral progression* with a constant interaction between the parts and the whole, and some of that is reflected in the presentation.²¹⁴

If we want to allow the Bible to speak to us with its own voice regarding how the Seventh-day Adventist Church should function, we need to establish the biblical perspective within which the authors organise their arguments and instructions, such as (a) their core biblical themes; (b) their specific teachings about God's New Testament people, the church of Christ; and (c) their thematic and specific view of the church (ecclesiology) that explains its mission and 'ordination' as part of that mission.

The key to our interpretation was, therefore, the overarching, core theme of the Bible as a whole. We propose that this theme is 'God, his nature, will and purpose' – he is the point of departure in Genesis 1:1, continues to be the centre throughout the Bible, and his grace in Jesus Christ is shared with all his people in Revelation 22:21. The Bible refers to this theme in active terms, such as (a) 'the kingdom or reign of God' (Ps. 90-106; Mark 1:14-15); (b) 'the love of God' (John 3:16); and (c) 'the presence and communion of God with his creation' (Rev. 4:11; 21:1-4).

Each of these themes is however connected with an opposite force, with darkness and evil, which challenges God within the theme of 'the Great Controversy': note, for example, (a) the cry for vengeance by God's people upon the wicked and evildoers in Psalm 94 (and elsewhere in Psalms); (b) the conflict between the salvation of those who 'do what is true and come to the light' and the judgement upon 'all who do evil and hate the light' in John 3:16-21; (c) and the

²¹⁴ Cf. the related term 'hermeneutical circle'. The concept focuses on the interaction between what the interpreter knows about two parts in the text and how they mutually affect each other. It may refer to (a) the interaction between the text as a whole and its parts; (b) the study of the context of a word or a saying; and (c) the interaction between the interpreter's study of the text and his/her own presuppositions about it. A variety of illustrations to the hermeneutical spiral is found in H. Seiffert, *Einführung in die Wissenschaftstheorie: Phänomenologie, Hermenutik und Historische Methode, Dialektik*, vol. 2, 2006. In Adventism, the concept is mentioned, for example, in F. Hasel, 'Presuppositions in the Interpretation of Scripture', 2006, p. 28. Note its theory and practical application in B. Wiklander, *Prophecy as Literature*, 1984.

cosmic conflict between God and Satan described in Revelation which results in God's ultimate victory and salvation of his people (Rev. 4-22).

Within the context of God being Who He Is (cf. Ex. 3:13-14) and his battle and ultimate victory in 'the Great Controversy', 'the Plan of Redemption' is another related theme that may be traced in the Bible from beginning to end (note e.g. Gen. 3:15; John 3:16; Rom. 8; 1 Cor. 15; Rev. 21-22). Its focus is on God's faithfulness, love and care for his people and it aims to re-establish the broken relationship between God and man. All these themes are central in Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the Bible as a whole.²¹⁵ For practical reasons, however, we will refer to all of this as 'the Mission of God'. This profoundly biblical theme,²¹⁶ which was central to Ellen White's theology (4.6.2.1), includes the nature, will and purpose of God, the Great Controversy, and the Plan of Redemption. It provides a 'room' within which we may understand how the biblical authors organise their instructions regarding the people of God and 'ordination'. It also allows us to relate God's various actions in the Bible to one coherent concept. The Mission of God subsumes in a descending fashion the Mission of Christ, the Church, the Ministry, and Ordination. In chapter 5 we have organised our proposed theology of ordination around these fundamental concepts.

As we proceed in our inductive study of the Bible, the Mission of God and its constituent elements will serve as an umbrella that guides our questions to the biblical books. Our intention is to draw on the material provided here in 'A Biblical Theology of Ordination' (chapter 5) and 'An Inclusive Christian Ministry' (chapter 6).

3.1 Man and Woman as Servants of God

The Bible as a whole gives fundamental importance to the reign of God and men and women being his 'servants' or 'ministers' to accomplish his mission. In the following, we present a study of how this concept impacts 'ministry' and 'ordination' in the Bible.²¹⁷ It is an *a priori* element of the reign and mission of God, the Ruler of the

²¹⁵ See, for example, Fundamental Belief No. 8 in: *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 2010, p. 157.

²¹⁶ C. J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, 2006.

²¹⁷ No doubt, this concept is vital for the current debate in Adventism, although it seems to have become geared towards the issue of male headship and female submission, rather than being seen from the biblical theme of men and women as servants of God, the Ruler of the Universe (cf. Ex. 19:5-6; Isa. 61:6; Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17-18; 1 Peter 2:9). See, for example, the various papers in *The Welcome Table: Setting a Place for Ordained Women*, P. A. Habada & R. Frost Brillhart (eds.), 1995; *Women in Ministry: Biblical & Historical*

universe, that *only God has authority to determine the tasks and induction of his servants, including 'ordination'*. 'God alone' in this context means 'the Bible alone'. It is what God has revealed in his word that counts, but what he has not revealed in his word may be 'applied' (2.7), not as a doctrine but as a *practice*, if it promotes the *mission of the church* and does *not contradict the Bible and sound sense* (following James White, as set out in 2.1).

3.1.1 Genesis 1-11

The first three chapters of the Bible are fundamental for a theology of ordination. They outline God's purpose with man's life on earth, how man has rebelled against it, and God's response to man's disobedience. While 'ordination' in a strict, 'institutionalised' sense is not part of man's existence at this time, the principles enunciated in these chapters impact our understanding of God's ideal for humans, men and women, who serve him in his mission to eradicate evil, and how human culture, when separated from God, has corrupted the ideal. A key question in reading these chapters, therefore, is what remedy God provides to the consequences of the human Fall and how he deals with the changes it brings.

3.1.1.1 The Creation of the World (Genesis 1:1-2:4a). According to a surface reading of this pivotal passage, God is creating heaven and earth as a place for man and woman to inhabit and have dominion over. At a deeper level, however, it is about more than that. God is preparing the created world as a *meeting place* between him and man, where the humans will *cooperate* closely in managing the affairs of life on earth, have *communion* as related beings (mankind being created 'in the image of God'), and share *worship* experiences (note the climax of the rest on the Sabbath day, its 'blessed' state and 'holiness'). In the context of a biblical theology, these elements in the passage stand out as we read it from the perspective of the purpose of the book of Revelation:

Revelation 21:1-4 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. **2** And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. **3** And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See *the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with*

*them; they will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God; 4 he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away. (NRSV; emphasis supplied.)*²¹⁸

This passage defines the purpose of God's first creation according to Genesis 1:1-2:4a as making a home for himself among mortals, as a place where he dwells with them, where human beings are his people and God is with them and is their God, and where God acts like a caring Father for his children (note Rev. 21:7), and where life from God the Creator is flowing to the humans without impediment.

On day six in the creation week, in Genesis 1:24-31, God creates animals and human beings on earth. Human beings are created in his image and God appoints them to function as his authorised representatives. This is a translation from the Hebrew:

Genesis 1:26-28 And God said: 'Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the cattle, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that crawl on the earth. **27** And (so) God created the human being in his image. In God's image he created him. Male and female he created them. **28** And (so) God blessed them and God said to them: 'Be fruitful and increase and fill the earth and subdue her and rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of heaven and all the living creatures that move on the earth.'

What interests us here is God's commissioning or 'ordination' of mankind. The passage states that God created human beings as male and female in his image and commissioned them to care for God's work and the life he has created on earth. Concerning the meaning of 'in his image', Laurence Turner says:

While the text of Genesis 1 does not state explicitly what the image is, it does provide hints. If humans are in God's image then there must be some analogy between God and humans. One such analogy is provided in 1:26b, with its granting of dominion over creation. God has just demonstrated his dominion by creating these creatures; the granting of human dominion over these same creatures is one way, perhaps the major way, in which human activity reflects the divine and thus indicates something of 'the image of God' in humans.²¹⁹

Reading Genesis 1:26-28 from the perspective of Psalm 8 and the widespread ancient Near Eastern concept of the 'image of God' as the 'king, son, authorised representative, governor, or deputy',²²⁰ the statement that God created *man and*

²¹⁸ We have followed the two variant readings/translations in the footnotes in verse 3 of NRSV.

²¹⁹ L. Turner, *Genesis*, 2000, p. 24.

²²⁰ H. Wildberger, Article 'tselem/Abbild', in: *THAT*, vol. 2, cols.. 559-561.

woman 'in the image of God' is a strong indication of women being equal to men in assuming the role of servants of God and governors of the world. Although it is not stated in the passage, it is implied that man and woman also function as *mediators* between God and the created world which he 'ordains' them to be responsible for. Thus, the 'priestly' function associated with the concept of sacral kingship in Israel may be implied in the 'image of God' (cf. the Priest-King Melchizedek in Ps. 110 and Gen. 14:18).²²¹ In Genesis 1:1-2:4a this *mediation* is not understood in the specific sense of bringing atonement for sin, but rather in the general senses of (a) *communicating* God's will to the created world and the needs of the world to God, and (b) *representing* God to the world and the world to God. The mediating function of man and woman derives from their standing between God and the world as God's *servants* or *ministers*. The divine blessing and holiness that through the Sabbath is given to the creation as a whole (2:2-4a) presuppose human obedience and adherence to God's personal act of 'resting'. It implies an imitation of God and a participation in his creative power, universal rule, and the beauty, order, and peace of his created work.

This reading of our passage may be further substantiated by some significant biblical research. Firstly, it has been convincingly argued that the seven-fold creation account in Genesis 1:1-2:4a is repeated in the account of the construction of the sanctuary in Exodus, which also has a sevenfold structure.²²² Thus, the creation of the universe is the creation of a sanctuary, and the sanctuary is a microcosm of God's creation. This understanding invests 1:1-2:4a with an implied *sanctuary symbolism*. We will see later how this is picked up by Genesis 2 and continues, in a way, in Genesis 3.

Secondly, it has been persuasively argued that being made in 'the image of God' (*imago Dei*) in 1:1-2:4a means to be delegated a royal-priestly role that expands God's good rule across the earth and that this function is exercised by humans in a royal-priestly role within a created world that is perceived as a sanctuary.²²³ To illustrate this view, we quote here some conclusions made on the

²²¹ For this concept, see R. Abba, Article 'Priests and Levites', in: *IDB*, vol. 3, p. 882.

²²² This was first observed by J. Blenkinsopp ('The Structure of P', 1976, pp. 275-292); it has been further expanded in J. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate*, 2009, especially pp. 78-92.

²²³ R. J. Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1*, 2005.

basis of a thorough study of the Old Testament texts and their environment in the ancient Near East:

When the clues within the Genesis text are taken together with comparative studies in the ancient Near East, they lead to what we could call a function – or even missional – interpretation of this image of God in Genesis 1:26-28 (in contradistinction to the substantialistic or relational interpretations). On this reading, the *imago Dei* designates the royal office or calling of human beings as God's representatives and agents in the world, grants authorised power to share in God's rule or administration of the earth's resources and creatures.²²⁴

If the cosmos can be understood as indwelt by the creator, then the language of Psalm 119:91 ('all things are your servants'; NRSV) might well refer not only to the obedience of creatures to their cosmic ruler, but also to liturgical service in the cosmic sanctuary ... This picture of creation as a cosmic temple also suggests the appropriateness of humanity as God's image in the symbolic world of Genesis 1. For just as no pagan temple in the ancient Near East could be complete without installation of the cult images of the deity to whom the temple was dedicated, so creation in Genesis 1 is not complete (or 'very good') until God creates humanity on the sixth day as *imago Dei* in order to represent and mediate the divine presence on earth.²²⁵

But the *imago Dei* also includes a priestly or cultic dimension. In the cosmic sanctuary of God's world, humans have pride of place and supreme responsibility, not just as royal stewards and cultural shapers of the environment, but (taking seriously the temple imagery) as priests of creation, actively mediating divine blessing to the non-human world and – in a post-fall situation – interceding on behalf of a groaning creation until that day when heaven and earth are redemptively transformed to fulfil God's purpose for justice and *shalom*. The human vocation as *imago Dei* in God's world thus corresponds in important respects to Israel's vocation as a 'royal priesthood' among the nations (Exodus 19:6).²²⁶

In order to preclude any misunderstanding of the point we are making here, we emphasise that the passage in Genesis 1:1-2:4a is primarily to be taken as an actual record of God's creation. However, in addition to that, it has been supplied by temple imagery which was not only widespread in the ancient Near East and evidenced across the entire Bible but is also central in John's vision of the Great Controversy and its final outcome in the book of Revelation. The description of God's people, men and women, as *priests* who *serve* God as *ministers* is vital at certain peaks in the structure of the book of Revelation (1:4-6; 5:9-10; 11:1-3, 16-19; 20:6). The home

²²⁴ Ibid., p. 27.

²²⁵ Ibid., p. 87.

²²⁶ Ibid., pp. 89-90.

of God, where he dwells with human beings, is described as a sanctuary that comes down upon earth and where the nations come together for worship and bring glory to God (Rev. 21:1-4, 9-27). This temple imagery is alluded to in Genesis 1:1-2:4a by the linguistic feature of ‘associative meaning’.

As we read the passage literally, the first charge to man and woman is to ‘be fruitful, increase, and fill the earth’. This is shared with the creatures of sea and air (cf. Gen. 1:22). However, it is the (second) charge to ‘subdue [the earth] and rule over [its animals]’, that is unique to human beings. ‘Subdue’ (*kabash*) and ‘rule over’ (*radah be*) express domination and subordination. Of particular significance for our study, however, is the circumstance that, when God gives the human beings their first charge, he addresses them as a unit – both of them together are charged with subduing the earth and serving as its rulers on behalf of the Creator. God makes no difference between man and woman as his servants/ministers in this passage. Both carry the image of God and are ‘rulers’ or ‘ministers’ who serve him.

God’s commissioning of man and woman may be divided into four steps:

(a) *Decision and Announcement of Intent* (1:26) (formally marked as collective acts of God): ‘Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the cattle, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that crawl on the earth.’

(b) *Appointment* (by creation) (1:27): ‘And (so) God created the human being in his image. In God’s image he created him. Male and female he created them.’

(c) *Blessing* (1:28a): ‘And (so) God blessed them.’

(d) *Charge and Authorisation* (1:28b): God said to them: ‘Be fruitful and increase and fill the earth and subdue her and rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of heaven and all the living creatures that move on the earth.’

This pattern bears some resemblance to a formal ‘ordination’, although there is no clear, unified model for it in the Bible, and although it is here adapted to the context of divine creation. Obviously, concepts of royal ‘ordination’ were in circulation in the cultural setting where this text was written (cf. Moses’ as a prince in Pharaoh’s court and the royal terminology in the story of Joseph). The intended readers, who would have been familiar with those concepts, would be able to make the connection with God acting as Sovereign Ruler of the world, and man and woman being introduced as his *servants or ministers*. It deserves to be noticed that ‘ordination’ is here exclusively a matter of God’s plan and initiative.

An important conclusion from our passage, therefore, is that, at creation, *God commissions (or 'ordains') man and woman as equal royal-priestly servants and ministers under his oversight in a world alluded to as a sanctuary and dwelling-place of God.*

Gerhard Hasel has summarised the equality between man and woman in 1:1-2:4a by pointing to the following features: (a) 'man' being created as 'male and female', (b) their creation 'in the image of God', (c) their sharing in equal manner in the divine 'blessing', (d) their common power to 'subdue' the earth, (e) their mutual assignment to 'rule' over the animals, and (f) their common vocation to be God's vice-regents on earth (1:26-21).²²⁷

The primary and general creation in Genesis 1 serves as the foundation for the explanatory details of creation in Genesis 2 and for the fundamental changes that are the consequences of the Fall in Genesis 3. Thus, we must take care not to ignore the *continuation* of God's relationship to mankind in Genesis 1-3 as a whole, or the functional role in which he *first* placed them as *his two equal servants* in a world functioning as *a sanctuary of God*.

3.1.1.2 The Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:4b-25). Genesis 1-2 is a thematic unit held together by the *general* creation of the world and the *specific* creation of man and woman as husband and wife in the Garden of Eden. Reading these two chapters as one coherent text, it is important to note initially that what has been said about humanity (man and woman) in 1:26-28 is introduced *first* and that its content is therefore fundamental also as a background for Genesis 2. Thus, the equal responsibility of man and woman to *minister* to God by subduing and ruling over the created world continues to be part of the world order intended in God's creation, even in Genesis 2.

In chapter 2, therefore, the fundamental parity between the genders established in chapter 1 is not changed or contradicted. A thoughtful reading of chapter 2, rather, shows that, while it endorses the male and female unity in functioning *together* as *priestly governors* in chapter 1, it deepens this unity by the

²²⁷ G. F. Hasel, 'Man and Woman in Genesis 1-3', 1984, pp. 9-22.

expansion of the relational and intimate aspects of *marriage* implied in the blessing and charge to be fruitful and increase in 1:28.²²⁸

Before bringing marriage into focus, however, we note that Genesis 2 also includes important teachings regarding the *relationship* between God and man. We will develop this theme in our proposed theology of ordination (chapter 5) and confine ourselves here to some brief observations.

Even a superficial reading of Genesis 2 gives the impression that, in the midst of the created world with its tasks and responsibilities, there is Eden which is the dwelling-place of God on earth,²²⁹ the place where God meets man, a primeval sanctuary directly linked with heaven as the later sanctuaries were thought to be.²³⁰ In fact, hints in Genesis 2 show that the arrangement of the Garden of Eden resembled the later Israelite sanctuaries. In 2:8-10 the Garden appears to be the dwelling place of humans which is attached to Eden where God is present. There are several textual parallels between Eden and later sanctuaries supporting this view:

(a) 'Eden' as 'the Garden of God' is identified with the heavenly sanctuary in Ezekiel 28:13 (cf. Gen. 2:8, 10, 15). (b) Both Eden and later sanctuaries were entered from the East (Gen. 2:8; Ex. 27:13-16; 36:20-30; 38:13-18; 1 Kings 7:21; Ez. 47:1). (c) The activity of 'planting' (*nata*) is mentioned in connection with Eden and the sanctuaries (Gen. 2:8; Ex. 15:17; cf. 1 Chron. 17:9). (d) The tree of life was placed in the midst of (*betok*) the Garden and the living presence of God was in the midst of (*betok*) the sanctuary (Gen. 2:9; Ex. 25:8). (e) God is said to be 'walking around' (hitpa'el of *halak*) in the Garden and in the midst of the camp of Israel, which occurs only in Genesis 3:8 and Deuteronomy 23:14 (cf. Hebr. 15). (f) The river from the central location in the Garden (2:10) has parallels in sanctuary symbolism and is understood as flowing from the throne of God (Rev. 22:1-5; cf. Ez. 47:1-12; Zech. 14:8; Ps. 46:5; John 7:37-39; Rev. 7:17). (g) The precious stones mentioned in the Garden (Gen. 2:12) are also used extensively in sanctuaries: 'bdellium' (Num. 11:7), 'onyx' (Ex. 25:7; 28:9, 20; 35:9, 27; 39:6, 13), and 'gold' (e.g. Ex. 25:9). (h) There are three spheres of ascending holiness: in Genesis 2-3, there is the earth, the Garden,

²²⁸ G. F. Hasel says (ibid.): 'The more extensive story of the creation of man and woman in Gen 2 does not stand in tension or opposition to [the equality between man and woman in Gen 1], but corroborates the compressed statements of Gen 1, complementing them with additional details.'

²²⁹ Cf. Gen. 2:8, 10, 15; 3:23, 34; 4:16; Isa. 51:3; Ez. 28:13; 31:9, 16, 18; 36:35; Joel 2:3. Note the expression 'the garden of the Lord/God': Isa. 51:3; Ez. 28:13; 31:9; cf. Gen. 13:10.

²³⁰ See, for example, Ex. 25:40; Hebr. 8:5.

and the midst of the Garden; in the Israelite sanctuary, there is the court, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place. (i) There are some series of striking verbal parallels: in Genesis 1:31 and 2:13, we have 'saw (*ra'ah*) ... made (*'asah*) ... finished (*kalah*) ... blessed (*qadash*)' in Genesis 1:31; 2:1-3, and in Exodus 39:43; 39:32; 40:33; 39:43, we find 'saw (*ra'ah*) ... made (*'asah*) ... finished (*kalah*) ... blessed (*qadash*)'. (j) The number six plus the Sabbath as the seventh occurs in the creation of six days with each reference introduced by 'and God said', followed by the seventh-day Sabbath (Gen. 1:3-2:3); it also occurs in the instructions for building the tabernacle (Ex. 25-31) where each of the six sections are introduced by 'the Lord said to Moses', followed by the seventh section dealing with the Sabbath. (k) Portrayals of the natural world are present in the creation of plants and animals in Genesis 1 as well as in the Solomon temple (1 Kings 6:29, 33, 35; 7:26, 29, 36), symbolising the idea of a return to the lost Garden, the earth's original sanctuary. (l) The term for 'light' (*ma'or*, 'lamp') is used to describe the sun and moon in Genesis 1:14-16 and function as the lamps of the Eden sanctuary; this term is found elsewhere in the Pentateuch only for the light of the menorah in the Holy Place of the sanctuary (Ex. 25:6; 35:14; 39:27 etc.); note also that the *menorah* in Hebrew tradition symbolised the tree of life. (m) Together, the Hebrew verbs with which God commissions humans in Genesis 2:15 (*'abad* 'to work', and *shamar*, 'to watch') are used only in sanctuary contexts within the Pentateuch. (n) Cherubim are guarding the entrance to the Eden (Gen. 3:24) and they are also 'guarding' the entrance to the holy of holies (Ex. 25:18; 37:7; 1 Kings 6:23, 27-29; Ez. 28:14; 41:17-20).²³¹

Thus, ancient Israel would understand these signals in the text that suggest a sanctuary environment where God is present and where God and man (male and female) have intimate communion. The Garden of Eden becomes the blueprint for how the whole earth should be – a sanctuary or 'house of God' where humans live in communion with him (as described also in Rev. 21:1-4). The commission of man and

²³¹ See the summary of findings in R. M. Davidson, 'Should Women Be Ordained as Pastors? Old Testament Considerations', 2013, pp. 17-20; note his extensive references to scholarly literature in footnote 92. See, among others, W. J. Dumbrell, *The End of the Beginning*, 1985, pp. 35-76; M. G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 1989, pp. 31-32, 54-56; M. Barker, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem*, 1991, pp. 68-103; E. Bolger, 'The Compositional Role of the Eden Narrative in the Pentateuch', 1993; D. W. Parry, 'Garden of Eden: Prototype Sanctuary', 1994, pp. 126-151; T. Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden: Genesis 2-3 and Symbolism of the Eden Garden in Biblical Hebrew Literature*, 1979, pp. 111-138; D. T. Alexander & S. Gathercole, *Heaven on Earth: The Temple in Biblical Theology*, 2004; and G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 2004; D. Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: Exploring God's Plan for Life on Earth*, 2008.

woman in this sanctuary and its wider missionary context is to function as mediators of God's presence – as 'priests' who bridge heaven and earth, or God and the created world, as 'rulers' who represent the good rule of God before the created earth, and they are therefore also seen in this thematic context as 'royals' (as expressed in Gen. 1:26-28). By their life, work, nourishment, Sabbath rest, marriage and procreation, they are to mediate God's reign and his presence with his created beings.²³²

This ideal is however narrowed down in the Bible by at least three turns of events: (a) the Fall (Gen. 3); (b) Israel (Gen. 12 and Ex. 19); and (c) the Kingdom (2 Sam. 7). As we come to the New Testament fulfilment in Jesus Christ, it is the kingdom theme in particular that is picked up and continued. These and related themes and thoughts will be developed further in our proposed 'Biblical Theology of Ordination' in chapter 5, particularly in section 5.3.

Returning to Genesis 2, marriage is introduced as an ordinance given by God to mankind. It reflects the ideal planned by God for man's paradisiac existence, but it changes through the Fall recorded in Genesis 3. As we apply this passage to the Church today, however, it is important to recognise that when we talk of women in ministry, far from all women are or will be married, and women who are widows may remain unmarried (note the role of 'widows' in the New Testament). There are also modern roles for husband and wife in some societies, where both of them work and therefore share the domestic duties.

The passage in Genesis 2:4b-25 deepens the story of creation from the perspective of the *relationship* between man and woman through marriage – including their role as the first family or household in human history (2:24) and their innocent existence in God's Garden of Eden (2:25). It also provides the background for the Fall and the expulsion from Paradise in Genesis 3, which then functions as the condition for all that follows from Genesis 4 (i.e. the primeval history of humans in chapters 4-11 and the ancestral history of Israel in chapters 12-50).

Genesis 1-3 reveals God's purpose for human beings on earth, but also how it failed due to their disobedience of God's law. However, Genesis 4 introduces the story of how God implements his mission to restore humanity to the originally

²³² J. Barna, 'Towards a Biblical-Systematic Theology of Ordination', 2013, pp. 5-6.

intended communion with him – a mission which will be completed when the situation in Revelation 21:1-4 has become reality.

Genesis 2:4b-25 opens by describing the early conditions on earth and the creation of the first human being (2:4b-7). The narrator notes that there was no growth of shrubs and plants on the earth, partly because God had not yet caused rain to fall and partly because ‘there was no man to till the ground’. However, God lets a stream of water come up from the earth and water the ground, and then he creates man out of dust from the ground in order for him to till the ground. The purpose of man’s creation is therefore to work the ground. Having formed man of dust from the ground and breathed life into his nostrils, making him a ‘living being’ (*nefesh*) (2:7), God takes him away from the ground and puts him to work in the Garden of Eden and gives him the task of taking care of it (2:8-15) – in some sense the Garden functions as a symbol of the created world that God has given mankind to govern in Genesis 1. As God charged man and woman to subdue the earth in chapter 1, he now charges man to care for his garden-sanctuary. There is an underlying issue, however, and it has to do with the first charge of being fruitful, increasing in number, and filling the earth (1:28), which man cannot fulfil alone. God commands man to eat freely from all trees, but issues a prohibition against eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and declares that any transgression is punishable by death (2:16-17). We then have the following scenario (translation from Hebrew):

Genesis 2:18 And the Lord God said: ‘It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him. **19** And the Lord God formed out of earth every kind of animal of the field and every kind of bird of the heavens, and he brought them to the man, to see how he would name them; and just as the man would name every living being, that would be their name. **20** And the man gave names to all cattle and to the birds of the heavens and to all animals of the field, but he found no helper suitable for man. **21** And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on the man, so that he fell asleep. And he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. **22** And the Lord God built the rib, which he had taken from the man, into a woman, and he brought her to the man. **23** And the man said: ‘She is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh! She shall be called woman, because she is taken from man.’ **24** Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and stays fast with his wife, and they become one flesh. **25** And the man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame before each other.

In the process of creation, God sees that ‘it is not good for man to be alone’ and makes a ‘helper suitable for him’. This resolve is made before man gives names to

the animals which God has created (2:19-20), which is one way of having dominion over them. 'Retarding the creation of the Woman, from the Man's perspective, underlines how crucial she is.'²³³ It is also clear from 1:26-31, that being created after the man and after the animals does not mean that the woman is subdued by them, for in conjunction with the man she has been commissioned on equal terms by God to subdue the earth and rule over the living creatures on it. What really matters in 2:4b-25 is that God has charged human beings to be fruitful, increase in number, and fill the earth. As the Creator, God is responsible for enabling them to accomplish his commission, and God now creates the woman, not of dust this time, but of man's own body (2:21-22). *Both of them are defined by what they do and their origin.* The man comes from the dust of the ground and his task is to till the ground; the woman comes from the man and her task is to partner with the man.²³⁴

As the man meets the woman, he acknowledges the fundamental unity in their origin and constitution. Both are created by and subordinated to God, and both are made of the same bones and flesh, although man comes from dust and woman from man. In his acknowledgment of God's gift to him, man confirms this (2:23). In naming her 'woman' (*'ishah*), the man simply adds the feminine ending to 'man' (*'ish*), which also underlines their equality: they are the same, just male and female. It should also be noted that Hebrew *'ishah* means both 'woman' and 'wife', and both meanings may be intentionally included here.

In a concluding comment, the passage looks to the future of humanity and envisages that 'a man will leave his father and mother and cling to his wife, and they will become one flesh' (2:24). Notem however, the present tense (used in the NRSV) which applies the comment to the times of the author of the text: 'a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh'. The point in the Garden of Eden is that, in marriage, the woman 'supports' (*'azar*) the man, and the man is drawn to her in order to unite with her and become one flesh with her. We will see later on, in our comments on Genesis 3:16, that this marriage rule is reversed after the Fall: the woman 'is drawn to' her husband, while he 'supports' her.

Based on a close reading of the text, our conclusion is that, as a whole, the passage in Genesis 2:4b-23 has a striking unity built on *the oneness of man and woman* in their *marriage* relationship. We therefore maintain that Genesis 2 (and 3)

²³³ L. Turner, *Genesis*, 2000, p. 29.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

concerns man's and woman's marriage relationship, not their public roles in Christian ministry and leadership. We note that this conclusion has also been carefully set out based on comprehensive studies by Gerhard Hasel and Richard Davidson.²³⁵ Our findings in Genesis 2 are as follows:

1. Man is incomplete when alone (2:18). This recognition by God implies that man/husband is *complete* with woman/wife in marriage (and vice versa).

2. The Hebrew terms underlying the phrase 'helper suitable for him' (2:18, 20) do not give any warrant for arguing the principle of man's headship and woman's submission. If anything, they refer to man's *dependence* on woman (she helps him) and their mutual *suitability* for each other.

3. Being created out of man's body, does not imply woman's subordination to man, but the text uses this element to underline their complete *equality*, which is confirmed by man's acknowledgement of her being 'bones of my bones and flesh of my flesh' (2:23). They are made of the same substance, although in terms of their origin and what they are made of, man is from dust (material) and woman is from man (living being). This may be understood to say that, by their origin, man is focussed on the material aspect of creation and working the ground, while woman is focussed on the people aspect of creation and is equipped to care for the needs of other people. Thus, the equality of man and woman is also a *complementarity*.

4. It is possible, but not necessary, that the reference to man's 'rib' from which God created woman is a way of saying that they stand side by side, i.e. none of them being superior or inferior to the other. Only in giving woman the name 'woman', man may be said to act in a leading role, but this role is merely a continuation of his role in naming the animals in 2:19-20 and derives from the order in which God chose to create man and woman (we will come back to this below). The point of his naming her is not to mark her submission and man's headship, but to define the fundamental equality and unity of the two in marriage (2:23). (We have expanded our comments on name-giving in Excursus 1 below.)

5. The order in which man and woman are created does not give grounds for saying that man, who came first, is superior to woman, who was created second. On the contrary, following Turner, we already noted that 'the retarding of Woman's

²³⁵ G. F. Hasel, 'Man and Woman in Genesis 1-3', 1984, pp. 9-22; R. M. Davidson, 'Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture', 1998, pp. 259-295.

creation in Genesis 2 underlines how crucial she is'.²³⁶ First and second in order is not a criterion in the Bible for headship and submission: Cain was born before Abel, but Abel's sacrifice was accepted by God (Gen. 4:1-5); Esau was born before Jacob, but Jacob carried the blessing and the promises of God to Abraham (Gen. 27-28); Jacob put Joseph's son Ephraim before Manasseh, although Manasseh was born first (Gen. 48:8-20).

6. The intimate unity between man and woman in marriage is defined as 'becoming one flesh' (2:24).

7. The picture of the relationship between the married man and woman according to God's ideal in Genesis 1-2 is one of unity and equality (a) in their origin from God and accountability to him, (b) in being created in his image, (c) in their role as sexual partners, multiplying and filling the earth with new human beings, (d) in their role of being rulers of the earth, (e) in their equal substance of human bones and flesh, and (f) in their mutual support and intimate relationship in marriage.

Excursus 1: Name-Giving

The giving of a name to the woman (Gen. 2:23) has been adduced by some readers in the discussion of ordination as evidence that man has superior authority in this story (in 3:20 Adam also names his wife 'Eve' to indicate her task as mother to all human beings). This view cannot be sustained.

Firstly, the passage describes a unique situation at creation, and there are no other examples in the Bible of a husband naming his wife, for naming was done at birth by parents. In the context of Genesis 2:23, God has assigned to man the task of naming all animals as they emanate from God's creative acts. This function simply continues when the woman is created, and God brings her to the man. The man's naming her in 2:23 is coupled with a strong recognition of their equality, and the name the man gives the woman recognises her *origin*, not her status.

Secondly, the role of naming a child could also be taken by women without impinging on the authority of the husband (e.g. Gen. 4:25; 29:32-35; 30:1-12, 18, 20, 24; Judg. 13:24; 1 Sam. 1:20).

Thirdly, the importance of man's naming the woman/wife in 2:23 is due to the fact that, in Old Testament times, 'the name was inextricably bound up with existence' so that 'nothing exists unless it has a name' (cf. Eccl. 6:10), and 'hence, the act of creation is not complete until all creatures have received a name'.²³⁷ 'The name was also the essence of personality, the expression of innermost being.'²³⁸ Based on these insights from the Old Testament as a whole, there is in 2:23 a double aspect of 'creation':

²³⁶ L. Turner, *Genesis*, 2000, p. 29.

²³⁷ R. Abba, Article 'Name', in: *IDB*, vol. 3, p. 501.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

(a) God the Creator allows man to name woman, as he has already done with the animals in 2:19-20; by this act she is recognised as a living being. The nature of the name given to her, however, suggests identity with the man, for we noted that 'man' and 'woman' (*'ish* and *'ishah*) are essentially the same word, separated mainly by gender markers. By naming her *'ishah* and explaining the name as alluding to 'being taken from man (*'ish*)', the fundamental *identity* of man's and woman's essence of personality is confirmed.

(b) In 2:23 man is also accepting woman as his 'wife', which is the other meaning of *'ishah*. In fact, the wording of 2:23 is in keeping with the so-called formula of relationship, as in Genesis 29:14; Judges 9:2, 3; 2 Samuel 5:1; 19:13, 14, indicating a permanent relationship.²³⁹ This reading is supported by the comment that follows in 2:24, where man/husband and woman/wife are described as one household and one flesh. Again, the emphasis in the name-giving is identity and equality.

In conclusion, therefore, the naming of woman in Genesis 2 does not express male superiority, but the man's/husband's acceptance of woman/wife as an intimate and equal partner with him.

Our conclusions on Genesis 2 harmonise with the conclusions of two eminent Old Testament scholars in our church: Gerhard Hasel and Richard Davidson. Hasel summarised his findings as follows:

That woman is created to be man's 'helper' (*'ēzer*) expresses both a beneficial and a harmonious relationship between man and woman. Only woman is a suitable partner alongside and corresponding to man; she is his equal companion (2:18, 20). As God is man's superior helper and animals are man's interior helpers, so woman is man's equal helper, one that fits him. Woman owes her creation as solely to God as does man who, although created first, is neither consulted nor participates in her creation. Her creation from Adam's rib indicates the inseparable unity and fellowship of life between male and female as well as her status as equal with man (2:21). The jubilant outcry, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh' (2:23a, RSV), expresses man's recognition that finally there is a fitting companion equal to him. The fact of Adam's creation before Eve's does not imply any superiority on his part.²⁴⁰

Davidson addresses in some detail the alleged divinely-ordained hierarchical view of the genders which has been attributed to Genesis 2 over the centuries. He addresses the main elements adduced in favour of such a view as follows:

1. The argument that man is created first and woman last (2:7, 22).

Davidson states correctly that 'a careful examination of the literary structure of Genesis 2 reveals that such a conclusion does not follow'.²⁴¹ He calls attention to the

²³⁹ C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, 1984, p. 232.

²⁴⁰ G. F. Hasel, 'Man and Woman in Genesis 1-3', 1984, p. 22.

²⁴¹ R. M. Davidson, 'Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture', 1998, p. 261.

inclusio or ‘ring construction’ of Genesis 2 – a very common pattern in the Bible – in which the creation of man at the beginning and woman at the end ‘correspond to each other in importance’. He adds that ‘the narrator underscores their equal importance by employing precisely the same number of words (in Hebrew) for the description of the creation of the man as for the creation of the woman’.²⁴² Quoting Trevor Dennis, he makes the point that ‘the writer has counted his words and been careful to match the lengths of his descriptions exactly’. Davidson summarises the literary structure in Genesis 2 as follows: ‘The movement in Genesis 2, if anything, is not from superior to inferior, but from incompleteness to completeness. Woman is created as the climax, the culmination of the story. She is the crowning work of Creation.’²⁴³

Two subordinate points of the argument for female submission in Genesis 2 relate to man’s priority in speaking and being spoken to in the narrative. Thus, it has been claimed that man’s headship over woman before the Fall is revealed in that God addresses man, and not woman, and also in that man does the speaking in the narrative, not woman. Against this argument, we agree with Davidson’s conclusions:

However, these points fail to take into account the movement of the narrative from incompleteness to completeness and climax, as noted above. As part of the process of bringing Adam to realize his ‘hunger for wholeness’, his need for a partner, God speaks to Adam, warning him not to eat of the forbidden tree. Such information was crucial for the human being to avoid transgression and to be a free moral agent with the power of choice. But the divine impartation of such knowledge to Adam before Eve was created does not thereby reveal the headship of Adam over his partner. Likewise, that only Adam speaks in Genesis 2 does not reveal his pre-Fall headship over Eve any more than only Eve speaking outside the Garden (Genesis 4) reveals Eve’s headship over Adam after the Fall.²⁴⁴

2. The argument that woman is formed for the sake of man – to be his ‘helpmate’ or assistant, to cure man’s loneliness (2:18-20). Davidson acknowledges that Genesis 2:18 records the Lord’s deliberation: ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him *‘ezer kenegdo* (KJV: ‘a help meet for him’; RSV: ‘a helper fit for him’; NASB: ‘a helper suitable for him’), and says that ‘these words have often been taken to imply the inferiority or the subordinate status of

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 261-262.

woman. For example, John Calvin understood that woman was a “kind of appendage” and a “lesser helpmeet” for man’.²⁴⁵

Probing into the meaning of the Hebrew terminology, Davidson calls attention to the misleading translation of the Hebrew *‘ezer* as ‘help’ and ‘helper’, because the English ‘helper’ suggests an assistant, a subordinate, an inferior, whereas the Hebrew word contains no such connotation. ‘In fact, the Hebrew Bible most frequently employs *‘ezer* to describe a superior helper – God himself as the “helper” of Israel. This is a relational term, describing a beneficial relationship, but in itself does not specify position or rank, either superiority or inferiority. The specific position intended must be gleaned from the immediate context, here the adjoining *kenegdo*.’²⁴⁶

Turning to Hebrew *kenegdo*, ‘like him’, Davidson correctly notes that *neged* conveys the idea of ‘in front of’ or ‘counterpart’, and that a literal translation of *kenegdo* is: ‘like his counterpart, corresponding to him’. Used with *‘ezer*, ‘this term indicates no less than equality: Eve is Adam’s “benefactor/helper”, one who in position is “corresponding to him”, “his counterpart, his complement”. Eve is “a power equal to man”; she is Adam’s “partner”.’²⁴⁷

3. The argument that woman comes out of man (2:21-22). This argument for female submission says that since woman was formed from man, she has a derivative existence, a dependent and subordinate status. Davidson’s convincing response against this view is:

That her existence was in some way ‘derived’ from Adam cannot be denied. But derivation does not imply subordination. Adam was also ‘derived’ – from the ground (2:7), but certainly we are not to conclude that the ground was his superior. Again, Woman is *not* Adam’s rib. The raw material, not Woman, was taken out of Man, just as the raw material of Man was ‘taken’ (3:19, 23) out of the ground. Samuel Terrien rightly points out that Woman ‘is not simply moulded of clay, as man was, but she is architecturally “built” (2:33)’. The verb *bnh*, ‘to build’, used in the Creation account only with regard to the formation of Eve, ‘suggests an aesthetic intent and connotes also the idea of reliability and permanence’. As the Man was asleep while God created Woman, Man had no active part in the creation of Woman that might allow him to claim to be her superior or head.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 262.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

4. The argument that woman is created from man's rib (2:21-22), which indicates her dependence upon him for life. This argument for female submission and male headship is contradicted by the symbolism of the rib which points rather to equality. By building woman from man's rib, God appears to be indicating the 'mutual relationship', 'the singleness of life', 'the inseparable unity', in which man and woman are joined. Thus, Davidson points out that 'the rib means solidarity and equality'²⁴⁹ and quotes Ellen White:

Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him.²⁵⁰

Davidson concludes that this interpretation is further confirmed by man's poetic exclamation when he sees woman for the first time (2:23): 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh!' The phrase 'bones of my bones and flesh of my flesh' indicates, Davidson says, 'a person "as close as one's own body" and it denotes physical oneness and "a commonality of concern, loyalty and responsibility", but does not lead to the notion of Woman's subordination or submission to Man'.²⁵¹

5. The argument that man names woman (2:23) which indicates his power and authority over her. We have already refuted this argument in our exposition above, and Davidson understands the passage along the same lines. He points out that man's naming of woman in Genesis 2 does *not* signify authority over the one named. Firstly, the word 'woman' (*'ishah*) is not a personal name, only a generic identification. This is verified in 2:24, which indicates that a man is to cling to his *'ishah* ('wife'), and is further substantiated in Genesis 3:20, which explicitly records man's naming of Eve only after the Fall.²⁵² Davidson goes further:

Moreover, Jacques Doukhan has shown that Genesis 2:23 contains a pairing of 'divine passives', indicating that the designation of 'woman' comes *from God*, not man. Just as Woman 'was taken out of Man' *by God*, with which the Man had nothing to do, so she 'shall be called woman' is a designation originating in God and not man. Doukhan also indicates how the literary structure of the Genesis Creation story confirms his interpretation.²⁵³ The wordplay in 2:23 between *'ish* ('man') and *'ishah* ('wo-man') and the

²⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 263.

²⁵⁰ E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 1890, p. 46.

²⁵¹ R. M. Davidson, 'Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture', 1998, p. 263.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ J. Doukhan, *The Genesis Creation Story*, 1978, pp. 46-47; P. Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 1978, pp. 99-100; G. F. Hasel, 'Equality from the Start: Woman in the Creation Story', 1975, pp. 23-24.

explanation of the Woman being taken out of Man are not given to buttress a hierarchical view of the sexes, but rather to underscore Man's joyous recognition of 'his second self'. In his ecstatic poetic utterance the Man is not determining who the Woman is, but delighting in what God has done, recognising and welcoming Woman as the equal counterpart of his sexuality. After the Fall Adam *did* give his wife the name Eve, probably signifying his exercise of headship authority over her; such was not the case at Creation.²⁵⁴

Davidson concludes – and we fully agree – that in light of his study, 'there is nothing in Genesis 2 to indicate a hierarchical view of the sexes. The man and the woman before the Fall are presented as fully equal, with no hint of headship of one over the other or a hierarchical relationship between husband and wife'.²⁵⁵

Rather than a hierarchy of genders, Genesis 2 describes an equality and complementarity of genders. The focus is not on headship and submission between male and female, but on the headship of God and the servanthood of man and woman together, as royal-priestly ministers to the one God who rules the world and dwells in his sanctuary, the Garden of Eden.

3.1.1.3 The Expulsion from Eden (Genesis 3:1-24). The Fall of mankind is a threat to God's mission. However, God's purpose has not changed but is still focussed on achieving the royal-priestly servanthood of man and woman in a world that functions as a sanctuary for God where all is created for his glory. God's actions to address the Fall reveal a dual purpose: (a) bringing justice and (b) saving what can be saved and provide for mankind's continued existence. This duality is rooted in God's nature as God and is repeated throughout the Bible as a whole. It is worded in the Ten Commandments as follows:

Exodus 20:3-6 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of their parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments. (NRSV)

This insight was constantly made by the believer, even in difficult times:

Lamentations 3:25-33 The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him. **26** It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord ... **31** For the Lord will not reject for ever. **32** Although he causes grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; **33** for he does not willingly afflict or grieve anyone. (NRSV)

²⁵⁴ R. M. Davidson, 'Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture', 1998, pp. 263-264.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

An exegesis of Genesis 3:1-24 must not lose sight of the nature and mission of God.

The Fall impacts not only the conditions of life for mankind but also their relationship to God, to the environment of the Garden of Eden, and to each other. What God instituted in Genesis 1-2 is fundamentally *changed*, but *not all is changed*. Features that remain, although set in a new context, are: (a) mankind was created in the image of God, *representing* him and *mediating* his presence and activities in the world; (b) God's commission to man and woman to be fruitful (life-giving) and subdue the earth (according to the order of God's kingdom); (c) God's blessing upon man and woman (life-giving and authorisation); (d) the egalitarian ideal for man and wife in marriage (cooperative interdependence); (e) the fundamental distinction between divine and human as the basis for God's ethical boundaries in guiding human life (the law of creation). The aspect of *continuation* needs to be kept in mind at each point in the reading of the story of the Fall in Genesis 3, because the biblical text indicates that this is essential. The meaning arises from the context (cf. 2.3).

1. The Fall (Genesis 3:1-13)

In 3:1-6, the serpent initiates a dialogue with the woman regarding God's ethical boundaries for humans. The humans' dominion over the animals is reversed: the serpent, more 'astute and cunning' than the other animals God created, entices the humans to disobedience. The woman rejects the insinuation that God has not said what he has said, showing a clear knowledge of and adherence to the instruction given to the man in 2:16-17. Nevertheless, she gives in to the temptation and disobeys God.

The factors that influence the woman to eat the fruit are partly sensual, namely that the fruit is 'good for food' and 'pleasing to the eye', and partly the desire to transgress the limits God had set between himself and humanity and thus the prospect of gaining wisdom without fear of God (cf. Ps. 111:10; Prov. 9:10; 15:33). The woman is tempted by the serpent's words that 'God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil' (3:5). She finds the fruit 'desirable for gaining wisdom' (3:6).

The Hebrew text does not make it fully clear if the man is with the woman during the dialogue with the serpent and her eating of the fruit – this depends in some way on whether one reads the situation in 3:1-6 as a successive sequence of

events or as one integrated situation with different elements that have to be described in a linear fashion due to the nature of the written language. However, it is clear that, when the woman eats of the forbidden fruit and gives it to her husband, he is 'together with her', and either he was present already when the serpent spoke to her or he joined her moments later – the text does not explicitly state which of the two is intended. Thus, by this ambiguity, the passage makes it plain that the question of whether the woman was alone, or if man and woman were together, is not a vital part of the story. A literal translation of the Hebrew text in 3:6 shows this:

Genesis 3:6 And the woman saw that the tree was good for food ... and she took from its fruit and gave also to her husband who was together with her and he ate.

The man is as knowledgeable of God's prohibition as is his wife, and yet he, too, eats of the forbidden fruit. Later on, as he faces the consequences before God, he blames his wife, and indirectly blames even God, saying: 'The woman you put here together with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it' (3:12). By this statement of the man, the text again underlines that she was 'together with him' (3:6, 12). Being true to the biblical text, therefore, the immediate impression is that the husband is together with his wife and that his disloyal act of blaming her in order to excuse his behaviour is not a statement that is meant to be taken as a statement of fact. Many expositors have however taken the man's cowardly defence speech as a factual statement which is included in their argument for female submission.

When God hears what the man says, he turns to the woman and asks her the question: 'What [is] this [that] you have done?' Thus, not even God accuses her directly, but wants to know her story. In her answer, however, she takes her blame for eating the fruit, does not mention the husband's role, and briefly tells the truth that 'the serpent deceived me'. Thus, the deceiver in the text is the serpent, and God's judgement also reveals that in 3:14-15. Both man and woman disobey God, and both receive God's judgements and suffer the consequences together.

When God comes to the Garden after the Fall, he initiates an encounter that functions as a legal process. He begins by interrogating the defendants in order to establish their guilt. He then pronounces his sentence in the form of (a) curses (note that the curses are only pronounced over the serpent and the ground in 3:14, 17) and (b) judgements (directed to woman and man in 3:16-19). God's *blessing* upon man and woman in 1:28 is still valid and we will see at the end of our exegesis that

God connects his judgements with certain provisions and care for them. In past exegesis, God's role as judge has been over-emphasised at the neglect of his role as father, care-taker and provider. Despite the Fall, God cares about his mission to restore humans and the creation according to his original intention. That this is God's plan is obvious from the immediate context and the Bible as a whole, and it is the necessary implication of the passage in Revelation 21:1-4.

2. Consequences of the Fall (Genesis 3:14-24)

God's actions towards man and woman in 3:14-24 indicate the changes brought by the Fall and how God's intention with his creation was affected negatively. In 3:22, God says: 'The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil.' This general statement about human beings (*ha'adam* with the definite article) concerns both man and woman.

The humans have now *experienced* (*yada'*, 'know') good and evil and are faced with coping with both these 'powers' in life, which in a limited sense makes them equal to the divine and angelic beings surrounding God. Thus, 'the image of God', which implies being a congenial *representative* of God, has been 'corrupted' by the knowledge of good and evil, which transgresses the absolute boundaries between the divine and the human. However, in no way does this imply a difference between man and woman. Both are affected in the same way. God's actions are described as follows:

Genesis 3:22-24 And the Lord God said: 'Look, the human has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. And now, may he not stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat of it and live forever.' **23** So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. **24** After he drove the human out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

The pattern here is that (a) the *consequence* of the transgression of the harmonious order in God's kingdom, which is *caused* by the Fall of the humans and *resulting* in them acquiring a knowledge of good and evil, brings (b) a *further threat* to God's order, namely that the humans will *live forever* despite God's decree that they will die if they disobey his boundaries for them. This threat is then eliminated by (c) *the punitive and preventive action* of expelling them from the Garden of Eden with the provisions for guarding their access back to the tree of life. Thus, God's action in

3:22-24 is not just described as a punitive act, but as a preventive act which is a necessary *consequence* of man's disobedience. Together with God's establishment of *justice*, we must therefore also be aware of his *re-arrangement* of the life of human beings that is necessitated by the Fall. God's governmental *accommodations* to the new, albeit fallen world-order are particularly essential for a balanced and comprehensive understanding of the passage.

A similar pattern of human crime and its divine, consequential *justiciary* and *administrative* provisions are found in the structure of God's judgements on the serpent, the woman, and the man. God needs to deal with man's disobedience in order to bring justice and to justify his decree that they would die if they disobeyed him (2:16-17). However, while justice is brought based on God's clear boundaries, the function of logical *consequences* is also prominent: (a) man's disobedience has *consequences*, namely, (b) curses (serpent, ground) or punishing acts (man, woman) which God inflicts on his creation; (c) the *consequences* of the curses/punishments bring new dimensions into the life of humans and change the conditions of their lives; (d) the *consequences* of this is a disruption of God's creative intentions as presented in chapter 1-2 and the need for some kind of remedial and accommodating measure arises, to which God responds.

Thus, the logical element of *consequence* keeps all the elements together in the entire section of 3:14-24. At the same time, God is not only acting as a *judge* who punishes, but he is also a *caring provider* – fulfilling his blessing on man and woman in 1:28 – who provides for man and woman certain safeguards in the midst of their misery. Let us see how this plays out in the text:

The Serpent (3:14-15): The curse and punishment inflicted on his *body*, in that he will have to crawl on his belly, brings the *consequence* that he will eat dust all the days of his life. The curse and punishment inflicted on his *relationship* with humans, i.e. the enmity between serpents and humans, brings the *consequence* that humans will crush the serpent's head and he will strike human heels. (We are not at this point addressing the typological and Messianic significance of the 'woman's seed' in 3:15.)

The Woman (3:16): The punishment (no curse expressed, suggesting that God's blessing making her fruitful in 1:28 still stands) which is inflicted on the woman – a painful pregnancy and childbirth – is a *consequence* of disobedience and in itself also has *consequences*: 'And so your longing (*teshuqah*) shall be for your husband,

and he shall be responsible for (*mashal be*) you' (3:16b). These *consequences* aim at the woman's dual role as wife and mother and refer to the life of humans after they are expelled from Eden. Because of the crucial importance of 3:16 in our study, we will come back to this passage for a more detailed reading later.

The Man (3:17-24): God first gives the curse – note that it is a curse upon the ground and not upon the man (since God's blessing making him fruitful in 1:28 is still valid). However, the *consequences* of the fall for him are that he will work the ground in pain until he returns to dust (3:17b-19), which 'suggests that ultimately it is the earth that subdues the man'.²⁵⁶ Thus, the charge to man and woman to subdue the earth in 1:28 is replaced by the earth subduing the man, by giving him pain in working the ground and by being the place to which he returns when he dies.

The central passage here, however, is 3:16. God's judgement upon the woman can be divided into the following four parts:

- a. I will greatly increase your pain [labour] in childbearing;
- b. with pain [labour] you will give birth to children;
- c. yet your longing [desire] will be for your husband;
- d. and he will be responsible for you.

As pointed out by Davidson, 'the meaning of the last two enigmatic lines (3:16c and d) of the divine sentence is crucial for a proper understanding of the nature of God's design for sexual relationships throughout the rest of Scripture'.²⁵⁷

Davidson outlines five major views that have been advanced in the history of interpretation of 3:16. The first, and perhaps most common position is that 'the subordination of woman is a Creation ordinance, i.e. God's ideal from the beginning, but as a result of sin, this original form of hierarchy between the sexes is distorted and corrupted and must be restored by the gospel'.²⁵⁸

Secondly, some have viewed the woman's subordination as a creation ordinance while seeing 3:16 'not as a distortion but a reaffirmation of subordination as a blessing and a comfort to the woman in her difficulties as a mother'. The meaning of 3:16c-d may then be paraphrased: 'you will have labour and difficulty in your motherhood, yet you will be eager for your husband and he will rule over you (in

²⁵⁶ L. Turner, *Genesis*, 2000, p. 33.

²⁵⁷ R. M. Davidson, 'Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture', 1998, p. 264.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.* Among theologians mentioned by Davidson who have advocated this position, we note S. Bacchiocchi, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Study on the Role of Women in the Church*, 1987, pp. 79-84.

the sense of care for and help you and not in the sense of dominate and oppress you)'.²⁵⁹

Thirdly, some maintain that 'the subordination of woman to man did not exist before the Fall, and the mentioning of such a subordination in Genesis 3:16 is only a *description* of the evil consequences of sin – the usurpation of authority by the husband (to be removed by the gospel) – and not a permanent *prescription* of God's will for the husband-wife relationships after sin'.²⁶⁰ Davidson notes that 'proponents of this view underline the culturally-conditioned nature of this passage and vigorously deny that it represents a divinely ordained normative position for sexual relationships after the Fall'.²⁶¹

Fourthly, some concur with the third view that the submission of the wife to her husband is part of the evil consequences of the Fall and did not exist as a creation ordinance. But in this fourth view, '3:16 is to be understood as *prescriptive* and not merely as *descriptive*. It presents God's normative pattern for the relationship of husband and wife after the Fall'.²⁶²

Finally, some agree with the second view, that 3:16c-d is a blessing and not a curse, but differ 'in denying that subordination of woman to man is a Creation ordinance'. The proponents of this position also argue, in effect, that 'even in Genesis 3 no hierarchy or headship in the sexes is either prescribed or described'. Davidson points out that in this view the word for 'rule' (3:16d) is often translated from an identical-looking but different Hebrew verb meaning 'to resemble' or 'to be like' (i.e. what the dictionaries refer to as *mashal* I), emphasising the equality of husband and wife (a view that Davidson appropriately rejects). Another variation of this view argues that man 'rules' or 'predominates' only in the area of sexuality, i.e. 'female reluctance is overcome by the passion they feel toward their men, and that allows them to accede to the males' sexual advances even though they realize that undesired pregnancies (with the accompanying risks) might be the consequence'.²⁶³

²⁵⁹ R. M. Davidson, 'Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture', 1998, pp. 264-265. Among expositors of this view, Davidson mentions S. B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ*, 1980, p. 35.

²⁶⁰ Among the large number of proponents of this view quoted by Davidson, see, for example, P. K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female*, 1975, p. 114.

²⁶¹ R. M. Davidson, 'Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture', 1998, p. 265.

²⁶² *Ibid.* This view is held by, among others, F. Schaeffer, *Genesis in Space and Time*, 1975, pp. 93-94.

²⁶³ R. M. Davidson, 'Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture', 1998, p. 265. An example of this view, among several references provided by Davidson, is J. H. Orwell, *And Sarah Laughed: The Status of Women in the Old Testament*, 1977, p. 18.

Davidson makes a careful evaluation of these views. He dismisses views one and two, since they assume that ‘a hierarchy of the genders existed before the Fall’. We agree with Davidson on this point, and our reading of Genesis 1-2 is fully in support of his conclusion that no such subordination or subjection of woman to man was present as a result of God’s creation. Davidson also dismisses option three (i.e. that 3:16 is only descriptive, not prescriptive), as well as option five (no headship or hierarchy is either described or prescribed in 3:16, but only a blessing of equality).

In arguing against options three and five, Davison ends up supporting option four, but is open to include the idea from option five that God’s sentence in 3:16c-d also includes a ‘blessing’.²⁶⁴ His main arguments for dismissing options three and five are that they fail to ‘take seriously the judgement/punishment context of the passage’. Thus, he claims, God’s pronouncement is not merely a culturally-conditioned description, but a divine sentence. In favour of this interpretation, (a) he points to the series of judgements in 3:14-19 (although not quoting them in full) and in analogy with them he concludes that ‘God pronounces the sentence upon the Woman with regard to her future relationship with Adam’; (b) he claims that the Hebrew grammar of God’s first words in the legal sentence ‘I will greatly increase’ underscores the divine origin and prescriptive nature of the judgement upon the woman – reference is made to the infinitive absolute construction which implies ‘the absolute certainty of action’; and (c) he makes the point that Ellen White adopted the interpretation that 3:16c-d institutes a change involving the subjection/submission of the wife to the husband.²⁶⁵

However, Davidson makes a significant concession to the fifth view, that Hebrew *mashal* in 3:16 has ‘a semantic range that makes it possible to understand the divine sentence in 3:16 as involving not only punishment but blessing’.²⁶⁶ He notes that ‘in many passages *mashal*, ‘rule’, is used in the sense of servant leadership, to ‘comfort, protect, care for, love’ (passages adduced are 2 Sam. 23:3; Prov. 17:2; Isa. 40:10; 63:19; Zech. 6:13).²⁶⁷ He says:

That the element of blessing is especially emphasized in this verse appears to be confirmed by recognizing the probable synonymous parallelism between 3:16c and 3:16d. God pronounces that even though the woman would have

²⁶⁴ R. M. Davidson, ‘Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture’, 1998, pp. 266-269.

²⁶⁵ E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 59.

²⁶⁶ R. M. Davidson, ‘Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture’, 1998, p. 268.

²⁶⁷ Reference is made to R. D. Culver, Article ‘Mashal III’, in: *ThWOT*, vol. 1, 1980, p. 534. Cf. V. Norskov Olsen, *The New Relatedness for Man and Woman in Christ*, 1993, p. 55.

difficult 'labour' in childbirth – an ordeal that would seem naturally to discourage her from continuing to have relations with her husband – 'yet', God assures her, 'your desire shall be for your husband'.²⁶⁸

In line with this understanding, Davidson points out that the meaning of the Hebrew *teshuqah*, 'strong desire, yearning', (3:16), which appears only three times in Scripture, is illuminated by its only other occurrence in a context of man-woman relationship, i.e. Song of Songs 7:11 (Hebrew). In this verse, the Shulamite bride joyfully exclaims, 'I am my beloved's, and his *desire (teshuqah)* is for me'. Along the lines of this usage of *teshuqah* in the Song of Songs to indicate a wholesome sexual desire, Davidson argues that 'the term appears to be employed in 3:16c to indicate a positive blessing accompanying the divine judgment'. He says: 'A divinely ordained sexual yearning of wife for husband will serve to sustain the union that has been threatened in the ruptured relations resulting from sin.'²⁶⁹

Davidson concludes from this interpretation, that 'if Genesis 3:16d is seen to be in close parallelism with 3:16c, the emphasis upon blessing as well as judgement seems to accrue also to man's relationship with his wife. The husband's "taking charge of" his wife, even though it grows out of the results of sin, may be regarded as a blessing in preserving the harmony and union of the relationship. As is implied in the semantic range of *mashal*, and becomes explicit in the Song of Songs, this is not to be a "rule" of tyrannous power, but a servant leadership of protection, care, and love. In modern idiom, the husband is to lovingly "take care of" his wife.'²⁷⁰

In stating his conclusion, Davidson says that view four is to be preferred, in that there is a normative divine sentence announcing subjection/submission of wife to husband as a result of sin. He then adds: 'This involves, however, not only a negative judgment but also (and especially) a positive blessing (as suggested in view five) designed to lead back as much as possible to the original plan of harmony and union between equal partners'.²⁷¹

We find Davidson's exegesis of 3:16 instructive and helpful in many ways but believe that there is more to be said about (a) the context in Genesis 1-3 as part of the overall biblical theme of the mission of God, (b) the immediate context in 3:14-24,

²⁶⁸ R. M. Davidson, 'Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture', 1998 p. 268.

²⁶⁹ Ibid. (emphasis supplied).

²⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 269.

²⁷¹ Ibid., p. 269.

and (c) the sense and reference of the verb *mashal be*. We have gratefully benefitted from Davidson's analysis but will give it some nuances.

With regard to the future of husbands and wives, the painful childbearing and childbirth that God inflicts in his judgement of the woman, is connected with the woman's 'longing' for her husband in two ways: (a) it *presupposes* her sexual desire which eventually brings her the pain of carrying and giving birth to children; and (b) it *results* in her needy desire to be provided for and sustained during many years of repeated childbirths until and beyond the time when she would turn unfruitful in old age. Her husband, who works the cursed ground and provides for her, determines both his response to her longing for sexual attention and to her life-long need for protection, provision and care. In this dual sense, he is her 'master'. It is relevant to note here that marriage in Old Testament times appears to have been based on the husband's provision of 'food, clothing and marital rights' (Ex. 21:10-11),²⁷² and in this sense the husband is his wife's caretaker, provider and lover.

In this context, it benefits us to consider the sense and reference of the Hebrew verb *mashal be* in 'he will be responsible for you' (3:16d). This expression is often translated 'rule over' in 3:16, perhaps under the influence of the Septuagint translation *kyrieuo*, which is somewhat mechanically used in the Septuagint for Hebrew *mashal be*, but with little regard for the fine nuances of the Hebrew verb.²⁷³ There are certainly royal contexts where *mashal* is best translated 'rule' (e.g. 2 Sam. 23:3). However, in our study of this Hebrew term, we find clear nuances in the concept of *mashal* in the book of Genesis. The English 'rule over' expresses a strong dominance and authoritative dominion over something,²⁷⁴ but with the preposition *be* the verb *mashal* may also be used in a non-hierarchical sense. This depends on (a) the object of the verb – if it refers to something or somebody that is 'in need to be served', *mashal be* tends to have the sense of 'manage' or 'care for'; it also depends on (b) the function of *mashal be* in its written context – if the verb expresses a positive and affirming action, its sense leans towards 'be responsible for, manage, take care of'; and it depends on (c) the function of the verb in relation to the status of its agent in the context – if *mashal be* signifies an action undertaken *on behalf of* or *in the service of* somebody who is superior to the agent, its sense also leans towards

²⁷² D. Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the bible: The Social and Literary Context*, 2002, pp. 8-11.

²⁷³ W. Foerster, Article '*kyrieuo*', in: *ThDNT*, vol. 3, p. 1097.

²⁷⁴ For the sense of English 'rule' compared to 'govern', see G. Crabb, *Crabb's English Synonyms*, 1974, p. 388.

‘be responsible for’, ‘manage’ take care of’, while ‘rule over’ would be appropriate for the Master or King standing above him. Thus, among others, the verb is used in the following three contexts in Genesis, besides 3:16:

(a) The ‘responsibility’ of the sun and moon to ‘care for’ the needs of the living by indicating and organising the day and illuminating and organising the night in the service of their Owner/Creator (1:18), where ‘rule over’ may perhaps work as a metaphor, but does not convey the more exact function of the sun and the moon;

(b) The function of Isaac’s servant who is ‘in charge of’ or ‘takes care of’ (*mashal be*) all Isaac’s possessions (24:2), where ‘rule over’ would be quite inappropriate;

(c) Joseph is said to ‘be in charge of (*mashal be*) all Egypt’ (45:8, 26), where ‘ruling over all Egypt’ would be inappropriate, since Joseph was not the ruler, above Pharaoh, but he was ‘put in charge of’, ‘took responsibility for’, or ‘governed the affairs of’ the country in the service of Pharaoh (41:45) – note that ‘with respect to the throne [Pharaoh] remained greater than him’ (41:40).

As we widen the context of the use of *mashal be* in the Old Testament and the Qumran Texts, it becomes clear that it can also mean ‘be in charge of, taking care of, and be responsible for’.²⁷⁵ We therefore prefer to translate *mashal be* with ‘be responsible for’ with an implied nuance of ‘take care of’, understanding it to be referring to ‘be in charge of’, as a trusted servant cares for the household of his master. We will see in the following how this translation fits better than ‘rule over’ in the context of Genesis 3:16.

Regardless of these comparative considerations, however, it is the use of *mashal be* in its context that must have the final word. The immediate context in 3:16 is God sentencing the woman for her transgression. We have four lines that may be grouped as two synonymous parallelisms – a common way of Hebrew poetic expression:

- A.
 a. I will greatly increase your pain in childbearing;
 b. with pain you will give birth to children;

²⁷⁵ See Ps. 8:7; 105:21; cf. J. A. Soggin, Article ‘*mashal/herrschen*’, in: *THAT*, vol. 1, col. 931; W. L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 1976, s.v. *mashal*, p. 219. See also H. Gross, article ‘Mashal II’, in: *ThDOT*, vol. 9, pp. 69-71; Gross notes that a related noun *memshalah* is found in the Qumran Texts in which ‘the notion of management appears alongside that of dominion: 1QS 10:1; 1QH 12:6, 9; 1Q34 fr. 3 2:3’ (ibid., p.71). The view that *mashal* signifies an act of ‘responsibility and care’ has been argued in V. Norskov Olsen, *The New Relatedness for Man and Woman in Christ*, 1993, p. 55.

B.

- c. yet your longing will be for your husband;
- d. and he will be responsible for you.

The first part (A) expresses the same content in lines (a) and (b) regarding the woman's punishment by pain in childbearing and childbirth. However, reading this in the context of Genesis 1-3, we immediately see the connection with God's initial command to man and woman to 'be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it', which is connected with his blessing of them (1:26). This command is given in the context of God's mission, his battle in the Great Controversy, and is associated with man's and woman's royal-priestly service to him. It is also where God displays his character of love and purpose (see 3.1.1.1 for details). The same God speaks in 3:16.

The internal logic of the four phrases in 3:16 is: (a) The pain inflicted in childbearing and childbirth may *prevent* procreation in that the woman may seek to avoid her pain by refusing to be intimate with her husband, and she will also be in great need of support during childbearing and childbirth; (b) thus, acting as caring a provider, God introduces an antithesis ('yet')²⁷⁶ in 3:16c-d: the wife's (positive) 'desire' for man will safeguard human procreation, and the husband's (positive) provision and care for her will alleviate the burden of childbearing and childbirth. Thus, the second part (B) again expresses the same content in lines (c) and (d) regarding the provisions for marriage and the care for the 'woman's seed'. Line (c) refers to the woman's longing need for her husband, and line (d) to the man's satisfaction of those needs and his responsible protection of his wife.

The sense of *mashal be* should be seen in this perspective. In at least three other instances in the book of Genesis (1:18; 24:2; 41:45), this verb has the sense 'be responsible for, be in charge of, take care of'. As in 3:16, (a) the object of the verb in these instances is 'in need to be served', and the wife in 3:16 is in such need after her punishment of pain in childbirth; (b) the function of the verb in 3:16d is to balance the infliction of pain in 3:16a-b by providing for the husband's care and respond to the wife's positive desire in 3:16c; and (c) the action undertaken by the

²⁷⁶ The conjunction *waw* in 3:16c functions as a signal of an antithesis, as, for example, in Gen. 17:21 and 19:19: W. Gesenius & E. Kautzsch, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, 1978, p. 485.

husband in 3:16d is *in the service of* God who in this very statement confides the childbearing wife into the responsibility of her husband.

This has wide implications for Genesis 1-3 as a whole. In 3:16, God demonstrates his faithfulness to his own words of blessing of the two who were made 'in his image' (1:28) and proves himself true to the ordinance of marriage that he has established in 2:24. As a result, despite their crime and the necessity of a punishment, he still cares about their sexual life and procreation (3:16c) and about the protection of the woman who is going to give birth to new human beings (3:16d) – by naming his wife 'Eve' in 3:20, Adam introduces in the story a special emphasis on the woman's fundamental role as 'mother of all the living', including the life of males (cf. 4:1), and this function of the woman is central to the continued mission of God, since it is through the continued life of the humans that 'the seed of the woman' will come to fulfil God's plan of salvation (3:15).

A particular structural relationship arises in the text from this reading between Genesis 3:16 and 2:18-24. The cooperative interdependence in marriage, which we noted earlier in our exegesis of Genesis 2, continues after the Fall, but *under different conditions*. Thus, Genesis 2:24 makes it plain that even *after the Fall* (sic!) 'a man clings to his wife and they become one flesh'. However, this interdependence is now based on (a) the woman's *longing* (*teshuqah*) for him, which balances the threat of her pain in childbearing, and (b) his support and care for her, based on his painful toil of the ground that yields the sustenance of life. This new situation *contrasts* with the setting in Genesis 2, where the cooperative interdependence is described by the woman as the 'support' (*'ezer*) of the husband (2:18), while the husband abandons father and mother and 'clings to' (*dabaq*) his wife (2:24). The contrast pattern is as follows:

The wife *supports* her husband and the husband *clings to* his wife (Gen. 2:18, 24).
The wife *longs for* her husband and the husband *supports* his wife (Gen. 3:16).

This pattern would give another argument in favour of our understanding of *mashal be* as 'be responsible for, support, look after, take care of'.

Our interpretation of the text means that, while God pronounces his sentence on the woman for her disobedience in 3:16a-b, acting as a righteous judge concerned with justice, he *also* pronounces his care for the survival of the humans in the dangerous situation they have created for themselves. Nothing can change their punishment, but God, who has a mission, provides a solution that will accomplish the

best that can be done under the circumstances. It is in God's character to care about them although they have been disobedient. And by doing so, God provides an important condition for the story that is to be told in Genesis 4-11, as an introduction to the story of Abraham and the election of Israel beginning in 11:27-32, namely the reproduction and multiplication of human beings, their genealogies and generations, and the spreading of humans across the earth creating a world of nations. It is from the central role of the 'seed of the woman' in Genesis 4-11 that God's promises about 'Abraham's seed' become significant. And the 'woman's seed' in 3:15, with its promise about victory over and salvation from evil, depends on God's provision for the *continued fruitfulness* of human beings and the *continued birth* of new lives. From this perspective, God's provision for the woman in 3:16 and her name in 3:20 forms one of the climactic points in the story of human beings which is then picked up in 4:1 and developed in Genesis 4-11. Thus, the blessing in Genesis 1:28 is implicitly confirmed in 3:16c-d and 3:20, and forms an important bridge in the flow of the narrative in the Pentateuch as a whole.

In this context, it seems that readers of 3:16 have too narrowly seen the passage in terms of *only* judgment and punishment. The God we encounter in Genesis 1-3, and in the Bible as a whole, however, also acts as a provider, like a father, for the humans whom he has created in his image – the same observation can be made regarding God's acts in the Flood story (Gen. 6-9). After their Fall, God provides man and woman with clothing (3:21); he seeks to limit the damage of human disobedience by preventing man from eating of the tree of life (3:22-24); he involves himself with Cain's anger when his offering is not accepted and provides to him a way out (4:6-7), and, as Cain complains that his punishment is more than he can bear, God protects Cain after he has killed his brother and ensures that he forms a family with descendants (4:13-24). Thus, it is in keeping with God's character and actions in Genesis, that he acts as a provider also towards the woman and arranges her new existence in order to protect her and the continued reproduction of human life.

Thus, (a) together with the sentencing of the serpent, God still includes a benefit for man and woman in that 'her seed' will crush the serpent's head, and this implication assumes even greater significance in a biblical perspective as we consider the Messianic prophecy implied.

(b) Together with the sentencing of the woman, God includes the blessing of her longing for her husband, which alleviates her fears of the discomfort of childbearing and the pain of childbirth (thus the blessing in 1:28 still stands), and man's 'caring governance' of her means that he protects, cares for and loves her in fulfilment of the marriage obligation in 2:24.

(c) Together with God's sentencing of the man, while he will eat the produce of the (now cursed) ground 'through painful toil', he will nevertheless eat and will nevertheless live for some time (Adam was 930 years according to Gen. 5:5).

(d) God's protection of man and woman is underlined by his act of clothing them with garments of skin (3:21), and at the birth of Eve's first child, she acknowledges God's protection and care: 'With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man' (4:1).

Thus, while the curses and punishments and their later consequences throughout human history, as presented in 3:14-24, do indeed upset the order God instituted in 1:28 and 2:21-25, God is still on man's side. Recognising this, Davidson says: 'The divine judgment/blessing in Genesis 3:16 is to facilitate the achievement of the original divine design within the context of a sinful world, and it is thus appropriate for marriage partners to seek to return as much as possible to total egalitarianism in the marriage relationship.'²⁷⁷

The changes resulting from the Fall affect the relationship between husband and wife in marriage, but not in the institutions of the covenant community or the church. The husband's 'caretaking' of his wife concerns his marital duties of providing food, clothes and marital rights, which are prompted by his wife's needs during childbearing and childbirth and by the circumstantial fact that he is the one who tills the ground and provides food. Davidson is adamant in his conclusions on this point: 'Any attempt to extend this prescription beyond the husband-wife relationship is not warranted by the text.'²⁷⁸ Gerhard Hasel concluded his exegesis of Genesis 3 by the following words:

The context of Genesis 3:16 amply indicates that the sphere of woman's submission is restricted to the marriage relationship ... the husband's ruling function was explicitly assigned to him after the Fall. The implications of these observations are of immense significance for the task of the proclamation of the gospel of God's remnant church. If the plan of salvation and the message

²⁷⁷ R. M. Davidson, 'Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture', 1998, p. 269.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

of the gospel are concerned with the reproduction of the image of God in men under the guidance of the Spirit of truth; and if on the basis that Christ in His life and death has achieved even more than recovery from the ruin wrought through sin, is it then not the responsibility of the church to bring about the reproduction of the image of God in man, to restore harmony between God and man, and establish equality and unity in the human family where there is now inequality between men and women in such spheres of life and activity where the divine declaration of man's rulership over his wife and of the wife's submission to her husband (Gen. 3:16; Eph. 5:22-23; 1 Pet. 3:1ff.) does not apply? Furthermore, do the urgency of the task and the shortness of time not require the total utilization of all our manpower and womanpower resources in the completion of the gospel commission given to the remnant church?²⁷⁹

Summing up, we argue that Genesis 3:16 is to be understood in the context of Genesis 1-3, in the context of both God's judgement and his caring provision, and with close attention to the nuances of meaning in each Hebrew term. Thus, in 3:16a-b God sentences the woman for her crime, acting as judge. In 3:16c-d, however, he acts as a caring provider for the humans and balances the consequences for human procreation, which he had commissioned in 1:26-28; acting as a provider, God is being true to his creation of man and woman in 'the image of God', to his commission male and female to govern the world, to his blessing of them both, and to himself, his character of love and his mission.

Another major reason for safeguarding the woman's childbearing and childbirth is the promise of 'the woman's seed' in the sentence of the serpent in 3:15, which envisages the coming of the people of Israel, Jesus Christ, and the church.

Consequently, there is no *ontological* hierarchical ordering of the status of man and woman in Genesis 3:16. The relationship defined there concerns the practical roles of husband and wife in the marriage relationship, not man and woman in general. The dependence of the wife on her husband, as well as that of the husband upon the cursed ground, are *consequences* of the Fall that are *described*, not *prescribed*. The egalitarian view of man and woman – as governors of the world (1:26-28) and in the marriage relationship in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2) – continues as far as God is concerned. In all the Old Testament, there is no indication that 3:16 was understood and applied as a divine injunction that man was to 'rule over' woman or as a divine prohibition against a woman being the 'head of men' in

²⁷⁹ G. F. Hasel, 'Man and Woman in Genesis 1-3', 1984, pp. 22-23. This does not mean that Hasel later on maintained a support for women's ordination in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but it does mean that the section quoted here expressed in 1984 his view on the meaning of Genesis 1-3, and with this view we agree.

public or communal life. The examples of women in leadership roles in the Old Testament are recorded without any criticism or disapproval whatsoever.

3. The 'Clothing' of Man and Woman in Eden (3:21)

Before leaving the story of the Fall, we will address the meaning of God's act of 'clothing' the fallen human couple (3:21). We noted in our study of Genesis 1 and 2 that the humans have an implied role of *mediating* the relationship between God and his created world (3.1.1.1), as well as to care for the 'sanctuary' of the Garden of Eden where God lives and where the humans were living with him (3.1.1.2). After the Fall, this role is emphasised by God's act of clothing the man and the woman and by the story of the sacrifices of Cain and Abel in 4:1-7.

The ways in which the 'priestly' status of man and woman is hinted at in 3:21 have been addressed by Doukhan.²⁸⁰ He concludes that it was in the Garden of Eden that 'priesthood was first evoked' and 'it related to both man and woman'. The context for this recognition is that God's response to the Fall is partly the promise of salvation through the woman's seed (3:15) and partly the dramatic gesture of coming down to dress Adam and Eve (3:21) – we might add other elements, for example, God's care and provision for the woman in 3:16c-d, so that she will be the 'mother of all the living' in 3:20, and his permission for the man to continue living for some time in 3:17-19 while the ground will yield some sustenance, albeit through painful work. Doukhan says with reference to the act of dressing:

This specific operation has a direct bearing on the call for priesthood. The rare occasions when God dressed humans in the Old Testament always concerned the dressing of priests either directly by God himself (Ps. 132:16; 2 Chron. 6:41) or through Moses (Ex. 28:41; 29:8; 40:13-14; Lev. 8:13). And in our passage, the verb describing the act of dressing (*labash*) in its *hifil* form is the very technical term which is normally used for the dressing of the priests (Ex. 28:41; Lev. 8:7; Num. 20:28; etc.).²⁸¹ In addition, the Hebrew word for 'tunic' (*ketonet*) is the same that designates the priestly garment (Ex. 28:39; 39:27). Adam and Eve were, indeed, dressed as priests, with one difference, however: instead of the fine linen that characterizes the priestly garment (Ex. 28:39), God chose animal skin. This specification not only implies the killing of an animal, the first sacrifice in history, but by the same token, confirms the identification of Adam and Eve as priests, for the skin of the atonement sacrifice was specifically set apart for the officiating priests (Lev. 7:8). By bestowing on Adam and Eve the skin of the sin offering, a gift strictly reserved

²⁸⁰ J. Doukhan, 'Women Priests in Israel: A Case for their Absence', 1998, pp. 29-43.

²⁸¹ See G. S. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 1987, p. 84; cf. N. Leibowitz, *New Studies on the Book of Exodus* (in Hebrew), 1994, p. 383.

to priests, the Genesis story implicitly recognizes Eve as priest alongside Adam.²⁸²

Doukhan's suggestion has been rejected by Gerard Damsteegt.²⁸³ His critique includes the objections that (a) when God 'clothes' humans (hifil of *labash*), it is not always in a priestly context; (b) while the term for 'tunic' (*ketonet*) is the term for the priestly garment, it is also used about other kinds of garments; (c) God's dressing of Adam and Eve in 3:21 is motivated by his special care for them, as a protection against climate change and a cover for their nakedness; (d) the first sacrifice for sin was, according to Damsteegt, offered by Adam after the expulsion from Eden (although this is not stated in the Bible); (e) he also points to the fact that the priesthood of God's people was always male.

While Damsteegt's arguments regarding Hebrew terminology may require a deeper study and his reference to God's clothing of Adam and Eve as being, at least partly, an act of covering their nakedness may seem feasible, he nevertheless (a) overlooks important points made by Doukhan, for example, the fact that both *hilbish*, 'clothe', and *ketonet*, 'tunic', are used in technical language for the Israelite priests and the significant point that 'the skin of the atonement sacrifice was specifically set apart for the officiating priests', according to Leviticus 7:8 – a practice that is also attested as a specifically priestly privilege in a Syro-Phoenician inscription.²⁸⁴ Moreover, (b) Damsteegt does not understand the phrase in 3:21 from the immediate context in Genesis 1-4; and (c) he overlooks the possible link with the whole people of Israel, men and women, being a 'priesthood' in some sense, as stated by God in Exodus 19:5-6.

Drawing on Doukhan's idea that God's dressing of Adam and Eve with tunics of skins contains an allusion to a priestly role, we suggest that Genesis 3:21 should be understood (a) from its function in the immediate context in Genesis 1-4, particularly the sequence of events marked in 2:8-9, 17, 25; 3:5-7, 10-11, 21-22 and 4:1-7, and, (b) from the perspective of a biblical theology and the wider context of God's declarations that (first) Israel and (then) Christ's followers are 'priests'

²⁸² Doukhan, 'Women Priests', 1998, pp. 36-37.

²⁸³ P. G. Damsteegt, 'Eve, a Priest in Eden?', 2000, pp. 123-128.

²⁸⁴ A fragmentary inscription found in Carthage, dating from the third or second century B.C., offers a tariff of how the different parts of 'whole offerings or substitute offerings' in the temple are to be distributed. Consistently, the priests are to have 'the skins', except when the offering is brought by someone 'poor in cattle', when the priests shall have 'nothing whatever' (J. B. Pritchard [ed.], *Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament*, 1969, p. 637).

according to the priesthood of the covenant people (Israel) or the priesthood of believers (Christ). Such a reading may not *per se* produce sufficient grounds for concluding that 'Eve was a priest in Eden', at least not in the technical sense of the Israelite priesthood in the later sanctuary, but it gives some indications that become meaningful in an overall biblical theology of ministry (and 'ordination') since it can be connected with the human *guilt* before God and their role of man and woman as *mediators* between God and the world assigned to them at Creation.

We begin by noting that God's act in 3:21 stands out as rather odd in its immediate context. Why would God 'clothe' Adam and Eve at this point – *after* his legal proceedings and *before* the expulsion from Eden? And, in particular, why would God 'make tunics' and use the material of 'skin', which implies the death and shedding of the blood of animals? In addition, the expression 'tunics of skin' is found only here in the entire Bible, and God's act of 'making tunics of skin and clothing somebody with them' is equally unique in the Bible.

At the same time, the combined use of 'clothe' (*hilbish*) and 'tunic' (*ketonet*) is also unique. We shall see later that, together, they are technical terms for the clothing of the priests in connection with their 'ordination'. Moreover, the peculiar circumstance that 'the priest who offers anyone's burnt-offering shall keep the *skin* of the burnt-offering that he has offered' (Lev. 7:8) does suggest a peculiar link between the ideas of priesthood and the skin of a sacrificial animal.

Thus, on the surface of the biblical text, the act of God in Genesis 3:21 would have raised the attention of the intended Israelite reader who would be aware of the fact that Genesis 1-3 introduces the story of Israel and its priestly sacrificial system. Thus, these associative meanings in the text would have been intended by the author.

We need to review the terminology more carefully. The use of 'clothe' (*hilbish*) in the Old Testament reveals the following:

1. In a *literal* sense, it is predominantly used in *priestly* contexts. Of a total of 32 occurrences of *hilbish*, this usage is found 11 times (Ex. 28:41; 29:5, 8; 40:13, 14; Lev. 8:7, 13; Num. 20:26, 28; Zech. 3:4, 5). There are also two (figurative) instances in Psalm 132:16-18 where God promises blessings for Israel and says that he will 'clothe her priests with salvation and [David's] enemies with shame'.

Other *literal* occurrences are found 12 times and in a wide variety of contexts with various agents: God (Gen. 3:21; Isa. 22:21), Rebekah (Gen. 27:15, 16),

Pharaoh (Gen. 41:42), King Saul (1 Sam. 17:38 [twice]), Queen Esther (Est. 4:4), the king's most noble princes (Est. 6:9), Haman (Est. 6:11), and Israelite soldiers (2 Chron. 28:15 [twice]). Among these 11 instances of literal usages other than in priestly contexts, the verb is used with God as agent only in Genesis 3:21, which adds to the peculiarity of God's act of 'clothing' here.

In a *figurative* sense, the verb appears 9 times with the agents of God (Isa. 50:3; 61:10; Ez. 16:10; Ps. 132:16, 18; Job 10:11; 39:19), King Saul (2 Sam. 1:24), and 'drowsiness' (Prov. 23:21).

2. The priestly usage shows that to 'clothe (*hilbish*) a priest with a tunic (*ketonet*)' is indeed a formulaic phrase or technical language for the investiture which is part of the consecration or 'ordination' of the priests:

Exodus 28:41 You shall clothe (*hilbish*) your brother Aaron, and his sons with him, with [tunics (*ketonet*) and sashes and head-dresses], and you shall anoint them and ordain (*mille' yad*) them and consecrate (*qiddash*) them, so that they may serve me as priests.

Exodus 29:5-9 Then you shall take the garments, and clothe (*hilbish*) Aaron with the tunic (*ketonet*) and the robe of the ephod, and the ephod, and the breast piece ... **7** You shall take the anointing-oil, and pour it on his head and anoint him. **8** Then you shall bring his sons, and clothe (*hilbish*) them with tunics (*ketonet*), **9** and you shall gird them with the sashes and the head-dresses on them; and the priesthood shall be theirs by a perpetual ordinance. You shall then ordain (*mille' yad*) Aaron and his sons.

Exodus 40:12-15 Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the tent of meeting, and shall wash them with water, **13** and clothe (*hilbish*) Aaron with the sacred vestments (*bigde haqodesh*), and you shall anoint him and consecrate him, so that he may serve me as priest. **14** You shall bring his sons also and clothe (*hilbish*) them with tunics (*ketonet*), **15** and anoint them, as you anointed their father, in order that they may serve me as priests: and their anointing shall admit them to a perpetual priesthood throughout all generations to come.

Leviticus 8:7, 13 [Moses] put the tunic (*ketonet*) on him, fastened the sash around him, clothed (*hilbish*) him with the robe (*me'il*), and put the ephod on him ... **13** And Moses brought forward Aaron's sons, and clothed (*hilbish*) them with tunics (*ketonet*), and fastened sashes around them, and tied head-dresses on them, as the Lord commanded Moses.

Numbers 20:25-26 Take Aaron and his son Eleazar, and bring them up Mount Hor; **26** strip Aaron of his vestments, and clothe (*hilbish*) his son Elias with them. But Aaron shall be gathered to his people, and shall die there. (Cf. Numbers 20:28.)

The *reason* for priestly clothing is given in Exodus 28:42-43: ‘*Make for them* linen undergarments to *cover their naked flesh*; they shall reach from the hips to the thighs. Aaron and his sons shall wear them when they go into the tent of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister in the holy place, *so that they will not carry guilt and die.*’ (Note the use of ‘make’, ‘*asah*, which is the same verb used of God ‘making’ the tunics of skin in Gen. 3:21.)

Applying this priestly *reason* for ‘making tunics’ and ‘clothing with a tunic’ to Genesis 3:21, God’s act would mean that, since Adam and Eve have disobeyed his instructions and will die as a consequence (2:17), he is, firstly, *protecting* Adam and Eve (a) against their guilt which sentences them to death, and (b) the consequences of the curses upon the serpent and the ground (3:14-15, 17-19) – according to the latter, they will live in enmity with evil (the serpent) and, after some time, return to dust. Thus, guilt, struggle with evil, and death are now the lot of human life, but God has a plan to deal with it and this is hinted at by the salvation through the woman’s seed (3:15), man’s ability to procreate and the woman’s life-giving power (3:16, 20), and God’s covering man and woman with tunics of skin (3:21).

Secondly, God is *confirming* the commission he assigned to them in Genesis 1:26-28. He created them ‘in his own image’, which means that they *represent* God and retain their *mediating* role between him and the world, although this is now going to be immensely more difficult and fraught with much failure. In this sense, however, Adam and Eve are confirmed as God’s representatives and mediators, i.e. ‘priests’, by their ‘priestly’ investiture in 3:21.²⁸⁵

3. In all 33 instances but 1 (viz. the proverbial saying in Prov. 23:21), the ‘clothing’ (*hilbish*) is made by a person with superior authority. By the act of clothing he or she assigns a position of authority (in the majority of cases) or a status of ‘salvation’ (only in 2 Chron. 28:15; Ps. 132:16).

A tentative conclusion from a study of the terminology, therefore, is that, granted the assumption that God’s act of clothing Adam and Eve with animal skins is a symbolic investiture for a position of a priestly responsibility in the fallen world, then this would fit the general usage of the verb in the Old Testament. To be specific, while being a unique phrase in the entire Bible, the expression ‘make tunics of skin and clothe somebody’ fits in a meaningful way the priestly terminology whereby the

²⁸⁵ For the centrality of the ‘mediating’ role of the priests in Israel, see R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 1973, p. 357.

priest's 'nakedness' is, firstly, to be protected by undergarments against the guilt he carries, i.e. his own and that of those he represents (Ex. 28:42-43). Secondly, the expression in Genesis 3:21 also fits the 'ordination' of the priests, where Aaron and his sons shall 'cover their naked flesh' so that they may 'serve God as a priests', in order not to incur 'guilt on themselves and die' (Ex. 28:40-43). We shall now see how this tentative conclusion fits in the immediate context in Genesis 1-4.

Let us begin by a few observations on the setting. We have already noted that, in Genesis 1:1-2:4a, man and woman, created 'in the image of God', function as priestly *mediators* between God and his created world (3.1.1.1). This continues to be implied in 2:4b-25 through the references to (a) God putting man in the Garden of Eden with the commission to 'care' for it (2:15); (b) God's instructions to man regarding what is permitted and prohibited (2:16-17); and (c) God's authority shared with man in giving names to the animals (2:19-20). These three functions are all priestly functions, i.e. 'sanctuary service', 'teaching, instruction', and 'judiciary functions'. Man and woman share these duties in Eden – the man is not to be alone in exercising his priestly duties (2:18); the woman gives support as one that is like him (2:20, 23); and they are both naked without being ashamed (2:25).

The trees planted in Eden are a central element in the priestly service of man and woman. Thus, God has planted the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:9) – one is connected with eternal life (3:22) and the other with divine wisdom (3:6-7, 22). In this micro-cosm of God's world/dwelling, it is God who provides man's knowledge and gives him wisdom through man's obedience to him – only in this way can man *serve* God as *mediator* and implement the will of God who is the *Owner* of the world. The symbol of this obedient servanthood is expressed in man and woman being 'naked and yet feeling no shame' (2:25). This symbolism runs through the story of the Creation and Fall and continues to function in 3:7 and in the sequence of innocent nakedness (2:25) – guilty nakedness (3:7a) – clothed with leaves (3:7b) – clothed with skins (3:21).

In this setting, the events unfold that lead to God clothing man and woman with animal skins in 3:21. The serpent's prediction in 3:4-5 is that, as the humans eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, (a) they will 'not die', (b) but 'their eyes will be opened', (c) they will 'be like God', and (d) they will 'know good and evil'. The verb 'know' (*yada*) means more than intellectual knowledge, generally

‘experiential knowledge’, as implied in its use in 4:1 (cf. Gen. 19:5, 8; 1 Kings 1:4).²⁸⁶ ‘Good and evil’ may well be a so-called merismus, that is, ‘a linking of polar opposites to convey the idea of totality (cf. ‘heaven and earth’, 1:1)’.²⁸⁷ ‘Good and evil’ may therefore express the totality of experience (cf. 2 Sam. 13:22; Zeph. 1:12), and we agree with Turner that the serpent’s statement is an idiomatic way of saying ‘you will experience everything’. In other words, the serpent tells the woman that she and her husband ‘will be able to experience life with no restrictions’, that God’s one restriction – prohibition of the tree – will be swept away, and they will be “like God” in experiencing whatever they wish’.²⁸⁸ The woman’s observation that the tree ‘was to be desired to make one wise’ implies the gaining of the experiential wisdom of ‘good and evil’.

Eating the fruit opens the eyes of man and woman (3:5, 7), but ‘what they see is not their expected autonomy, but the knowledge that they were naked’.²⁸⁹ Their making clothes of leaves to hide their nakedness indicates what their wisdom without God has revealed to them: that in their purely ‘human’ state (outside of God’s reign) they lack the dignity and honour given by God and feel only shame.²⁹⁰ Their shame is mutual, but their relationship to God is also influenced. Thus, when man becomes aware of God’s presence in the Garden, he hides himself because of fear, because he is naked (3:10).

The nakedness hidden with leaves expresses the humans’ futile attempts to hide the shame caused by their disobedience and separation from God. However, man and woman after the Fall are not only filled with shame and fear, but they also carry *guilt* before God. The *mediator* between God and world is now in need of *mediation* in relationship to God. This is a typically *priestly* predicament and is the *reason* for the rituals of consecration that the priests in Israel had to experience in their ‘ordination’. Thus, by clothing man and woman in animal skins, God deals with them in the same way as when he commands the priests in the Israelite sanctuary to cover their nakedness in order to protect them from their guilt while they serve at the altar. This may be the reason why man and woman need to be covered while still being near God in the Garden of Eden.

²⁸⁶ L. Turner, *Genesis*, 2000, p. 31.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*

God's act of making tunics of skin with which he clothes man and woman (3:21) is intimately connected with his recognition that 'man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil' (3:22). While no temple or organised sanctuary service in Eden is mentioned (cf. the same setting in the new Jerusalem according to Rev. 21:22), the issue is one of the relationship between God and man which is now described in terms of man's *experiential* 'wisdom' and 'knowledge' linked with its external expression in the human 'nakedness'. Their own clothing, i.e. their own work to hide their nakedness before God – with clothes of *leaves* – is replaced by God's clothing of them, and he uses *skins*. In the story line of Genesis 2-3, this divine act may be one of care and provision. However, in the context, a *deeper meaning* is also indicated – note the recurrent themes of (a) the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:17), (b) man's and woman's nakedness without shame (2:25), (c) the anticipated wisdom from the fruit (3:5-6), (d) the opening of their eyes and the discovery of their nakedness with shame (3:7), (e) the covering with clothes of leaves and the clothes of skin (3:7, 21), (f) the fear of God and the hiding from him (3:10), and (g) the changed status of man who has now become 'like God' (3:5) or 'like one of us' (3:22) which prompts man's expulsion from Eden where God dwells with man (3:23-24). The man's and the woman's shameful nakedness is treated by the passage as a symbol of their disobedience and pride in seeking the kind of wisdom that is reserved for God, thus putting themselves above their divinely designed sphere and becoming guilty of disobedience, pride, and rebellion against God as God.

This particular theme is treated more explicitly in other biblical passages. In Ezekiel 28:1-19 (cf. Isa. 14:12-14), the crime of the king of Tyre is described in the same terms as that of man and woman in Genesis 2-3:

Ezekiel 28:2 Because your heart is proud and you have said: 'I am a god; I sit in the seat of the gods, in the heart of the seas', yet you are but a mortal, and no god, though you compare your mind with the mind of a god. (NRSV)

God therefore accuses the priest-king of Tyre of crimes that resemble that of man and woman in Eden (and the serpent who seduced them):

Ezekiel 28:12b-18 You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. **13** You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering ... on the day you were created they were prepared. **14** With an anointed cherub as guardian I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked among the stones of fire. **15** You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, until iniquity was

found in you. **16** In the abundance of your trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned; so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God, and the guardian cherub drove you out from among the stones of fire. **17** Your heart was proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendour. I cast you to the ground. I exposed you before kings, to feast their eyes on you. **18** By the multitude of your iniquities, in the unrighteousness of your trade, you profaned your sanctuaries ... (NRSV)

Guided by this biblical parallel, we see that Genesis 3:21-24 is based on man's and woman's wisdom becoming 'corrupted' by the unlawful desire of making themselves like God and gaining his wisdom which knows of no limits. This is in reality their nakedness and their shame for which they deserve *death*.

However, in accordance with God's mission, he does not reject them. He holds them accountable and they receive punishments, but he also provides for their continued life, obviously to carry out his mission for the world, albeit in a more limited way than originally planned. In order to continue living, they need to deal with their guilt and the fact that they are under a death sentence. The first sign of this need is when God replaces their clothing that is meant to cover their *shame* and *fear*, exchanging clothes of *leaves* for clothes of *skin*. By using animal skins, God makes a connection with the need for man to live by a *substitutionary death*.

In a very subtle manner, man's clothing with leaves and God's clothing with skins indicate a connection with Cain's sacrifice (*minkhah*) of *fruit* as opposed to Abel's sacrifice of the *first born of his flock*. That the author of Genesis intentionally seeks to link chapter 3 with chapter 4 is already clear from the verbal parallel between 3:16c-d and 4:7. The theological significance of God clothing man and woman with skins would then be that he covers their nakedness, shame, disobedience and guilt with skins that derive from the shedding of blood and of the life of a (sacrificial) animal, thus anticipating the manner in which sinful man after the Fall will need to worship God (confirmed by the episode of Cain and Abel), and alluding to the covenants with Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the people of Israel, and the final, perfect covenant with all believers in Jesus Christ.

This line of thought suggests a connection between the hints regarding man and woman as priestly mediators in Eden and God's later declaration that the whole nation of Israel – upon being freed from slavery in Egypt – is to be 'a kingdom of priests' and a 'holy people' (Ex. 19:6; Lev. 11:44-45; Num. 15:40-41). This priesthood is for all Israel, men and women, and functions as God's way of dealing

with the fallen created world. It is later on fulfilled and made perfect in the priesthood of all believers in new Israel which has Christ as high priest. We will pick up this thread of thought in our review of the priesthood in Israel (3.2.4 and 3.2.5) and in our concluding exposition of a biblical theology of ordination (see chapter 5).

This interpretation also impacts our understanding of Genesis 4-11 as a whole. The priesthood of Adam and Eve in Eden continues after the Fall. God's confirmation of their role as priestly mediators in 3:21 is part of a dual investiture, namely the clothing with leaves (by themselves, in order to cover their shame and fear) and the clothing with tunics of skin (by God, in order to mediate and atone for their guilt). The nakedness of fallen man is, by God's *corrective* action, covered by the skin of an animal which has lost its life.

This motif in the text provides a meaningful explanation of why Cain and Abel offer sacrifices (4:1-5). It explains why Abel's offering of the 'fat portions of the firstborn of his flock' is received with God's favour. It forms the condition for God's dialogue with Cain in 4:6-7, to which we will return shortly.

Above all, however, it implements the divine declaration in Genesis 9:4-7 that 'for your own lifeblood I will surely require a reckoning: from every animal I will require it' which is connected with the idea that, being created in the image of God, human beings must not have their blood shed and lose their life by the hand of another human being (9:6). Since humans have transgressed God's law and deserve death (2:17) (although the life of humans must not be taken because they are created in the image of God [9:6]), the blood of animals shall be shed as a 'demand' (*darash*) for man's transgression (9:5), thus fulfilling the law that man will die as a consequence of sin (2:17).

Adam's and Eve's priestly role of mediators is thus appropriately marked after the Fall, and this takes place while they are still in Eden as a sign that this is God's provision for man and woman. This human role of offering animal sacrifices to atone for their transgression is then applied by Adam's and Eve's sons (4:1-7), as the first action of born humans, and by Noah on behalf of all humanity (8:20-9:17)

In conclusion, the peculiar and remarkable act of God in Genesis 3:21, where he makes tunics of skin and clothes man and woman, *correcting* the human's own clothing with leaves, is significant:

1. Literally, in the surface flow of the story, it expresses God's protection of Adam and Eve. This protection has deep theological significance.

2. At a deeper level, in view of Old Testament priestly terminology, the content of the Pentateuch as a whole, the immediate context in Genesis 1-4, and the wider biblical context of the mission of God, the act of clothing with tunics of skin functions as (a) a *priestly investiture* of man and woman, which is then (b) *followed* by Cain's and Abel's sacrifices as a necessary human activity, (c) is *confirmed* by Noah on behalf of all humanity after the Flood, (d) is *prefiguring* the mediating ministry of the male priests in the Israelite sanctuary, (e) is *explaining* the basis for God's election of all men and women in Israel as a kingdom of 'priests', and (f) for Christ's calling his believers to be his 'priests' in God's great mission to save the world.

3. Finally, the priesthood of man and woman established at Creation (Genesis 1-2) and confirmed in Eden after the Fall (3:20) is fulfilled according to the book of Revelation: (a) in the service to God by the church on earth (Rev. 1:6); (b) in the ministry of Christ (Rev. 5:9-10); and (c) in the new heaven and earth (Rev. 5:10; 20:6).²⁹¹ The passages in Revelation 5:10 and 20:6 explicitly resume the theme of man and woman as *priests* and *rulers* of the earth in Genesis 1-3. They do so, on the one hand, in the context of an emphatic reference to the sacrifice and blood of Christ which fulfils God's promise of salvation by 'the seed of the woman' (Gen. 3:15), and, on the other hand in the context of the priestly mediation instituted in Eden for men and women which continues in humanity through Cain and Abel, and later on by Noah (Gen. 3:20; 4:1-7; 8:20-8:17) and both the old and the new Israel:

Revelation 5:9-10; 20:6 You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; **10** you have made them to be a kingdom of priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth ... **20:6** ... but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

Thus, in a biblical theology of ordination, it is essential that the priestly role of man and woman in Creation and after the Fall is confirmed.

3.1.1.4 The Primeval History of Man (Genesis 4-11). This part of Genesis records the human attempts to accomplish the charge of the Creator in Genesis 1:27-28, after the expulsion from Eden in 3:22-24. God's mission is making little, if any, progress, and his interaction with humans, with few exceptions, demonstrates their failure to comply with his plan, until he elects Abraham.

²⁹¹ Cf. B. Wiklander, 'The Mission of God and the Faithfulness of His People', 2009, pp. 284-285.

Man multiplies (note the genealogies in 4:1-5:32; 9:18-10:32; 11:10-32). This is marked by the introductory reference to the sexual encounter of Adam and Eve, resulting in the birth of Cain (4:1). As the firstborn human, Cain provides a wrong offering to God (4:1-7), kills his brother (4:8-12), and is removed from the presence of God (4:16). This suggests that the history of man that follows will be fraught with crimes and failures, and this premonition is fully realised.

After another breach of the ordered distinction between humanity and the divine (6:1-4; cf. 2:4b-3:24) and a pervasive wickedness, corruption and violence (6:5, 11-12), God destroys the created earth and all beings, except for Noah, his family, and a selected number of animal pairs, through the Flood (6:1-9:17). The salvation of Noah expresses God's grace (8:1) but also his mission to continue his plan of salvation for humanity (9:1-17).

After the Flood, however, man's wickedness and pride continues (9:18-29). Man acts contrary to the Creator's charge to multiply and fill the earth by not wanting to be 'scattered over the face of the whole earth' (11:4), and instead men build a tower that reaches to the heavens, attempting to transcend the border between the human and the divine that led to the Fall in Genesis 3. As a punishment and prevention, God confuses their language and scatters them over the face of the earth (11:8-9). In addition to being spread out across the earth (10:32), the *nations* are now divided into language groups. God's reply to this complication in earth's history is the election of Abraham and the promises to make a great *nation* of his seed (12:1-3), thus fulfilling the promise of salvation through 'the woman's seed' in 3:15.

It is striking how completely different the role of the woman is from Genesis 4 and onwards. In God's created, ideal world, according to Genesis 1-2, she is always together with her husband. God creates them both in his image and charges them to multiply, fill the earth and subdue it together. The creation of the woman is the climax in the expanded creation story in chapter 2, where her equality and unity with the man is underlined in so many ways, and where she, through her help and partnership, remedies the weakness of the man who is incomplete when alone.

The woman brings with her a name from Eden, 'Eve', which links her with the role of giving life to all humans (3:20). However, it is Adam's male initiative to 'know' (*yada*) his wife, i.e. to have sexual intercourse with her. And the record includes only the birth of three sons, Cain, Abel and Seth, although judging from the context Eve

would have had daughters, too. She is nowhere mentioned again in the Bible, until in two of Paul's letters, where she is remembered for being created *from* her husband (thus reflecting his 'glory') and *for the sake of* her husband (1 Cor. 11:8-9), for being deceived and deceiving her husband (1 Tim. 2:14) and for her childbearing at which she acknowledges 'the Lord' (Gen. 4:1) and 'will be saved' (1 Tim. 2:15).

Thus, in the primeval story of Genesis 4-11, concerning Eve and the women following her, there is silence, except for being a wife and mother. All mentioning of women in Genesis 4-11 is reduced to these two roles, and all the actors and movers are males. We will see later on how this expresses a patriarchal perversion of God's original plan (3.1.1.5).

The summary of God's original intention as Creator in 5:1-5 draws on God's creative act in 1:28 but changes it slightly and fits it into the record of male dominance in Adam's genealogy in 5:1-32:

Genesis 5:1b-5 When God created humankind, he made them in the likeness of God. **2** Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them 'Humankind' when they were created. **3** When Adam had lived for one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth. **4** The days of Adam after he became the father of Seth were eight hundred years; and he had other sons and daughters. **5** Thus, all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died. (NRSV)

As an introduction to the 'genealogy of Adam' in Genesis 5, these verses are technically vital as links within the wider story-line. They connect the individual 'Adam' with the creation of 'man' or 'humankind' (*'adam'*) in 1:28. They also repeat the element that 'God created them male and female and blessed them', which refers to the genders, sexuality, and the blessing that made them fruitful. However, they also refer to the impact of the Fall. They introduce the repeated phrase 'and he died' in each refrain. Together with Lamech's speech concerning the 'work and painful toil caused by the ground the Lord has cursed' (5:29), this phrase underlines the gap that exists between man's past existence in Eden and his present existence on the cursed ground which ends with his death.

The passage in 5:1-5 introduces an important shift. The 'blessing' of the Creator is fulfilled in the fruitfulness and multiplication reported in Adam's genealogy (man seems to fulfil this part of the Creator's charge), but the 'likeness of God' in Adam (the 'image' not being mentioned) is now merely the image of Adam in his son (5:3). What was a representative *function* of exercising a God-given dominion over

the world in creation has now become a genetical *status* that represents the father. Eve, the wife and mother, is left out, although she was also created in the image of God. This *patriarchal* perception is then applied in the progression of the line of new generations in Adam's genealogy.

While the genealogy mentions 'sons and daughters', not one single woman is mentioned by name in this list, but the generations are named after the father. The same is the case with the genealogy in 10:1-32. However, in all the book of Genesis, and in the Bible as a whole for that matter, there is no instruction preserved from God to do so. Thus, the ideal of equality and cooperative interdependence for man and woman in Genesis 1-3 disappears in man's history without any plain explanation. The concept of a patriarchal line is introduced as yet another consequence of sin which was incorporated over long time in the traditions that Moses and his assistants used in creating the text before us. Only with the story of Terah and Abram in 12:27-32, do we have wives named by name together with their husbands, which puts the focus on family relationships and descent.

The formula 'and [he] had other sons and *daughters*' (Gen. 5:4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 26, 30) is part of the recurring pattern of saying about each member of the list that 'he was born, he lived x years, he had other sons and daughters, and then he died'. The reference to 'daughters' forms the background for the enigmatic passage introducing the Flood story in 6:1-4. This passage is difficult to explain in detail, but we suggest that, as an introduction to the corruption of God's creation in 6:5-7, it describes (a) the violation of God's command to man and woman to multiply, committed by the sons of God marrying the daughters of men and having children by them, and (b) God's further limitation of the length of mortal man's life.

We will return to the patriarchal concept of organising the life of families in 3.1.1.5 below.

We have already outlined above the role of Adam and Eve as priests and the function of sacrifice that centres on 3:21 (3.1.1.3). We also noted that the theological background for the sacrifices of Cain and Abel comes from the divine declaration that man's transgression of the prohibition of eating the fruit has incurred guilt and the punishment of death (Gen. 2:17). The hint in 3:20 that the life of an animal is to *replace* man's death is later on explained in Genesis 9:4-7 (and was presumably known to the intended reader of Genesis). This is, then, the context of Cain and

Abel's offerings in 4:1-7, the first act recorded of the firstborn human beings, *placing right sacrifice that pleases God in the forefront of life after the Fall*.

In God's dialogue with Cain after Cain's offering is disfavoured, the exhortation to Cain in 4:6-7 strongly alludes to what we have understood here as the woman's 'way out' in 3:16c-d, considering the consequences of her punishment in 3:16a-b (3.1.1.3). The two sayings are so closely worded in Hebrew that we must assume that there is some kind of correlation between them:

Genesis 4:7d Sin's longing (*teshuqah*) is for you [Cain], and you must take charge of (*mashal be*) it.

Genesis 3:16c-d Your longing (*teshuqah*) is for your husband, and he will take charge of (*mashal be*) you.

Both are notoriously difficult phrases to understand and there is no consensus among the scholars. However, we propose an interpretation along the following lines: The formal analogy between 3:16c-d and 4:7d suggests that (a) both sayings explain *consequences* of the sin/judgment scenario in 3:1-24, but also (b) *a way out* for both the wife/husband and Cain.

In the wife's case in 3:16c-d, she has been judged by a great increase of her pain in childbearing and childbirth (3:16a-b), but her way out is her longing for her husband (which controls her fear of becoming pregnant and removes the threat against continued human procreation which the fear of pain creates) and his responsibility and care for her not only during painful childbearing and childbirth, and, we may add, in view of the later legislation in Israel, the monthly cycle of her menstrual pain and blood which would render her unclean for a considerable time.

In the case of sin (under the guise of the serpent)²⁹² in 4:7d, it is said to 'be lurking at the door', if Cain 'is not doing what is right' in connection with his offering for his sin. The background is that Cain's sacrifice of the fruits of the ground is not accepted by God, but Abel's offering of the 'fat portions of some of the firstborn of his flock' is accepted. This makes Cain angry, which prompts God to address him in 4:6-7. God says:

- 4:7a Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast?
- 4:7b If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?
- 4:7c But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door;
- 4:7d it desires to have you, but you must take charge of it.

²⁹² C. F. Keil & F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 1, 1971, Part I, p. 112 (on Gen. 4:7).

Doing right and wrong refers to the right offering that deals with sin, and the wrong offering that does not. It is possible that there is an allusion here to the wisdom aspired to by the humans in Eden, which would give them knowledge of good and evil. Cain fails and does not know how to worship God in an acceptable way. However, the sin/serpent becomes a dangerous threat if the right offering has not been made. The enmity established in 3:15 between the serpent(s) and the woman and her offspring means that sin/serpent ‘desires to have Cain’, but he must ‘take charge of’ the sin/serpent by offering a right sacrifice. The act of managing and taking charge of, which is implied in Hebrew *mashal be*, refers to Cain’s need to act responsibly in order to survive in a life under the curse of sin.

This reading fits the observation that Genesis 4:7 ‘reads more like fatherly advice to a wayward child than a condemnation’ and that God ‘gives Cain hope’.²⁹³ The fact that God gives Cain advice on how he can be ‘accepted’ shows that ‘whatever the reason for the rejection of his sacrifice, the rupture in their relationship was not final – but its continuation was in the hands of Cain’.²⁹⁴

Despite the formal similarities and the hopeful undertones, the nuances between the ‘parallels’ in 3:16c-d and 4:7d are nevertheless clear. In the first case, the one who is desired (husband) *will* take charge of (*yimshol be*) the one who desires (wife), and, in the second, the one desired (Cain) *is exhorted* to take charge of (*timshol be*) the party desiring him (sin/serpent). The saying in 3:16 describes God’s intention with the marriage relationship between man and woman, who are now living under the punishment of death. The record of how this is playing out in history follows in the book of Genesis as a whole. The saying in 4:7 gives Cain a way out, which he fails to follow, so he moves away from the presence of God (4:16). And yet, even after he has killed his brother and received his punishment (4:9-12), God takes detailed precautions to protect him (4:13-16).

In the story of the Flood, the author has woven into the text a pattern of ‘ordination’ in God’s commissioning of Noah to build the ark:

(a) Inspection: The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually.’ (6:5; cf. v. 12; NRSV)

²⁹³ L. Turner, *Genesis*, 2000, p. 37.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

(b) Decision: ‘So the Lord said, “I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created – people together with animals and creeping things and birds in the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.”’ (6:7; NRSV)

(c) Assessment/Appointment: ‘But Noah found favour in the sight of the Lord ... Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God ...’ (6:8-9; NRSV)

(d) Charge (before the Flood): ‘Make yourself an ark of cypress wood ... This is how you are to make it: ... I am going to bring a flood of waters on the earth to destroy from under heaven all flesh ... everything that is on the earth shall die.’ (6:14-17; cf. 7:1-4; NRSV)

(e) Promise of Covenant and Blessing: ‘But I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark; you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you.’ (6:18; NRSV)

(f) Charge (after the Flood): ‘Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons’ wives with you. Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh ... so that they can abound on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.’ (8:15-17; NRSV)

(g) Covenant and Blessing: ‘Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and ... offered burnt-offerings on the altar ... God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth”.’ (8:20; 9:1; NRSV)

This pattern may indicate, like the similar one in Genesis 1:26-28 (3.1.1.1), that the author and intended readers in ancient Israel were familiar with a certain structure when someone with authority commissioned somebody for a particular task. A blessing and a charge would be central parts of such a pattern. In Genesis 6:22, the Hebrew term *tsawwah* is used in the sense of ‘command, charge’: ‘Noah did everything just as God *charged* him.’ We will find this term also in the induction of Joshua (3.2.6).

In conclusion, therefore, in pursuing his mission in the world, God commissions human beings as his servants for specific tasks. This may involve certain patterns, but these vary depending on the circumstances. Ultimately, the word of God is enough, by which he expresses his command, and it is noteworthy that, when he does, *when God’s call comes to a man or a woman, his servants always obey.*

3.1.1.5 The Introduction of the Patriarchal Family System. The patriarchal concept of the family structure is nowhere directly commanded or instituted by God in the Bible. It is a human institution arising after the Fall which God accepted as a vehicle for his mission to the world. The Old Testament laws – in legal texts as well as in their practical application in stories and prophecies – are full of similar accommodations, e.g. in the areas of death penalty, slavery, covenant-making,

marriage, bride price, divorce, levirate marriages. In the new Israel, in Christ, the human institution of patriarchy is ideally transcended – which we see by the way in which Christ related to women²⁹⁵ – but it lingers somewhat in the apostolic church as a practical challenge for sharing the gospel with societies where patriarchy is still predominant,²⁹⁶ because it requires a decision – in a patriarchal environment – about what is appropriate, decent and honourable behaviour within the church family and in its relationship with the surrounding world.²⁹⁷

We have seen in 3.1.1.1 and 3.1.1.2 that, in his creation, God did not rank man and woman hierarchically. Instead, their equality and cooperative interdependence is striking in numerous ways. Quite the opposite of a patriarchal family structure shines through in the phrase in 2:24: based on what God has done in creating man and woman in 2:21-23, in their *future* existence which is contemporaneous with the times of the author, man will 'leave his father and mother and cling to his wife', which even has a 'matriarchal' ring about it as a way to highlight that in Eden, with God, *there was no patriarchy*.

We have seen in 3.1.1.3 that God does not curse man and woman in Genesis 3. His blessing in 1:28 still remains. He curses the serpent and the ground. While putting enmity between the serpent and the woman's seed, he also announces the victory over evil by the offspring of the woman, which gives humans hope and a future. The woman/wife is punished by an increase of her pain in childbearing and childbirth, but she will still long for her husband and he will take responsibility for her and care for her in marriage. Having cursed the ground from where the man came, God punishes the man/husband by making his work painful and hard as he seeks to obtain sustenance for the life of the family until he returns to the ground in death.

We noted several elements in 3.1.1.4 which express the change to patriarchy in Genesis 4-11. Thus, in describing the early life of man outside Eden, the author applies patriarchal language which is suited for the content he is recording. In no way is the author implying that, by the use of such language, patriarchy is divinely instituted or recommended.

There is no explicit foundation or explanation of the occurrence of a patriarchal family system in Genesis 4-11, but it is clear that it is not a situation that

²⁹⁵ See V. Norskov Olsen, *The New Relatedness for Man and Woman in Christ*, 1993, pp. 85-103.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 63-82.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 107-120.

God wants. It is a *consequence* of the Fall that is based on *human* decisions. On the basis of (a) the male being the physically stronger and the worker of the ground which, through painful labour, provided sustenance for life (3:17-19; 5:20), and (b) the woman/wife being absorbed, weakened, and made dependent on the care of her husband by her painful childbearing and childbirth (3:16), the male 'takes to himself' wives (4:19), and 'knows his wife', i.e. makes her pregnant (4:17).

We should take note of the fact that, in all the book of Genesis, and in the Bible as a whole for that matter, there is no command preserved from God to organise the family according to a patriarchal pattern. Patriarchy is one of many possible ways in which humans may organise their family. And we will see below that God not only accepted deviations from the patriarchal rules, but he also intentionally asks Abraham to deviate from such rules by leaving his father's house and go to the land that God will show him. *God's will overrules patriarchy.*

Thus, the ideal of equality and cooperative interdependence for man and woman in Genesis 1-3 disappears in man's history for no explicit reason. In his teaching, however, Jesus often referred to how things were at the beginning and instructs his disciples to live according to God's original plan, and not according to the way in which sinful humanity has distorted life.

The concept of a patriarchal line is introduced as yet another consequence of sin which was incorporated over long time in the traditions that Moses and his assistants used in creating the text before us. Only with the story of Terah and Abram in 12:27-32, do we encounter wives named by name together with their husbands, and the roles of Sarah and Rebekah exemplify women taking important decisions without reference to the patriarch.

As Terah's family appears on the scene in 11:27-32, they are semi-nomads becoming a settled people.²⁹⁸ Based on what is known from the Old Testament and from the conditions of life among Arab Bedouins, in the desert, the unit of society 'must be compact enough to remain mobile, yet strong enough to ensure its own safety; this unit is the tribe'.²⁹⁹ According to the Bible, this social unit has not been formed by a command of God, but is a human invention after the Fall and the expulsion from Eden. It has come about in order for families to survive in a dangerous and arid environment.

²⁹⁸ R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 1973, p. 4.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

The tribe has an internal organisation which is founded on *blood-ties*. The *bet 'ab* is the 'family', which consisted of the father, his wife or wives and their unmarried children but also their married sons with their wives and children, and the servants.³⁰⁰ Several families constituted a clan, the *mishpakhah*. Each clan was ruled by the heads of families, the *zekenim*, 'elders', and in time of war it provided a contingent commanded by a 'chief', *sar*. Both men and women could lead such a group of tribal contingents, as we see in the story of Deborah (Judg. 4), where the Canaanite army commander Sisera is said to be 'handed over by the Lord to a woman' (4:9). The tribal system did not prevent women from taking leadership, which is a sign that the patriarchal model was not the only model followed. In Judges 8:14 the 'chiefs' of Sukkoth are distinguished from the 'elders'. A group of clans formed a 'tribe', *shebet* or *matteh*, two words with the same meaning. The tribe embraced all those who obeyed the same chief. The hierarchy of the three terms, *bet 'ab*, *mishpakhah*, and *shebet* is clearly exposed in Joshua 7:14-18, but one term may sometimes be used for another, as in Numbers 4:18 and Judges 20:12 (Hebrew text). This was the institution that developed in the desert areas where the Semites lived and much of what we see in the Bible is also found among the modern Arab Bedouins.³⁰¹

This institution undergoes some change in the course of history. After the settlement in Canaan, the tribes disappear and the clans led by 'elders' become the central element. Thus, the village now stands for the clan.³⁰²

A closer study of the family tells us that humans in the Near East developed different kinds of family patterns, although one seems to have become predominant, judging from the texts of the Old Testament. The Bible gives some information about this:

The Fratriarchy: In this form of family, the eldest brother is the head. This is found among the Hittites, Hurrites, Assyria, and Elam.³⁰³ One biblical example of this family pattern is the 'levirate' (Deut. 25:5-10).³⁰⁴ Two cases may be considered:

1. In Tamar's case, her husband dies and his brother is bound to marry her and provide descendants on behalf of his brother, according to the levirate custom.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 7-8.

³⁰¹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 1-15.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

When also his brother dies and there are no more brothers, Tamar seeks a solution by deceiving the father, Judah, to provide her with an offspring to preserve the name of her first husband (Gen. 38).

2. Ruth has a different situation, but related rules apply. She had no more brothers-in-law (Ruth 1:11-12). According to customs supplementary to the levirate marriage custom, some near relative must then marry her, and this is the duty of the *go'el* in her family, the kinsman-redeemer (2:20; 3:12). The purpose is to perpetuate the name of the dead (4:5, 10), and the child born was considered the child of the deceased. The intentions and effects of Ruth's marriage to Boaz were those of the levirate marriage. The practical basis for this custom was the need to prevent alienation of family property and to preserve the name of the deceased, which shows the importance of the blood-ties in this cultural environment.³⁰⁵

The Matriarchy: In this form of family, the lineage is traced through the mother and the rights of inheritance are passed on through her line. The mother serves as the head. This form of family structure still exists in the world today. The matriarchate is generally associated with small-scale cultivation, while pastoral civilization tends to be patriarchal, but these distinctions are somewhat fluid in the nomadic form of life. In the Bible we have only a few hints at matriarchy, although it should be noted that there are scholars who see a larger influence from it.³⁰⁶

One example of the primacy of the female line is the characterisation of man's future behavioural pattern in Genesis 2:25 that he 'leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife' (NRSV).

In Genesis 20:12-13, the author does not question Abraham's passing off Sarah as his sister (she was his half-sister). Abraham does so in the context of 'God having me wander from my father's household', then yielding his patriarchal authority as head of his family to his half-sister/wife who is asked to show her love to him by saying of him: 'he is my brother'. Abraham's scheme to share his headship role with Sarah is not something that generates questions in the text. Rather, Abimelech's generous attempts to make up for his violation of Abraham's marriage are considered appropriate. Sarah later on takes a significant leading role in her relationship with Abraham. For example, when she sees a threat to the male line through her son with Abraham, she tells him: 'Get rid of that slave woman and her

³⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 38.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 19-20.

son, for that slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac' (Gen. 21:10).

Genesis 24:67 records a wedding ritual of the groom taking his bride to his mother's tent. Genesis 28:2-5 states repeatedly that Jacob should 'go to the home of his mother's brother, a kinship reference indicative of matrilineality'.³⁰⁷

Other clear signs of matriarchy may be detected in Song of Songs 3:4 (cf. Ruth 1:8), which refers to 'the house of my mother' – see also Song of Songs 3:11, which describes Solomon's mother as the one who 'crowned him'.³⁰⁸

Another example suggesting a rival principle to a patriarchal system is found in Judges 14, where Samson abandons his father's house to marry a woman in Timnah, where he stays and even celebrates the bridegroom feast.

The biblical traces of matriarchy do not denote, however, goddess worship, as some have argued.³⁰⁹ Doukhan's explanation seems better in harmony with the ethical and ritual integrity of the Old Testament, namely, that 'this phenomenon should rather be explained on anthropological grounds: matriarchal trends are, indeed, often present in nomadic societies. Since nomadism was an important fact of life in biblical times, one would expect the biblical society to be saturated with matriarchal traditions. This connection (rather than the goddess-worship connection) is all the more correct as the observation holds across various cultures and is still valid today'.³¹⁰

The Patriarchy: In this form of family, which is central in the Old Testament writings, the father is the head and descent follows his line. He is the family authority who blesses his firstborn son by the imposition of hands and appoints him to succeed him (3.2.1). The fact that the Bible records many instances when the patriarchal rule was put aside, indicates that patriarchy is (a) not commanded by God, and (b) is not an absolute rule. Some examples may illustrate this:

The Bible refers to instances where the blessing that belonged to the firstborn was re-directed to the second born, either by deceit (Jacob and Esau; Gen. 27) or by the patriarch's personal preference (Manasseh and Ephraim; Gen. 48). One may

³⁰⁷ S. J. Teubal, *Hagar the Egyptian: The Lost Tradition of the Matriarchs*, 1990, p. 27; see also R. K. Harrison, 'The Matriarchate and Hebrew Regal Succession', 1957, pp. 29-34.

³⁰⁸ M. Kartagener, 'Über Spuren und Reste des Matriarchats im Judentum', 1977, p. 141.

³⁰⁹ See G. Weiler, *Das Matriarchat im Alten Israel*, 1989, pp. 118ff.

³¹⁰ J. Doukhan, 'Women Priests in Israel', 1998, p. 41, footnote 26, referring to T. S. Barfield, *The Nomadic Alternative*, 1993, pp. 15, 146.

also mention the twelve tribes of Israel, where (a) the tribal ancestor Judah, who was not first-born but the ancestor of David and Messiah, is described by his father Jacob's words in his blessing: 'your father's sons will bow down to you' (Gen. 49:8), and (b) Levi, who was ancestor of Moses and Aaron, and gave rise to the favoured position of belonging to God *in the place of the firstborn* of each Israelite family. All these deviations from established customs are accepted by God as a means of carrying out his mission for humanity. God himself breaks the patriarchal rule when he calls Abraham to leave his father's household (Gen. 20:13). We may also note that in the Ten Commandments the honour to be shown to one's father and mother does not in any way place the father above the mother (Ex. 20:12).

In the Bible, patriarchy is a normal feature in a pastoral society, where the family keeps flocks of animals and is mobile like nomads or semi-nomads. This is the form of life that we see reflected, in the stories about Terah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob/Israel (Gen. 12-50).

Later on, Israel would take up a more settled life and this created tensions with the old customs. The family is no longer self-sufficient, but the standards of material welfare rise and the production units become more central. The authority of the family head is not unlimited. Legal decisions are taken by the elders in the village community, with appeals to the king being permitted. Thus, individualism gradually arises which impacts not only the family patterns and the authority of the head of the family but also religion (Deut. 24:16. 2 Kings 14:6; Jer. 31:29-30. Ez. 14:12-20; 18:10-20).³¹¹

As we consider the role of biblical women in leadership later on, we will see that women take leadership in situations (a) where there is some small-scale cultivation and no strong central organisation (Deborah), (b) when Israel is in transition and the woman has blood-ties with a strong leader (Miriam), and (c) where the spirit of God equips the woman with wisdom in a city setting where individualism has become acceptable (Huldah). The impression given by the Bible is that *God does not engineer human cultures, but he accepts them as part of the life of those human beings that he calls to take part in his mission.*

In the Bible, there is no text that explains the origin of patriarchy. Filling the gaps of knowledge with what we see in the texts, however, patriarchy was based on

³¹¹ Ibid. pp. 22-23.

male *dominance*, which was contrary to God's original plan for man and woman in Eden and contrary even to God's provision for man and woman in marriage after the Fall (Gen. 3:16). On the basis of (a) the male being the physically stronger and the worker of the ground which, through painful labour, provided sustenance for life (3:17-19; 5:20), and (b) the woman-wife being absorbed, weakened, and made dependent on her husband's care by her painful childbearing and childbirth (3:16), the male 'takes to himself' wives (4:19), and 'knows his wife', i.e. makes her pregnant (4:17). This is essentially the information gained from Genesis 4-11, but it is not expressed that it is a situation that God wants. It is rather a *consequence* of the Fall.

We need to remind ourselves at this point of one of the principles of biblical interpretation (2.5). The Bible has incorporated many cultural elements in its texts that originated with man and undergo constant change. One therefore needs to be cautious with the application to various situations of literal readings of texts. The underlying principle needs to be sought for, since many of our societies today are not at all patriarchal, and patriarchal preferences are not commissioned to or expected from the disciples and servants of Christ.

3.1.2 Servants of God in the Old Testament

In the context of the Bible as a whole, God is the sovereign Creator and Ruler of the universe. The Bible is the record of his mission to save and have communion with his people as God. In this setting, the most general and common term for people who accept to engage in God's mission is 'servant' which in Latin is *minister*. This term implies that God is the Sovereign Ruler and that the people who acknowledge him take part in his mission.

The divine pattern for man-woman relationships in Eden remains a consistent thread throughout the rest of the Old Testament.³¹² However, while the wife is submitting in practice to her husband's 'headship among equals' in the home, and the same principle is implied in laws and precepts, 'this does not bar women from positions of influence, leadership, and authority over men in the covenant community'.³¹³ This general conclusion will be sustained in the following.

³¹² As pointed out in R. M. Davidson, 'Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture', 1998, p. 270.

³¹³ Ibid.

3.1.2.1 God's Election of Israel. God's mission in the world takes on a more focused shape from the calling of Abraham and his covenant with him. God calls Abram ('high father') out of his country and kindred and father's house and gives him a new identity, 'Abraham' ('father of many'), which is linked with God's mission to the world through Israel. Several features in Genesis 11:1-9 ('Babel') and 12:1-3 (Abram's calling) suggest that Abram's destiny 'will be to reverse the effects of God's judgment on Babel'.³¹⁴

Considering the Abraham story as a whole (Gen. 11:27-25:18), it could be argued that the form in which God involves Abraham in his mission is by 'covenant', as in the case of Noah (Gen. 9), and not by 'ordination'. A 'covenant' was, generally speaking, an agreement between two parties, where each is bound to keep his part of the agreement (cf. Gen. 21:27, 32; 31:44). The agreement God makes with Abram in Genesis 12:1-3, however, resembles more of a command: the Hebrew text says literally 'Be a blessing!' (12:2). Thus, the imperative of the Hebrew means that the promises in 12:3 (God's blessing of Abram's seed; his seed being a blessing to 'all families on earth') depend on Abram's obedience to God's command and Israel being obedient to the call of being a blessing to other nations.³¹⁵

The biblical text refers to the Abrahamic covenant in several versions (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:1-18; 17:1-27). God takes the initiative and Abraham is obedient. There are examples in the ancient Near East that treaties between a suzerain and his vassals could be based on commands by the more powerful party.³¹⁶ If that is applicable here, God acts in calling Abraham as a Sovereign who is obeyed by his servant.

The key elements in Genesis 12:1-3 are:

1. Abraham will be the father of 'a great nation'; (cf. 17:1-14)
2. God will bless him and make his name great, so that he will be a blessing;
3. God will bless those who bless him, and curse those who curse him;
4. In Abraham all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

A fifth element is hinted at in 12:1 and elaborated in 15:1-21, namely, that God will give Abraham the land between the river of Egypt and the river of Euphrates, which is then more restricted, in 17:8, to 'all the land of Canaan'. The purpose of giving

³¹⁴ L. Turner, *Genesis*, 2000, p. 63.

³¹⁵ For an instructive reading of the passage along these lines, see *ibid.*, pp.62-64.

³¹⁶ See G. E. Mendenhall, Article 'Covenant', in: *IDB*, vol. 1, p. 716; for a survey of the covenants entered upon by God in the Old Testament, see pp. 718-719. Cf. D. J. McCarthy, *Old Testament Covenant*, 1972, pp. 10-34, 65-72.

Abraham a land, however, is that God wants to ‘be God to you and to your offspring after you ... and I will be their God’ (17:7-8). This involves Israel in God’s mission by a fresh attempt to accomplish God’s purpose in the Creation and moves towards its fulfilment according to Revelation 21:1-4.

The calling of Abraham is a major phase in God’s mission proceeding from the Creation, the Fall, and the covenant with Noah after the Flood. The promise of ‘the woman’s seed’ in Genesis 3:15 is fulfilled by the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob/Israel functioning as God’s ‘servants’ (Ex. 32:13).

The emphasis in God’s promises is placed on the great nation, Israel, which God will bring about from his servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob/Israel. In Exodus, in connection with the calling of Moses as ‘God’s servant’ in Egypt,³¹⁷ Israel as a nation is also called ‘God’s servant’ (Lev. 25:42, 55). After the miraculous exodus from Egypt, it is through his servant-people Israel that God’s mission will be carried out.

The calling of Israel as God’s servant/minister receives particular emphasis in Exodus 19:4-6, as a foundation for the covenant based on the Ten Commandments in chapter 20. God confirms his promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob/Israel by asking Moses to convey his mission to God’s servant people, as follows:

You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. **5** Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, **6** but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites. (NRSV)

Israel’s calling to be a ‘priestly kingdom’ and a ‘holy nation’ has to do with God’s wish to be with his people and be their God, which is God’s mission from the creation until the new heaven and the new earth. Since the whole earth is his, he is the sovereign God and King, and his people, therefore, are a kingdom and a holy nation through the presence of God, which is administered by the people, the priests, or servants/ministers. There is in Exodus 19-20 no difference between men and women. They are all priests and ministers. However, there is a special class of ‘priests’ (19:22, 24), and we will see later why that was necessary in Israel.

³¹⁷ The designation of Moses as ‘God’s servant’ is very common ; see, for example, Ex. 4:10; 14:31; Num. 11;11; 12;7-8; Deut. 3:24; 34:5; Josh. 1:1-2, 7, 13, 15; 8:33. Also Caleb (Num. 14:24) and Joshua (Josh. 5:14) are designated as God’s servants or ministers.

In the following, we will look at how the servants/ministers of God are brought into service/ministry in Israel, with a particular view towards the role of men and women.

3.1.2.2 Husband-Wife Relationships. An important way of serving God the Creator is by the roles associated with marriage (Gen. 1-3). Both husband and wife are servants of God and are to act in the marriage relationship according to God's instructions. However, in the current discussions of women's ordination for ministry, the issue of male headship and female submission is often raised. On the one hand, it is erroneously applied to men's and women's public roles in the faith community, while the biblical text is only addressing the marriage relationship (note our comments on Gen. 3:16 in 3.1.1.3). On the other hand, the issue of headship and submission is misrepresented when applied to the biblical marriage. In the following we will clarify the issue of headship and submission in the Old Testament marriage context.

As we leave the primordial events in Genesis 1-11 and enter the history of Israel, it becomes clear that the roles of husband and wife are to a very large extent conditioned by social customs and legal stipulations dealing with rights and prevention of crime. It is not possible to review all this material, and only some examples may be given here.

The headship of the husband following the Fall is demonstrated in the life of Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 18:12). Sarah is referring to her husband as 'my Lord' (*'adoni*) and in many other instances in the Old Testament the husband is identified by the use of 'lord' (*ba'al*).³¹⁸ For example, in the context of the story of Abraham, Sarah and Abimelech in Genesis 20, Sarah is referred to as *be'ulat ba'al* which means 'one who has been taken in possession by a husband', i.e. 'one who is married'.³¹⁹

The headship of the husband is very much intertwined with social customs current at the time. Thus, in the stories of Abraham and Sarah, and of Isaac and Rebekah, as they relate to Pharaoh in Egypt (Gen. 12:10-20) and King Abimelech of Gerar (Gen. 20; 26:1-11), it becomes clear that the marriage values were not

³¹⁸ Gen. 20:3; Ex. 21:3, 22; Deut. 22:24; 24:4; 2 Sam. 11:26; Joel 1:8; Prov. 12:4; 31:11, 23, 28; Esth. 1:17, 20.

³¹⁹ See E. Hammershaimb, *Genesis: En sproglig analyse*, 1963, p. 40; F. Brown, S. R. Driver & C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 1977, p. 127.

peculiar to the Abrahamic tradition but common among the Near Eastern peoples. For example, Abimelech's crime in taking Sarah as wife is that he has violated Abraham's right of possession of his wife Sarah and endangered and confused the pure blood-line and name of Abraham's offspring. For the same reason, several portions of the Mosaic law included severe punishments for violations of women who had been betrothed or married to another man (Num. 5:11-31; 30:3-16; Deut. 22:22-30).

The abuse of the role of male headship in marriage created the need for various stipulations intended to limit that. Often, the spirit of those laws consists in endeavours to protect the woman and ensure that God's words of assurance in Genesis 3:16c-d were maintained. For example, the law on divorce and remarriage in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 stipulates that if a man divorces his wife – on the grounds that he 'finds something indecent about her' – and if she then marries another man who also divorces her, then the first husband is not allowed to marry her again after she has had a sexual relationship with another man who has been her 'head'. There have been many different attempts to explain this law, but a very convincing explanation has been put forward by Raymond Westbrook.³²⁰ He has traced the reasons for this law to the financial payments and penalties involved in marriage and divorce. The main difference between the two marriages lies in the financial consequence for the woman. The first marriage ended when the man cited a valid ground for divorce, namely 'a matter of indecency'. The fact that he had a valid ground for divorce implied that she lost her right to her dowry. The second marriage ended without any valid grounds for divorce, either because the man 'disliked her' (which was a technical term for divorce), or because he died. In either case the woman would have kept her dowry. If she had not brought a dowry into this second marriage, she would nevertheless have been awarded an equivalent amount. Now, Westbrook noted that this would give the first husband a financial motive for remarrying his former wife, because he would then have both her new dowry and her old one. Therefore, this law forbids the first husband from getting financial gain in this way.³²¹ Apart from demonstrating how closely the roles of husband and wife were intertwined with ancient Near Eastern and Old Testament customs of possession,

³²⁰ R. Westbrook, 'Prohibition of Restoration of Marriage in Deuteronomy 24:1-4', 1986, pp. 387-405.

³²¹ We have used here the summary of Westbrook's study in D. Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 2002 p. 7.

ownership, and valid or non-valid reasons for divorce, this example shows how the rights of the woman were protected from male desire for selfish financial gain.

The principle of male headship in marriage could be disposed of, if a principle of higher dignity became involved. Exodus 21:2-6 shows that the headship of a slave in marriage was subordinated to the headship of the owner of the wife of the slave. If a slave was 'lord of a woman', i.e. married, when he came to serve his master, she will go with him after six years when he is free. However, if the slave's master gives him a wife and she bears him sons and daughters, the woman and her children shall belong to her 'master' (*'adon*) and only the male slave goes free. If the slave then says that he loves his master, his wife and children, agreeing to give up his freedom, he can do so but remains a slave for life. Thus, the headship of a married man over his wife could be overruled by laws of ownership. In this context (or anywhere else), there is no reference whatsoever to Genesis 3:16c-d as a divine law that is to be followed.

In Exodus 21:7-11, another law regulating marriage stipulates that if a man buys a woman and takes her as wife, and if she then 'does not please her master who designated her for himself', he is to let her be redeemed and has no right to sell her to foreigners. If he then marries another woman, he must not deprive the first one of her 'food, clothing and marital rights', and if he does not provide her with these things she is to go free without any payment of money. This law stipulates a responsibility for the husband of caring for the wife by providing food, clothing and marital rights, which is a condition for his role as husband. This may be implied in God's words to the woman in Genesis 3:16d, that her husband will 'be responsible for her', 'be in charge of her', and 'care for her'. Thus, the husband's headship functions as an *obligation* as much as a right.

In Exodus 21:22-25, a law stipulates that if someone inflicts an injury on a pregnant wife so that she gives birth prematurely, her husband (*ba'al*) determines the price for the damage done. Headship involves here both possession of the mother and her child and the legal right to require restitution. This role may however also include protection of the rights and well-being of the wife.

In view of these examples, Davidson's conclusion is very appropriate:

There is little question that in ancient Israel (and throughout the ancient Near East) a patriarchal structuring of society was the norm, and the husband/father was the titular head of the ancient family. In marital/familiar situations, the husband/father assumed legal responsibility for the household.

His leadership and legal headship are evidenced in such concerns as genealogy, family inheritance and ownership of property, contracting marriages for the children, initiating divorce, and overall responsibility in speaking for his family.³²²

However, the headship principle in Israelite marriages does not override the basic equality between the marriage partners, nor does it condone a husband's oppression, domination, or authoritative control over the wife. If such things are mentioned in the Bible, it is never with approval. The divine egalitarian ideal from the Garden of Eden is still attainable and praised. In his major work on the institutions of Ancient Israel, Roland de Vaux says:

The law condemned the faults of children against their mother as much as offences against their father (Ex. 21:17; Lev. 20:9; Deut. 21:18-21. 27:16), and the Decalogue (Ex. 20:12) commanded equal honour to be given to father and mother (cf. Lev. 19:3). The Wisdom books insist on the respect due to one's mother (Prov. 19:26; 20:20; 23:22; 30:17). And those rare passages which give us a glimpse into the intimacy of family life show that an Israelite wife was loved and listened to by her husband, and treated by him as an equal: Samuel's mother, for example (1 Sam. 1:4-8, 22-23), and the woman of Shunem (2 Kings 4:8-24) ... And there is no doubt that this was the normal picture. It was a faithful reflection of the teaching enshrined in Genesis, where God is said to have created woman as a helpmate for man, to whom he was to cling (Gen. 2:18, 24); and the last chapter of Proverbs sings the praises of a good housewife, blessed by her children, and the pride of her husband (Prov. 31:10-31).³²³

Davidson provides an impressive review of how the wife is seen in Song of Songs, which he rightly defines as 'the most extensive and penetrating Old Testament presentation of the divine ideal for husband-wife relationships in the post-Fall setting'.³²⁴ He notes the keynote of 'the egalitarianism of mutual love' in Song of Songs 2:16: 'My beloved is mine and I am his.' The life of man and woman in mutual harmony after the Fall follows the divine norm given in Genesis 3:16c-d. Davidson calls attention to Song of Songs 2:3:

As an apple tree among the trees of the wood,
so is my beloved among young men.
With great delight I sat in his shadow,
and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

³²² R. M. Davidson, 'Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture', 1998, p. 270.

³²³ R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 1973, pp. 39-40.

³²⁴ R. M. Davidson, 'Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture', 1998, pp. 271-272.

Both motifs in Genesis 3:16c-d are involved here – the wife’s desire for her husband and the husband’s protection and care for his wife, and they are described in powerful erotic terms, as has been pointed out by Francis Landy:

The apple-tree symbolises the lover, the male sexual function in the poem; erect and delectable, it is a powerful erotic metaphor. It provides the nourishment and shelter, traditional male roles – the protective lover, man the provider.³²⁵

Davidson calls attention to the fact that the divine ideal in Genesis 3:16c-d is balanced by Song of Songs 7:10: God promises the woman that ‘your desire (*teshuqah*) shall be for your husband’, and now, in Song of Songs, the woman says: ‘I am my lover’s and for me is his desire (*teshuqah*)’.

Thus, the Old Testament teaches a mutuality of love in marriage and this is based on God’s words in Genesis 3:16c-d: that the wife longs for her husband (personally, socially, and sexually) while the husband is in charge of her (as the provider who works the ground), caring for her needs and protecting her. This does not, of course, exclude the mutual sharing of these roles in marriage, if the social conditions permit it. The fundamental principle is that the biblical marriage was based on mutual love. The practice of dominant headship on the part of the husband is connected with later practices of male rights of ownership of the wife, which is generated by patriarchal customs which are never commanded by God and certainly are not implied in God’s provisions for marriage in Genesis 3:16c-d.

3.1.2.3 God’s Servants and Leaders in Israel. God’s mission through Israel results in various divine initiatives. God directly calls his servants. There is in other words a prophetic current throughout Israel’s history in the calling of servants and leaders. Only when institutions such as the tabernacle/temple and kingdom are established, God adapts to human culture and channels his calling through the institutional system, which leads to certain patterns of ‘ordination’.

Since we will deal with ‘ordination’ in the Old Testament in a separate section (3.2), we will call attention here especially to the gender-inclusive nature of servanthood and even, to some extent, of leadership authority, although the

³²⁵ F. Landy, ‘The Song of Songs and the Garden of Eden’, 1979, p. 526.

patriarchal social system in Israel and other factors limited women's participation in public life (3.1.2.4).³²⁶

1. The Judges – Men and Women

The selection of the judges as leaders seems to have been a decision of the Lord, who raised them by his power and inspiration, i.e. we have here a type of charismatic leadership. Concerning Othniel, for example, the text says that 'the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, so that he became Israel's judge and went to war' (3:10).

The famous judges had one thing in common: 'they were chosen by God for a mission of salvation (Judg. 3:9, 15; 4:7; 6:14; 13:5) and they were endowed with the Spirit of the Lord (Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19)'.³²⁷ Thus, the only authority manifest in Israel at this time was divine and charismatic. In that sense, the judges were forerunners of the prophets (cf. Judg. 6:7-10).

A significant case is that of Deborah, a woman. She was a 'prophetess' and the wife of Lappidoth, and 'was leading Israel as a judge at that time' (Judg. 4:4). The term for 'lead' is *shapat*, 'act as judge'. She holds a triple role of leadership in that she is a prophetess with charismatic gifts (4:4), acts as judge and holds court so that 'the Israelites came to her to have their disputes decided' (4:5), and she leads the people in military conquest (4:6-23). In addition, she has authored the hymn of praise to God in Judges 5, which means that she may have had scribal education. Deborah is important for many reasons; she demonstrates that (a) if God sent his Spirit on a woman, she was accepted for leadership, and (b) there was no reservation among Israelites at this time against having a woman as their head – obviously, they did not interpret Genesis 1-3 as instituting male headship and female submission.

Gideon's call to service bears some resemblance to a prophetic call. After a prophet has been 'sent' by the Lord with a message of revival (6:7-10), 'the angel of the Lord' visits Gideon. He first acknowledges Gideon's *qualifications* for the task of saving Israel from the Midianites (see 6:1-6), which may imply an *appointment* already made by the Lord: 'The Lord is with you, mighty warrior' (6:12). Gideon then raises *objections* to the statement that God is with him, firstly claiming that God has

³²⁶ For surveys of all women and their role in ministry in the Bible, see H. Lockyer, *All the Women of the Bible*, 1988; M. J. Evans, *Women in the Bible: An Overview of All the Crucial Passages on Women's Roles*, 1983..

³²⁷ R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 1973, p. 93.

abandoned them and put them into the hand of Midian (6:13). But the angel (now identified with the Lord himself) then issues the *charge*, saying: 'Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?' Gideon raises another *objection*, similarly to that of the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 1:6), but here it is about his status, being from the weakest clan in Manasseh and being the least in his family (Judg. 6:15). God's *assurance* is similar to the call of Jeremiah (Jer. 1:7-8, 17, 19): 'I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites together' (Judg. 6:16). Gideon's call to service is then confirmed by the sign of food being miraculously ignited by fire (6:17-24).

A final note on Gideon comes from the story when the Israelites offer him to 'be in charge of' (*mashal*) them, because he has saved them from Midian (8:22-23). Gideon declines the offer, also on behalf of his son, referring to the same conviction that we find in 1 Samuel 10 in connection with the introduction of a king: 'The Lord will be in charge of you.'

Samson's leadership is introduced in terms of the Nazirite. His mother, the wife of Manoah of Zorah, is commanded by an angel of God to follow the rules of the Nazirite herself (Judges 13:3-5) and then to make her promised son a Nazirite who is 'set apart to God from birth until the day of his death' (13:6-7). Here is an example of how a woman 'ordained' her son to serve the Lord (cf. Hannah and Samuel). Samson grows up under the Lord's blessing, while the Spirit of the Lord eventually begins to influence him (13:24-25). Samson's leadership is clearly seen in charismatic terms, although the impact of the Spirit of the Lord upon him is rather that of extraordinary physical strength than prophetic insight.

2. The Nazirites – Men and Women

The law of the Nazirite in Numbers 6 opened up for *both men and women* to take the vow 'to separate themselves to the Lord' (Num. 6:2). Some Nazirites were significant leaders in Israel, for example, Samson and Samuel.

The induction to being a Nazirite is the vow that made him/her bound by three provisions that became marks of his/her sanctity: (a) avoiding wine, strong drink, and all 'that is produced by the grapevine' (Num. 6:4); (b) for the duration of the separation the hair is not to be cut; and (c) the presence of the dead, even parents, must be avoided. These rules, particularly the latter, placed the Nazirite 'in the same

sphere of sanctity as the high priest (Lev. 21:11), ahead of the other priests (Lev. 21:1-10)' and suggests an accommodation of the Nazirite to the priesthood.³²⁸

The root *nzr* means 'separate, set apart, dedicate, consecrate to the Lord'.³²⁹ In Hosea 9:10, the verb *nzr* (nifal) refers generally to 'consecrating oneself (to a god)', and in Leviticus 21:23 the related noun *nezer* is used in the sense of 'consecration, ordination' of the high priest.

We have noted that Samson was a Nazirite, and we will see how Hannah, in a sense, 'dedicated'³³⁰ Samuel as a Nazirite to the Lord 'for the whole of his life' (1 Sam. 1:28), committing him to 'serve before the Lord' in the temple of Shiloh under the priest Eli (2:11).

Historically, the Nazirite was a sacred person and a charismatic who had made him-/herself bound or had been made bound to serve God in deep loyalty, being set apart for duty to God. Amos mentions 'the prophet' and the 'Nazirite' together as persons with a special vocation whose ministry had become frustrated by the people in the Northern Kingdom (Amos 2:11-12). God had called both, including women.

It is of some significance to note that women were not prohibited from being Nazirites. God called them and gave them his Spirit. They are juxtaposed to 'the prophets', and have a high-priestly level of sanctity. The example of Samuel shows that a Nazirite could minister in the sanctuary doing priestly service and later function as leader, judge, and prophet in Israel. Although we have no record in the Bible of a woman fulfilling such ministry, the fact that the office was open and available to women is significant.

3. Prophets and Prophetesses

The prophet Samuel embodies the transition from the charismatic and prophetic leadership of the judges to that of the institutionalised king. However, the story of Samuel is subordinate to the extended account of his mother Hannah.³³¹

³²⁸ J. C. Rylaarsdam, 'Nazirite', in: *IDB*, vol. 3, 1962, pp. 526-527.

³²⁹ *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, 1978, p. 845.

³³⁰ Thus W. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, pp. 232-233.

³³¹ See the summary of Hannah's pivotal role in Israel's history in T. Dennis, *Sarah Laughed: Women's Voices in the Old Testament*, 1994, pp. 115-116. The relevant passages are quoted in J. A. Davidson, 'Women in Scripture', 1998, pp. 169-170.

Hannah's prayer and vow in 1 Samuel 1:10-11 introduces her leading role as a speaker in the story. Although daughters or married women could not make legally binding vows without the consent of their father or husband (Num. 30), in her initial prayer, Hannah vows to dedicate the promised son as a Nazirite 'for all the days of his life' without apparent consultation with or dependence on her husband Elkanah. Her plan to dedicate Samuel is presented as something that she has already decided upon and she is simply informing Elkanah of this decision (1 Sam. 1:22).³³² Elkanah's permission is not requested; he merely gives his blessing (1:23). Thus, all the initiatives are taken by Hannah in the dedication of Samuel. This is significant, since Hannah's activities 'are generally thought of as belonging to the male'.³³³ Moreover, Elkanah was a Levite (1 Chr. 6:25-27, 33-38) living in Ephraim (1 Sam. 1:1), the country given to one of the sons of Joseph and therefore being associated with Joseph who was designed as the 'Nazirite of his brothers' in Jacob's blessing of the twelve tribes in Genesis 49:26. When Hannah eventually travelled to the house of the Lord in Shiloh with bulls, flour, and wine, she went 'expressly to perform her own vow' and 'it is she who has come with such fine offerings for sacrifice, and, remarkably, with her own child to dedicate to the service of God'.³³⁴

Hannah's leading role is all the more remarkable since God endorses her dedication of Samuel for 'ministry before the Lord' and the author of 1 Samuel accepts her action although she is a woman. The appointment and induction of Samuel as a servant of God, a priest and a prophet, has significance also in view of the law of the Nazirite in Numbers 6. Accordingly, Hannah's act was one of 'separating', 'setting apart', 'dedicating', or 'consecrating' her son to the Lord – these are meanings included in the root *nzr*.³³⁵ Thus, in a sense, Hannah 'dedicated' or 'ordained',³³⁶ Samuel as a Nazirite to the Lord 'for the whole of his life' (1 Sam. 1:28) and committed him to 'serve before the Lord' in the temple of Shiloh under the priest Eli (2:11).³³⁷

³³² As noted by T. Dennis (*ibid.*, p. 130); see also J. A. Davidson, *ibid.*, p. 169.

³³³ J. A. Davidson, *ibid.*, p. 170.

³³⁴ T. Dennis, *Sarah Laughed: Women's Voices in the Old Testament*, 1994, p. 132.

³³⁵ *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, 1978, p. 845.

³³⁶ Thus W. L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, pp. 232-233.

³³⁷ For a review of the consecration of the Nazirite, see 3.1.2.3 above.

Not only is Hannah ‘the *only* woman in the Bible to utter a formal, spoken prayer, and have her prayer quoted in the text for us to read’,³³⁸ her vow and her offering to perform her own vow is without parallel in the Bible.³³⁹ After leaving her son with the priest Eli, Hannah’s song is recorded as part of the word of God in the Bible (1 Sam. 2:1-10).

Samuel subsumes in him a variety of functions: priest (1 Sam. 2:18, 21, 26, 35-36; 7:5, 9), prophet (3:20-21), military commander (7:2-13), judge (7:15-17), tribal leader (12:2) and administrator (10:25). His appointment for these tasks is a combination of his mother’s dedication of him (1:24-28), the Lord’s call (4:1-21), the priest Eli’s acceptance of him (2:18-21, 26), and the people’s acceptance (3:19-4:1). No formal procedure for the appointment and induction to his unique combination of offices is recorded, which seems to be a standard feature in inductions to charismatic or prophetic leadership. In those contexts, the direct appointment by God overrules the human ceremony.

Essentially, Samuel is appointed by the Lord as a prophet (3:1-21) and since the Lord was with him and let ‘none of his words fall to the ground’, all Israel ‘recognised that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the Lord’ (3:19-20). ‘The Lord continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word. And Samuel’s word came to all Israel’ (3:21-4:1). Samuel’s charismatic ministry endorses his leadership function.

In the same way, Samuel’s priesthood is endorsed by God and the people because he is ‘a faithful priest for the Lord, who will do according to what is in [the Lord’s heart and mind]’ (2:35). As priest in Shiloh where the Ark of the Covenant was placed in those days, he has the authority to ‘attach’ (*sapakh*) a man of priestly descent to a ‘priestly office’ (*kehunnot*) (2:36).

Samuel’s function as judge seems to flow automatically from his roles as prophet and priest, and again his endorsement by the people derives from his spiritual influence and the quality of his service (7:15-17), including his success as a leader who saves the people from their enemies (7:2-14). He ‘appoints’ (*sim*) his sons as judges for Israel (8:1).

Samuel’s call to be the Lord’s prophet to Israel is indicative of a pattern seen in the prophets that followed him. The Lord calls and gives the commission and the

³³⁸ Ibid., p. 124.

³³⁹ Ibid., p. 132.

messages, and the people either accept the prophecies or they do not. The prophet's acceptance by the people would depend on whether they accepted his messages or not. A prophet could therefore run into conflicts, as we see in Amos 7:10-17. The Lord's call is a sovereign act of God which the prophet usually cannot resist. Thus, Amos says:

Amos 7:14-15 I am no prophet, nor a prophet's son; but I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees, **15** and the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said to me: 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.' Now therefore, hear the word of the Lord ... (NRSV)

Among the so-called writing prophets, i.e. prophets who have a book with their name in the Old Testament, the story of the Lord's call is an essential element. Here, we also find certain patterns of appointment and commissioning (see Isa. 6; Jer. 1:4-19; Ez. 1-3).

We noted earlier that Deborah was a prophetess and a judge (Judg. 4:4-5). In her song recorded in Judges 5, she characterises herself as 'a mother in Israel' (5:7). There were other prophetesses in Israel. One example is Huldah in Jerusalem (2 Kings 22:14; 2 Chr. 34:22). As the law book is found in the temple in King Josiah's time ca. 622 B.C., the king tells Hilkiah the high priest, Shaphan the king's secretary, and Asaiah the king's attendant, and two other high officials, to 'go and inquire of the Lord for me and for the people and for all Judah about what is written in this book that has been found' (2 Kings 22:11-13). In compliance with the king's orders, the group 'went to speak to the prophetess Huldah, who was the wife of Shallum, the keeper of the wardrobe' (22:14). The text says she lived in Jerusalem, in the second district. Huldah then gives the king detailed instructions of the will of the Lord (22:15-20)

The practice of female prophets is not a temporary or odd feature in Israel's history. Moses' and Aaron's sister Miriam 'the prophetess' (Ex. 15:20) was leading the people in crafting and singing hymns of praise after the miracle at the Red Sea. The three joint leaders of the people, Moses, Aaron and Miriam, are addressed by God personally where he rebukes Aaron and Miriam but also gives them instructions regarding the institution of prophets in Israel (Num. 12:4-8). In the book of Micah, God speaks to his people and, referring to the exodus from Egypt and the redemption from the land of slavery, he says: 'I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and

Miriam' (Mic. 6:4; NRSV). Miriam is even recorded among the sons of Amram (1 Chr. 6:3), which confirms her prominence.

It is obvious, therefore, that the Old Testament part of the Bible is clearly indicating that a woman could 'go before' the people (i.e. Miriam), function as Israel's judge and military commander (i.e. Deborah), receive, speak and write the words of God (Miriam and Deborah), and have the highly respected office of a prophetess by the power of the holy Spirit who would instruct even the king of Judah what to do (Huldah).

4. Kings and Queens

In the same way as God accepted the human institution of patriarchy, he also accepted to work out his mission through Israel by accepting the institution of kingship. It is clear that this is not God's ideal, and Samuel is strongly opposed to it, but in the end God accepts it, although he recognises that it means that the people have 'rejected him from being king over them' (1 Sam. 8:4-9). God then finds a way to turn this challenge into an advantage by calling and making a covenant with King David, through whom the seed of the woman and the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob/Israel will bring salvation.

The story about the shift from a theocratic system under the leadership of Samuel, God's man as priest and prophet, to that of a monarchy under King Saul offers some insights into how leaders were appointed in Israel at this time.

The people ask Samuel: 'Appoint (*natan*) for us, then, a king to govern us (*shapat*), like other nations' (1 Sam. 8:5; NRSV). As he reluctantly agrees, on the command of God, he warns them about what a king will do: 'He will take your sons and appoint (*sim*) them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots; and he will appoint (*sim*) for himself commanders (*sarim*) of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plough his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots.' (8:11-12). Concerning the appointment of Saul as king, the Lord is giving Samuel instructions (8:1-9:27). A condition for Saul's suitability is his humility, i.e. sense of inferiority to the task (9:21). Samuel then 'anoints' Saul:

1 Samuel 10:1 Samuel took a phial of oil and poured it on [Saul's] head, and kissed him; he said: 'The Lord has anointed you ruler (*mashakh lenagid*) over his people Israel.' (NRSV)

A sign of Saul's authority and endorsement by the Lord is that 'the Spirit of the Lord will come upon you, and you will prophesy with them, and you will be changed into another person' (10:6). Spiritual giftedness from the Lord is obviously also a condition for leadership. This was confirmed and reinforced by the ritual of *anointing*.

Anointing with oil was used both in civil and religious contexts in Israel, but it was a custom well attested across the ancient Near East. Both objects and persons were consecrated to cultic service by the rite of anointment in Israel.³⁴⁰ Among the persons who were anointed, we note the priests (Ex. 28:41; 29:7; Lev. 6:13; 8:12; Num. 3:3), the high priest (Lev. 21:10), prophets (1 Kings 19:16; Isa 61:1), the patriarchs referred to as 'anointed prophets' (Ps. 105:15; 1 Chron. 16:22), and the king (e.g. Judg. 9:15; 1 Sam. 10:16). The anointment of kings in Syro-Palestine is attested in the Amarna Letters during the fourteenth century B.C.³⁴¹ The anointments of Saul (1 Sam. 10:1), David (1 Sam. 16:3), Solomon (1 Kings 1:39), Jehu (2 Kings 9:6), and Joash of Judah (2 Kings 11:12) are reported in considerable detail, while the anointments of Absalom (2 Sam. 19:10) and Jehoahaz (2 Kings 23:30) are casually mentioned. Obviously, it belonged to the ritual of inducting someone to the office of king, in accordance with the culturally conditioned customs in the ancient Near East. Concerning the significance of anointing, the following observation has been made:

'The anointment of the king was not merely a part of the ceremonial of enthronement; it was of decisive importance, for it conveyed the power for the exercise of royal authority. By strength of anointment, the king became a theocratic vassal of the Lord, as texts like 1 Samuel 9:16 and 16:3 indicate.'³⁴²

The theocratic character of the royal anointment is also exemplified by the fact that the king was the Lord's anointed (1 Sam. 24:6, 10 [Hebr. 24:7, 11]; 26:16), and a vassal of God who reigned in God's stead over his people (1 Sam. 10:1; 2 Sam. 6:21).³⁴³ The title 'the Lord's anointed' was later abbreviated to 'the anointed' and then applied to Jesus (Hebrew 'Messiah'; Greek 'Christ'). Jesus was said to be anointed by God 'with the Holy Spirit and with power' (Acts 10:38). We will see later on that the priestly anointment is part of the ritual consecration for the sanctuary service (3.2.4). The rite of royal anointment in ancient Israel was originally executed

³⁴⁰ For a survey, see S. Szikszai, Article 'anoint', in: *IDB*, vol. 1, pp. 138-139.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

³⁴² *Ibid.*

³⁴³ *Ibid.*

by a prophet (1 Sam. 10:1; 1 Kings 1:45; 19:16; 2 Kings 9:6), but later on the right to anoint the king became the exclusive privilege of the priests (1 Kings 1:39; 2 Kings 11:12).

The kings were anointed as part of the enthronement ceremony (Judg. 9:8, 15; 1 Sam. 9:16; 10:1; 15:1, 17) and the rite symbolised the transfer of authority. It also seems to have been associated with the gift of the Spirit of the Lord (1 Sam. 16:13), but at the same time having the Lord's Spirit is a condition for leadership (3.2.2). Anointing, therefore, does not work magically, as if man had the power to prompt God to act, but it was an act that equipped the king for the future: from the time of his anointment, he would be in need of special power and strength, and the anointment confirmed the promises of God and conveyed the king to the hands of the Lord. However, the laying on of hands was not a part of the induction of a king.

All through biblical times, oil was a necessity for life and considered a special gift of God. The cosmetic anointing with oil for festive occasions, joyous celebrations, and everyday cosmetic linked the practice with gladness (Deut. 28:40; Ruth 3:3; Ps. 45:7 [Hebr. 45:8]). It was also used for medical treatment and healing (Isa. 1:6; Ez. 16:9; Mark 6:13; Rev. 3:18). It was considered to be a way of showing honour (Ps. 23:5; Amos 6:6; Luke 7:46). It was used as part of the sacrificial service in the sanctuary (e.g. Lev. 2:4; see also 3.2.4). Thus, it became associated with power and with God's good will. Therefore, the metaphor of 'oil' could symbolise prosperity and God's blessing (Job 29:6; Joel 2:24). In 1 Samuel 16:13 anointing with oil is associated with empowerment by the Spirit of the Lord (3.2.2).³⁴⁴ Thus, anointing with oil is another example of how God used culturally conditioned customs to achieve his mission, but they are always local and temporal and can be changed.

After his anointment, Saul is finally made king by a process of selection and acknowledgment of all the people at Mizpah. A procedure of lot-casting is described in 1 Samuel 10:20-21, where the tribe of Benjamin is chosen from all Israel, then the clan of Saul, then Saul. The lot-casting is taken to reveal the will of the Lord, like Urim and Tummim (cf. the appointment of Matthias as the twelfth apostle in Acts 1). When Saul is found, he is taller than everybody else, and Samuel says: 'Do you see the man the Lord has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people.' (10:24). The people then make their acclamation of God's choice: 'Long live the

³⁴⁴ J. A. Thompson, Article 'ointment', in: *IDB*, vol. 3, p. 595.

king!' After this event, however, Saul proves to be a 'saviour' (like the 'judges' before him) against the Ammonites (11:1-11), and after this successful demonstration of his leadership he is confirmed again as king (11:12-15).

David is also selected by the Lord through Samuel for the kingship. Samuel follows the Lord's voice until David is singled out and he then anoints him, and 'from that day the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power' (16:13). Later on, after Saul's death, the men of Judah come to Hebron and 'there they anointed David king over the house of Judah' (2 Sam. 2:4).

In the case of Solomon, he is chosen by his father David on the advice of Nathan the prophet and his wife Bathsheba (1 Kings 1:5-31). The priest then anoints Solomon and he is greeted by the people as king (1 Kings 1:38-40). Later on, David gives Solomon a charge, primarily to follow the Lord, but also to exercise wisdom in dealing with issues in the kingdom (2:1-9).

Queens and queen mothers also had authority, usually by way of marrying the king or by their motherhood.³⁴⁵ Thus, the mother of King Solomon, Bathsheba had a throne on the right hand of the king's throne (1 Kings 2:19). Similarly, we see that King Asa 'deposes' the queen mother 'from her position', because of her idolatry, but it is implied that before that she had a position of authority (1 Kings 14:12). The significance of these practices is clear: *the female gender of the queens is no hindrance from holding authority over men*. Her blood relation by being the mother of the king overrules her female gender.

Other named queens in Israel are: Michal, Abigail, Maacah, Rizpah, Jezebel, Athaliah, and Nehushta.³⁴⁶

An example of a queen who had full control and 'ruled the land' is Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, who ruled for six years in Judah (1 Kings 11:3). She was the granddaughter of Omri king of Israel (2 Kings 8:26). While she was not faithful to the Lord, the point here is that she held the office as ruling queen and exercised authority, and the fact that she did so while being a woman is not negatively judged by the author of 2 Kings.

Although the Queen of Sheba came from a foreign land, she makes a very appropriate assessment of King Solomon's government and the blessings the people have received from the Lord through him. Her statement to Solomon has been

³⁴⁵ Note the concept of the 'Great Lady' in Israel: R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 1973, pp. 117-118.

³⁴⁶ See the surveys in H. Lockyer, *All the Kings and Queens of the Bible*, 1961, pp. 222-246.

recorded and is part of the Bible. When she praises the Lord, she acknowledges him as God and uses words that suggest inspiration by the Holy Spirit:

1 Kings 10:9 Blessed be the Lord your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel! Because the Lord loved Israel for ever, he has made you king to execute justice and righteousness. (NRSV)

Another queen was Esther. While she was queen in Persia and not Israel, she belonged to God's people and her authority is nowhere disputed in the book that carries her name. King Xerxes sets a royal crown on her head and makes her queen (Est. 2:17). In this role, she had the authority to make 'appointments' (8:2), and wrote 'with full authority to confirm the second letter concerning the Purim' (9:29). She makes 'decrees' that confirm the regulations about the Purim (9:31-32), and her actions benefit especially the Jewish people. The positive view of Queen Esther and the fact that the book was included in the Old Testament canon indicates that her authority as a ruler of male individuals is not in question.

5. The Wise Woman

In the Old Testament wisdom literature – particularly Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes – the purpose is to teach the right attitudes and behaviour so that one fulfils the ideal of 'fearing the Lord' (Prov. 9:10). Concerning the woman, we encounter a mixed picture, in that the author warns the readers and students against women that may lead them astray. The 'woman' is here typically the married woman who is perceived as sexually enticing and tempts the wise man to commit adultery which was seen as a grievous offence (Prov. 6:32-7:27; Ex. 20:14; Lev. 20:10), much in the same way as Potiphar's wife in relation to Joseph (Gen. 39). However, there are also other sections in the wisdom texts that are significant for the present study.

It is clear that women in ancient Israel, generally speaking, lived in a separate sphere of social life compared to men. In 3.2.10 below we have covered this topic in some detail. The main functions usually offered women were those of daughter, sister, wife, and mother. While Proverbs offers teaching also for women, it is within the sphere of the home. In one instance, we read:

Proverbs 14:1 The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish tears it down with her own hands. (NRSV)

What a wise woman might be like as she builds her house is developed in the well-known praise of the woman of noble character in Proverbs 31:10-31. Among the

many virtues listed here, we note her involvement in buying property and trading (31:16, 19); her activities to assist the poor and needy, which is a social responsibility (31:20); her being clothed in 'strength and dignity' (31:25); and the feature that 'she opens her mouth with wisdom' while 'the teaching of kindness is on her tongue' (31:26). This suggests that a woman's capacity to deal with social life outside the home was clearly recognised, while the social setting and the deeply rooted laws of shame and honour continued to bind women to the home. This was not only the case in ancient Israel but in the entire Mediterranean culture from ancient times to today.³⁴⁷

In the biblical texts we also notice the existence of 'wise women' who form a special class in society and who 'by their sagacity and their counsel exerted an active influence on the course of events'.³⁴⁸ Striking examples are the 'wise woman' from Tekoa (2 Sam. 14:1-22) and the 'wise woman' in the city of Sheba (2 Sam. 20:15-22).

3.1.2.4 Limitations of Women's Public Activity in Israel. We have seen in 3.1.2.3 that women were *not prohibited* from holding leadership roles in ancient Israel. Genesis 3:16 was clearly not understood by the Old Testament authors as a *prohibition* against women being heads and leaders in public life and in the life of the covenant community. God's provisions for the woman in Genesis 3:16c-d gave the man responsibility for his wife and family as a caretaker and provider, but this is not necessarily a law – God may be merely outlining the consequences of the Fall, of the expulsion from Eden, of the pain inflicted on the woman in connection with child-bearing and child-birth, and of the curse upon the ground that would result in painful toil and labour for the man – and in any case it refers to the male and female roles within the marriage, not public life.

However, the examples of female leadership recorded in the Old Testament are limited. This may partly be due to the selection of sacred writings that now forms our canonical writings of the Bible, while in reality the situation may have been quite different. Based on recent research, it has been stated that 'in biblical times more women held positions of power and authority than a mere surface reading of the

³⁴⁷ See R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 1973, pp. 24-40; B. J. Malina, *The New Testament World*, 2001.

³⁴⁸ J. Doukhan, 'Women Priests in Israel', 1998, p. 32.

texts may suggest'.³⁴⁹ The question still remains, however: What concepts limited the involvement of women in leadership in Israel?

In the context of the inductions to the priestly office, we will later address the absence of female sacrificial priests in Israel (3.2.5). Some of the possible reasons for this peculiar circumstance are practical concepts connected with the *ritual purity* of the sacrificial service in the sanctuary and/or the need to protect the integrity of the Israelite worship against polytheism or temple prostitution.

Women's limited participation in leadership is however more widespread in Israel and does not only occur in the priestly area. There are deeper reasons for this limitation that are rooted in *the very essence of the nature of the people of Israel*. Thus, exegetical and theological considerations give us a set of concepts that were fundamental to the life of Israel as a people and that limited the possibility for women to be leaders on a broader scale. A review of each of them gives the following result:

1. The divine egalitarian ideal for man and woman in the Garden of Eden was seriously damaged as a consequence of the Fall. Instead of God's ideal, the wife would now suffer pain in childbearing and childbirth, while the husband would have to work the cursed ground through painful toil and eat his bread by the sweat of his brow. Since God's nature is love for his created human beings, he sets out on his mission to save them and leaves them a way out: Firstly, through the 'proto-gospel' in Genesis 3:15 which promises *humanity* salvation from evil through 'the woman's seed', and, secondly, through the assurance to *husband and wife* in 3:16c-d that the wife will continue to 'long for' her husband (safeguarding their continuing offspring and ensuring that the promise of 'the woman's seed' in 3:15 can be fulfilled), while her husband, as worker of the ground, takes charge of his wife and children.

2. This new marriage ideal after the Fall may have been forgotten as Adam and Eve and their generations died out. There is no record of the ability to write and record words of God in the early history of man. With Noah, life on earth starts from the beginning.

3. As the nations of the earth are then formed (Gen. 10), they spread across the world 'according to their clans and lines of descent' (Gen. 10:32) and the previously 'common language and common speech' is eventually turned into different languages (Gen. 11:1-9). Thus, in the world of the nations, from where

³⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 32-33; note the research on 'strong evidence of matriarchal tendencies' in the biblical society described in footnote 26 on p. 41.

Abraham is called to form a separate nation according to God's will, a 'patriarchal' pattern of life was already firmly rooted. There is no record in the Bible that the patriarchal way of organising life is commanded by God. It is therefore a human invention prompted by the hardship of life and male physical dominance. Studies in human anthropology suggest that the generally accepted understanding of patriarchy in Mediterranean culture in antiquity has to do with a certain view of the male 'seed':

We might characterize the patriarchal period as symbolized by kinship ties, a sacred or holy kinship group chosen by God and consisting of the patriarch and 'his seed'. The first-century author Seneca tells us what the ancients believed 'the seed' to be: 'In the semen there is contained the entire record of the man to be, and the not-yet-born infant has the laws governing a beard and grey hair. The features of the entire body and its successive phases are there, in a tiny and hidden form.'³⁵⁰ In antiquity, 'seed', which only males have, is much like the Russian nesting dolls or Chinese boxes, each containing the whole of forthcoming posterity. The patriarch heads his family, with worship centred in the kin group and with norms governing social interaction deriving from family custom.³⁵¹

This concept is not explicitly referred to in the Old Testament, but, assuming that some such idea existed also in Israel, it would explain the use of biblical language when 'Abraham's seed' is seen as the carrier of a future people along the patrilineal descent by God's covenant with Abraham (see, for example, Gen. 12:7; 13:15-16; 15:13; 17:7; 21:12; 22:18; 28:13-14).

However, the point we are making here is that the patriarchal customs that we find in the Bible are not revealed truth from God but a human invention. As in so many other cases in Scripture, God is using whatever human invention there is, in order to achieve his mission in the history of man. For example, while God does not want the institution of the kingdom in Israel, he concedes to the people and then accomplishes his plan with Israel and the Messiah through the Davidic line (1 Sam. 8).

We have seen that the submission of women and the headship of men in Genesis 4-11 simply happen without any command from God (3.1.1.4). Rather, it seems to be part of the general degradation of humanity that begins with Cain (killer) and Abel (killed), which reaches its first ending with the Flood.

Thus, while the patrilineal descent of male 'seed' was defined in Israel as the carrier of the promise and the covenant of Abraham with God, Israel would tend to

³⁵⁰ Seneca, *Natural Questions*, Vol. 1, Book 3, 1971, 29:3.

³⁵¹ B. J. Malina, *The New Testament World*, 2001, p. 147.

see in the males, especially the firstborn male, the given leaders. This root concept of Israel as a people may give part of the explanation for the absence of female leaders: the elders of families and tribes would be the first-born males who belonged in a special way to the Lord. As all first-borns were replaced by the Levites (including the family of Aaron) to do priestly service, the concept is implied that the religious and cultic functions, which in the patriarchal period before the exodus from Egypt had been handled by the head of the family or elders of tribes, were *taken over* by the priests in the sanctuary. A passage that would sustain this understanding is when Micah engaged the Levite and said: 'Be a father and a priest to me' (Judges 17:10), even though the Levite was only a young man (17:7, 10).

4. The patriarchal time and Israel's formation before, during and after the exodus from Egypt, is a time when the family headship of the firstborn males and the clans with their male heads dominate. This social pattern has been accepted by tradition and is more or less the same in the whole ancient Near East.

It begins with Terah who is the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran in Ur of the Chaldeans (Gen. 11:27-32). Haran dies but has two daughters, Milcah and Iscah and one son, Lot. Abram marries Sarai and Nahor marries Milcah, but Abram's wife Sarai has no children. One day Terah takes his firstborn Abram and his wife, together with Lot, and they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. However, they decide to settle in Haran which is on the way.

At this point, God calls Abram, the firstborn of Terah, and elects him as the father of a great nation (12:1-3). Although God has not yet talked to him about Canaan, Abram leaves Haran with his wife and Lot and comes to Canaan. It is there that God tells him that 'to your seed I will give this land' (12:7). Abrams' response is to build altars in various places and worship God, as if the country is turned into a sanctuary where God is close to him. Later on, Abram's name is changed to 'Abraham', i.e. 'father of many' (17:5). Family roles and patterns are crucial all along from the start.

Thus, Israel as a people is first conceptualised as 'the seed' of a firstborn man, Abraham. God's promise of seed, land and blessing is repeated, also to Abrahams' son Isaac, and to Isaac's son Jacob, who becomes the father of the twelve ancestors of the twelve tribes (Gen. 12-50) and receives the name of 'Israel' (32:28). The bearers of the promise are male and their seed is to be multiplied and dwell in Canaan, always with God's special blessing.

The male priority is further marked by the rite of circumcision which functions as a sign of the covenant (Gen. 17:10-14; Ex. 4:24-26). Only males can carry this outward sign. Thus, as the people of Israel is eventually formed and consolidated with laws in Sinai, males carry the sign of the covenant by circumcision, while females are challenged by regular and lengthy ritual impurity.

In some parts of the *Torah*, however, Moses speaks about a 'circumcision of the heart' – once in the Sinai covenant (Deut. 10:16) and once in the Moab covenant renewal (Deut. 30:1-10). This means that a vital sign of the covenant partnership is transformed from one that can include only males to one that includes men and women, without any distinction. It has been noted, however, that Deuteronomy 30:6 *transforms* the phrase of Deuteronomy 10:16, 'circumcise your hearts' (imperative directed to Israel). Thus, in the future, it will no longer be the Israelites themselves who circumcise their hearts but *God will do it for them and their descendants*, as they return from their dispersion in foreign lands to the land of their fathers, so that 'you, all Israel, man and woman' (cf. 29:2, 18) will 'love [God] with all your heart and with all your soul, and live' (30:2, 6). In this *promised new Israel*, made by circumcised *hearts* rather than circumcised bodies, the appropriate sign of the covenant relationship with the Lord will abolish the different ranks of men and women brought by the patriarchal, human traditions and bring Israel back to God's ideal in Eden.³⁵² It is our Christian belief that this promise has been fulfilled in the Christian church (note Gal. 3:28).

5. Israel is then formed as a people in the desert where the clans and families (and their male heads) make up the core. As they enter the desert of Sinai to meet God and worship him, making their camp before the mountain, Moses receives God's word:

Exodus 19:3-6 Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites: **4** You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. **5** Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, **6** but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites. (NRSV)

This is collective language and the whole of Israel is embraced by (a) the command to obey God's voice and keep his covenant, and (b) the function of being, literally, 'a

³⁵² Cf. A. Laffey, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1988, pp. 64-66.

kingdom of priests' (*mamleket kohanim*) and a 'holy people' (*goy qadosh*). This, then, includes the women as 'priests' and as being 'holy'. The full expressions refer to a worshipping community (priests) devoted to God as the King and Ruler of the earth and who is a holy people by virtue of being near the holiness of God.

The references to 'priests' and 'holy' in Exodus 19:3-6 are key terms that qualify the priest not only in Israel but in the neighbouring Canaanite, Ugaritic, and even Babylonian languages: *kohen* ('priest', from *kun*, 'to stand') and *qadosh* ('holy') are common in those cultures. Doukhan notes, however, that 'In the Canaanite language, the word *kohen* is also used to designate priestesses and even high priestesses (*rb khnm*); likewise, the word *qdsh*, traditionally associated with priesthood in the Bible,³⁵³ is also found in Ugaritic alongside *khn* to designate the sacred prostitute (*qdsh*).³⁵⁴ Thus, Exodus 19:3-6 uses genuine priestly language, but by referring to Israel as a people without gender distinctions, the passage avoids making unwanted associations with the pagan cults of Israel's neighbours.

However, the all-inclusive, collective language in God's address to Israel is not literally carried out in the context. Firstly, Moses summons the 'elders of the people', i.e. the male heads of the clans, and sets before them what God has said. Through their elders, the people answer as one and say: 'Everything the Lord has spoken we will do' (19:8). Secondly, as God decides to come near to and meet his people, they are consecrated and wash their clothes, and are told not to 'come near a woman', since intercourse would make them ritually unclean (19:10-11, 14-15), in order to enable them to be near God's holiness. Thus, it seems that the reference to Israel as a 'kingdom of priests' in Exodus 19:3-6 operates at three levels: (a) collectively, all Israel, men and women are included as priests; (b) in action, however, the representatives of the people, i.e. the male heads or 'elders', speak and make commitments on behalf of their clans and families; (c) in both instances, there is a separate class of professional 'priests', distinct from the men and women and the elders (note 19:22, 24).

In Exodus 19, God seeks to fulfil his desire to 'bring Israel to himself [out of Egypt]' (19:4) by meeting his people, but they must be consecrated and ritually clean in order to be near his powerful holiness, as in a sanctuary. Coming too close is to be punished by death (19:12-13). When the day comes, the people are brought out

³⁵³ See, for example, Lev. 21:6; Num. 8:14; Deut. 10:8; 1 Sam. 7:1.

³⁵⁴ J. Doukhan, 'Women Priests in Israel', 1998, p. 31.

of the camp 'to meet God' (19:17), and God gives them the Ten Commandments (20:1-17).

Thus, besides the declaration that the whole people, men and women, are 'priests', certain rules on ritual cleanness apply to the whole people of Israel, such as clean clothes and sexual abstinence (cf. Lev. 15; Num. 8:7), and the priestly character of this consecration is underlined by the statement in Exodus 19:22 that 'even the priests who approach the Lord must consecrate themselves' (cf. 19:24).

In ancient Israel, it is quite plausible from the context in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy that the priestly functions of consecration in order to come near the holy God may have barred some or all women from approaching the cloud of God's presence, since the laws of ritual purity were very strict for women. Due to the danger of ritual pollution from the blood after childbearing or menstruation and the impurity arising from sexual intercourse, many women would be unclean in a ritual sense for long periods of time (see Lev. 12 and 15).

Thus, while Exodus 19:3-6 opens up for an understanding of women as being 'priests' and 'holy' within the people of Israel, in reality they may well have been limited from taking public office due to two reasons: (a) the will of 'the people' was expressed by the elders or male heads of the clans and families, which eliminated women from participation (determined by the underlying concept of *patriarchy*); (b) the strict rules of ritual purity linked to the sanctuary and the presence of God barred women from a chance of serving in priestly roles in Israel (determined by the underlying concept of holiness and ritual *purity*).

We find, in other words, that God's definition of all men and women in Israel as 'priests' is rooted in a concept of priesthood that is related to God's *external* mission to the nations of the world – as 'priests', Israel is to testify to God's glory to the nations through their worship of him. However, the *interior* life of Israel near the holiness of God in the sanctuary required another concept of priesthood, namely a special *mediating* priesthood that served to manage the distance between the people's ritual uncleanness and the holiness of God. Both these concepts are held together in Israel. Both men and women are included in the external priesthood of testifying to the nations, while only men were involved in the internal priesthood maintain ritual cleanness. In view of this distinction, it is clear why the women's general priesthood in the New Testament – the role of testifying to the nations of the glory of God - is the only priesthood: the *mediating* priesthood has disappeared with

the sacrifice of Christ and his role as high priest of the new Israel. This is what Peter is talking about in 1 Peter 2:9 as he addresses men and women in the church: 'You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, *in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light*' (NRSV).

6. In the Israelite sanctuary service instituted in Sinai through Moses, a section of the tribe of Levi, the family of Aaron and his descendants, were to serve as priests to ensure the presence of God and the ritual purity of his people. As pointed out by Jacques Doukhan, 'no reason is given for the selection of Aaron as the founder of a hereditary priesthood, but the "house of Aaron" was identified as the only legitimate priestly line (1 Chron. 6:49-52; Ezra 7:1-3)'.³⁵⁵ Later on, the Aaronic priesthood was connected to the tribe of Levi (Num. 18:2, 4).

7. After the formation of the people of Israel in Sinai, the Israelites eventually enter Canaan and settle, as described in the book of Joshua. On the occasion of their settlement, the various parts of the land are distributed to the heads of the twelve tribes and their clans and families (Josh. 13-19). Thus, the entire formation of Israel focuses on the male heads, their legal right of ownership of the land, and their receiving the blessing of God. This is later on confirmed in a similar way by the promises to King David, whose offspring will rule the nation and eventually give birth to the Messiah, Christ (2 Sam. 7:1-17).

8. In Canaan, Israel is threatened by a powerful and rich Canaanite way of life which has implications for their worship of God. Female priests were abundant in the Canaanite cult, but usually engaged in ritual and cultic prostitution in order to secure fertility and a rich offspring. As is the case with many laws in the Pentateuch, there arose a need to protect Israel from Canaanite practices, and, consequently, one of many precautions was that women were not accepted in the cultic priesthood.³⁵⁶

In conclusion, based on these observations, inferences from the Old Testament scarcity of references to women in leadership, or their absence from the body of sacrificing priests in the sanctuary, are invalid as biblical arguments against women's ordination in the Christian church. The entire concept of Israel as God's chosen people and its historical application from Abraham to the New Testament is intertwined with a social and cultural context which is characterised by a strong

³⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 30.

³⁵⁶ J. Doukhan expands on this point with references to the relevant literature (ibid., p. 31).

domination of a patrilineal understanding of the role of the genders and a sacramental sanctuary concept which underlines God's holiness as a fearful power which Israel must be ritually pure to relate to and for which continuous atonement must be sought. In this context, women as mediating and sacrificial priests brought complications.

The fact that, despite this, women are indeed perceived in leadership roles, particularly in the spiritual terms of prophecy and wisdom, suggests that while there is no prohibition against women in leadership in the Old Testament, there were practical and traditional obstacles deeply rooted in the culture of ancient Israel which made female leadership challenging, particularly as elders representing families and priests serving in the sanctuary. None of these obstacles, however, are based on an inherent female submission to male headship but they rather point in the direction of ritual-cultic restrictions and restrictions emanating from a patriarchal society.

3.1.2.5 Men and Women in the Covenant Community. The predominant patriarchal structure of Israelite society did not exclude women from positions of influence, leadership, and even headship over men.³⁵⁷ This is exemplified and supported in the study by Jo Ann Davidson,³⁵⁸ and we have earlier added to her study our own observations (3.1.2.3).

The intended meaning of Genesis 3:16 was not that God makes a legal prescription of male headship and female submission, which is not only to be applied in the marriage and home setting, but also in the Israelite society and the covenant community. That would contradict the leadership roles of Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and others found in the Old Testament, which appear despite the general patriarchal setting of Israelite society and the striking circumstance that these references are not objected to by the biblical authors but unreservedly endorsed. Although the references to women in leadership roles are relatively few, the fact that they are evidenced in the Bible shows that *the Bible does not prohibit women from being given leadership roles.*

The existing biblical cases of women as leaders suggest three things:

1. When Israel is *in transition* and not settled with the central city of Jerusalem and its temple, women such as Miriam (at the time of Israel's wandering through

³⁵⁷ R. M. Davidson, 'Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture', 1998, p. 272.

³⁵⁸ J. A. Davidson, 'Women in Scripture, 1998, pp. 157-186.

Sinai) and Deborah (at the time of the judges) come to the foreground in leadership roles. Thus, when Israel was institutionalised with a temple and a complex organisation involving priests and Levites, women tended to be excluded from leadership involvement.

2. Women's leadership roles become *more prominent and acceptable in the prophetic movement and in the wisdom circles*. Women serve as spiritually endowed prophetesses (Huldah and others), wise women (2 Sam. 14:2-22; 20:16-22; Prov. 31:10-31), and spirit-filled 'servants of the Lord ... whom the Lord calls' (Joel 2:28-32). Thus, the resistance against women in leadership comes rather from men in the human patriarchal setting than from God in a spiritual setting. (This point would of course also apply to Ellen White's ministry among Seventh-day Adventists, confirming that God's call to men and women transcends the human social customs and structures.)

3. The selection of canonical writings in the Old Testament Bible was clearly not made with the purpose of highlighting the role of women in the Israelite society. Yet, the Old Testament contains books with female names (Ruth; Esther), books where women have a central role (Judges 4-5; Song of Songs), and portions of Scripture written by women (e.g. Ex. 15; Judges 5; 1 Sam 2). In addition, as pointed out by Doukhan, 'recent anthropological studies have shown that along with traditional patriarchal trends in biblical society, one can find strong evidence of matriarchal tendencies'. Thus, 'these last findings suggest that in biblical times more women held positions of power and authority than a mere surface reading of the texts may suggest'.³⁵⁹

There are good examples of legal provisions that took into account special circumstances and permitted women to have the legal right to own property and, therefore, to exercise headship. One such example is the case of Zelophehad's daughters Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah in Numbers 27:1-11. Since their father died without sons, the five daughters would ensure that their father's name would 'not disappear from his clan'. Thus, they were given property among their father's relatives' and special legal provision for all Israel was adopted. God endorsed that this was right. In another context, Zelophehad's daughters were

³⁵⁹ J. Doukhan, 'Women Priests in Israel', 1998, pp. 32-33.

restricted to marry members of their father's own clan, so that the property they had would not be transferred to another tribe (Num. 36).

The case of Zelophehad's daughters also shows that female headship was restricted in Israel due to the need to keep the land distribution intact between the twelve tribes. A man could choose a wife from any tribe and she would become subordinated to the husband's tribal rights. A woman could not choose a husband and property that she might own, for, if she married, the property would be transferred to the tribe of her husband and potentially be lost.

Another example is the manner of treating vows. A vow by a man could not be broken. A young woman living in her father's home or a wife – both dependent on the father/husband – could make a vow, too, but it could be abolished if the father/husband so decided (Num. 30:1-8, 10-16). However, the vow or obligation by a widow or a divorced woman would be binding on her (30:9). This means that the legal rights to make agreements and transactions were not restricted for women because they were women, but because they were dependent as daughters or wives of a father/husband. Women not bound by a man in that way had the right to exercise headship because they did not violate the patriarchal rights of a man. Such headship would have to do with property, owning slaves, employment, and various business activities. Thus, it is not the gender that is the issue for female leadership, but legal property restrictions emanating from the patriarchal social norms.

3.1.3 Servants of God in the New Testament

3.1.3.1 The Mission of Christ.

The overall biblical theme of the mission of God is being narrowed down in the course of biblical history. After the Fall (3.1.1.3; 5.4), the election of Abraham and the delivery of Israel (3.1.2; 5.4), the third narrowing down of the mission of God is the Kingdom, which links (a) what God was doing through King David, (b) the promises of a Messiah of the Davidic line, and (c) their fulfilment in Jesus Christ (5.4).

Thus, by the time we come to the New Testament, the umbrella under which the mission of God operates is the theme of the kingdom and its king. (We have developed this point further in 5.5.) What this all means is that in the Gospels Jesus is acting as a servant of God, the King, who is bringing the promised kingdom to Israel. Thus, there is a specific kingdom Christology in the Gospels, which will form

the basis for the New Testament theology of the church, ministry and its ecclesiastical functions.

One of the epithets of Jesus is 'the servant of God' (Matt. 12:15-21; Phil. 2:1-11; cf. 1 Cor. 15:24-28),³⁶⁰ which alludes to the use of this term in the Old Testament³⁶¹ and which is rooted in kingdom terminology. The concept of service is central in Jesus' teachings and the active verb to 'serve' is used to define the mission of Christ: 'the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many' (Matt. 10:45; cf. 23:11-12). The finest example of Christ's servanthood is when he washed his disciples' feet, which was a task performed by *douloi*, 'slaves'.³⁶² God is the King of the universe, and Jesus is sent as his servant with the mission to establish God's true kingdom on earth. This kingdom is offered to Israel. Some Jews accept it, but, as the church is founded by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, it spreads across the Roman Empire and its core membership consists of Hellenists or Gentiles.

Commissioned by God, Christ calls the church to be a kingdom of priests and servants of God to bring the gospel to the world by proclamation, witnessing and various kinds of ministry (5.6; 5.7). Thus, 'servants' or 'ministers' are spiritually called by Christ and when this call is recognised by the church they are put to work.

The question this is now raising in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is whether men and women can be ordained and elected for any function in the church organisation, so that we will have an *inclusive ministry* in the church, which would reflect God's initial plan when man and woman were created (3.1.1.1; 3.1.1.2). It is in this context that we approach the Bible in the present section.

One important conclusion can be made already at this point. Since Christian service/ministry is *commissioned by God and Christ through the Holy Spirit*, it is the unique prerogative of God to determine whom he chooses. It is therefore what God says in his Word, the Bible, which determines how the principle of gender applies to service and ministry.

³⁶⁰ Some of this idea is implied in God's recognition of Jesus as his 'son' at his baptism (Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22), since God's words seem to allude to Isaiah 42:1: 'Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him.' This passage is applied to Jesus in Matt. 12:15-21.

³⁶¹ See in particular Isa. 41:8-9; 42:1, 19; 43:10; 44:1-2, 21, 26; 45:4; 48:20; 49:3, 5-7; 50:10; 52:13; 53:11; 54:17.

³⁶² K. H. Rengstorf, Article '*doulos*' etc., in: *ThDNT*, vol. 2, pp. 277-278. (261-280)

The role of the church – consisting of servants/ministers who have themselves been called by God to serve him, and who therefore are working under the same call and spiritual authority as men and women being considered for ordination – is merely to *recognise and confirm* what God has done (we will come back to this biblical teaching in various places in our study of ‘ordination’). Thus, *the calling that matters for ordination is the calling of God*. The endorsement of the church is merely a practical matter, to make the ordination public and to approve it as appropriate in the situational and cultural setting in which the gospel is to be shared.

3.1.3.2 The Headship and Submission Passages. Studies have shown that ‘there is a clear distinction in the New Testament between counsel regarding husband-wife relationships and general men-women relationships in the church’.³⁶³ In addressing the issue of ordination, therefore, the Seventh-day Adventist Church must not carelessly apply biblical counsels intended for the husband-wife relationship to the ministry of the church. Firstly, not all women are *wives*. Secondly, the *roles* in husband-wife relationships are created by the spouses based on personalities and needs, mutual love and care; the appropriateness of those roles is seen in their fruit, i.e. in a harmonious and happy marriage. Thirdly, the *purpose* of the family is to live intimately together in love and raise children, while the purpose of the ministry of the church is to build up the church in many different ways and to expand the kingdom of God by leading non-believers to Christ and witness in the world of the love of God. While there may be some overlap, as we see, for example, in Ephesians 5:21-33, we are in principle dealing with two different functions. Thus, in the Bible, the submission of wives to their husbands was not a hindrance for female leadership functions.

We will now examine the key ‘submission passages’ in the New Testament, drawing on the studies by R. M. Davidson, L. Richards and N. Vyhmeister.³⁶⁴ In these passages, the Greek terms *hypotasso*, ‘submit’, or *hypotage*, ‘submission’, apply to the relationship between husband and wife. Besides the major passages in Ephesians 5:21-33 and 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, we include 1 Corinthians 14:33-35, Colossians 3:18-19, 1 Timothy 2:8-15, Titus 2:5, and 1 Peter 3:1-7.

³⁶³ R. M. Davidson, ‘Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture’, 1998, p. 273.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.259-295; L. Richards, ‘1 Corinthians 11 and 14’, 1998, pp. 313-333; N. Vyhmeister, ‘1 Timothy 2:8-15’, 1998, pp. 335-354.

1. Ephesians 5:21-33.

The text reads as follows according to the NRSV:

Ephesians 5:21-33 Be subject (*hypotasso*) to one another out of reverence for Christ. **22** Wives, be subject (*hypotasso*) to your husbands as you are to the Lord. **23** For the husband is the head (*kephale*) of the wife just as Christ is the head (*kephale*) of the church, the body of which he is the Saviour. **24** Just as the church is subject (*hypotasso*) to Christ, so also wives ought to be in everything to their husbands. **25** Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, **26** in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, **27** so as to present the church to himself in splendour, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind – yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. **28** In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. **29** For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, **30** because we are members of his body. **31** ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ **32** This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church. **33** Each one of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband.

Ephesians 5:21-34 is the pivotal and foundational New Testament passage dealing with husband-wife relations, and the only passage in the New Testament related to this issue that contains both *kephale*, ‘head’, and *hypotasso*, ‘submit’.

The specific setting in the church of Ephesus and the religious and cultural conditions in that particular city in Asia Minor made the relationship between men and women, and particularly between husband and wife, a serious issue of church unity. This has been described in some detail in the study of 1 Timothy 2:8-15 below (passage no. 5). Under the influence of the unique Artemis cult in Ephesus, sectarian Jewish and Gnostic teachings were widespread concerning the superior role of the woman in marriage, and even regarding ascetic abstention from marriage. A new, emancipated role for women was also emerging in Roman society which threatened traditional values and raised issues of decency and propriety. Paul’s aim is to safeguard marriage in the church of Ephesus, defining the roles of husband and wife as was customary and considered appropriate in his time, using the model of the relationship between Christ and the church.

Before looking at the passage as a whole, some comments on key terms are needed. In its seven occurrences with a metaphorical sense in the New Testament –

note its dual occurrence in Ephesians 5:23³⁶⁵ – the Greek *kephale* may have the sense ‘head’ (as in ‘superior rank’) or ‘origin, source/mouth (of a river), pre-eminence, something determinative’.³⁶⁶ Davidson notes that *kephale* is paired with *hypotasso*, ‘submit’, which provides a parallel to the similar usage of *kephale* in the sense of ‘pre-eminence’ or ‘superior rank’ with reference to Christ in Ephesians 1:22 and Colossians 2:10. There is no contextual reason for discarding this sense in Ephesians 5. However, we will see later in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 (passage no. 2 below) how Paul slightly nuances the sense of *kephale* to his argument on women’s veiling, the audience in Corinth, and the Gnostic teachings.

A second term is the Greek *hypotasso*, ‘be subject to, submit’. It occurs in some form 39 times in the New Testament (23 times in Pauline epistles and 6 times in 1 Peter). The root verb *tasso* means ‘order, position, determine’, and with the prepositional suffix *hypo* the meaning is, in the active voice: ‘place under, subordinate, subject, submit’. In the passive voice, the meaning is: ‘become subject [to someone or something]’; and in the middle voice: ‘[voluntarily] submit oneself, defer to, acquiesce, surrender one’s rights or will’.³⁶⁷ Seven occurrences of *hypotasso* – all in the middle voice – occur in the context of man-woman relationships: 1 Corinthians 14:34; Ephesians 5:21, 24; Colossians 3:18; Titus 2:5; 1 Peter 3:1, 5.

Ephesians 5:21-33 is part of a series of ‘household codes’, which is a New Testament genre,³⁶⁸ that provides counsel for proper relationships between various members of domestic households: husbands and wives (5:22-23), children and parents (6:1-4), and servants and masters (6:5-9). There is no doubt, therefore, that the passage has the husband-wife relationship in view and not men-women relationships in general.³⁶⁹ The biblical statements regarding headship and submission in Ephesians 5 *should therefore not be applied to women as ministers or leaders in the church*, for there is no such instruction in the passage. Even in the context of marriage, however, the husband-wife relationship should be carefully

³⁶⁵ 1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Col. 1:18; 2:10, 14.

³⁶⁶ H. Schlier, Article ‘*kephale*’, in: *ThDNT*, vol. 3, pp. 673-674.

³⁶⁷ R. M. Davidson, ‘Headship, Submission, and equality in Scripture’, 1998, p. 274; cf. W. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 1978, p. 855.

³⁶⁸ See Col. 18-4:1; 1 Tim. 2:18-15; 6:1-2; Titus 2:1-10; 1 Pet. 2:18-3:7.

³⁶⁹ R. M. Davidson, ‘Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture’, 1998, p. 274.

understood. The relevant conclusions from this passage may be summarised in the following eight points.³⁷⁰

1. The context of Paul's counsel for husbands and wives (Eph. 5:22-23) is one of *mutual submission* as described in 5:21: 'submitting to one another in the fear of God'.

2. The word *hypotasso*, whether actually present in Ephesians 5:22 or implied in 5:21 (the manuscript evidence is divided), occurs in the middle voice ('wives, submit yourselves'), indicating that the wife's submission is a 'voluntary yielding in love',³⁷¹ not forced by the husband. *There is no permission given for the husband to demand that his wife submits to his headship.*³⁷²

3. The wife's submission is not a blind yielding of her individuality; she is to submit only 'as to the Lord' (5:22).

4. The nature of the husband's headship is paralleled to that of Christ, who 'loved the church and gave himself up for it' (5:25). The husband's headship is consequently a loving servant leadership. It means 'head servant, or taking the lead in serving',³⁷³ not an authoritarian rule. It consists of the husband loving his wife as his own body, nourishing and cherishing her, as Christ does the church (5:28-29).

5. The emphasis in the headship-submission relationship is underlined in the summary in 5:33: love (of the husband for his wife) and respect (of the wife for her husband).

6. While mutual submission is implied between husband and wife, this does not equal total interchangeability in the marriage relation. The term 'head' is used only of the husband within the marriage relationship. (This seems to be based on patriarchal values that were common in biblical times.)

7. The respective roles of husband and wife are not explicitly defined by the social setting or the qualifications of the partners, but from the model of Christ and his church.

8. The ultimate ideal of husband-wife relations is still the partnership of equals that is set forth from the beginning in Genesis 2:24: 'the two shall become one flesh', which is quoted in Ephesians 5:31.

³⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 274-275.

³⁷¹ W. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 855.

³⁷² R. M. Davidson, 'Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture', 1998, p. 274.

³⁷³ B. Witherington III, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, 1988, p. 220.

This summary of points made by Davidson qualify and develop the idea of Christian marriage in this remarkable passage, which is a profound Christian argument against the aberrations *en vogue* in Ephesus at the time.

Paul argues in favour of the headship/submission of husband and wife in marriage from the highly revered model of Christ and his church. Why would he draw on such a model for *marriage*? It is perhaps remarkable that Genesis 3:16 is not quoted or alluded to, although Genesis 2:24 is quoted in full. Nobody could, of course, deny that the relationship between Christ and the church is one of harmonious headship and submission, so the *model* he applies to the Christian marriage is beyond reproach, and perhaps that was why he preferred to use it as his main argument.

Paul's ideal of the roles of husband and wife, however, remains the traditional patriarchal ideal which was common and considered appropriate in his time. The power of his argument may have derived from the well-known metaphor of husband and wife, or bridegroom and bride,³⁷⁴ which was rooted in the Old Testament and Judaism where it was applied to God and his people.³⁷⁵ It was a powerful symbol embedded in the minds of the early Christians, and provided a powerful argument in the kind of persuasive speech that characterised the genre of household codes. However, since it included the image or object of 'marriage' as traditionally understood in the ancient Near Eastern culture of Israel, first-century-Judaism, and early Christianity, it would inevitably involve elements of patriarchy. So, while Paul's stated argument in Ephesians 5:23, that 'the husband is the head of the wife', was appropriate for the original readers in their setting, some modern Bible readers may not be convinced of its universal validity and applicability also in an egalitarian society.

While the part of the metaphor that concerns the headship/submission roles of husband and wife in marriage is indirectly taken from changeable ancient Near Eastern customs and social norms, Paul's *principle* is nevertheless clear, and he succinctly summarises it in 5:33: 'Each one of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband.' This should also be connected with the opening phrase in 5:21: 'Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ', which teaches *mutual* submission in the church. And, furthermore, the overarching

³⁷⁴ See, for example, Matt. 22:1-14; John 3:29; Rev. 19:7-9; 21:2, 9-10.

³⁷⁵ See, for example, Hos. 2:16-23; Isa. 62:1-5.

concept that governs the larger context of ethical and behavioural counsel in Ephesians 4:1-6:18 is also the foundation for marital headship/submission, namely: 'Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God' (Eph. 5:1-2).

We conclude by noting that there is no reference in this passage to a limitation of women's service or ministry in response to God's calling. The roles of husband and wife in marriage are not intended to exclude either of them from serving God in the church and in the world, but to foster a harmonious and mutual submission in a loving relationship within the sphere of the home, emulating the love and sacrifice of Christ and the nature of God. The elements of patriarchy in the passage, as applied to marriage, were appropriate and needed in the original setting, in order to avoid internal church disorder and external disrespect among outsiders. This may well apply to contemporary patriarchal societies in some parts of the world. However, in modern egalitarian societies, patriarchy will achieve just what Paul sought to avoid in Ephesians 5, namely, internal disorder and disrespect among outsiders. A distinction between the original and universal meaning of the passage (2.5) is therefore appropriate.

2. 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

Besides Ephesians 5:23, 1 Corinthians 11:3 is the only other passage in the New Testament where *kephale* is used in the context of man-woman relationships.³⁷⁶ The text in the NRSV reads as follows:

1 Corinthians 11:2-16 I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions just as I handed them on to you. **2** But I want you to understand that Christ is the head (*kephale*) of every man, and the husband is the head (*kephale*) of his wife, and God is the head (*kephale*) of Christ. **4** Any man who prays or prophesies with something on his head disgraces his head, **5** but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled disgraces her head – it is one and the same thing as having her head shaved. **6** For if a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or to be shaved, she should wear a veil. **7** For a man ought not to have his head veiled, since he is the image and reflection of God; but woman is the reflection of man. **8** Indeed, man was not made from woman, but woman from man. **9** Neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man. **10** For this reason a woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her

³⁷⁶ We have benefitted in our study of this passage from R. M. Davidson, 'Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture', 1998, pp. 275-276, and L. Richards, '1 Corinthians 11 and 14', 1998, pp. 313-333.

head, because of the angels. **11** Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman. **12** For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman; but all things come from God. **13** Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head unveiled? **14** Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair, it is degrading to him, **15** but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering. **16** But if anyone is disposed to be contentious - we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God. (NRSV)

Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth addresses a series of specific issues. A dangerous threat was the false teachers who believed that 'knowledge' (*gnosis*) was the basis for salvation, not God's grace and love centred in the cross of Christ. For convenience, we may call them 'Gnostics', recognising that Gnosticism appeared in various forms over time and seems to have pre-dated Christianity. The 'knowledge' that brought salvation was the view that 'a Gnostic was part of the divine, a person who was spiritual from all eternity', while 'everything connected with the material world (the opposite of the spiritual world) was considered evil'.³⁷⁷ The Gnostics had specific beliefs that impacted their view of man and woman, for example:

1. The creation of male and female, a wholesome and natural feature of a good God's creation (Gen. 1:27, 31), was for the Gnostic heretics the by-product of an inferior development. Therefore, the physical being was of no value. The physical nature actually hindered the Gnostic from realising his/her true spiritual or immortal identity.

2. Gender distinctions should be ignored, because the distinction between male and female belongs to the world of 'fallenness'. The Gnostic female was no different from the Gnostic male, for both of them had the same divine spark.

For the Gnostic teachers, therefore, the creation recorded in Genesis was flawed, not only because it involved the creation of matter, but also because it was designed to produce more physical life (matter) through the union of male and female (Gen. 1:28; 2:24; 3:16).³⁷⁸ The Gnostic understanding of reality allowed only for spiritual aspects.

This Gnostic view of life and the genders influenced some women in the church in Corinth to challenge conventional worship customs. According to the Gnostics, a woman who wore a veil or kept her hair long was acknowledging a theological distinction which the Gnostics denied. They therefore cast aside

³⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 315.

³⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 316.

traditions which they believed reflected wrong views of male and female. The respect that was shown for angels (1 Cor. 11:10) by following conventional practices was complete nonsense to them. Not only did Gnostic women and men consider themselves equal or superior to angels, but the 'Gnostic Christians' in Corinth behaved in such arrogant manner that Paul asked them if they thought they were stronger than the Lord (1 Cor. 10:22).

Thus, the topic of the passage in 11:2-16 is Paul's concern regarding *proper behaviour in public worship*. Paul's view is that Gnostic women distort a fundamental Christian understanding of creation and redemption. It is important, therefore, to note that *Paul is not at all addressing the issues of male-female relationships as they are applied in our times and certainly not the arguments for or against female ordination to the gospel ministry*.

It is also important for an understanding of the passage to bear other elements in mind from the historical and cultural setting of Paul's letter. Among Hellenistic Greeks and Romans, both men and women remained bareheaded in public prayer, but in Judaism and early Christianity, it was customary for women to veil their heads in the public worship setting. This was done out of respect for the angels who were believed to be present at worship assemblies (1 Cor. 11:10).³⁷⁹ The veil of all Eastern countries was, and to a great extent still is, a symbol of female modesty and subjection. Therefore, a woman who discarded the veil was perceived as renouncing modesty and refusing to recognise her subordination to her husband (in the context of patriarchy). This significance of the use of the veil is the foundation for the apostle's whole argument in this paragraph.³⁸⁰

Paul's arguments in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 against the new and unacceptable practice of refusing to wear the veil in Corinth are divided into six steps. 'Each is related to propriety in light of tradition, customs, respects, nature, and common sense.'³⁸¹ What he addressed was not the veil in itself, but the false teachings underlying the doing away with the veil. Since those teachings were based on 'knowledge' (*gnosis*) as the basis for salvation, not God's grace and love centred in the cross of Christ, they were a serious threat to the gospel and undermined the significance of the cross of Christ and his resurrection. Paul's six arguments are:

³⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 316-317.

³⁸⁰ C. Hodge, *An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1965, pp. 204-205.

³⁸¹ L. Richards, '1 Corinthians 11 and 14', 1998, p. 318.

1. The importance of tradition (1 Cor. 11:2, 16). Paul begins and ends with an appeal to the traditions of all the churches. By referring to [the churches of] God (11:16), he reminds the church in Corinth of what he said in 10:31-33: do not cause anyone to stumble in the church of God, but whatever you do, do it all 'for the glory of God'. All that Paul says in the passage is subject to this essential communicative intention.

2. The importance of origin (1 Cor. 11:3, 7-9). Paul gives a sequence of relationships in 11:3. Using the NRSV, it reads: 'Christ is the head (*kephale*) of every man, and the husband is the head (*kephale*) of the wife, and God is the head (*kephale*) of Christ'.

This passage is difficult to translate due to several word ambiguities. Such ambiguities are not unusual in the writings of Paul and are often intentional.³⁸² It is therefore a widely accepted view that he often applies techniques in producing his texts which he had learnt through his Jewish scribal education (cf. Gal. 1:13-14), and this may be what Peter refers to in 2 Peter 3:15-16. Among the rabbis, a word with dual meanings was seen as an asset that provided a richness of meaning and a wider capacity of expressing the divine meaning.³⁸³

Thus, the Greek word *kefale* may mean 'head', 'origin', or 'what is primary and prominent'.³⁸⁴ It is possible that Paul uses it here with a view to the Gnostic part of his audience, for *kefale* had a special significance in Hellenistic and Gnostic circles where it would be associated with 'the first man – the redeemer' in which 'the concept of *kefale* contains both an element of basic superiority over the body and also an element of unity with it'.³⁸⁵ The Gnostic myth was that 'the first man (= aeon) who bears the cosmos (of men) in himself recovers from the fall in the redeemer (= aeon) who gathers and establishes the cosmos (of men) in himself'.³⁸⁶ Paul may therefore be seeking to teach the aberrant Gnostic Christians the true meaning of *kefale* as a reference to God and Christ.

The Greek *aner* and *gyne* may mean 'man/husband' and 'woman/wife'. In fact, *aner* may have six different senses in Greek: (a) general designation of a man

³⁸² See, for example, B. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity*, 1961, pp. 262-323.

³⁸³ See, for example, D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*, 2011, *passim*.

³⁸⁴ See the numerous examples and nuances listed in H. Schlier, Article '*kefale*', in: *ThDNT*, vol. 3, pp. 673-674.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 677.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

the function of whom is defined by adjectives or nouns; (b) the human species; (c) man as opposed to woman; (d) husband; (e) an adult man as distinct from a boy; (f) full manhood.³⁸⁷ The exegesis needs to include all these different options, but options b, c and d seem to be of primary interest.

The passage is made of three carefully sequenced and related clauses:

- a. The head/origin of every *aner* is Christ
- b. The head/origin of the *gyne* is the *aner*
- c. The head/origin of Christ is God

An understanding of Christ as *kefale* in this context must address the question of whether or not the meaning of the word in this passage is consistent with the use of 'head' in the other references referring to Christ as the 'head of the church', or whether or not it has changed to mean something different here. Sometimes, interpreters carelessly infuse the word 'head' in this text with its meaning in the English language to obtain the following hierarchical order: God is head over Christ – Christ is head over man – man is head over woman. This top-down vertical chain of command then goes as follows: God – Christ – man – woman.

However, this interpretation is obtained by manipulating the biblical text. In order to make the text say what Scripture does not teach in this passage, its three clauses are taken out of their original sequence and rearranged. The apostle Paul knows exactly how to structure hierarchies in perfectly descending order (see e.g. 1 Cor. 12:28). However, the context of 1 Corinthians 11:3 indicates that he is not structuring a hierarchy here. In keeping with the theme developed in the immediate context, he is discussing the traditional significance of *origination*, and the sequence that links the three clauses is not hierarchy but *chronology*. As a whole, the passage should therefore be understood as follows:

At creation, Christ was the primary originator (*kefale*) of life to human beings, serving as the source of the life of Adam (cf. 'by him all things were created'; Col. 1:16). In turn, man was the primary originator (*kefale*) of the woman as she was taken from him, serving as her source of life. Then, God was the primary originator of the Son as he was incarnated and came into being in the human world, serving as the source of Christ. When the biblical sequence of the three clauses is not tampered with, the consistent meaning of 'head' in this verse is that of a *servant*

³⁸⁷ A. Oepke, Article '*aner*', in: *ThDNT*, vol. 1, pp. 360-363.

function as provider of life. And this is consistent with the meaning of ‘head’ in the other five passages that refer to Christ as head of the church.

Of particular significance to our study is the fact that in the context of 1 Corinthians 11, the Greek terms for ‘man/woman’ also have the sense of ‘husband/wife’. Culturally in the Corinthian setting, the wife (*gyne*) was expected to be in submission to her husband (*aner*). No mention is however made of her subordination to any other man in 1 Corinthians 11, and ‘Paul never, here or elsewhere, widens the wife’s subordination to her husband within the family circle to a general subordination of women to men’s authority, in the church or in society’.³⁸⁸ However, Paul’s intention in the passage is not to rank man and woman in terms of authority, but in terms of *prominence based on origin* as it emerges in Scripture, which defines their nature. This is obvious from the immediate context.

As we read 1 Corinthians 11:3 together with 11:7, we see that to the direct subjection of humans (*aner*) to Christ corresponds the fact that man is “the image and reflection” (*eikon kai doxa*) of God, and to the position of man as *kefale* of the *gyne* corresponds the fact that she is “the reflection” (*doxa*) of man.³⁸⁹ There is a ‘halakic’ abridgement and a fusion here of the two creation accounts in Genesis 1-2,³⁹⁰ for the story of the creation of man and woman (as *humans* vis-à-vis God) states that they were both created in the image (and reflection) of God (Gen. 1:27), and the story of the creation of woman out of man (as *genders* and *husband/wife*) states that they were both reflecting each other as equals (Gen. 2:21-23).

The point that Paul is making in 11:7 is another, however, because his issue is to correct the behaviour of women in Corinth who under the influence of Gnostic teachings refuse to use the veil in public worship (11:10). Based on a ‘midrashic’ exegesis of the Genesis creation texts,³⁹¹ he is using the ‘loaded’ term *kefale* in arguing that woman should show respect for God, represented in Christian worship by the presence of angels, by veiling herself, because her primary origin is different from that of man, who originated before her from Christ. The same point emerges in 11:8-9, ‘where the being of woman as *doxa*, and indirectly of man as *eikon kai doxa*,

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

³⁸⁹ H. Schlier, Article ‘*kefale*’, in: *ThDNT*, vol. 3, p. 679.

³⁹⁰ For this common ‘halakic’ technique in Paul’s scribal education, with examples in the New Testament and particularly 1 Corinthians, see, for example, B. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity*, 1961, pp. 175, 312-323.

³⁹¹ I.e. seeking (*darash*) the deeper meaning in a text by filling in gaps left in the biblical text that are only hinted at; see R. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 1975, pp. 97-98.

is explained by the fact that the origin and *raison d'être* of woman are to be found in man'. This midrashic argumentation regarding woman's origin is what leads to Paul's conclusion in 11:10: 'For this reason, a woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels'. True to the equality of the genders in Genesis 2:21-23, however, Paul immediately adds:

1 Corinthians 11:11-12 Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman. **12** For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman; but all things come from God.

Here, the hierarchical sequence implied in the concept of 'x coming from y' is God – the Lord (Christ) – man and woman. Thus, the passage underlines the equality and unity of man and woman 'in the Lord' and under God.

In conclusion, the man/husband being the *kefale* ('head' or 'primary origin') of woman/wife is used by Paul as an argument for women to wear veils in public worship for the sake of the angels, who represent God. Wearing the veil is an act of submission before God, of honouring him, and thus, as a consequence, of honouring the husband or the father who is in charge of her. The veil is not seen as degrading the woman, but as 'a symbol of authority' that elevates and honours her.

In more than one way, the basic point of wearing a veil and for women to honour their male protector (husband or father) by wearing it, belongs to the local culture in Corinth in the first century and has no relevance for most Christians today. Given the cultural norms for decency and propriety, such rules for women served to safeguard the internal unity in the church, and were needed to preserve respect and trust among outsiders for the sake of the gospel. In this particular case, it also had to do with refuting a dangerous Gnostic heresy that undermined the gospel and the teachings of Scripture. Paul's principle in 1 Corinthians 11, therefore, is that 'violation of accepted social practices by a woman who wished to defy the distinctions of gender is unacceptable for a Christian'.³⁹²

3. The matter of honour (1 Cor. 11:4-6). Paul states here that a woman who prays or prophesies (cf. Acts 2:18; 21:9) in public worship with her head uncovered (with short hair or no veil) *dishonours* her head to the point that it is seen as the same as having her head shaved (11:5). At the time, when a woman appeared in a public service with her head uncovered, she was sending a message that said at least one of three things: (a) she was a person of loose morals and sexual

³⁹² Ibid., p. 319.

promiscuity; (b) she had been publicly disgraced because of some shameful act; or (c) she was openly flaunting her independence (in this case, to support a heretical interpretation of human existence). The information we have about the conditions in Corinth at the time Paul wrote his letter strongly points to the third option.³⁹³

4. 'Because of the angels' (1 Cor. 11:10). This phrase has been the object of intense discussion.³⁹⁴ The best conclusion is that the angels are holy angels that veil their faces in the presence of God (cf. Isa. 6:2). The Dead-Sea Scrolls have revealed that the conservative Jewish Qumran community, which was contemporary with Paul's letter to Corinth, believed that holy angels attended their services and that respect for them was so vital that persons with a physical defect could not attend the sacred assembly.³⁹⁵

The meaning of 'the symbol of authority on her head' in 11:10 offers another exegetical difficulty. Literally, the Greek text states: 'therefore, a woman ought to have authority on her head, because of the angels'. Clearly, it does not speak of woman 'under authority'. The real issue here is, however, how the woman has 'authority' on her head by the wearing of a veil (or by keeping her hair long). Richards' answer falls well into place in the specific context in 1 Corinthians:

Elsewhere in 1 Corinthians, the Greek word for authority, *exousia*, means the right or freedom to act (see 7:37; 8:9; 9:4-6, 12, 18; see also Rom. 9:21; Rev. 22:14). This is, no doubt, the meaning of the word here. How does this usage affect this verse? The most natural meaning would be that the woman has 'authority', that is, the freedom to act or to worship, simply by following proper decorum and conventional practices. If she brazenly refuses to follow the accepted custom, which in itself shows disrespect for the angels, she forfeits the very authority she is attempting to claim for herself! *Paul's conclusion is that women did have authority to worship by having the proper head covering, and did not have authority by the maverick action of the Corinthian women of casting the custom aside.*³⁹⁶

5. Equality and mutuality of man and woman (1 Cor. 11:11-12). As we noted earlier, Paul is addressing the gender issue in these verses: 'Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman. For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman; but all things come from God'. Paul says here in no uncertain terms that *man and woman are equal and mutually dependent*. The key elements in the statement are 'in the Lord' and 'all

³⁹³ Ibid., pp. 319-320.

³⁹⁴ See the review of the research in *ibid.*, p. 320.

³⁹⁵ See H. N. Richardson, 'Some Notes on 1Qsa', 1957, p. 120.

³⁹⁶ L. Richards, '1 Corinthians 11 and 14', 1998, pp. 320-321 (emphasis supplied).

things come from God'. Regardless of cultural conventions, man and woman are one in the Lord and this unity comes from God. There is reference here both to the new creation of men and women in Christ (cf. Gal. 3:26-29), and to the ideal which God created in the Garden of Eden, which we have analysed in detail earlier (3.1.1.2).

6. Appeal to common sense (1 Cor. 11:13-15). Paul appeals here to the Corinthians to maintain appropriate gender distinctions on the basis of one's ordinary understanding of what is natural and in harmony with common sense. 'Judge for yourselves', Paul says, 'Is it proper?'

Paul's concluding words in 1 Corinthians 11:16 challenge those who are disposed to be 'contentious' about the issue (i.e. 'fond of strife') by a firm principle: 'we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God'.

In conclusion, the following principles can be deduced from this passage:³⁹⁷

1. Men and women are equal human beings (11:12). In the Christian community, therefore, particularly in the home, each Christian should treat others with respect. Christian submission is mutual.

2. As equal human beings, men and women are still distinct genders with special functions and roles, some of which are culturally determined.

3. The gender subordination discussed in this passage is specifically that of wives to their husbands (11:9, 11-12), not of all women to all men. In a patriarchal society, women could also be in submission to fathers or other male 'heads of family'. As such, the female submission by praying and prophesying only with a veil reflects a patriarchal heritage in terms of female behaviour and male honour which was common and 'decent' in Paul's time. It had become accepted as part of what was appropriate in the normal context of worship. Paul does not teach it based on Scripture or any special revelation, but on tradition and common practice.

4. God is a God of order; worship therefore must also be peaceful and orderly.

5. Decency and propriety maintain internal order, and generate respect among outsiders and promote the gospel.

6. Based on the order of origin in the arrangement of the threefold headship and submission by Christ/man, husband/wife, and God/Christ, Paul concludes that the heretic woman in Corinth must not usurp authority by uncovering her head – against tradition – because her 'show of authority' represents a heretical position in

³⁹⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 322.

the setting of the church in Corinth.³⁹⁸ Thus, Paul does not seek to lower the status of women, but to *counter the Gnostic heresy and its destructive influence*.

Finally, the exegesis of this passage gives no warrant for applying it to the issue of women in leadership in the church. It addresses a different issue. The context is one of wives submitting to the headship of their own husbands, and not the headship of men over women in general. Although Greek *gyne* can mean either 'woman' or 'wife', and Greek *aner* can mean either 'man' or 'husband', the context clearly favours the translation 'husband' and 'wife' (as in the NRSV). 'The wearing of the head covering described in 1 Corinthians 11 was a sign of the wife's submission to her husband's headship, not to the headship of all men.'³⁹⁹ The passage is worded on the basis of patriarchal customs and social convenances regarding women wearing a veil, as well as the necessity of being veiled before the angels in worship, both of which are local and time-limited values. In some modern societies in the world today, a literal application of the text may work, for example in parts of the Middle East. However, the underlying principle of order, decency and respect in public worship is universal and would apply in the whole world at all times, although the way in which this would be expressed may vary according to accepted values.

3. 1 Corinthians 14:33-40

Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 14:34 that women/wives are to 'be silent' and 'subordinate' must be understood from the context in the Greek original version and the cultural patterns that governed the understanding of 'peace' and 'order' in Paul's days.

The central passage for our study in 14:33b-35 functions within 14:1-40 as a whole, where Paul deals with the issues of prophetic speech and speaking in tongues at public worship services. This longer section, in turn, concludes Paul's major treatise in 12:1-14:40 regarding 'spiritual gifts' and their use and function in the church (12:1). What he says in 14:33-35 must therefore be understood in the context of 12:1-14:40 and this section should be read within the structure of the letter as a whole.

God's mission in Christ has founded the church. God wants to be known to people in Corinth and involve them in a relationship with him, as he moves history

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ R. M. Davidson, 'Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture', 1998, p. 275.

towards its great climax and the creation of a new heaven and a new earth. Thus, Paul addresses the church, saying that 'you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ' (1:4-9). The church is addressed in the opening as if Paul wants to remind the believers of who they really are: 'the church of God that is in Corinth ... those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours' (1:2). The reason for this emphasis and the letter as a whole is that the church is divided into factions and the spirit of unity is replaced by 'quarrels' (1:10-11). In addressing each issue, one after another, *Paul sets out to restore the church to its true identity and calling*. This purpose is the underlying intention of our passage in 14:33-35.

Paul's fundamental concern in 12:1-14:40 is to deal with a misunderstanding regarding a 'spiritual person' (*pneumatikos*). The fact that somebody has a spiritual gift does not raise him/her above others and does not condone internal divisions or rivalry in the church: all spiritual gifts (12:8-10) are given by the *same* Spirit, the *same* Lord, and the *same* God (12:4-11), and the church is 'one body with many members' (12:12-26) where God has 'appointed' various functions in order to build up the church and strengthen its spiritual unity (12:27-30; note the background in 12:12-26).

In particular, Paul emphasises the following themes in 12:1-14:40:

1. The *unity* and the *authority of God* in the choice and appointment of servants or ministers in the church: although the gifts are different, the One who gives them is the same, and the Spirit 'allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses' (12:11, NRSV); although the services are different, the One who gives them is the same, and 'God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then deeds of power, the gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues' (12:28-30, NRSV);

2. The *priority of love* over and above any gift of spiritual speech (12:31; 13:1-3, 8-10; 14:1);

3. Prophesying and speaking in tongues in public (where the former supersedes the latter in importance) is an issue of *church order* (12:10; 12:28-30; 13:13:1-3, 8-10; 14:1-40), which should reflect *God's nature* as a God of peace (14:33), the purposes of *building up the church* (14:2-5) and *making God known* to visiting outsiders (14:23-25).

In describing the spiritual gifts, Paul focuses particularly on *spiritual speech* as a ‘manifestation of the Spirit for the common good’ (12:7, NRSV): ‘To one is given through the Spirit the *utterance of wisdom*, and to another the *utterance of knowledge* according to the same Spirit; to another *faith* by the same Spirit, to another gifts of *healing* by the one Spirit, to another the working of *miracles*, to another *prophecy*, to another the *discernment of spirits*, to another *various kinds of tongues*, to another the *interpretation of tongues*’ (12:8-10, NRSV). All these gifts and related activities have to do with *speech* – even healing and miracles depended on utterances of spiritual words. The same connection with speech is implied in the list of services in 12:28-30 and in the hymn about love in 13:1-13; it is also the central aspect of the special focus on prophesying and speaking in tongues in 14:1-40. Thus, our passage in 14:33-35 relates to *public spiritual speech in the church which is based on spiritual gifts and functions given by God, the issue of church order, building up the church in faith, and the concern for a reverential environment for outsiders which enables them to find God through the spiritual speech in the church.*

In chapter 14, Paul claims that, *in public worship*, what is essential is doing all for the ‘building up’ of the church. This is so central to him that he uses the Greek term for ‘building up’ seven times in this chapter (14:3, 4 [twice], 5, 12, 17, and 26). Each of these times, Paul opposes speaking in tongues in public worship because it does not ‘build up’ the church. We note that in 14:5 Paul says that ‘I would like all of you to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy’ and the ‘one who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up’. In stating this, Paul accepts that women, like men, prophesy, which means to speak, as long as they do so with veiled heads (cf. 11:4-5). Thus, *building up the church* is the primary concern for Paul, not only in 1 Corinthians 14, but in the entire letter (see 1 Cor. 3:9; 8:1, 10; 10:23), because this is how the divisions in the church will be settled and God be glorified.

The ‘spiritual speech’ in the church has several aspects in 14:1-40: (a) prophesying (14:1, 3-5, 6, 22, 24, 29, 31-32, 37); (b) speaking in tongues (14:2, 4-6, 9, 13-14, 18-19, 21-23, 26-27, 39); (c) revelation (14:6, 26, 30); (d) sharing knowledge (14:6); (e) lesson of teaching (14:6, 26); (f) interpretation of tongues (14:13, 26-28); (g) prayer (14:15); (h) hymn of praise (14:15, 26); (i) blessing and thanksgiving (14:16-17). This means that in the church services in Corinth, all

members, men and women, who were receiving spiritual gifts of various kinds from God, took part in the acts of spiritual speech. We know from the New Testament as a whole that women performed all the tasks listed above. This raised issues of order and there was a danger that the purpose of spiritual speech was lost. The principle Paul therefore teaches in the whole chapter is stated in 14:12: 'Since you are eager for spiritual gifts, strive to excel in them for building up the church' (NRSV). As he summarises his arguments in 14:26-40, he demonstrates an emphatic concern with *order*. Firstly, he reiterates the purpose of building up the church:

1 Corinthians 14:26 What should be done, then, my friends?⁴⁰⁰ When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. (NRSV)

'Each one' includes here all those who have the gift of spiritual speech, and this we know included women. Women prayed and prophesied (1 Cor. 11:5; cf. Acts 21:9), and Paul's language on who is speaking in the church is inclusive in 14:23-25. There is no gender limitation for the gifts of the spirit in chapters 12-14, and, for Seventh-day Adventists, the gift of prophecy to Ellen White should settle this matter. This means that in the mixture of spiritual speech taking place at a Christian gathering, women (many of them married) were involved.

Secondly, Paul gives detailed instructions on the *order* of those who speak in the church, which is divided according to the *nature* of the speech:

1 Corinthians 14:27-33 If anyone *speaks in a tongue*, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn; and let one *interpret*. **28** But if there is no one to interpret, let them be silent in church and speak to themselves and to God. **29** Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others *weigh what is said*. **30** If a *revelation* is made to someone sitting nearby, let the first person be silent. **31** For you can all *prophesy* one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged. **32** And the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets, **33** for God is a God not of disorder but of peace. (NRSV; emphasis supplied)

The setting is one where men and women may speak in a tongue, others may interpret the tongue; some prophesy, others weigh what is said; some have a revelation which is shared with a person sitting nearby. This is a scenario that may easily go out of hand, but Paul implements the rule that one person speaks at a time

⁴⁰⁰ The Greek text has 'my brothers', but it is characteristic for Hebrew and New Testament Greek that the masculine form is used for a congregation of both men and women (this is exemplified in 1 Cor. 16:19-20). In the same way, today we may say 'chairman' or 'ombudsman' although the person may be a woman. Thus, the NRSV translates the Greek 'brothers' with 'brothers and sisters' (e.g. 1 Cor. 1:10, 11, 26; 2:1; 3:1; 12:1; 14:6; 15:1; 16:15). The letter as a whole is clearly directed to the church as a whole, including men and women.

and that what is said is to be understandable, so that 'all may learn and be encouraged'. He does not even allow a prophet (man or woman) to use their spiritual gift as an excuse to speak when this disturbs the order, because 'the spirit of the prophets are subject to prophets' (14:32). Thus, spiritual speech is needed in the church, by men and women, but it has to be shared within an orderly procedure. Part of the order is that there are situations where a man and a woman must 'keep silent'. This is an important context for understanding our passage in 14:33-35 to which we will return in a moment.

Chapter 14 ends with a concluding emphasis on recognising the spiritual gifts of prophecy and speaking in tongues (be they given to men or women), but that all things should be done *decently and in order*' (14:39-40). Paul also appeals to 'all those who claim to be a prophet [i.e. one who prophesies by the Spirit] or to have spiritual powers' that a true sign of their spiritual gift is that they recognise that Paul's instruction concerning order is 'a command from the Lord' (14:37). The divine command is connected with the nature of God, who 'is not a God of disorder but of peace' (14:33). If the spiritual speakers do not recognise this, their spiritual gift should not be recognised either (14:38).

It is in this context that we need to read our passage. It reads as follows according to the NRSV:

1 Corinthians 14:33-40 ... For God is a God not of disorder but of peace.

As in all the churches of the saints, **34** women/wives (*gynaikes*) should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate (*hypotassesthosan*), as the law also says. **35** If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman/wife to speak in church. **36** Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only ones it has reached?

... **39** So, my friends, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues; **40** but all things should be done decently and in order.

Paul has stated in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 that women are permitted to speak in the church by praying and prophesying. Thus, the prohibition for them to speak in 14:34 refers to a particular issue in the context of the public services in Corinth where many different speakers would want to prophesy (leading to a weighing of the prophecy) or speak in tongues (leading to interpretations) or sharing a revelation with someone sitting nearby (possibly leading to a conversation). The conclusion that this issue concerns 'wives' and not 'women' in general – Greek *gynaikes* can mean 'wives' or 'women' depending on the context – will be explained in a moment.

The command that women/wives are to ‘keep silence’ (14:34) receives its referential meaning from the context where Paul addresses (a) prophesying and speaking in tongues as means of *building up the church*, and (b) how this is to be carried out with respect for *order in the church service*, so that the spiritual speeches are understandable and have the desired effect. The command to keep silence in 14:34 is in fact the third in a sequence of three commands to keep silence (with the same Greek verb being used). Paul’s real purpose emerges clearly when we consider this sequence:

1. In 14:28, he says: ‘But if there is no one to interpret, *let them be silent* in church and speak to themselves and to God’. Those who are to be silent are the speakers in tongues, who, although having a spiritual gift, are commanded to be silent for the sake of maintaining order so that the church is being built up in the Spirit. The persons that are commanded to be silent here include males.

2. In 14:30, Paul writes: ‘If a revelation is made to someone else sitting nearby, *let the first person be silent*’. The persons who are to be silent are the two to three speakers in tongues and their interpreters. Again, the persons commanded to be silent here include males.

3. In 14:33-34, Paul writes: ‘As in all the churches of the saints, women/wives (*gynaikes*) should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says’. Like the men in 14:28 and 14:30, the women/wives also need to keep silent for the sake of order and building up the church, but it is noteworthy that the silence commanded here for women/wives is not directly linked to a particular previous speaker in the church service; it rather has the character of a general command which addresses 14:26-33 *as a whole*. Thus, it cannot be a restriction for women in general, because women were clearly involved in the variety of spiritual speech being shared in the church – prophesying, speaking in tongues, interpreting, bringing a revelation, teaching, praying, blessing, and more. It makes sense only if we understand Greek *gynaikes* as ‘wives’. This is strongly indicated by 14:35 which says: ‘And if [the women/wives] want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home’. This conclusion also explains the point that women/wives are to ‘be subordinate, as the law says’ in 14:34, for the only possible point of reference in the *Torah* for such an claim would be Genesis 3:16 (as it was understood in accordance with scribal Jewish traditions with which Paul would be intimately familiar from his education as a scribe), and that passage clearly refers

to husband and wife. The scenario that then opens up as we read 14:26-33, where Paul gives his instructions regarding the order, is the following:

(a) 'When you come together, each one has a hymn, a teaching lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation' (14:26). This is inclusive, and women, including married women, would want to share what the Spirit had given them.

(b) 'If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn; and let one interpret.' (14:27) This could involve married women who would be speaking before or after their husbands, or speaking in tongues while their husbands interpreted, or interpreting what their husbands had spoken in tongues, and all this taking place in the name of the Spirit that activated their speech.

(c) 'Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said' (14:29). This could mean that married women would prophesy (i.e. deliver spiritual speech), while their husbands had to keep silent. It could also mean that after the delivery of a prophetic speech, wives would seek to weigh what was said and in seeking understanding they might ask their husbands. If they were seated in separate sections, which was the common pattern in the Jewish synagogue, this would certainly disturb the order.

(d) 'If a revelation is made to someone else sitting nearby, let the first person be silent' (14:30). If a married woman delivered the revelation, the same issue of decency would arise as when she prophesied or spoke in tongues (note above). The wife spoke while the husband kept silent. If the wife was at the receiving end, 'sitting nearby', she may again have had questions as she was seeking understanding and this would, again, be an issue of order.

Thus, it is clear that the scenario outlined by Paul in 14:26-33 contained several issues regarding proper conduct for married women at the time, and these were the issues that Paul addressed in our passage.

However, we also need to bear in mind that there were in Corinth false teachings of a Gnostic nature that distorted the roles of man and woman (see our earlier exegesis of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16). Thus, the command that women/wives should be silent in the churches can be understood in several interacting ways – Paul was fond of *double entendre*, a device he would be well acquainted with from

his scribal education and which he used in his letters to the Christian churches.⁴⁰¹ We note here the following features:

(a) Paul may have targeted the 'Gnostic' women (not necessarily 'wives') with whom he takes issue in 1 Corinthians 11. They would defy the commonly accepted worship practices of the Christian churches and sought to influence the church in a heretical direction, theologically and behaviourally, as we have seen in some detail earlier. He may therefore intentionally have used the Greek *gynaikes* with its dual meaning of 'women' and 'wives', in order to capture both classes.

(b) The issue of speaking in tongues, which was clearly disturbing the order in the church, and in which also women participated, underlined the need for women, too, to keep silent. The commands in 14:28 and 14:30 are literally directed to the masculine gender, which includes both men and women, but Paul is underlining in 14:33-34 that the women are certainly included. The speaking in tongues and the need for interpretation of tongues, as well as the need to respect the order of speakers (14:28, 30), opened opportunities also for women to be speaking during the worship and thus they would be contributing to the confusion.

(c) Recognising the dual meaning of the Greek *gynaikes* and noting the issue of 'marital submission' in 14:34, as well as the obvious background of wives asking questions to their husbands during the worship service (14:35), the command to women to keep silent in 14:34 is preferably understood in the context of husband and wife. Paul had given instructions in 14:22-29 for prophesying in the church worship, which involved evaluating the prophetic messages, and during this time (a) those who did not receive a revelation were to keep silent and (b) wives were to be silent out of respect for their husbands. E. Earle Ellis says:

1 Cor. 14:34-35 represents the application, in a particular cultural context, of an order of the present creation concerning the conduct of a wife vis-à-vis her husband. It reflects a situation in which the husband is participating in the prophetic ministries of a Christian meeting. In this context, the co-participation of his wife, which may involve her publicly 'testing' (*diakrinein*, 14:29) her husband's message, is considered to be a disgraceful (*aischron*) disregard of

⁴⁰¹ For general reviews, see E. Starfelt, *Studier i rabbinisk och nytestamentlig skrifttolkning*, 1959; B. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity*, 1961; R. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 1975; S. Westerholm, *Jesus and Scribal Authority*, 1978; E. E. Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament*, 2003; D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*, 2011. For the example of Paul's dual reading of Hebrew *zera'* and Greek *sperma* in Galatians 3:16, see for example F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 1982, pp. 172-173.

him, of accepted priorities, and of her own wifely role. For these reasons it is prohibited.⁴⁰²

Thus, it is clear from the context that the command to women/wives not to speak in the worship service has to do with *specific conditions of order in the church services in Corinth and the need for wives to show their husbands due respect as this was defined in the Jewish-Christian setting.*

Not only the command for wives to keep silent but also the command for them to be 'subordinate' in 14:34 needs to be understood from this context. 'Wives' acting in subordination to their own husbands was a phenomenon that was part of the code of honour in ancient Mediterranean societies. A short passage by Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 B.C. – ca. 50 A.D.) illustrates the widespread Jewish-Hellenistic 'spatial' opposition of men and women and its public consequences:

Marketplaces, council meetings, courts, social organisations, assemblies of large crowds of people, and interaction of word and deed in the open, in war and in peace, are suited only for men. The female sex, by contrast, is supposed to guard the house and stay at home; virgins are to remain in the back of the rooms and regard the connecting door as boundaries; married women, however, should regard the front door as the boundary. For there are two kinds of urban spheres, a larger and a smaller. The larger ones are called cities, the smaller ones households (*oikia*). Of these two, on the basis of the division, the men are in charge of the larger one, which is called municipal administration (*politeia*); women, of the smaller one, which is called the household (*oikonomoia*). Thus women are not supposed to concern themselves further with anything but the duties of the household.⁴⁰³

It is important to note, however, that 'this is without doubt a prescription that shows only how things *should* be'. In fact, 'women appeared in public in various connections, even before court, and they also belonged to social organisations. Yet direct participation in what Philo calls "municipal administration" (*politeia*) was the domain of men.'⁴⁰⁴ The culturally conditioned *public* expectation of women in Paul's time has been summarised as follows:⁴⁰⁵

Thus one central aspect of the distinction of gender-specific spheres consists in the fact that *women were generally excluded from holding public office as senators, equestrians, decurions, or judges, as well as subordinate*

⁴⁰² E. Earle Ellis, 'The Silenced Wives of Corinth (1 Cor. 14:34-35)', 1981, p. 218.

⁴⁰³ Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus*, 3.169-170; cf. 169-178; cf. E. W. Stegemann & W. Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 1999, pp. 364-365.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 365.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.* (emphasis supplied).

positions.⁴⁰⁶ They were not even allowed to belong to the most important political decision-making body of the *polis* (except for the magistrates), the popular assembly (*ekklesia*), in which women could neither vote nor speak.⁴⁰⁷ Could they, nonetheless, at least be present as observers? We do not have an explicit testimony that Greek women, for example, were forbidden to participate in the popular assembly, but Just infers this prohibition from Aristophanes' comedy *Ekklesiazusae*.⁴⁰⁸ Further indirect evidence is found in a dialogue in another of his comedies, *Lysistrata*, which clearly reveals that the wives interrogated their husbands when they came home from the popular assembly.⁴⁰⁹

Paul's command in 1 Corinthians 14 that married women are to be silent in the *ekklesia*, for they are not allowed to speak (14:34), and that they are supposed to ask their husbands at home (14:35), is verbally reflected as *proper and decent conduct* in the Hellenistic-Greek environment. Paul's and the early Christians' strong concern to adapt their practices to what was considered 'appropriate' in the contemporary culture,⁴¹⁰ in order that the gospel would not be ridiculed but believed, gives a perfectly valid explanation for his command in order to establish order in the church in Corinth.

The public display of a wife's subordination to her husband gave the husband honour and status in that society, while any form of disrespect towards the husband on the part of his wife would bring him dishonour and was by common consent considered disgraceful. Even in the Law of Moses, this was considered a reason for divorce according to Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

In conclusion, in 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 Paul deals with a local issue of *order* in worship in the church of Corinth. His command concerns mainly *wives*, not women in general, and it reflects word by word what was considered *appropriate* in the contemporary society. If his recommendation also includes an address to women, this would be 'Gnostic' women and/or disorderly women taking part in the speaking in tongues in a way that did not build up the church.

There is therefore no warrant in the passage for concluding that Paul's command that women should keep silent in the church is a universal rule for all

⁴⁰⁶ This was later fixed in the Roman codes of law – see the Roman *Digests* (50.17.2), which was one part of the *Corpus Juris Civilis*, i.e. the body of civil law issued under Justinian I and later influencing the Code of Canon Law in the Roman Catholic Church (see 4.2.1 below); cf. W. Schuller, *Frauen in der römischen Geschichte*, 1992.

⁴⁰⁷ R. Just, *Women in Athenian Law and Life*, 1991, p. 13.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 281.

⁴⁰⁹ The passage from *Lysistrata* is printed in E. W. Stegemann & W. Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 1999, p. 400.

⁴¹⁰ See 1 Cor. 7:12-16, 17-24; 9:19-23; 10:23-11:1; 14:24-25; Col. 4:4-5; 1 Thess. 4:12; 1 Tim. 3:2, 7.

times. *It is clearly meant for a local and culturally bound situation.* The universal meaning of the passage concerns order in worship, building up the church, and avoiding reproach and scorn from the surrounding non-believers in order that the gospel will go forward.

4. Colossians 3:18-19

This brief passage reads as follows in the NRSV:

Colossians 3:18-19 Wives, be subject (*hypotassesthe*) to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly.

This is a brief version of the household code already examined in Ephesians 5 (see our exegesis above) and adds nothing of importance. Ephesians 5:21-22, 25 divides the instruction into three parts:

General: 'Submit (*hypotasso*) to one another *in the fear of God*.

Specific A: 'Wives, submit (*hypotasso*) to your husbands, *as to the Lord*.'

Specific B: 'Husbands, love your wives, *just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it ...*'

Obviously, the ideal for wives and husbands in both passages is mutual submission and mutual love. The qualifications of these acts of submission and love are:

'as is appropriate in the Lord' (Col. 3:18)

'in the fear of God' (Eph. 5:21)

'as to the Lord' (Eph. 5:22)

'just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it' (Eph. 5:25)

The examples from Ephesians 5 refer to the act of submission as done in reverence for God (general, v. 21), or as the same act of submission as the submission to Christ (wives, v.22), or as the same love as Christ demonstrated for the church when he sacrificed himself for it. The criterion for submission and love in marriage is God and Christ.

Colossians 3:18-19 introduces another aspect: 'as is appropriate (*anekei*) in the Lord'. The term *anekei* refers to that which is 'suitable, appropriate, or fitting'. Drawing on the usage in Ephesians 5:3-4, the suitability of an act would be defined by what is 'fitting for God's holy people'.⁴¹¹ The underlying point is then that the holiness of God requires order and peace, which is based on what is commonly

⁴¹¹ H. Schlier, Article '*anekei*', in: *ThDNT*, vol. 1, p. 360.

thought to be proper conduct. Drawing rather on the context in Colossians 3, the rules laid down for families, masters and slaves in 3:18-4:4, may exemplify the wisdom needed in the way Christians act towards outsiders (4:4-5). Thus, the submission of a wife to her husband was a common social expectation in first-century Mediterranean culture,⁴¹² and by fulfilling this expectation Christian wives in Colossae would 'make the most of every opportunity'. The passage makes no reference to women's ministry in the church.

5. 1 Timothy 2:8-15

This important passage is best understood in light of (a) the purpose of Paul's letter to Timothy, (b) the specific setting in the church of Ephesus, and (c) the religious and cultural conditions in that particular city in Asia Minor.⁴¹³

Pauls' purpose in his first letter to Timothy is obvious: it is to give Timothy instructions on how to deal with *false teachings and teachers* (see 1:3-7; 3:14-15). The instructions to Timothy are to help him 'know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth' (3:15).⁴¹⁴

The false teachers in the church in Ephesus 'forbid marriage and enjoin abstinence from foods which God created to be received in thanksgiving' (1 Tim. 4:3; cf. 6:3-5). Paul also says that Timothy should 'avoid godless chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge (*gnosis*), for by professing it some have missed the mark as regards the faith' (6:20-21). The women in the church are not exempt from being influenced by these false teachers (4:7; 5:13; 2 Tim. 3:6-7). Vyhmeister summarises the false teaching as follows from the information in the letter:

The teaching is godless, has to do with myths and genealogies, involves and promotes speculation, contains elements of asceticism (such as forbidding marriage), and has a negative effect on believers, causing useless discussion and ultimate departure from truth. Women are somehow especially vulnerable to these false teachings.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹² See, for example, the survey in V. Norskov Olsen, *The New Relatedness for Man and Woman in Christ*, 1993, pp. 63-82.

⁴¹³ We are indebted to the study by Nancy Vyhmeister, even where this is not explicitly acknowledged: N. Vyhmeister, '1 Timothy 2:8-15', 1998, pp. 335-354; see also C. P. Cossaert, 'Paul, Women, and the Ephesian Church: An Examination of 1 Timothy 2:8-15', 2013.

⁴¹⁴ Cf. N. Vyhmeister, *ibid.*, p. 336.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 338.

This church setting is conditioned by the cultural and religious context in Ephesus, where four dominant influences may be detected: (a) the pagan worship of the mother goddess, in Ephesus called Artemis or Diana; (b) Judaism; (c) incipient Gnosticism; and (d) the ideal of the new Roman woman. We present here a brief review of these influences:

1. The pagan worship of Artemis/Diana.⁴¹⁶ Luke records in Acts 19:23-41 the stir of the people of Ephesus in support of Artemis 'whom all Asia and the world worship'. Artemis of Ephesus was called a virgin, not because she was indeed a virgin, but because she had not submitted to a husband: 'No bonds tied Artemis to any male she would have to acknowledge as master.'⁴¹⁷ Her worship required a multitude of priests and priestesses as well as other attendants. Each year the month of Artemision was dedicated especially to the goddess, with cultic rituals as well as athletic, dramatic, and musical contests. The city of Ephesus thrived on the Artemis cult; the inhabitants could not remain unaffected by the Great Mother cult. Women were especially attracted to her worship because she was perceived as 'chaste, beautiful, and intelligent', meeting the needs of the female worshippers.⁴¹⁸ The ultimate power in the cult was assumed by a high priestess.⁴¹⁹

The Artemis cult was connected with various kinds of myths, tales and fables. Among other things, a hymn from the early second-century A.D. devoted to Isis, who was often identified with Artemis, declares that the goddess vests women with power equal to that of men.⁴²⁰

2. Judaism. In first-century Judaism, the religious role of women was mostly limited to the home. The rabbis were divided on the wisdom of teaching daughters the Torah.⁴²¹ In one rule preserved in the *Mishnah*, it is stated that 'a woman may not be a teacher of scribes' (*Mishnah Qiddushin* 4:13).⁴²²

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 338-339; C. P. Cossaert, 'Paul, Women, and the Ephesian Church', 2013, pp. 7-15.

⁴¹⁷ S. Hodgkin Gritz, *Paul, Women Teachers, and the Mother Goddess at Ephesus*, 1991, p. 39; cf. N. Vyhmeister, '1 Timothy 2:8-15', 1998, p. 338.

⁴¹⁸ S. Hodgkin Gritz, *ibid.*, pp. 41-42; cf. N. Vyhmeister, '1 Timothy 2:8-15', 1998, p. 338.

⁴¹⁹ M. Barth, *Ephesians*, 1974, p. 661; S. M. Baugh, 'A Foreign World: Ephesus in the First Century', 1995, pp. 13-63; cf. N. Vyhmeister, *ibid.*, p. 338.

⁴²⁰ See 'Invocation of Isis', papyrus 1380, *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1915, pp. 194-195; cf. N. Vyhmeister, *ibid.*, p. 339.

⁴²¹ See N. Vyhmeister, *ibid.*, p. 339.

⁴²² *Ibid.*

The Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 B.C. – ca. A.D. 50) introduced Hellenistic notions into Judaism concerning Eve, who is associated with wisdom and life; he has female individuals like Sarah, Rebekah, and Zipporah bringing divine enlightenment to their husbands, with Eve directing ‘massed light towards Adam’s mind to ‘disperse the mist’.⁴²³ The *Apocalypse of Adam*, a pseudepigraphical work that contains Gnostic theology and may date from the first century A.D., takes up this theme and affirms that Eve taught Adam ‘a word of knowledge of the eternal God’.⁴²⁴ Consequently, in some strands of first-century Judaism, a bridge was formed to Gnosticism under the influence of Hellenistic philosophy.

3. Gnosticism. We have already hinted at some Gnostic ideas in our exegesis of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16. We noted that Gnostic ideas began to circulate as early as in the first century A.D. – although their peak was in the second to fifth century. Of particular relevance in our study is the fact that Paul admonishes Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:2 to ‘avoid the godless chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge (*gnosis*)’. Assuming that the false teaching in Ephesus anticipates later Gnostic ideas, and bearing in mind the ideas of Philo noted above, two areas of Gnostic theology are relevant to Paul’s letter to Timothy: Eve’s part in the Creation of Adam and the denigration of femaleness.⁴²⁵

Thus, there is a tendency in Gnostic circles to exalt Eve, drawing on Genesis 2-3. For example, Adam addresses Eve: ‘You are the one who has given me life.’⁴²⁶ (cf. Gen. 3:20). Eve is said to have ‘sent her breath into Adam, who had no soul’.⁴²⁷ (cf. Gen. 2:7). Eve is the one who teaches Adam ‘about all the things which are in the eighth heaven’; she uncovers ‘the veil which was upon his mind’⁴²⁸ (cf. Gen. 3:5-6). Finally, Eve declares herself the ‘mother of my father and the sister of my husband, ... to whom I gave birth’⁴²⁹ (cf. Gen. 3:20).⁴³⁰

Within Gnostic circles, another extreme idea of women was common. Some writings found in the so-called Nag Hammadi Gnostic manuscripts (Egypt, fourth

⁴²³ Philo, *On the Cherubim*, 9-14, 61; cf. N. Vyhmeister, *ibid.*, p. 339.

⁴²⁴ *Apocalypse of Adam*, 1:3; cf. N. Vyhmeister, *ibid.*, p. 339.

⁴²⁵ N. Vyhmeister, *ibid.*, p. 340.

⁴²⁶ *Hypostasis of the Archons* 2.4.89.14-17; cf. N. Vyhmeister, *ibid.*, p. 340.

⁴²⁷ *On the Origin of the World*, 115; cf. Vyhmeister, *ibid.*, p. 340.

⁴²⁸ *On the Origin of the World*, 104; *Apocryphon of John*, 67-71; cf. N. Vyhmeister, *ibid.*, p. 340.

⁴²⁹ *Thunder, Perfect Mind*, 6.2.13.30-32; cf. N. Vyhmeister, *ibid.*, p. 340.

⁴³⁰ N. Vyhmeister, *ibid.*, p. 340.

century but containing earlier texts) repeatedly show a negative view of females and their natural and God-given ability to bear children. Thus, the *Gospel of the Egyptians* (early second century) contains a passage where Jesus says: 'I came to destroy the works of the female'. He then points out that death will prevail as long as women bear children, to which Salome responds: 'Then I have done well in bearing no children'.⁴³¹ According to the *Gospel of Thomas* (ca. A.D. 140), Peter wanted to send Mary away, 'because women are not worthy of life'. Jesus in this Gospel then offered himself to make her into a male, 'because every woman who will make herself male shall enter into the kingdom of heaven'.⁴³² Being a female is seen as a defect, and salvation comes through masculinity, or even better, by an elimination of all sexuality.⁴³³ Epiphanius (ca. 315-403) tells of a Gnostic group, successors of the Nicolaitans, which was hated by the church of Ephesus and brought false teaching into the church of Pergamum; they rejected marriage and were opposed to child-bearing, practising *coitus interruptus* and going so far as to abort the fetus of a pregnant woman.⁴³⁴

4. The New Roman Woman. A radical change took place in Roman society during the time of the Empire: 'legal, political, and social changes gave women an acceptable public persona'.⁴³⁵ It has been noted that these changes resulted in a generation of women whose lifestyles and opportunities varied considerably from the traditional image of the modest Roman woman. Roman authors witness that this influence had spread around the Mediterranean, and, as the fourth largest city in the Empire, it should be no surprise that it spread to Ephesus.⁴³⁶ It resulted, among other things, in a weakening of the authority and status of the *pater familias* and women assumed an egalitarian status both in the home and in public life.⁴³⁷

These religious and social currents interacted and fed upon each other. As the gospel moved from the Jewish environment in Jerusalem and Palestine and

⁴³¹ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* (Miscellanies), 3.45; cf. N. Vyhmeister, *ibid.*, p. 340.

⁴³² *Gospel of Thomas*, 114; cf. N. Vyhmeister, *ibid.*, p. 340.

⁴³³ *Dialogue of the Saviour*, 90-95; *Gospel of Thomas*, 27; *Zostrianos*, 8.1.131; cf. N. Vyhmeister, *ibid.*, p. 340.

⁴³⁴ Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 26.3-5; cf. N. Vyhmeister, *ibid.*, p. 340.

⁴³⁵ C. P. Cossaert, 'Paul, Women, and the Ephesian Church', 2013, p. 15; cf. pp. 15-21; reference is made to B. W. Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Roman Women in the Pauline Communities*, 2003. This change of women's status in Rome has long been known: see, for example, J. Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome*, 1991, pp. 89-115 (first French edition 1939).

⁴³⁶ C. P. Cossaert, *ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

⁴³⁷ J. Carcopino, *ibid.*, pp. 89-92, 104-108.

reached the Graeco-Roman Asia Minor, it was confronted with these challenging values.

Thus, from this mixed environment came the women in the Ephesian congregation whom Paul instructs Timothy how to deal with. Those from the background of the pagan Artemis cult, with its ascetic or sensual practices, held on to attitudes and teachings that were highly inappropriate for Christian women. Their promotion of female headship would destroy the Christian marriage, unsettle the church, and call down the scorn of the unbelievers. Those who were from a Jewish background and brought with them Jewish-Hellenistic philosophy might teach a mixture of rules that silenced women in the Christian community while bringing Gnostic or semi-Gnostic ideas regarding female supremacy by having esoteric knowledge. Finally, the more pronounced Gnostic ideas, relating to asceticism and rejections of females, childbearing, and marriage, would need to be counteracted by a balanced view of God's command to man and his blessing at creation according to Genesis 1-2 and the mutual love and submission of the Christian marriage.

What we have outlined here, following material adduced by Vyhmeister, concerns the issue at stake in 1 Timothy 2:8-15. The passage offers many difficulties for the translator. Drawing on our exegetical conclusions, it may be translated as follows:

1 Timothy 2:8-15 I desire, then, that in every place the men should pray, lifting up holy hands without anger and argument; **9** also, that the women (*gynaikes*) should dress themselves modestly and decently in suitable clothing, not with their hair braided, or with gold, pearls, or expensive clothes, **10** but with good works as is proper for women (*gynaikes*) who profess reverence for God. **11** Let a woman/wife (*gynaika*) learn in peace (*hesychia*) with full submission (*hypotage*). **12** I allow no woman/wife (*gynaika*) to teach or actively wield influence (*authentain*) against a man/husband, but she is to be at peace (*hesychia*). **13** For Adam was formed first, then Eve; **14** and Adam was not deceived, but the woman/wife (*gynaika*) was deceived and became a transgressor. **15** Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they remain in faith, love and holiness with modesty.⁴³⁸

The passage gives instructions regarding worship, but does not specify where and when it takes place – it can be in the public assemblies or in the home. The context shows that it is not just an instruction for women, but for men and women in the whole church.

⁴³⁸ The translation follows NRSV closely, but some changes have been made for the purpose of our exegesis.

Preceding it, the section in 2:1-4 opens with a general exhortation to ‘you, brothers and sisters’, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving ‘be made for everyone’ – also for kings and all those in authority, so that people in the city and in the Christian church ‘may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness’. This is appropriate for the worship of God, who ‘wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth’.

Paul then reminds Timothy of the gospel, that ‘there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ, who gave himself as a ransom for all men’ (2:5-6). This is a clear call to unity in the church.

Lastly, before coming to our passage in 2:8-15, Paul mentions his own calling as a herald and an apostle to the gospel for all men and underlines that he is ‘a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles’ (2:7). This, too, is appropriate for the setting in Ephesus where false teachers are breaking down the unity of the church and clouds the truth of the gospel.

1. 1 Timothy 2:8. This is the setting, then, when Paul opens our passage in 2:8 by addressing *the men*, asking them to apply the appropriate posture of prayer, namely the *Jewish* posture of lifting hands. The Christian church in Ephesus may have had a Jewish-Christian source of its worship practices (cf. the environment as described in Acts 19:1-20:1 and the overseer/servant in 3:1-3 and the presbytery in 4:14 that were characteristic for the synagogue). The prayer must take place ‘without anger or argument’, which may address the tensions caused by false teachers in the Ephesian church.

Although the word translated as ‘men’ (*andres*) in 2:8 may refer either to a single or married man, ‘Paul’s adaptation of the household code and the discussion of women in what follows suggest that he primarily has husbands in mind. This would certainly not have been a surprise since the vast majority of men at the time would have been married.’⁴³⁹

2. 1 Timothy 2:9-10. Paul turns to the *women/wives* in worship (publicly or at home) and brings advice on their clothing. ‘The use of the word “likewise” that introduces the shift from men to women coupled with the issue of ornament suggests Paul’s comments in this section are best understood in the context of a household code – societal rules that governed husband/wife, parent/child, and

⁴³⁹ C. P. Cossaert, ‘Paul, Women, and the Ephesian Church’, 2013, p. 21, note 51.

master/slave relationships. Further confirmation of this is seen in how this account parallels the contrast between outward and internal adornment in the household code in 1 Peter 3:3-5.⁴⁴⁰

In order to appropriately ‘profess’ or proclaim’ (*epaggellomai*) reverence for God (2:10), the women/wives who also pray at worship are to make themselves attractive inwardly, with becoming and honourable conduct, in modesty and good judgement. Outwardly they are to ‘adorn’ themselves with good works, rather than with extravagant hair styles, elegant clothing, gold, and pearls. As worshippers, then, the women/wives are to conduct themselves and dress in a way that ‘is proper for women who proclaim reverence for God’. Propriety and decency in the cultural context of the church in Ephesus is the theme. This advice may well be explained by the influence from the new Roman woman, which generated a more sensual and expensive dress.

3. 1 Timothy 2:11. ‘Let a woman learn in silence with full submission.’ Paul makes a shift from speaking about ‘women’ (*gynaikes*) in general to speaking of ‘a woman’ (*gyne*). This formal shift and the content has been understood to mean that Paul is now introducing teaching for a specific kind of woman, the ‘wife’ – the Greek word *gyne* may refer to both ‘woman’ and ‘wife’. This is possible, because in 2:11-15a Paul is more specifically addressing wives. However, in 2:10, Paul may still be referring to women in general *including* wives. The following features in the context would favour the latter conclusion:

(a) Paul has just described how Christian women are to ‘appropriately proclaim the reverence for God’. He now points out how a woman is to become such a Christian woman: ‘Let her learn!’ The Greek term used (*manthano*) means both formal instruction and practical learning and is of the same root as ‘disciple’ (*mathetes*).

(b) The woman’s/wife’s learning is to take place in *hesychia*, ‘peace, harmony, quietness’. This is the same word as in 2:2, where the governors and kings allow Christians to lead a ‘peaceful life’. The best understanding of this term is therefore to see it as a parallel to the men being admonished to pray ‘without anger or argument’ (2:8): in the same way, as pointed out by Vyhmeister, ‘the women are to be allowed

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid. pp. 21-22.

to learn without being subjected to the dissensions and wranglings that exist among Ephesian Christians'.⁴⁴¹

(c) The women are to learn in 'full submission', but the passage does not say to whom they are to submit. Paul seems to be intentionally balancing between speaking about, on the one hand, women in general, who are to submit to God in worship (2:3-5) and to the gospel, to the teaching of Jesus, to the true faith which Paul is teaching (2:5-7), and, on the other hand, wives who are to submit to their husbands (cf. Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18). The same shift between a wife (singular) and women (plural) in general is also found in 2:15.

(d) As Paul urges that women should learn quietly, he is both maintaining and departing from Jewish tradition. To learn in silence was, according to Simon son of Rabban Gamaliel, the best way, since indulging in too many words brings about sin (*Mishnah Aboth* 17). On the other hand, the rabbis also denied religious instruction to women (*Mishnah Sotah* 3:4; *Qiddushin* 4:13). Paul, however, who had himself been taught at the feet of Gamaliel, seems to be following the tradition of Gamaliel and following the gospel teaching of the example of his Master (Luke 10:39-42).

4. 1 Timothy 2:12. Concluding, therefore, that Paul is still referring to women in general *including* wives in 2:10, we come to a very difficult Greek verse in 2:12, one that has generated much discussion.⁴⁴² A literal translation reveals the complicated syntax: 'But to teach for a woman/wife I do not allow nor to *authentein* a man/husband, but to be at peace'. Three observations are vital for the interpretation:

(a) 2:9-11 speaks of women's appropriate behaviour *in worship* and how they are to *learn* in submission the truth about God, about the gospel and the true faith that Paul is teaching. However, 2:12-15 changes the topic and focuses on *women's* inappropriate way of *teaching* their (erroneous) views. Thus, the understanding of 2:12 should be searched for in the context of 2:12-15, where the relationship between Adam and Eve is used as an illustration and a married woman is said to be 'saved by childbearing'.

(b) Vyhmeister has demonstrated, with rigour, that the Greek term *authenteo* – which is found only here in the entire New Testament – does not primarily mean 'occupying a position of authority' or 'exercising authority' but has an adversative sense such as 'taking independent action against, assuming responsibility over,

⁴⁴¹ N. Vyhmeister, *ibid.*, p. 342.

⁴⁴² For a review of different proposals that should be discarded, see *ibid.*, p. 343.

actively wielding influence against, perpetrating a crime towards, or instigating violence against'.⁴⁴³ Thus, the word refers to an action that is in opposition to the peace and harmony and good judgement that Paul has called for in the passage as a whole. Vyhmeister also quotes Perriman's very pertinent observation regarding the meaning of *authenthein*:

In v.12 Paul is thinking specifically of what Eve did to Adam; and Eve did not *have* authority, but *in her action became* responsible for – became the cause of – Adam's transgression. In the light of these associations the connotation of 'perpetrating a crime' is fully appropriate. In the overlapping of two contexts – that of the scriptural 'type' and that of the current circumstances at Ephesus – *authenthein* refers both to what Eve once did and to what women now should not do.⁴⁴⁴

Thus, 2:12 may be translated: 'I allow no woman/wife (*gyne*) to teach or actively wield influence (*authenthein*) against a man/husband, but she is to be at peace (*hesychia*).' The crucial issue remains, then: What is this sense of the passage referring to in the real world?

(c) The term *hesychia* is usually understood as 'silence', generating translations like 'to be in silence' (NKJV), 'she is to keep silent' (NRSV), 'she must be silent' (NIV), which may stem from the assumption that this passage is to be read in the light of 1 Corinthians 14:33-35. However, applying a contextual approach, we note that *hesychia* appears also in 1 Timothy 2:2 and 2:11, where its root meaning is 'quietness, peace' and it is connected with 'godliness and holiness' and 'learning in submissiveness'.⁴⁴⁵ We therefore agree with Vyhmeister, who points out that 'there is no reason to choose a secondary meaning, not attested in the New Testament, when the primary meaning is logical'.⁴⁴⁶ And we may add, when the primary meaning is attested twice in the immediate context.

In view of these observations, what Paul says in 2:12 presupposes that there are women in Ephesus who teach and wield influence against men – either they are false teachers, being influenced by concepts associated with the pagan Artemis cult or incipient Gnostic ideas, or they are wives who inappropriately teach and influence their husbands. In his instruction, Paul seeks to put an end to this, because he wants

⁴⁴³ Ibid., pp. 344-345. Another, similarly stringent approach that demonstrates a negative connotation in *authenthein* is C. P. Cossaert, 'Paul, Women, and the Ephesians Church', 2013, pp. 28-34.

⁴⁴⁴ A. C. Perriman, 'What Eve Did, What Women Shouldn't Do: The Meaning of *Authentein* in 1 Timothy 2:12', 1993, p. 148.

⁴⁴⁵ Cf. W. Bauer, *Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, col. 690.

⁴⁴⁶ N. Vyhmeister, '1 Timothy 2:8-15', 1998, p. 346.

these women to learn in modesty and submission to the teaching of the gospel, to receive the truth (see 2:4, 7). These women should not emulate Eve – who in the Ephesian environment at the time might well have been used as a model of female superiority and particularly one who had been ‘teaching’ Adam with disastrous consequences for humanity.

5. 1 Timothy 2:13-14. Paul uses Adam and Eve in the creation story to substantiate his point that ‘a woman/wife should *not teach or wield influence against* a man/husband, but to be at peace’. The passage is often understood as if Paul were giving reasons for forbidding women to teach. Such an interpretation would agree with the Jewish tradition given in Sirach 25:24: ‘Woman is the origin of sin, and it is through her that we all die’. The Jewish thinker Philo of Alexandria expressed similar sentiments.⁴⁴⁷ However, such an interpretation disagrees with what Paul says elsewhere, and there is no reason for believing that he was inconsistent on this point. For example, in Romans 5:12-14, Adam is the one who sins and brings death to the human race. And we have noted in our exegesis of Genesis 3, that the Hebrew text is not clear regarding Adam’s presence with his wife when she took the forbidden fruit.

A better way to interpret 2:13-14, therefore, is taking it as an example of what happens when *false teaching* is given (as the teaching of the serpent) and accepted (as it was by Eve). The Greek conjunction *gar*, ‘for’, which introduces 2:13, is often used to introduce an *example* of what has just been said.⁴⁴⁸ Such a reading gives us a close parallel to 2 Corinthians 11:3:

2 Corinthians 11:3 But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by its cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. (NRSV)

This understanding makes 2:13-14 particularly fitting in the environment of false female teachers in Ephesus. Considering the specific issues with women in Ephesus noted earlier, Philip Payne concludes his interpretation, saying:

‘Paul points to the example of Eve’s deception which led to the fall as a warning to the church in Ephesus lest deception of women, there, too, lead to their fall’.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁷ As quoted in *ibid.*

⁴⁴⁸ A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the New Testament Greek in Light of Historical Research*, 1934, pp. 1189-1191.

⁴⁴⁹ P. B. Payne, ‘Libertarian Women in Ephesus: A Response to Douglas J. Moo’s Article “1 Timothy 2:11-15: Meaning and Significance”’, 1981, p. 177.

Paul, then, repeats in 1 Timothy 2:13-14 what the Bible clearly states, namely that Adam was created first (Gen. 2:7, 18, 21), and Eve was deceived by the serpent (Gen. 3:13).

In his arguments against the Gnostic women in Corinth (see 1 Cor. 11:8; 2 Cor. 11:8), Paul noted that woman was made from man. Similarly, if there had been no doubt in the church setting of 1 Timothy about whose creation came first, the point made in 1 Timothy 2:13, that ‘Adam was formed first, then Eve’, would not have been necessary – it is obvious in Scripture. We noted earlier in our review of the setting of 1 Timothy in Ephesus, that the idea that Eve was somehow prior to Adam and responsible for his enlightenment was current by the mid-first century. Paul now seeks to address this erroneous teaching. Vyhmeister concludes: ‘Eve was not created first, nor was she to be thanked for leading Adam into sin. Yet she was led completely astray. Ephesian women were in danger of the same fate.’⁴⁵⁰

The message of 2:12-14, then, addresses a specific issue concerning the women in Ephesus: Paul permits no woman/wife in the church in Ephesus to teach or wield influence against a man/husband, for (against the false teaching by women in Ephesus) Adam was created before Eve and she was completely led astray (which is what you are in danger of if the false teachers continue). Thus, Paul is not providing an in-principle universal law about all teaching women at all times, but addresses a local issue in Ephesus. As he does so, he naturally applies the patriarchal language which was appropriate in his time. The underlying principle, however, is peace and harmony in the church as is proper for the worship of God.

6. 1 Timothy 2:16. Paul concludes by highlighting the positive way out for the women in Ephesus, who have gone astray or may be in danger of doing so under the influence of pagan and Gnostic teachings. The verse presents very serious difficulties in vocabulary, syntax, and meaning, which have been examined carefully by Vyhmeister.⁴⁵¹ A literal translation (following NRSV) would be: ‘Yet [woman] will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.’ If understood literally, however, this saying would mean that a childless woman would have no hope of salvation, and that would not be compatible with the teaching of the Bible as a whole. On the basis of a comprehensive review of

⁴⁵⁰ N. Vyhmeister, ‘1 Timothy 2:8-15’, 1998, p. 347.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 348-349.

suggested interpretations, Vyhmeister wisely takes the view that 2:15 responds to erroneous Gnostic teaching in Ephesus which implied that childbearing was an occasion for condemnation of Christian women.⁴⁵² David Kimberley summarises well the understanding that accounts for the literary and situational context of the passage:

The sense of the text is that women will be saved in childbearing, not condemned, as long as they continue in faith. Paul's intent is to restore this womanly vocation to its rightful place in contrast to the manner in which it was depreciated in Gnostic circles.⁴⁵³

Before we summarise the understanding of 1 Timothy 2:8-15 as a whole, a few comments are required on Davidson's view that the 'woman' (*gyne*) mentioned in 2:11-12 is a 'wife' and that any talk of submission here is the submission that was generally considered appropriate for a wife towards her husband.

Davidson notes that 'already with Martin Luther, 1 Timothy 2:11-12 was understood as referring to the husband-wife relationship and not to men and women in general'.⁴⁵⁴ An ample bibliography exists to sustain the same view,⁴⁵⁵ and Davidson lists a number of additional recent studies along the same line.⁴⁵⁶ He brings seven arguments which 'strongly support this conclusion':

1. 'Everywhere in the Pauline writings, and in fact throughout the whole New Testament, where *gyne* and *aner* are found paired in close proximity, the reference is consistently to wife and husband and not women and men in general.'⁴⁵⁷

2. 'The movement from the plural in vv. 8-10 to the singular in vv. 11-12 seems to highlight the focus upon the wife and her husband, especially in these latter verses.'⁴⁵⁸

3. 'The reference to the married couple, Adam and Eve, in vv. 13-14, provides a marital context for the passage.'⁴⁵⁹

4. 'The reference to childbirth in v. 15, and the shift back to the plural "they" (probably referring to both husband and wife as parents of the child, or perhaps

⁴⁵² Ibid., pp. 349-350.

⁴⁵³ D. R. Kimberley, '1 Tim 2:15: A Possible Understanding of a Difficult Text', 1992, p. 486.

⁴⁵⁴ R. M. Davidson, 'Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture', 1998, p. 278.

⁴⁵⁵ See the bibliography in G. P. Hugenberger, 'Women in Church Office: Hermeneutics or Exegesis? A Survey of Approaches to 1 Tim 2:8-15', 1992, pp.350-351.

⁴⁵⁶ R. M. Davidson, 'Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture', 1998, pp. 278 and 293, footnote 97.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 279.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

broadening again to speak of wives in general as in vv. 9-10), certainly provides a marital context.⁴⁶⁰

5. 'The reference to "submission" (*hypotasso*) in a setting of man-woman relationships elsewhere in Paul always refers to the submission of the wife to her husband. Hugenberger rightly points out that "in the face of this established pattern of usage only the most compelling evidence should be allowed to overturn the presumption that *hypotage* ('submission') in 1 Timothy 2 has to do with a requirement specifically for wives rather than woman in general".⁴⁶¹

6. 'Strong parallels with 1 Corinthians 14:34-36 (a passage dealing with husbands and wives, as discussed above) point to a similar context of husband-wife relationships in 1 Timothy 2. In particular, E. E. Ellis has noted striking verbal and conceptual similarities between these two passages: "to allow or permit" (*epitrepes thai*), "silence" (*sigao, hesychia*), "submission" (*hypotassesthai, hypotage*), "learn" (*manthano*), and the allusion to Genesis 2-3."⁴⁶²

7. 'The most determinative line of evidence supporting the "husband-wife" context of 1 Timothy 2:8-15 is found in the extensive verbal, conceptual, and structural parallels between this passage and the household code of 1 Peter 3. Various scholars have recognized that the parallels between these two passages are so impressive that one passage must be dependent upon the other or both go back to a common tradition.⁴⁶³ Hugenberger has set forth most comprehensively the extensive parallelism. In a chart displaying the two passages in parallel columns he highlights the detailed verbal correspondences, including the rare New Testament terms for "adornment", "quiet", and "braided" hair.⁴⁶⁴

Davidson adds that 'both passages have the same structural flow of logic and thought, moving from a discussion of wifely submission, to the specific counsel on her proper adornment, and then on to an Old Testament paradigm for proper marital relationships (Adam-Eve, Abraham-Sarah). The only significant difference in order is

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.; reference is made to G. P. Hugenberger, 'Women in Church Office', 1992, p. 355.

⁴⁶² Ibid.; reference is made to E. E. Ellis, 'The Silenced Wives of Corinth', 1981, p. 214.

⁴⁶³ See, for example, E. G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, 1946, pp. 432-435; M. Dibelius & H. Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 1972, p. 5. Davidson adds here that 'the interdependence and/or commonality of these two passages should not be surprising when it is remembered that according to available evidence both Paul and Peter wrote them about the same time (early A.D. 60s), Peter from Rome, and Paul just after leaving Rome.'

⁴⁶⁴ R. M. Davidson, 'Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture', 1998, p. 279; reference is made to M. P. Hugenberger, 'Women in Church Office', 1992, pp. 355-358.

that Paul puts the additional counsel to husbands first (1 Tim. 2:8), while Peter puts it last (1 Peter 3:7). But even this counsel to husbands show striking linkages between the two passages, since the shared warning of problems hindering prayer life occurs only rarely elsewhere in Scripture. Inasmuch as 1 Peter 3 is a “household code” unambiguously dealing with interrelationships of husbands and wives, it is difficult to escape the same conclusion for the corresponding Pauline passage in 1 Timothy 2.⁴⁶⁵

The arguments of Davidson, and the scholars he relies on, are no doubt weighty. It should be noted, however, that (a) while the passages in 1 Timothy 2:8-15 and 1 Peter 3 are very similar in vocabulary and general meaning, their function is different: Paul addresses specific issues of false teaching in Ephesus, while Peter writes to many different churches in a more general way, in the established form of a ‘household code’, teaching general ‘submission’ to rulers and masters in 2:13-3:7; (b) it is a principle of biblical interpretation to prioritise the text before us and its immediate context rather than depending on parallels in other passages; (c) since the passage in 1 Timothy 2 does not state *where* or *when* the worship, prayer, learning and teaching are taking place, it is not clear if we are looking at settings of assemblies in a church setting or the home; in fact, both are possible; (d) Paul refers to ‘men everywhere’ raising their hands in prayer in 1 Timothy 2:8 and ‘without anger or argument’, which seems to be more inclusive and public than merely referring to a home setting and the husband-wife relationship; (e) the admonition to women in 1 Timothy 2:9-10 regarding their inward and outward adornments would apply to women in general, not just married women; (f) in 2:10, Paul says that his admonition regarding dress and appearance concerns what is ‘appropriate for women who *proclaim* the reverence for God’, which seems better fitted for a public setting; (g) in 2:11, the ‘submission’ (*hypotage*) of a woman/wife (in the singular) does not state to whom or what she is to submit, which would suggest a general or inclusive reference to female submissiveness, not just to a husband.

However, it could also be argued that the shift from the plural reference to ‘women’ in 2:9-10, 15b to the singular ‘woman/wife’ in 2:11-15a zooms in on a husband-wife setting in the home where the wife is ‘learning’. In keeping with the general rules of female propriety in Graeco-Roman society, which we noted in our

⁴⁶⁵ R. M. Davidson, *ibid*, pp. 279-280;

comments on 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 above, Paul taught that women should learn from their husbands in their home according to 1 Corinthians 14:33-35, while being 'silent in the church'. The fact that Paul is referring to the married woman in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 is also obvious from the reference to childbearing in 2:15.

These observations, which seem to point in different directions, may be harmonised in our understanding of the passage if we read it as addressing both women in general and wives in particular, both women in a public assembly of the church and in the home. Some parts of the passage would then be more specifically dealing with women in general and some with married women. The shifts between plural and singular forms in referring to 'women/woman (wife)' may then function as a signal of this intentional dual reference.

An important conclusion for the present study, however, is that this passage does *not* say that a woman cannot hold an office of leadership in the church, or that a woman at all times must be submissive to men in general because of a headship principle of man over woman rooted in creation. The passage says instead that:

(a) Christian women are to be modestly and decently dressed and are to display good deeds as they 'proclaim the reverence for God' (2:10);

(b) Whether in public assemblies or at home, they are to learn in peace and full submission (2:11) (against the aberrant women in Ephesus);

(c) Whether in public assemblies or at home, they are not to teach and thus wield influence over a man or a husband in a manner that disturbs the peace (2:12) (both for reasons of culturally accepted rules of female propriety and for the reasons generated by the Artemisian and Gnostic teachings regarding women's priority over men in Ephesus);

(d) The false teaching in Ephesus regarding Adam and Eve (male and female) by women contradicts the truth that Adam was born first and that Eve, rather than giving him true knowledge, was initially deceived and misled Adam to transgression (2:13-14);

(e) The false teaching regarding the woman's motherhood in creation, as promoted by some women in Ephesus, contradicts the truth that a married woman will be saved by childbearing which is a gift of God (2:15a); and

(f) What matters in being a woman is to 'continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety' (2:15b).

We conclude with the reflection that, if the Pauline injunctions regarding women in 2:9-15 were to be applied by the church today as universal and perpetual, then neither is there any reason for disregarding the injunction regarding men always praying in the Jewish way with lifted hands. Our application of the Bible needs to be consistent and allow for the recognitions that the biblical text may have an original (temporary) and contemporary (universal) meaning (see 2.5) and that it is a blending of human language and the divine message.

6. Titus 2:3-5

In this passage Paul asks Titus to instruct older women to 'teach what is good' to younger women, ultimately in order that 'the word of God may not be discredited':

Titus 2:3-5 Likewise, tell the older women to be reverent in behaviour, not to be slanderers or slaves to drink; they are to teach what is good, **4** so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, **5** to be self-controlled, chaste, good managers of the household, kind, being submissive (*hypotassomenas*) to their husbands, so that the word of God may not be discredited. (NRSV)

In this rather straightforward passage, we note two points:

1. In this 'household code' Paul strongly underlines that a wife is to submit to her own husband (*tois idiois andrasin*), and not to all husbands. The submission of a woman to a man is a standard feature of marriage in the historical cultural setting.

2. The purpose of female appropriate behaviour, to which submission to the husband belongs, is to safeguard respect for the word of God and the gospel among people, especially outsiders.

7. 1 Peter 3:1-7

This is also a 'household code' concerning husbands and wives, and we have already called attention to its close similarity to the passage in 1 Timothy 2:9-15:

1 Peter 3:1-7 Wives (*gynaikes*), in the same way, be submissive to your own husbands (*hypotassomenai tois idiois andrasin*), so that, if any of them do not obey the word, they may be won over without a word by their wives' conduct, **2** when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. **3** Do not adorn yourselves outwardly by braiding your hair, and by wearing gold ornaments and fine clothing; **4** rather, let your adornment be the hidden man, in other words the heart, with the lasting beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit (*hesychiou pneumatos*), which is very precious in God's sight. **5** For in this way, long ago, the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves by submitting themselves to their own husbands (*hypotassomenai tois idiois*

andrasin). **6** Thus Sarah listened to Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror. **7** Husbands, in the same way, live with your wives (*gynaikes*) in knowledge, giving honour to the woman as the weaker body, since they are also heirs of the gracious gift of life – so that nothing may hinder your prayers.⁴⁶⁶

Peter provides the same counsel that we found in Paul's writings, but specifically addresses wives whose husbands are unbelievers. The submission to their husbands is a 'culturally bound strategy for winning the unbelieving spouse'.⁴⁶⁷ It also imitates the example of Sarah who 'listened to' her husband and called him 'lord' (which was the normal word for 'husband' in the Old Testament).

This passage concerns female submission within marriage and applies the patriarchal understanding of husband and wife, which was the proper norm in Peter's days and cultural context. It therefore does not apply to women in ministry.

8. Concluding Remarks on 'Submission' in the New Testament

It is important to understand how early Christianity dealt with the issue of 'submission' in a society where the established system divided people into classes and required submission from the inferior party. The Christian view was based on Christ's submission to God and to his assumed human conditions.

Reviewing the meaning of 'submission' in Paul's thought, Richards concludes convincingly that 'submission is the correct thing to do for all Christians' and that the 'Lord himself set an example for all Christians in submission to God'.⁴⁶⁸ Thus, 'submission' is not an attitude for the female gender alone, it is for all believers and a sign of their following Christ. Paul consequently admonishes the Ephesians as the principal rule: 'Be *subject* to one another out of reverence for Christ' (Eph. 5:21; cf. Col. 3:21; Titus 2:5). Only after that, and within the setting of marriage, he admonishes the wives to submit to their husbands (5:24).

Thus, the superior biblical principle is not that women in the church are to 'submit' to men, but that all are to 'submit' to each other. The submission of the wife in the marriage is a compliance with social structures in an historical society which defined what people would consider honourable and dishonourable behaviour. This

⁴⁶⁶ The translation follows NRSV except in 3:1 and 3:5, where we have supplied a more literal translation.

⁴⁶⁷ R. M. Davidson, 'Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture', 1998, p. 278.

⁴⁶⁸ L. Richards, '1 Corinthians 11 and 14', 1998, pp. 325-326.

social custom could be changed, while the Christian attitude needed to remain permanently submissive – irrespective of the social system.

The meaning of ‘submission’ in Paul’s thought may be explained by an analogy with slavery. Paul says, for example, in Titus 2:9: ‘Bid slaves to be *submissive* to their masters and to give satisfaction in every respect; they are not to be refractory.’ This passage reveals a wider concern behind the bid to slaves to be submissive. As Richards points out, ‘attitude is the crux of [Paul’s] theology of submission’: ‘it allows for social changes, but changes that are made in a non-rebellious frame of mind’,⁴⁶⁹ and he continues:

That is, at the right time, slaves might not have to ‘submit’ in the manner in which it was understood in the mid-50’s A.D. The church has already made this shift in application of Paul’s teaching in ‘subordination’. The extension of the logic is obvious. Regardless of the time in which we live, all Christians should always have a ‘submissive’ disposition. Grace can operate in such a setting.

Even the prophetic spirit is to submit: ‘And the spirits of prophets are *subject* to prophets.’ (1 Cor. 14:32). Not only is submission to God and others; the individual practices submission or self-discipline.

The centrality and primacy of Christian submission is rooted in Jesus Christ. As he emptied himself of his divinity and became like one of us, he was submissive until his death on the cross, and it is because of his attitude of submission to God, as a *servant* or *minister* of God, that he was given all authority to the glory of God (Phil. 2:5-11). At his second coming, Christ will *subject* himself to him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to everyone (1 Cor. 15:24-28). We will see in chapter 5 how this attitude of submission is a key element in the grand narrative of the Bible, i.e. the Mission of God, and why it is relevant in a theology of ordination. Richards makes the very pertinent remark:

Submission should surely be something every Christian is willing to do for the benefit of others. To cite Paul’s words as a support for insisting on the subjection of someone else in the family of God, be that woman, slave, or whoever, is to totally miss the message Paul wishes to convey in the verb *hypotasso*. The subjection demonstrated by heaven was completely unselfish: ‘Christ emptied himself’ (for our benefit, Phil. 2:6-7). ‘Christ *subjected himself*’ (for our benefit, 1 Cor. 15:24-28). In both statements Paul is using heaven’s example to counter self-promotion among the church members, male and female. The word clearly refers to an attitude regarding

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 325.

one's own submission, not to what one should be insisting on for the other person.⁴⁷⁰

The universal biblical principle is that all Christians submit to each other as Christ has submitted himself to God for our salvation. This principle overrules the patriarchal model of an exclusive female submission of the wife to her husband, which the New Testament mentions in contexts where proper conduct is required in order to maintain order, culturally accepted decency, safeguarding the impact of the gospel on outsiders, and safeguarding reverence for God in worship.

3.1.3.3 Disciples and Apostles. In the Gospels, the designation 'disciples' dominates for the followers of Jesus and continues even in Acts.⁴⁷¹ The term has a dual reference, however, including both the followers/believers and the twelve. Both groups respond to a call from Jesus. For example, while John 15:16 is explicitly directed to the twelve in the context of chapters 13-17 (note 18:1), the content is paradigmatic and John clearly is making it applicable to *all followers* of Jesus at all times:

John 15:16 You did not choose me but I chose (*eklegoma*) you. And I appointed (*tithemi*) you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name.' (NRSV)

The Greek verb *tithemi* means 'assign to some task or function'. A verb from the same root, *epitithemi* ('lay on, place on') is used in the phrase 'laying on of hands'.⁴⁷² These Greek verbs do not refer to 'ordination' but to 'appointment'.⁴⁷³ The status of being *chosen* and *appointed* by Christ belongs to all followers/believers, and this is the foundation of the biblical doctrine of the priesthood of all believers which is advocated in 1 Peter and Revelation based on Exodus 19:5-6 (note the emphasis on being 'chosen' in 1 Peter 2:4, 9). Peter defines the task to which all believers in Christ are appointed as follows:

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a *chosen* (*eklektos*) race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may *proclaim* (*exaggello*) the mighty acts of him who *called* (*kaleo*) you out of darkness into his marvellous light. (NRSV)

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 326.

⁴⁷¹ See, for example, Matt. 5:1-2; 10:1; 11:1; 16:21; 28:18-20; Acts 6:1-2, 7; 21:4-5, 16.

⁴⁷² See, for example, Acts 6:6; 13:3; 1 Tim. 5:22; cf. in the Septuagint Num. 8:10; 27:18, 23; Deut. 34:9.

⁴⁷³ In Mark 3:16, *epitithemi* is used by Jesus for the laying on of hands on the twelve, but this is only when he gave them new names, which is a different usage of the verb (*epitithemi onoma*, 'give a surname [to someone]').

Thus, the general reference of ‘disciple’ is to any follower of Jesus, who has been *called* (and therefore *chosen* and *appointed*) by him in order to proclaim the kingdom of God. All believers are ‘servants’ or ‘ministers’ (1 Peter 2:16) who witness and evangelize.

However, in a more narrow sense, Jesus also appointed twelve ‘disciples’ from the wider group of his disciples/followers, it seems, after the pattern of the contemporary Jewish teaching of the *torah*, in order to support his ministry. Thus, Jesus ‘made’ or ‘appointed’ (*poieo*) his twelve disciples (Mark 3:14; cf. *tithemi* in John 15:16) and ‘designated them apostles’ (Luke 6:13; cf. the varying text witnesses in Mark 3:14). However, *nowhere do the Gospels state that Jesus ‘ordained’ his disciples by the imposition of hands*. He may have blessed them, as he did in other circumstances,⁴⁷⁴ but there is no record of a formal ‘ordination’ process involving the imposition of hands.

The Gospels record that Jesus first called the twelve to function as his ‘disciples’, then as ‘apostles’ when he authorised them and ‘sent’ them out (*apostello*) to proclaim the kingdom of God and heal the sick.⁴⁷⁵ At a later stage, he also called seventy-two and ‘sent them out’ (*apostello*) with a similar mission.⁴⁷⁶ Again, there is no mentioning of ‘ordination’ or a particular sign or ceremony, not even of the imposition of hands or prayer, but simply an ‘appointment’ or ‘choice’ with prayer being vital in the process of selection.⁴⁷⁷ At the time of selection, Jesus called his disciples together and *from them* he chose twelve.⁴⁷⁸ It is important to notice in our study that the *calling* by Jesus (involving both *choice* and *appointment*) is the only action that matters – in the same way as when Jesus called followers in general.

The task of the twelve is defined as ‘to be with him’, ‘to be sent out (*apostello*) to proclaim (*kerysso*) the message’, and ‘to have authority (*exousia*) to cast out demons’.⁴⁷⁹ As disciples, the twelve were together with Jesus, which implies that they participated in his life and ministry, and received his teaching. This would be vital conditions for a Christian leader even today. The ‘authority’ given them has to

⁴⁷⁴ See Luke 24:50-52; John 20:21-22; cf. the imposition of hands for blessings noted in 3.3.7.2.

⁴⁷⁵ Matt. 10:1, 2, 5; Luke 5:1-11; 6:12-16; 9:1-9.

⁴⁷⁶ Luke 10:1-24.

⁴⁷⁷ Luke 6:12-16.

⁴⁷⁸ Luke 6:13.

⁴⁷⁹ Mark 3:14-15; cf. Matt. 10:1, 5-8.

do with powers of the ministry of healing, rather than any ecclesiastical decision-making or leadership authority. The ‘sending out’ (*apostello*) is obviously associated with the designation of the disciples as ‘apostles’.

It is noteworthy that the terminology is fluid. The appointment as ‘disciples’ is associated with the relationship between the teacher and his disciples (Matt. 10:24), which is generally applied to all who follow Jesus, including women. However, it also applies more specifically to the twelve, but we have seen previously that the twelve do not function as exemplary role models in the Gospels and that their leadership role emerges in connection with Pentecost, following Matthias’ replacement of Judas. In this specific sense, the model of a teacher (of the law) and his disciples is rooted in the practice of contemporary Judaism and certain (not all) scribal practices, but while Jesus applies it as a simple teaching model, he does not accept its Jewish institutionalisation, formalism, titles, hierarchy, or its formal authority based on the act of a scribal ordination.

The fluidity applies even to the term ‘apostles’. On the one hand, this term may have a royal and ‘authoritative’ character in that an ‘apostle’ being ‘sent out’ to ‘proclaim’ the ‘kingdom of God’ is associated with the setting of a royal court where the King sends out his servants as heralds among his subjects, and they act on his command⁴⁸⁰ – a concept rooted in the Old Testament and the kingship of God. On the other hand, this concept was also rooted in contemporary Judaism. It has been pointed out that ‘the Hebrew equivalent of *apostolos* is *shaliakh*, a rabbinic term for the envoys used by the central authorities in Palestine to keep in touch with the diaspora’.⁴⁸¹ The same author develops the nature of this function as follows:

In the power vacuum left within Judaism by the failed rebellion of 66-70 C.E., Luke’s *apostoloi* – backed by learned and detailed exposition of scripture – could serve a vital rhetorical role in a competitive bid for the heart and soul of the diaspora communities. Bearing “letters” (Acts 28:21) was part of the role of the *shaliakh*, and in the confusing circumstances of the post-war period, that is exactly what Luke sets out to provide in Acts.⁴⁸²

Alexander also points out that Luke’s ‘apostles’ are in no way subordinate to the council of elders in Jerusalem, but, rather, Luke ‘stresses repeatedly that the Twelve (and Paul) received their commission directly from the Lord (Acts 1:2-8; 9:15)’.⁴⁸³

⁴⁸⁰ See, for example, Matt. 9:38; 22:2-14.

⁴⁸¹ L. Alexander, ‘Mapping Early Christinaity: Acts and the Shape of Early Church History’, 2003, pp. 167-168.

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 168.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*

This direct link with the Lord, rather than 'ordination' as we understand and apply it today, is the key to the function of an apostle. This understanding goes back to Jesus. In Matthew 10, as he sends out his twelve disciples as apostles, he gives some hints at their intended role:

(a) Jesus conveys to the disciples/apostles a prophetic role through his admonition that 'the Spirit of your Father will be speaking through you' (10:20), and the apostles are compared to prophets (10:41). Thus, the office of 'apostle' is seen from the beginning as a *charismatic* or *prophetic* role.

(b) In relation to Jesus ('Teacher and Lord'), his followers are called 'disciples and servants' who are not above him but like him (10:25). Those who receive the disciples receive Jesus and the One who sent him (10:40). A close identity between the teacher and his disciples or between the King and his apostles/servants is implied, and, ultimately, they are perceived as 'servants of God'.

It is possible to conclude, therefore, that the office of 'apostle' originally carried an emphasis on prophetic *charisma* through the Spirit and the task of proclamation, rather than being a formal office within the Jesus movement. Aspects of this emphasis re-appear in Paul's understanding of his apostolic ministry, in that it is based on the exercise of spiritual gifts and the direct calling of Christ rather than being authorised by the eleven plus one disciples/elders in Jerusalem or being seated in an institutionalised office. This is the implied background for Jesus' last speech to the disciples/apostles in Acts 1 which functions as a preamble to the *authorisation and sending of the church* on the day of Pentecost.

After Jesus ascended to heaven and the twelve began to lead the community of believers, the term 'apostle' became more common than 'disciple' for a church leader. In Acts 1:21-22 we see that the leadership role of the twelve was based on (a) their appointment by Jesus (except for Matthias replacing Judah, who was chosen directly by God through the casting of lots), (b) their received instruction from Jesus, and (c) their being eyewitnesses to the risen Christ (although many others were also eyewitnesses, especially women).

Thus, Luke in particular emphasises that Jesus also called his disciples 'apostles' (Luke 6:13; 11:49; cf. Mark 3:14 where the text witnesses do not concur), and as narrator, Luke himself calls the disciples 'apostles' in many places (Luke 9:10; 17:5; 22:14; 24:10; cf. Matt. 10:2; Mark 3:14; 6:30). As an introduction to the Acts of the Apostles, Luke underlines Jesus' 'instructions through the Holy Spirit to

the apostles he had chosen (*eklegomai*)' and points out that, 'after his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive' (Acts 1:2-3). The connection between 'apostles' and 'the 'kingdom of God' is made explicit when it is stated that 'he appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the *kingdom of God*' (1:3). Later on in the same chapter, Jesus defines the role of the apostles as 'my witnesses' which is conditioned by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon them (1:8). An apostle is 'sent' (*apostello*) as a 'witness' to the world concerning Jesus' resurrection and is authorised by God through the Holy Spirit. Thus, again there is a *charismatic* element from the start in the concept of 'apostle'.

The only clear and explicit connection with some sort of organised work rests with the role of the eyewitnesses, i.e. those who had seen Jesus' ministry from beginning to end (Acts 1) and who were approved by the believers as trusted sources on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. By the fact that Mark starts his Gospel with a reference to Peter and ends it in chapter 16 with a reference to 'the disciples and Peter', we see that Peter is the trustworthy source behind Mark. Consequently, early Christians identified who among them carried authority when it came to determining the words and deeds of Jesus. As the apostolic eyewitnesses died, and itinerant prophets began to create divisions, the young church began to resort to formal offices, as we see in the post-biblical writings of the Apostolic Fathers. Thus, our understanding of ordination in the New Testament is fundamentally dependent on the recognition of a *development* created by the growth and practical needs of the church.

Maintaining the number of *twelve* apostles was evidently important, to keep the association with the twelve tribes of Israel and to comply with the original decision of Jesus when he 'made twelve' from the wider group of disciples (Mark 3:14). This purpose explains why Matthias must be selected as the twelfth apostle in Acts 1:21-26. Thus, in 'making twelve', Jesus indicated that he had in mind the training of a body that would represent God's exemplary people as a tool to reform Israel (it did not work in Jesus lifetime, but through the Holy Spirit on Pentecost the new era began). And yet, the formalisation and organisation of this body is not stipulated by Jesus – it is left to the continued leading of the Spirit in the life and

growth of the church.⁴⁸⁴ Building a modern-time pastoral ordination on the Bible, therefore, must give the primary place to the calling and equipping of the Holy Spirit and a secondary place to the recognition by the church of this calling and equipping. If we are looking for ordination as an issuing of ecclesiastical authority in an organised system of the church, we must go outside of the Bible.

The appointment of Matthias as apostle gives some insights into Luke's understanding of how a leader was selected and installed in the early church (before Pentecost):

(a) Place: The setting is a group of believers numbering about 120, including 'the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus', who had all been praying together (1:14-15), with Peter as leader.

(b) Qualifications: 'One of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us' (1:21-22a). The emphasis here is on being with the group of disciples under the leadership of Jesus. Peter states, however, that the candidate is to be a 'man' (*aner*), despite the fact that the first witnesses of Jesus' resurrection were women, who were explicitly called and sent by divine representatives to the disciples (3.1.3.4).

(c) Function or Position: 'Become (*ginomai*) a witness with us of [Jesus'] resurrection' (1:22b), called 'the position of this ministry and apostolate' (*topos tes diakonias tautes kai apostoles*) in 1:25. Note that being an apostle is here defined as a 'ministry' (*diakonia*), which is a general term for any function in the church. Peter also gives the position a name in 1:20: *episcopo* ('[role of] oversight') and in 1:25 he formalises 'being an apostle' as a 'position of the apostolate' (*apostoles*). Thus, when Luke wrote about Matthias' appointment in Acts, the office of 'overseer, bishop' (*episkopos*), 'servant' (*diakonos*), and 'apostle, emissary' (*apostolos*) was understood as one and the same thing, as well as referring to some kind of institutionalised office.

(d) Nomination: Joseph (Barsabbas, Justus) and Matthias (1:23).

(e) Prayer: The Lord, who knows the heart of all, is asked to show them which of the two he has 'chosen' (*eklegomai*) (1:24-25). Again, the divine choice is the fundamental factor.

⁴⁸⁴ Cf. the reading of Acts in C. Vine, 'Listening to the Spirit: Lessons in Decision-Making from the Book of Acts', *Adventist Review*, October 12, 2012, pp. 14-16.

(f) Casting of Lots: The lot falls on Matthias who is added to the eleven (1:28).

This is a unique event, since it is about filling the number of the twelve appointed by Jesus, and therefore God is making the choice. While there is prayer, there is no mentioning of imposition of hands or any form of ceremonial induction to the office. Matthias is being set apart or appointed, but his qualifications and the result of the casting of lots determine the case. Because of its uniqueness, because it takes place before the outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost, and because the office of ‘apostle’ gradually disappeared when the twelve apostles had passed away, it is difficult to see how this can be taken as an ordinance for ordination today.

The twelve apostles appointed by Jesus had a special status as the earliest leaders. Their key role was due to being named by the Lord – symbolically as a counterpart of the twelve patriarchs and tribes in Israel – and having ‘been with him’, and being eyewitnesses to him as the risen Lord (although the primary eyewitnesses were women). The group of ‘apostles’ was gradually expanded, however, and we will see how in 3.1.3.9 below.

3.1.3.4 Female Disciples and Eyewitnesses to the Resurrection. Reviews of the Gospels reveal that Jesus called women as well as men to discipleship.⁴⁸⁵ There are rich narratives regarding women in all four canonical Gospels.

In the Gospel of Luke, *Mary the mother of Jesus*, plays the central role in God’s fulfilment of his promise of a ‘woman’s seed’ that would ‘crush the head of the serpent’ (Gen. 3:15). Mary receives her assignment by a messenger sent by God (Luke 1:26-38) who tells her that ‘the Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you’. In her Song, which glorifies the power of God (1:46-55), she refers to herself as ‘God’s servant’ (*doulos theou*, 1:47), which is the term generally used for apostles and leaders in the church (3.1.3.7).

In a close and comprehensive analysis of Mary’s Song, Richard Bauckham has demonstrated persuasively that it stands in the great tradition initiated by Moses’ Song (Exodus 15:1-18) and Miriam’s Song (15:21), which was followed by the Old Testament and Jewish songs in Judges 5 (Deborah and Barak), 1 Samuel 2

⁴⁸⁵ See, for example, H. Westphal Wilson, ‘The Forgotten Disciples: The Empowering of Love vs. the Love of Power’, 1995, pp. 179-195; J. A. Davidson, ‘Women in Scripture’, 1998, pp. 172-179; R. Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels*, 2002; E. W. Stegemann & W. Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 1999, pp. 378-388.

(Hannah), 2 Samuel 22 (David), Isaiah 38:9-20 (Hezekiah), Judith 16 (Judith), Additions to Daniel (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego), Tobit 13 (Tobit), and Isaiah 12 (Israel at the new exodus).⁴⁸⁶ Thus, the salvation that Mary is celebrating has its ultimate precedent in the exodus from Egypt.⁴⁸⁷ Bauckham also shows that the main theme of Mary's Song is the connection between Mary's 'lowly status' as 'God's servant' (*diakonos autou*, Luke 1:48), for whom God 'has done great things' (1:49), and 'the lowly', whom God 'has exalted' (1:52), as well as 'his servant Israel' (*paidos autou*), whom God has helped (1:54).⁴⁸⁸ Thus, the central thought is the reversal of status for Israel, 'God's servant', and this is symbolically expressed in the reversal of status for Mary, 'God's servant'. As God's *lowly* servant, Mary is representative of his servant Israel and *precisely as a woman* she 'instantiates the weakness of the lowly before the oppressive power of the haughty'; however, Mary 'is not only aligned with the lowly, but herself is empowered by God to act as his agent in his exaltation of the lowly'.⁴⁸⁹ Thus, Luke opens his Gospel of Jesus Christ with the message that *female lowliness is and will be exalted by God through his Son Jesus*, as God now makes his move to bring his salvation to Israel and the world, restoring men and women to full participation in the presence of God that was lost as man and woman were expelled from the Garden of Eden. This presence of God is now revealed in the *person* of Jesus Christ, and, therefore, his relation to men and women will define their status in relationship to God and their role as witnesses, teachers and preachers of his mighty works. Men and women, regardless of gender, will take up these roles, and Mary is one of them. She and the brothers of Jesus are among the disciples who 'constantly devote themselves to prayer; before Pentecost (Acts 1:14), and her family exercised leadership in the church until the destruction of Jerusalem.

At the time of Christ's birth, Luke refers to the widow and prophetess *Anna daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher* (Luke 2:36-38). As a prophetess (*profetis*), who worshipped in the temple and prayed and fasted daily, Anna was filled with the Holy Spirit and recognised Jesus as the promised Messiah. In confirming Simeon's *spiritual* testimony that Jesus is 'God's salvation', 'a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel' (2:25-35), she fulfils the injunction of the

⁴⁸⁶ R. Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 2002, p. 68.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 69-76.

Mosaic law that 'a matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses' (Deut. 19:15; Matt. 18:16) and, thus, contributes a *female* witness to establish the truth of Jesus' identity in God's plan of salvation. Anna is also the first public preacher and teacher of Jesus as the promised Messiah: 'she spoke to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem' (2:38).

Bauckham has explored thoroughly Luke's information that Anna was of the tribe of Asher, which is a remarkable circumstance, since Asher was part of the northern tribes (who inhabited the northern kingdom of Israel which was destroyed by the Assyrians in 721 B.C.) and not of the tribes usually represented in Jerusalem (Judah, Levi, Benjamin). Noting that Simeon and Anna 'form one of the pairs of man and woman of which Luke is fond',⁴⁹⁰ he calls attention to the fact that Simeon represents the 'hope of the centrifugal movement of salvation out from Jerusalem to the Gentiles'⁴⁹¹ – see, for example, Isaiah 2:2-4 – while Anna, a returnee from the diaspora of the northern tribes, waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem (2:38), 'recognises the Messiah Jesus as the one who will fulfil Jerusalem's destiny to be the centre to which all the tribes of Israel are regathered' – see, for example, Isaiah 60 – and therefore she represents 'the hope of the centripetal movement of salvation as the diaspora returns to Zion'.⁴⁹² Anna's spirit-filled witness and public preaching, and in particular her role as the *female* counterpart in a man-woman symbol of 'totality' for announcing hope for Israel and the world, sends a strong message to the church of women's spiritual gifts and ministry, and illustrates the egalitarian fullness of servanthood of God which is so clearly taught in Genesis 1-2.

Among those who travelled with Jesus and his twelve disciples was *Mary of Magdala* (Luke 8:2). She is almost always mentioned first in a list of the female disciples of Jesus and may have been one of the leaders of that group who followed Jesus from the beginning of his ministry in Galilee to his death and after that.⁴⁹³ The risen Jesus Christ appeared to her first and she was called by Christ to bring the first witness of his resurrection to the apostles (Mark 16:9; John 20:10-18) – at a time when women could not be legal witnesses in public courts or attend popular

⁴⁹⁰ Bauckham refers to T. K. Seim, *The Double Message: Patterns of Gender in Luke-Acts*, 1994, pp. 11-24.

⁴⁹¹ R. Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 2002, p. 98.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁴⁹³ H. Westphal Wilson, 'The Forgotten Disciples', 1995, p. 181.

assemblies,⁴⁹⁴ although they had a central religious role outside Judaism in the home and in temple cults.⁴⁹⁵

Mary and Martha of Bethany were two sisters who were disciples of Jesus. Martha gives one of the first confessions of faith in Christ in the New Testament:

John 11:25-27 Jesus said to her: 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, **26** and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' **27** She said to him: 'Yes, Lord', 'I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world'. (NRSV)

Martha's (John 11:27) and Peter's (Matt. 16:16) confessions of faith in Jesus as the Messiah/Christ are not only similar in wording but the first recorded instances of Christian faith in the New Testament. It has been noted that the Gospel of John tends to 'give to women roles normally associated with Peter in the other gospels' (3.1.3.5).⁴⁹⁶ Her sister Mary did not only share the faith in Jesus but is described as 'sitting at the Lord's feet listening to what he said', which is the classical position of a disciple (cf. Paul being 'thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers at the feet of Gamaliel', Acts 22:3). Jesus commends Mary for her choice of 'the one thing needed', which is 'the better thing', and 'it will not be taken away from her' (Luke 10:38-42). Jesus is referring to his teaching as that which will remain in Mary. Martha is here reacting like the twelve who sought to remove the children from Jesus (Matt. 19:15; Mark 10:13), but Jesus rebukes her as he rebuked his twelve disciples, making women and children part of his kingdom.

The story of the *Samaritan woman* in John 4 shows the encounter between Jesus and one of the lowliest beings in society becoming his disciple. By placing this story after the one where Jesus meets Nicodemus, John may want to contrast the weak faith of a prominent male Jewish religious leader with that of a Gentile woman.⁴⁹⁷ The conversation Jesus has with the woman is 'the longest recorded discussion Jesus had with anyone – and she, a Gentile woman',⁴⁹⁸ and it is significant that Ellen White described it as 'the most important discourse that

⁴⁹⁴ For this general setting of women in New Testament times, see E. W. Stegemann & W. Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 1999, pp. 364-377,

⁴⁹⁵ L. H. Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians*, 2009, pp. 195-224.

⁴⁹⁶ F. Wheeler, 'Women in the Gospel of John', *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity*, Joplin, MO: College Press, 1995, vol. 2, pp. 216-217; for this point of view, Wheeler makes reference to R. Brown, 'Role of Women in the Fourth Gospel', 1979, pp. 183-198.

⁴⁹⁷ J. A. Davidson, 'Women in Scripture', 1998, p. 174.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

Inspiration has given us'.⁴⁹⁹ The woman is converted, brings others to Jesus, and through her testimony many of the Samaritans from her town believed in Jesus as the Saviour of the world (John 4:25, 28-30, 39-42). Ellen White says that she 'proved herself a more effective missionary than his own disciples'.⁵⁰⁰ The woman is 'the first person recorded in Christ's public ministry whose witness brought a group of people into a believing relationship with the Messiah (4:39-42)'.⁵⁰¹

It may be noted that the story of the Samaritan woman fulfils the words of Jesus to his disciples in John 4:37, that 'one sows and another reaps' (cf. 4:34-38). Jesus has sown through his interaction with the woman and then the disciples see the harvest when the town responds to the woman's work of witnessing (4:27-30, 39-42). Thus, Jesus offers the woman as a paradigm for the disciples to imitate in sowing and reaping the word of God.

Luke has recorded the story of the healing of a *disabled woman* on Sabbath, in the synagogue, right in front of the synagogue ruler (Luke 13:10-17). Jesus puts his hands on her and heals her and she praises God. The protests of the synagogue ruler are met with his words:

Luke 13:15-16 You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? **16** Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has jet bound for eighteen long years be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?

By replacing the usual patriarchal phrase 'son of Abraham' with 'daughter of Abraham', Jesus assigns as much value to her as to the male leaders of the synagogue, and creates a balance between man and woman in the kingdom of God, which we have seen was God's original intention (3.1.1.1; 3.1.1.2). In the woman's praising God (13:13), and the people being delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing (13:17), lies a reference to their belief in him.

All the four Gospels are structured with a view to the climax of the resurrection of Jesus. No doubt, the resurrection is the foundational and central doctrine of early Christian preaching (see 1 Cor. 15). It is therefore a remarkable fact that women have the determining role in establishing the empty tomb and the resurrection of Christ. Backhaum expresses it as follows:

⁴⁹⁹ E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 1885-1909, vol. 3, p. 217.

⁵⁰⁰ Id., *The Desire of Ages*, 1898, pp. 194-195.

⁵⁰¹ J. A. Davidson, 'Women in Scripture', 1998, p. 174.

In the Gospel narratives the women disciples of Jesus are the first people to find the tomb of Jesus empty. Moreover, they are the only witnesses to the empty tomb who had seen Jesus buried and therefore could vouch for the fact that the empty tomb really was the tomb in which Jesus' body had been laid two days before. According to two of the Gospels, the women were also the first to meet the risen Lord.⁵⁰²

We might add that women, on divine instruction, were also the first to proclaim the resurrection of Christ, even to the eleven disciples/apostles themselves.

Bauckham has thoroughly investigated the issue of the credibility of women as witnesses, hence the credibility of the resurrection stories.⁵⁰³ The following conclusion is worthy of our attention:

If there is a problem in [the women's] Jewish context about the role of the women in the resurrection narratives, it may not be so much their supposed unreliability as witnesses or their susceptibility to delusion in religious matters, but something even dearer to patriarchal religious assumptions: *the priority of men in God's dealing with the world*. In these stories *women are given priority by God as recipients of revelation and thereby the role of mediators of that revelation to men*. Is this not part of the eschatological reversal of status, in which God makes the last first and the first last, so that no one might boast before God?⁵⁰⁴

Thus, in view of our lengthy review of the Old Testament material and the patriarchal dominance in it (3.1.1; 3.1.2; 3.2), the role of the women disciples of Jesus in the resurrection stories of the Gospels reverts the roles of male and female and provides very strong evidence that the traditional 'priority of men in God's dealing with the world' is now *reverted* to women being 'given priority by God as recipients of revelation and thereby the role of mediators of that revelation to men'. One may well ask why God would do this, and Paul may have the answer, which ties in well with the Song of Mary in Luke 1:46-55: 'God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him ... Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord".' (Jer. 9:24).

Regarding the resurrection, two traditions seem to be preserved in the Gospels – one says that Jesus 'appeared first to Mary Magdalene' (Mark 16:9; John 20:1-18), the other that *a group of women* were first commissioned by God to share

⁵⁰² R. Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 2002, p. 257.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 257-277

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 275 (italics supplied); cf. B. Witherington III, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, 1988, p. 165.

the news of the resurrection with the disciples (Matt. 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-12).⁵⁰⁵

According to the synoptic gospels this group of women included several individuals: Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (according to Matt. 28:1); Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome (according to Mark 16:1); and Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, 'and the others with them' (according to Luke 24:10). The phrase 'and the others with them' in Luke suggests a larger group of women. In fact, Luke – who researched the historical events carefully (1:1) – knows of a group of women who 'followed Jesus [to Jerusalem] from Galilee' (23:49, 55) and witnessed all the decisive events including Jesus' suffering and crucifixion (23:27, 49), his death (23:49), his burial (23:55), his empty tomb (24:1-3), and who received the first commission to witness about his resurrection from the angel at the tomb (24:4-8). Luke even states that when the women heard the angel's explanation that what had happened was a fulfilment of Jesus' own prophetic words that he would be delivered and crucified, but then 'raised again on the third day' (24:6-7), 'they remembered [Jesus'] words' (24:8). This suggests nothing else but the significant fact that the women were *disciples of Jesus*, received his teaching, and remembered it as a good disciple would be expected to do. This is quite different from the doubting and questioning reception the gospel received from the male disciples (24:11), who had to see Jesus in person, his hands and feet (24:38-39), and whose minds had to be opened 'so they could understand the Scriptures' when Jesus reminded them of his previous teachings to them about his suffering, death and resurrection (24:44-45).

Probing backwards in the Gospel of Luke takes us down to the point where he introduces the women 'who had followed him from Galilee'. Luke states in 8:1 that, as Jesus travelled from one town and village to another in Galilee preaching the good news of the kingdom of God, 'the twelve were with him and also some women': Mary Magdalene, Joanna wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household, Susanna, and many others, and the comment is added that 'these women were helping to support (Jesus and the twelve) out of their own means' (8:1-3). These

⁵⁰⁵ For a reasoned attempt to explain these traditions, see R. Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 2002, pp. 257-310; note especially his conclusion on pp. 303-304, where he states that the stories of the women of the empty tomb and the appearance of the Lord 'are substantially as the women themselves told them', and that, therefore, 'we must regard the differences between the stories as irreducible' and 'we cannot go behind them to a supposedly original version'.

women are with the eleven after the resurrection and take part in the election of Matthias, the twelfth apostle, in Acts 1, and they are obviously included among the disciples who receive the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, when Peter applies to them the prophecy of Joel 2:28-32 and the outpouring of God's Spirit upon 'his servants, both men and women' (Acts 2:1, 17-18).

In view of this, one may well ask why one of these women would not be eligible for the office of apostle. They fulfilled all the explicit requirements mentioned by Peter in Acts 1:21-22: they had been with the twelve, as disciples of Jesus, 'the whole time that Jesus walked in and out among us' and they were 'witnesses of the resurrection'.

The answer is probably twofold: on the one hand the twelve were to imitate the twelve patriarchs of old Israel, thus announcing that a new Israel had come based on the death and resurrection of Christ; on the other hand, as we have concluded with Bauckham above, there were dominant patriarchal customs protecting 'the priority of men in God's dealing with the world'. This, in turn, created a bias regarding how trustworthy the witness of a woman could be, and we see how this aspect plays out in Luke's description of the women's witness to the resurrection event, even though they are commissioned to witness by God's angel (Matt. 28:6-7; Mark 16:7; Luke 24:6-7) and Jesus himself (Matt. 28:8-10). The disciples receive the gospel of the resurrection from the women with disbelief, and Luke adds in 24:11: 'for their words seemed to them like *nonsense*' (KJV: 'idle tales'). To put it plainly, there were socially accepted views of the role of women which make it understandable, even appropriate under the circumstances, to consider only a man as a member of the twelve. However, there is no biblical warrant for regarding this as a rule for all times. It is rather a concession to historical social customs that have changed and will continue to change.

In conclusion, women witnessed the great events upon which the gospel is founded: Jesus ministry, death, burial, and resurrection.

3.1.3.5 The Women in the Johannine Writings. Many Bible scholars have noted that women disciples have a particular prominence in the Gospel of John. An

example is the study by Sandra M. Schneiders,⁵⁰⁶ who partially relies on Raymond Brown's work.⁵⁰⁷ She lists seven passages that involve women and then makes the detailed comments, both in general and in particular:

1. The First Sign at Cana (2:1-12): Mother of Jesus
2. Dialogue at Jacob's Well (4:4-42): Samaritan Woman
3. Raising of Lazarus (11:1-44): Martha and Mary
4. Anointing at Bethany (12:1-8): Martha and Mary
5. Word from the Cross (19:25-27): Jesus' Mother, Mary Magdalene, two other women
6. Discovery of the Open Tomb (20:1-2): Mary Magdalene
7. First Resurrection Appearance (20:11-18): Mary Magdalene

For reasons of space, we will summarise here only the general arguments:⁵⁰⁸

1. *All the women in the Fourth Gospel are presented positively and in intimate relation to Jesus.* No woman resists Jesus, failing to believe, deserting him, or betraying him. This is in sharp contrast to John's presentation of men who are frequently presented as vain (13:37), hypocritical (12:4-6), fickle (13:38; 16:31-32), obtuse, (3:10; 16:18), deliberately unbelieving (9:24-41; 20:24-25), or thoroughly evil (13:2, 27-30). Obviously, women are presented as positive exemplar figures, as characters for the reader to imitate, even male readers!

2. *John's positive presentation of women is neither one-dimensional nor stereotypical.* Women do not appear in the Fourth Gospel as bloodless representatives of the 'eternal feminine'. On the contrary, John's women appear as strikingly individual and original characters, especially in contrast to the shadowy male figures that frequently appear in close proximity to them. One may compare the stereotypical scribe, Nicodemus (3:1-12) with the Samaritan Woman (4:7-41); the shadowy Lazarus with his sisters. The disciples in the resurrection narratives, with the exception of Thomas (20:2-8, 19-29), are not nearly as realistically drawn as is Mary Magdalene (20:12, 11-18). Thus, the author of the Fourth Gospel had a remarkably rich and nuanced understanding of feminine religious experience.

⁵⁰⁶ S. M. Schneiders, 'Women in the Fourth Gospel and the Role of Women in the Contemporary Church', 1982, pp. 35-45.

⁵⁰⁷ R. Brown, 'Role of Women in the Fourth Gospel', 1979, pp. 183-198.

⁵⁰⁸ S. M. Schneiders, 'Women in the Fourth Gospel', 1982, pp. 38-39.

Historically, it is likely that this is the result of actual experiences of Christian women who played prominent roles in early Christianity.⁵⁰⁹

3. *The women in John's Gospel play unconventional roles.* (a) The Samaritan woman with her checkered past, her uncommon theological knowledge and interests, and her spontaneous assumption of the role of public witness to Jesus; (b) Martha running the public aspects of funeral and mourning; (c) Mary of Bethany extravagantly anointing the feet of Jesus over the protests of the devious Judas; (e) Mary Magdalene roaming alone in a darkened cemetery, questioning a strange man, and responsibly bearing apostolic witness to the assembled disciples – all these examples suggest that the Christian women of John's experience were not uneducated domestic recluses. Surprisingly, none of John's women figures, except the Mother of Jesus and Mary of Clopas, is presented as wife or mother or in any way essentially defined in relationship to men. On the contrary, Lazarus is identified through his relationship with Mary and Martha and named after them in relation to Jesus in John 11:5.⁵¹⁰ John's presentation makes it more than likely that real women, actually engaged in theological discussion, competently proclaiming the Gospel, publicly confessing their faith, and serving at the table of the Lord, stand behind these Johannine characters.

These three general observations, that women in the Fourth Gospel are all presented positively and in particularly intimate relationship to Jesus, that they have richly complicated and various religious personalities and experiences, and that they play quite unconventional roles, suffice to suggest that the women Christians in a significant part of early Christianity were fully participating and highly valuable members of the Jesus movement.⁵¹¹ It also suggests that the evangelist considered such feminine behaviour as fully according to the mind of Jesus, who is never presented as disapproving of the women and, in two scenes, defends the women against explicit and implicit male objections (4:27; 12:4-8). The Fourth Gospel is also significant for what it says about the discipleship of Christian women:

1. Women relate to Jesus directly and never through the mediation and/or by the permission of men.

⁵⁰⁹ Cf. R. Brown, 'Role of Women in the Fourth Gospel', 1979, p. 183.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

2. There is no such thing as 'women' whose 'place' and 'role' are to be decided and assigned once and for all by some third (male) party. Their ministry to Jesus and to others in his name requires no approval or authorisation of anyone.

3. Unlike most of the male disciples, the women are remarkable for their initiative and decisive action. The Samaritan woman assumes on her own her mission of bearing witness to the people of her town; Martha and Mary immediately send for Jesus when Lazarus is ill; they prepare and host the last supper, and Mary performs the unusual anointing on her own initiative; Mary Magdalene is first at the tomb on the resurrection morning determined to find and remove the body of the Lord; she alerts the male disciples to Jesus' disappearance and she alone remains to continue the search while they hide for fear of the Jews. If leadership is a function of creative initiative and decisive action, the Johannine women qualify well for their role.

Schneider then analyses each passage with a view to features that have been overlooked or underestimated. We have touched on some of these features in 3.5.5.1 above. The conclusion in Schneider's study is quite remarkable:

Both general impressions and analyses of particular passages about women provide a picture of early Christianity in which original and loving women played a variety of unconventional roles which the Fourth Evangelist presents as approved by Jesus, despite the grumblings from some men. These women do not appear dependent on husbands or other male authorities, not as seeking permission for their activities from male officials. They demonstrate remarkable originality in their relationships with Jesus and extraordinary initiative in their activities within the community.

They are the privileged recipients of three of Jesus' most important self-revelations: (a) his identity as the Messiah, (b) that he is the resurrection and the life, and (c) that his glorification is complete and its salvific effects given to his disciples. Women are the two most important witnesses to him both during his public life and during his Hour.

Schneider's study demonstrates that women officially represent the community in the expression of its faith (Martha), its acceptance of salvation (Mary Magdalene), and its role as witness to the Gospel (Samaritan Woman, Mary Magdalene).

Together with John, the beloved disciple, two women in John's Gospel hold the place occupied by Peter in the synoptic gospels: Martha as confessor of faith and Mary Magdalene as recipient of the first resurrection appearance and the commission by the Lord as apostle being sent to the Church and its leaders. Women were disciples in the strict sense of the word as students of the word of Jesus (Mary of Bethany). The women also played the leading roles, along with the beloved disciple, in the Easter meal. There are examples of male objections to the activity of women (the disciples in Samaria and Judas at Bethany), both of which were effectively suppressed by Jesus, and two examples of the acceptance and effectiveness of the witness of women (the Samaritans and the disciples after the glorification).

The openness and the endorsement of women as disciples of Jesus and leaders in the church fellowship, which appears in the Fourth Gospel, suggests that the sources of Jesus' involvement with the women recorded in the Gospel were received without restrictions in the various audiences to which John wrote his Gospel. This has preserved to us a significant material that was not recorded or preserved in the three Synoptic Gospels.

Ellen White made the following observation concerning the differences between the Gospels:

Why do we need a Matthew, a Mark, a Luke, a John, a Paul, and all the writers who have borne testimony in regard to the life and ministry of the Saviour? Why could not one of the disciples have written a complete record and thus have given us a connected account of Christ's earthly life? Why does one writer bring in points that another does not mention? Why, if these points are essential, did not all these writers mention them? It is because *the minds of men differ. Not all comprehend things in exactly the same way. Certain Scripture truths appeal much more strongly to the minds of some than of others.*⁵¹²

The Gospel of John, obviously, appeals to a female mind and, therefore, it may need more attention as the church considers the issue of gender in 'ordination'.

3.1.3.6 Elders. From early on, the twelve apostles became increasingly associated with another kind of official, namely, the 'elders' (*presbyteroi*). In the important decision recorded in Acts 15, the 'apostles and elders' in Jerusalem play a central role (Acts 11:30; 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4; 21:18). However, we hear of no 'ordination' or

⁵¹² E. G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students*, 1913, p. 432 (italics supplied).

imposition of hands for the office of elder in the body of the Jerusalem leadership. In Acts 15 the role of elder could allude to James (and Jude). As brother of Jesus, his status was already guaranteed, regardless of any imposition of hands. In the same way, as evidenced by Eusebius,⁵¹³ the family of Jesus led the church up until the destruction of Jerusalem. This may be another possible explanation of the curious fact that the New Testament does not describe the selection and induction of elders or apostolic leaders – *it was generally not needed during the first generation of Christians, because the key forms of leadership were the family of Jesus (no ‘ordination’ required), the twelve apostles (not ordained by Jesus), and the charismatic and prophetic apostles who (like Paul) had a direct ‘ordination’ by Christ.*

There were elders (*zeqenim*) in ancient Israel, even as early as in Egypt before the exodus.⁵¹⁴ They exercised governing and judicial functions, often being referred to as ‘elders and judges’,⁵¹⁵ and they were responsible for giving instructions in the law.⁵¹⁶ They had a role as assistants in leadership to Moses;⁵¹⁷ they accompanied Moses in his meetings with God⁵¹⁸ and had functions in the sanctuary service as representatives of the people.⁵¹⁹ All through the Old Testament history we hear of them.

The elders also had an important role in first-century Judaism, functioning as the *Council of Elders* or the *Presbytery* in each Jewish synagogue and in the local Sanhedrin, which consisted of twenty-three or seven persons. Some of them were members of the Jerusalem Sanhedrin, the Council of Seventy-One,⁵²⁰ which had authority as a supreme court. The local presbyteries had a general administrative oversight of the Jewish communities, and represented the Jews in relation to the Roman authorities. The elders ‘were selected by co-optation and ordained by prayer and the laying on of hands, after the pattern of Num. 27:18; Deut. 34:9’.⁵²¹ In the course of time, they developed a vast body of precedents in the interpretation (or *halakah*) of the law – we know these interpretations as ‘the traditions of the elders’ in Mark 7:3-5 and Matthew 15:2. As a result of the dispersement of those previously in

⁵¹³ *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Book 2, Chapter 23: 1, 4; Book 3, Chapter 11:1-2.

⁵¹⁴ Ex. 3:16, 18; 4:29; 12:21; Deut. 5:23; 19:12.

⁵¹⁵ Deut. 21:2 3, 6, 19-20; 22:15-18; 25:7-9.

⁵¹⁶ Deut. 29:10; 31:9, 28; 32:7.

⁵¹⁷ Ex. 18:12; Num. 11:16-17, 24-25.

⁵¹⁸ Ex. 24:1, 9, 14.

⁵¹⁹ Lev. 4:15.

⁵²⁰ E.g. Acts 4:5, 8, 23; 5:21; 6:12.

⁵²¹ M. H. Shepherd, Article ‘Elder in the NT’, in: *IDB*, vol. 2, p. 79.

leadership, particularly the family of Jesus and those disciples who had remained in Jerusalem, 'ordination' of elders in the Christian church may have become customary after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and 'elder' had by then become a title of honour for theologians, and implied 'ordination'.⁵²²

The institution of elders occurred in the local Christian churches that began to emerge, perhaps under the influence of the Jewish synagogue. Paul and Barnabas 'appointed (*cheirotoneo*) elders' in each church and 'set them apart' (*paratithemi*) (Acts 14:23). It is possible that this involved the imposition of hands, but the text does not state so (see 3.5.4.3 below). Elders seem to have existed in each Christian local church.⁵²³

However, there is no clear, explicit evidence of a Christian 'ordination' of elders including imposition of hands. The reference in 1 Timothy 4:14 is to the 'presbytery' exercising the 'imposition of hands' (note the noun for the first time) either on young Timothy (but, if so, the purpose is not clear), or any kind of imposition of hands in the congregation for blessing, healing, or ordination of elders (but, if so, the purpose cannot be determined). By relating the imposition of hands in 1 Timothy 4:14 to the Jewish synagogue custom of appointing elders, it may be possible to infer such a practice here, but again it cannot be determined to what extent the church in Ephesus imitated the Jewish practice and how. Timothy 5:22 is equally difficult to explain. The best exegetical solution is to understand it as an advice to Timothy of not being too hasty in restoring an erring and disciplined elder to his office. That in itself might imply that an elder was inducted by imposition of hands, but the biblical text does not state it.

3.1.3.7 Servants and Ministers. A significant aspect of the development of ecclesiastical roles in the New Testament writings is the wide use of 'servant' or 'minister' (*doulos, diakonos*) for men and women in leadership. While the Greek language had several terms, e.g. 'servant, slave' (*doulos*) and 'servant' in a general sense (*diakonos*), the Hebrew had only one term, namely '*ebed*', which means that behind the Greek distinctions we may in both cases assume the underlying Hebrew concept. 'Servant' (*diakonos*) in a general sense is not the same as the special

⁵²² M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, p. 19.

⁵²³ Acts 20:17; 1 Tim. 4:14; 5:17; Titus 1:5.

church office of ‘deacon’ (*diakonos*), which represents another development in the New Testament church and is mainly linked to the local church in tandem with the ‘overseer’ (*episkopos*).⁵²⁴

Theologically, ‘servant’ and ‘serving’ had a rich background in the Old Testament. Israel (cf. Luke 1:54), Moses (cf. Heb. 3:5), and David (cf. Luke 1:69) were all called ‘servant (of God)’. The same epithet is used about Jesus when the apostles addressed a Jewish audience (e.g. Acts 3:13). Jesus had laid the foundation for a theology of ‘service’ by his teaching, example and sacrificial death,⁵²⁵ and had made ‘service’ the central concept in being a disciple and an apostle.

This conceptual and ideological context is fundamental to any office and leadership roles in early Christianity. Thus, in his sermon on Pentecost, Peter sees the prophecy in Joel 2:28-32 as being fulfilled in the outpouring of the Spirit. God’s authorisation of the Christian church is described as follows:

Acts 2:18 Even on my servants (*douloi*), both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

The Greek term *doulos*, ‘slave servant’, was one of the Septuagint translations of Hebrew ‘*ebed*’ in the Old Testament.⁵²⁶ Among the Greeks, *doulos* had no religious connection but signified ‘slave’ – the opposite of the Greek self-awareness that focused on freedom; it was therefore a negative term for Greeks.⁵²⁷ In the Old Testament and in contemporary Judaism, however, as a translation of the Hebrew ‘*ebed*’, the Greek term *doulos* referred to one who was ‘in a relation of dependence or service which may be forced, or sometimes voluntary, but which is always felt to be restrictive’ and is ‘the usual linguistic form for the relation of the subject to the king in the despotic monarchies of the ancient Orient’.⁵²⁸ Thus, ‘*ebed*, servant, slave’ belongs to the social context of a master-servant relationship in Israel, where it is in opposition to ‘*adon*, ‘lord’, and is used in many different biblical contexts.⁵²⁹

⁵²⁴ ! Tim. 3:1-13.

⁵²⁵ For example: Matt. 10:24-25; 12:18; 20:26; 23:11; 24:45-51; 25:14-30.

⁵²⁶ K. H. Rengstorf, Article ‘*doulos*’, in: *ThDNT*, vol. 2, pp. 265-269.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 261-265.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 266; note the Old Testament passages from ‘royal contexts’ in Israel listed on p. 267.

⁵²⁹ C. Westermann, Article ‘*ebed*’, in: *THAT*, vol. 1, cols.. 183-188.

Considering Peter's application of the prophecy in Joel to the spiritual event of Pentecost and probing further into the Old Testament background, we may draw some important conclusions regarding 'servant' and 'minister':

1. Clearly, *doulos* is rooted in *kingdom terminology*. In the Old Testament, being an '*ebed (doulos)* 'servant, slave', is the logical correspondence of man's relationship to God as 'Lord' and 'King', which is a feature Israel shared with all known Semitic religions. The primary meaning is not the subjection, but the *belonging to and protection by the Lord*.⁵³⁰ Thus, the word 'cannot be used without specifying to whom the service is rendered',⁵³¹ and the attitude of divine service is always connected with God in 'his unconditional majesty and absolute superiority to man'.⁵³²

2. In the Old Testament, '*ebed (doulos)* was adopted into the *language of worship*, describing 'the relationship of dependence and service in which man stands to God'.⁵³³

3. By using the term *doulos*, the young church recognised the absolute authority of God and his servant Jesus Christ who had authorised by his word and the Spirit the service of any leader in his church. Nobody in the New Testament is ever being 'made' a *doulos* by 'ordination', but this is always the work of the Holy Spirit (sent by God and Christ), which means that the charismatic 'ordination' by the Spirit is central.

4. In a biblical understanding of 'ordination', therefore, the term 'servant' or 'minister' always implies a unique and singular subordination to one King and Master, i.e. God or his servant Jesus who is the Head of the church. In this context, therefore, *it distorts the biblical teaching to bring in a secondary subordination such as the submission of women to men (which is a matter dealt with in completely different contexts and mainly referring to issues of order according to local social norms)*. Therefore, *the New Testament nowhere compromises the sovereign authority of God through Christ in calling both men and women as his 'servants' or 'ministers'*.

Acts 4:23-31 is another instructive passage regarding the early references to Christian leaders as 'servants of God' (*douloi theou*). The congregation in Jerusalem

⁵³⁰ Ibid., col. 191.

⁵³¹ K. H. Rengstorf, Article '*doulos*', in: *ThDNT*, vol. 2, p. 267.

⁵³² Ibid., p. 268.

⁵³³ Ibid., col. 267.

is praying to God, the 'Sovereign Lord' who 'made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them', who 'spoke by the Holy Spirit through your servant (*pais theou*), our father David [regarding the rulers taking their stand against God's Anointed One]', and who 'by his power and will had decided beforehand' that Herod and Pontius Pilate would 'conspire with the people in Jerusalem against your holy servant Jesus (*hagios pais theou*), whom you anointed'. The prayer ends in a request that God will enable his servants (*douloi theou*), the apostles, to speak God's word in boldness, and that he will 'stretch out his hand' to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus (*hagios pais theou*). God answers by filling them with his Holy Spirit (4:32). The changing forms of the references to Jesus as 'God's holy servant' (*pais*), David as 'God's servant' (*pais*), and the apostles as 'God's servants' (*douloi*) suggests a *ranking of order in the servanthood to God*. All serve God, but God *anointed* Jesus as his *holy* servant, which suggests a closer connection and a royal or high-priestly role, while the apostles are called to 'speak the word of God'. No other ranking is involved. *No human servants of God are placed above those who are his servants called by the Spirit*. The New Testament church considers unity as a spiritual reality and does not hold on to formal, structural and administrative hierarchies.

In various ways, Acts 4:23-31 also illustrates the intimate connection between the concept of 'servant' with God's absolute sovereignty as Lord and King, and the distinctions between Greek *doulos* and *pais*: thus, 'servant' (*pais*) is more closely and naturally linking God with Jesus (his Anointed) and David (speaking through Scripture), while 'servant' (*doulos*) suggests a submission to God's will, which is prompted by the power of the Holy Spirit, thus 'forcing' the servant to full commitment (cf. the idea of being 'compelled' [by the Holy Spirit] to go, preach and serve, Acts 20:22; 1 Cor. 9:16; 2 Cor. 5:14). *Therefore, a 'servant' or 'minister', be it a man or a woman, who has submitted to God's will by the power of the Holy Spirit, being 'compelled' to full commitment in serving God, should not be prevented from such service by the assembly of the church simply on the grounds of gender. If the spiritual gifts, the divine calling, general qualifications and abilities, and the appropriateness of such service in the social context of the church is established, the church would be going against the will of God by not recognising his/her as a true 'servant' or 'minister'.*

The New Testament church continued to call the apostles *douloi*, 'servants', but other terms were also used. The concept of 'servant' becomes alive and powerful with the Lukan Paul, starting from his call and conversion by the Lord himself. Paul describes it in this way:

Acts 26:15-18 I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. **16** But get up and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint (*procheirizomai*) you as a servant (*hyperetes*) and as a witness (*martys*) to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you. **17** I will rescue you from your people and from the Gentiles – to whom I am sending (*apostello*) you **18** to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

Again, we need to bear in mind that the Greek language offers the possibility of making distinctions in the sense of 'servant', while the Hebrew always used one word. The Greek *hyperetes* in 26:16 is by far the most common Greek term for 'servant' and carries a certain nuance that is relevant in the context in Acts. While in the case of *diakonos* the accent is on 'the objective advantage the service brings to the one to whom it is rendered', the special feature of *hyperetes* is that the servant 'willingly learns his task and goal from another who is over him in an organic order but without prejudice to his personal dignity and worth'.⁵³⁴ The term *hyperetes* is vital in Christ's call of Paul in 26:16 view of Paul's pointed address to King Agrippa in 26:19: 'So, then, I was not *disobedient* to the vision from heaven.'

From this foundational experience of Paul, the usage of 'servant' (*diakonos*, *doulos*, *hyperetes*) is found throughout the New Testament for the apostles and leaders in the church, although clearly with a dominance in the language of Paul and Luke. Thus, 'servant' or 'minister' is used as a 'title' for a spiritual leader, which we can see from its occurrences in the opening greetings in letters: note Peter and John (Acts 4:20 [*douloi*]); Paul (e.g. Rom. 1:1 [*doulos*]; 1 Cor. 4:1 [*hyperetes*]; 2 Cor. 6:4 [*diakonos*]); Paul and his associates (Acts 16:17 [*douloi*]); Paul and Apollos (1 Cor. 3:5 [*diakono*]); Paul and Timothy (Phil. 1:1 [*douloi*]); James (1:1 [*doulos*]); Peter (2 Pet. 1:1 [*doulos*]); Jude (1:1 [*doulos*]). In 2 Timothy 2:24 'servant' (*doulos*) is used as a technical term for a church leader in the context of instructions concerning right behaviour. The young Tychicus is described in Colossians 4:7 as 'a dear brother, a faithful minister (*pistos diakonos*) and fellow servant (*syndoulos*) in the Lord'. It is

⁵³⁴ K. H. Rengstorf, Article '*hyperetes*', in: *ThDNT*, vol. 8, pp. 533-534, 542-543.

noteworthy for the purposes of the present study that Phoebe, a woman, is designed 'servant, minister (*diakonos*) of the church in Cenchreae' (Rom. 16:1); she is not a 'deacon' but a 'minister'.

The apostles that emerged in addition to the twelve, particularly Paul and those working with him, began to call themselves 'servant[s] of the gospel, servant[s] of Christ, servant[s] of God' (Eph. 3:7 [*diakonos*]; cf. 2 Cor. 6:3 [*diakonia*]). This is the foundation of our modern term 'minister'.

The Greek term *diakonos* has both a general sense of 'servant' and a specific, technical sense of 'deacon' as a church official. In the general sense, it is similar to *doulos* and *hyperetes*. It can be used as follows:⁵³⁵

1. 'The waiter at a meal' (John 2:5, 9).
2. 'The servant of a master' (e.g. Matt. 22:13; John 12:26).
3. In a figurative sense, 'the servant of a spiritual power' (e.g. 2 Cor. 11:14-15), particularly of the gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit (e.g. Eph. 3:6-7; Col. 1:23).
4. As the 'servant of the gospel', the apostle is 'the servant of Christ' (2 Cor. 11:3) and the 'servant of God' (2 Cor. 6:3-10). For this sense, *doulos* is the more common term.
5. When Paul mentions his fellow workers, he calls them *diakonoï*, and usually defines 'of whom', i.e. 'of God', 'of Christ', in Christ': note Timothy (1 Thess. 3:1-3; 1 Tim. 4:6), Epaphras (Col. 1:7), Tychicus (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7).
6. Pagan authorities may be called 'servants of God' in the discharge of their office, since they are appointed by God and have the task of maintaining God's order in the world (Rom. 13:1-4).
7. Paul describes himself in Colossians 1:25 as 'servant of the Church' (*ekklesias*) in view of his divinely appointed commission. Similarly, Paul and Apollos are servants of God and of the church (1 Cor. 3:5).

Thus, the New Testament reflects a certain process of development when it comes to 'servants' or 'ministers' of the Lord in the church. There also seems to have been different practices developing in various parts of early Christianity. The terminology is therefore somewhat fluid.

⁵³⁵ Following H. W. Beyer's survey in Article '*diakonos*', in: *ThDNT*, vol 2, pp. 88-89.

3.1.3.8 Women as Servants and Ministers in the Church. We noted earlier that the story of Jesus' life and ministry is initiated by Mary, the mother of Jesus, who refers to herself as 'servant of God' (*doulos theou*) in Luke 1:47 (3.1.3.4). The story of the early church is initiated by Peter addressing the crowd on the day of Pentecost. He tells them that the mighty act of God they have just witnessed, as the Spirit has authorised the church for its mission, is a fulfilment of Joel's prophetic message about the outpouring of the Spirit of God 'on my servants, both men and women' (*epi tous douλους mou kai epi tas doulas mou*) so that 'they will prophesy' (Acts 2:18). It is clear, therefore, that the early church viewed all members as 'servants or ministers' who received the Holy Spirit and expressed themselves by prophetic (spirit-filled) speech. In this regard there was no distinction between men and women.

A similar, inclusive language, which embraces both men and women, is found in 1 Peter 2:16, where the church is admonished to 'live as servants of God' (*douloi theou*). This is stated in the context of a series of house codes (2:13-3:7) following the passage on the church being 'a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God' (1 Pet. 2:4-12). Women are obviously included in these general references to 'servants', as we see from 3:1-7 which addresses wives. Later on in his letter, in 4:7-11, Peter makes an important appeal to men and women in the church, where 'service' (*diakonia*) is a general term for prayer (4:7), love (4:8), hospitality (4:9), and speech (4:11). Interspersed between these portions are two sections that define what it means to be a 'servant':

1 Peter 4:10-11 Each one should serve others (*diakoneo*), according to the gift of grace (*charisma*) received, as good stewards of the grace (*charis*) of God in its various forms. **11** ... If anybody serves (*diakoneo*), it should be with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.

The 'service or ministry' of men and women is based on God's gift of spiritual grace which provides the needed power and strength. The central issue is not the gender of the 'servant or minister' but the glory the service or ministry brings to God.

One of the 'servants or ministers' in the church was 'our sister Phoebe', who is called *diakonos* of the church (*ekklesia*) in Cenchreae, the eastern port of Corinth on the Aegean Sea, and a *prostatis*, 'patron, benefactor' for many people (Rom. 16:1-2). The Greek terms for 'servant' or 'minister' varied somewhat and both for men and women the terms *doulos* and *diakonos* were used interchangeably

(3.1.3.7). Phoebe's function as 'servant or minister' has nothing to do with the modern 'deacon/deaconess' but is an official office of the church and Paul commends her to the church in Rome which she is to visit as an emissary of the Lord. A careful examination of the *diakonia* word group suggests a sense of 'representation or agency'.⁵³⁶ Thus, in calling Phoebe *diakonos*, 'Paul identified her as his agent or intermediary carrying his gospel message, or most specifically, his letter to the Romans'.⁵³⁷ In view of the language in Romans 16:1, being carefully compared to the letter as a whole and other instances in Paul's letters, it is a valid conclusion that Phoebe is acting in the same way as the male *diakonoi*, such as Tychicus (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7) and Timothy and Erastus (Acts 19:22), i.e. Phoebe acts as Paul's emissary, in Paul's name, and with his authority.⁵³⁸ Thus, Paul emphasises Phoebe's role as go-between for the Corinthian churches and the Roman congregation, as well as her specific duty to carry Paul's letter, with his authority.⁵³⁹

However, Phoebe is also called 'sister' and 'patron'. Thus, she is a member of the Christian family, and as patron she had obligations to care for them. The role of 'patron' gave Phoebe status and authority in her home churches, but Paul is recommending her to the church in Rome so that they will reciprocate the favours and help she has given Paul and others elsewhere.⁵⁴⁰

There are some other similar examples of 'servants or ministers' who are women and who by being wealthy and resourceful exerted a significant influence and had authority in the church: e.g. Lydia from Thyatira (Acts 16:14) and the prominent women from Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens recorded by Luke in Acts 17:1-34.⁵⁴¹

Acts 9:36-43 describes Tabitha (Dorcas) in Joppa as 'a disciple who was always doing good things and helping the poor'. This is clearly a ministry, not only to help materially and practically, but to bring the gospel to people by acts of loving kindness and relieving people from poverty to open the doors for the entry of the gospel with the Spirit of God. Tabitha is surrounded by disciples who call for Peter

⁵³⁶ See the references in: L. H. Cohick, *Women in the World of the Early Christians*, 2009, p. 304, footnote 64.

⁵³⁷ Ibid.

⁵³⁸ Ibid. p. 305.

⁵³⁹ Ibid.; cf. J. N. Collins, *Diakonia: Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources*, 1990, p. 194.

⁵⁴⁰ See the extensive study of this matter with the help of contemporary source material regarding the Roman woman Julia Theodora who had considerable political influence, in: L. H. Cohick, *Women in the World of the Early Christians*, 2009, pp. 301-307.

⁵⁴¹ See L. H. Cohick's detailed study (ibid., pp. 307-308).

when she passes away, and it is clear that they were women (9:36). As Tabitha is miraculously resurrected from death by Peter's prayer and spiritual powers, many people come to believe in the Lord.

In his role as an itinerant apostle, Paul connects with a large group of people. Among them we also note the presence of women. One of the recipients of the letter to Philemon is 'Apphia, our sister' (v. 2). She may be Philemon's wife, but it is noteworthy that she is held in high regard and being mentioned before other men in the household and even before 'the church that meets in your home'.

Paul's greetings to twenty-six people in Romans 16, includes nine to women. Obviously, women occupied a prominent place in Paul's entourage. He thinks highly of them all and singles out four (Mary, Tryphenia, Tryphosa and Persis) as having 'worked hard' (*kopiaō*), which in Greek implies strong exertion, and this is not stated about anyone else on the list.⁵⁴²

Besides Phoebe (considered above), Paul mentions also Priscilla and Junia. Junia will be examined in the next section (3.1.3.9). In Romans 16:3 and in three other New Testament instances (Acts 18:18, 26; 2 Tim. 4:19), Priscilla is named before her husband Aquila. Paul calls Priscilla 'my fellow worker in Christ Jesus' (*synergos*), and notes that she and her husband have risked their lives for Paul. Priscilla and Aquila have obviously worked in many churches and seem to be itinerant 'apostles' or 'prophets and teachers', like Barnabas and Paul (cf. Acts 13:1-3 where this role was marked by the imposition of hands), because 'all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them'. In Acts 18:18-28, Luke records the event when Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus explained 'the way of God more adequately' to Apollos, a learned Jew with 'a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures'. Thus, Priscilla was a co-worker with Paul, had an itinerant 'apostolic' ministry, and is thoroughly educated in the Scriptures.

The term 'apostle' is not used about Priscilla, but it is, as we shall see, used about another woman, Junia, in Romans 16:7. We will come back later to an explanation of the term 'apostle' that would apply to both women and men (3.1.3.9).

The clear impression that Paul cooperated in ministry with many different women is further supported by a note in Philippians 4:2-3. Reference is made to Euodia and Syntyche who have a disagreement between themselves, but who 'have

⁵⁴² J. Stott, *Romans: God's Good News for the World*, 1994, pp. 394-396.

contended at my side in the cause of the gospel (*en to euangelio synethlesan moi*), along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers (*meta loipon synergon mou*), whose names are in the book of life'. The Greek *synathleo*, 'struggle together with', is used in Philippians 1:27-30 in reference to standing firm to the point of suffering as one faces opposition to the faith of the gospel, which is the same struggle as that of the apostle Paul. The letter to the Philippians is addressed to 'all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi with the overseers (*episkopoi*) and servants (*diakonoï*)' and it is likely that the struggle for the gospel involved primarily the leaders. When Paul describes the two women as struggling with him *for the gospel (en to euangelio)* together with his other fellow workers, he is referring to their active participation in 'the work of evangelisation'.⁵⁴³

It is obvious that women served as teachers and speakers in early Christianity. Luke records from his and Paul's visit to Philip the evangelist (one of the seven) in Caesarea, that Philip had 'four unmarried daughters who had the gift of prophecy' (Acts 21:9). In Paul's dealings with the issues of church order in the Corinth, he states that 'any woman who prays and prophesies with her head unveiled disgraces her head' (1 Cor. 11:5). Later on, he addresses his 'brothers and sisters' (14:6; cf. 12:1) and says: 'Pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts, and especially that you may prophesy' (14:1). This exhortation follows the description of the church as a body where the Spirit has assigned various gifts to its members – utterance of wisdom and knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment of spirits, various kinds of tongues and interpretation of tongues (12:1-13) – and God has appointed in the church some to be apostles, prophets and teachers, then deeds of power, gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues (12:28-30). The remarkable thing about 1 Corinthians 12 is that Paul does not with one word make a gender distinction regarding who may *function* in these roles or *receive* the gifts of the Spirit. Rather, he states explicitly that 'it is God who activates all [gifts and activities] in everyone' and that 'all these are activities by one and the same Spirit [of God], who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses' (12:6, 11). This teaching is directed to men and women in the church (12:1). Its in-principle openness to men and women as receivers of spiritual gifts and as appointees by God to carry various responsibilities in the church has only two

⁵⁴³ G. Friedrich, Article, 'euangelion', in: *ThDNT*, vol. 2, p. 729.

caveats, which both apply to men and women, namely, the issue of church order (see e.g. 14:26-40) and the need to avoid bringing the gospel in disrepute among outsiders (see e.g. 14:23-25).

In conclusion, it is obvious that women took part in the work of the early church as ‘servants’ and ‘ministers’, alongside the apostles. In one sense of the word, they may also be called ‘apostles’, as we shall see in the next section.

3.1.3.9 Women as Apostles. Paul states in Romans 16:7: ‘Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives who were in prison with me; they are prominent among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.’ (NRSV)

This passage confirms that Junia, a woman, is seen by Paul as a prominent apostle (in some sense). That the name ‘Junia’ is the original text and that it refers to a woman is a well-founded conclusion.⁵⁴⁴ This view has been adequately argued by scholars since the 1970s and is widely accepted.⁵⁴⁵ The translation of *episemoi en tois apostolois* as ‘prominent among the apostles’ was supported by most of the apostolic fathers who express an opinion, and has been the most common view among modern commentators, endorsed by most modern translations.⁵⁴⁶

The information about Junia in Romans 16:7 is significant:

1. The name ‘Junia’ is well attested as a female Roman name, while, for example, the erroneous male name ‘Junias’ is unattested – this is a late insertion in the manuscripts by a copyist who did not accept a female name here. There is no other relevant evidence that has a bearing on this issue.⁵⁴⁷

2. Andronicus and Junia are described as Paul’s ‘relatives’, which probably means that they were of Jewish descent.⁵⁴⁸

3. They are described as Paul’s ‘fellow prisoners’. The Greek term refers to ‘captives taken in war’.⁵⁴⁹ Junia and Andronicus are Paul’s ‘fellow prisoners’ in the

⁵⁴⁴ This has been demonstrated in detail in R. Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 2002, pp. 165-186, 194-198; N. Vyhmeister, ‘Junia the Apostle’, 2013, pp. 6-9.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 166; see also B. J. Brooten, ‘Junia ... Outstanding among the Apostles (Romans 16,7)’, 1977, pp. 141-144; P. Lampe, ‘Junia/Junias: Sklavenherkunft im Kreise der vorpaulinischen Apostel (Röm 16,7)’, 1985, pp. 132-134; *idem*, *Die Städttrömischen Christen in den ersten beiden Jahrhunderten*, 1987; R. S. Cervin, ‘A Note regarding the Name “Junia (s)” in Romans 16,7’, 1994, pp. 464-470; J. Thorley, ‘Junia, a Woman Apostle’, 1998, pp. 18-29.

⁵⁴⁶ R. Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 2002, p. 172; reference is made to the detailed survey in M. H. Burer & D. B. Wallace, ‘Was Junia Really an Apostle? A Re-examination of Rom 16:7’, 2001, pp. 78-84. The challenge to this common view by Burer & Wallace (*ibid.*) has been effectively refuted by Bauckham (*ibid.*, pp. 172-180).

⁵⁴⁷ R. Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 2002, pp. 167-169.

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p. 170.

sense that they too had suffered imprisonment for their allegiance to the gospel (cf. the expressions used of Euodia and Syntyche in Phil. 4:2-3; 3.1.3.8). It is not possible to determine, however, if this means that: (a) at some time when Paul was in prison, they had come to share his confinement in order to encourage him and care for him, or (b) they had been in prison, but not at the same time and place as him, or even (c) they were in prison in Rome when Paul wrote his letter.⁵⁵⁰

4. Together with Andronicus, Junia is 'prominent *among (en)* the apostles'. As mentioned already, there is convincing evidence that the Greek here does not mean 'well known to the apostles'.⁵⁵¹ Thus, Junia is not only an apostle but also 'prominent' or 'marked out, distinguished, outstanding'. What does 'apostle' mean here? Obviously she was not one of the twelve. However, there is a nontechnical sense of the term 'apostle' that Paul uses twice (2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25) to designate official messengers of the churches. Bauckham appropriately points out, however, that 'this cannot be the meaning in Romans 16:7' and says: 'Such people are clearly designated "apostles of the churches" (2 Cor. 8:23) and "your [i.e. the Philippian Christians'] apostle" (Phil. 2:25)', and 'it is hard to see how they could form a known body of people among whom Andronicus and Junia could be said to be outstanding'.⁵⁵² Bauckham's well-founded conclusion is that 'the unqualified "apostles" of Romans 16:7 must refer to the apostles of Christ, whom Paul generally refers to simply as "apostles".' Bauckham continues and points out the following:

But Paul's use of the term in this sense is broader than that of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, who restrict it to the twelve. For Paul the apostles of Christ included not only the twelve but also Barnabas (1 Cor. 9:6), the brothers of the Lord (Gal. 1:19; 1 Cor. 9:5), probably Silvanus/Silas (1 Thess. 2:7), and perhaps Apollos (1 Cor. 4:9), as well as Paul himself. Paul speaks of 'all the apostles' alongside the narrower category of 'the twelve' (1 Cor. 15:5, 7). These are those who have been commissioned by the risen Christ himself in resurrection appearances, since it is in this sense that Paul can regard himself, the last to be so commissioned, as the least of the apostles (1 Cor. 15:9; cf. 9:1). It is important to consider that this category could have been considerably larger than the few names we know, and so there is no difficulty in supposing that Andronicus and Junia belonged to it, especially as Paul says specifically that they were Christians before him.⁵⁵³

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 170.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 170-172.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 172-180.

⁵⁵² Ibid., p. 180.

⁵⁵³ Ibid.

Our previous presentation of the term 'apostle' concurs with the summary provided by Bauckham (3.1.3.3).

5. Andronicus and Junia 'were in Christ before Paul'. This suggests that they were Palestinian Jews or diaspora Jews converted while visiting Jerusalem, and probably members of the early Jerusalem church.⁵⁵⁴ This may be the reason that they are 'prominent' and 'are among the apostles'.

Bauckham presents a very interesting hypothesis regarding Junia in that he shows the possibility that she is identical with Joanna, the wife of Herod's manager Cuza, mentioned in Luke 8:3 and 24:10.⁵⁵⁵ If this is correct, Junia/Joanna is an outstanding apostolic witness in that she witnesses the death and burial of Jesus as well as the empty tomb and is part of the group of women who are asked by the angel to bring the first gospel of Jesus' resurrection to the disciples (Luke 23:27-28, 49, 55-56; 24:1-12). We need not at this point go into the details of Bauckham's proposal regarding Joanna, but the established fact of the existence in Rome of Junia, a woman, as prominent among the apostles, is a significant evidence of women being endorsed as servants, ministers and leaders in the Bible.

3.1.3.10 The Offices of Elder, Overseer, and Deacon. Towards the end of the process that can be traced in the New Testament, rudimentary church 'offices' emerge which would take firmer form in the second century, after the canonical writings of the New Testament. However, as far as the formal induction is concerned, almost no information at all is made explicit in the New Testament. There is therefore a clear danger that later developments, even in our times, are being projected back into the biblical material in order to make the scattered evidence more meaningful. This nevertheless amounts to a distortion of the original Word of God.

The development towards fixed offices with a 'professional' body of leaders cannot be traced in detail, but the following observations are relevant:

1. The twelve disciples/apostles that Jesus instituted as a means of preaching the kingdom of God to Israel, his chosen people, became the leading group of eyewitnesses before and after Pentecost as the church was born. However, from the beginning, the family of Jesus was also involved in leading the young church. Both these groups, however, disappeared and were not replaced.

⁵⁵⁴ See the exposition in *ibid.*, p. 181.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 202.

2. The apostles and elders in Jerusalem were *expanded* by the seven in Acts 6:1-6 in order to relieve the apostles from their practical duties (cf. the judges and elders relieving Moses in Ex. 18 and Numbers 11). It was also *expanded* by a widened concept of 'apostle' which was charismatically defined and may have borrowed the Jewish model of sending 'apostles' (*shelikhim*) to the diaspora synagogues (as exemplified by Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13:1-3).

This *expansion* was driven by both practical and spiritual needs:

(a) It occurred for practical mission purposes through 'apostles of churches' (2 Cor. 8:23), i.e. leaders being appointed by the Holy Spirit and then confirmed, commissioned and sent out by laying on of hands by the church (e.g. Acts 13:1-3). These 'apostles' functioned as itinerant preachers and teachers who founded and organised new congregations. Thus, both Paul and Barnabas are called 'apostles' in Acts 14:4, 14, as they appoint 'elders' in each church (14:23).

(b) The concept of 'apostle' was also expanded *charismatically*, i.e. by a personal sense of calling by God, as in the case of Paul (explicitly set out in 1 Cor. 15:1-10). Paul reveals a concern for arguing that he, too, is an apostle (1 Cor. 9:1-2; Gal. 1:11-19) and introduces most of his letters by the claim that he is an apostle. Thus, Paul seems to have understood 'apostles' as a wider group than being restricted to the twelve and the family of Jesus in Jerusalem. In the local churches, for example in Ephesus, there would now be a variety of classes of leaders set up by Christ for 'preparing God's people for works of service' and for 'building up the body of Christ', and 'apostles' is one of them, albeit the first of those mentioned (Eph. 4:11-12; cf. 1 Cor. 12:28). Consequently, there were 'apostles' that had a closer involvement in the life of the churches that were expanding and growing far beyond Jerusalem and Palestine.

This charismatic expansion of the concept of 'apostle' was also driven by the impact of the destruction of Jerusalem. Power shifted away from the family of Jesus in Jerusalem to those 'chosen by the Spirit' in other cities, particularly in Antioch (cf. Acts 13:1-3; 14:23). Paul's emphasis on spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12) may be understood as anticipating the shift in authority that would be required as the disciples died out.

2. The Pastoral Epistles give some evidence of how the office of apostle was gradually transformed into organised offices in the local churches. Timothy and Titus were not 'apostles', while Paul defines himself as 'a herald (*keryx*), apostle (*apostolos*) and teacher (*didaskalos*)' (1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11). Paul says he has

been 'appointed' (*tithemi*) to these offices and introduces himself as 'Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus *by the will of God*, according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus' (2 Tim. 1:1). Thus, Christ has directly appointed him for his office:

1 Tim 1:12: I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because he judged me faithful and appointed (*tithemi*) me to his service (*diakonia*). (NRSV)

This is in harmony with Christ's direct calling of Paul recorded in Acts 26:15-18, which we considered earlier. His divine appointment as apostle is consistently carried out in the Pastoral Letters. In Titus 1:1, for example, he introduces himself as 'a servant (*diakonos*) of God and an apostle (*apostolos*) of Jesus Christ for the sake of the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that is in accordance with godliness'. He adds that God has 'revealed his word through the proclamation with which I have been entrusted *by the command of God our Saviour*' (1:3). His appointment as apostle is by God's command and the office includes teaching and preaching. However, there is no mentioning of an ecclesiastical authority or a ceremony of 'ordination'. Paul has his *charismatic* apostolate from God, and the decisive test of his ministry is its results and the acceptance of it by the leadership in Jerusalem and the Christian congregations. Early in his Christian ministry, he was endorsed by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-30; Gal. 2:1-10). They recognised 'the grace' (*charis*) given to him (Gal. 2:9) and, to use Paul's own words, that 'God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles' (2:8). While the apostolate of the twelve was a more 'established' order by the appointment of Jesus and functioned at the crucial initiation of the Christian movement in Jerusalem, it was short-lived and disappeared. The charismatic apostolate of Paul was not an ecclesiastical office but rested on God's call, and the title 'apostle' served more as an honorary title besides many others. Eventually, this title gave way to a more organised set of offices held by the leaders of the churches.

3. Quite early, the apostles in Jerusalem are mentioned together with the elders (*presbyteroi*) as one coherent leading group (Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22-23). The seven in Acts 6 may be an example of such a group of elders, although being subordinate to the apostles and the elders in Jerusalem. There is no definition of the

elders' office in the New Testament, but this group may initially have been called 'elders' (*presbyteroi*) or 'servants, ministers' (*diakonoï*).⁵⁵⁶

4. As a general term for apostles and elders of all kinds, the term 'servant, minister' (Hebrew *'ebed*; Greek *doulos, hyperetes, diakonos*) was widely used and seems to have remained strong in the vocabulary even after 'apostle' came out of use. However, the New Testament does not define 'servant/minister' in narrow terms and there is no evidence of an 'ordination' with prayer and imposition of hands for taking such a role in the church.

5. In connection with the emergence of the elders (*presbyteroi*), we noted above that Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in local churches. This practice included 'committing them with prayer and fasting'. However, there is no mentioning of imposition of hands – the sense of the Greek term *cheirotoneo*, 'appoint', in Acts 14:23 is 'appoint' either by imposition of hands or raising hands in a congregational vote. However, the practice of prayer and fasting seems to have been continued by Paul and Barnabas in 'every' local congregation (Acts 14:23) and seems to have become a pattern in churches under the oversight of Paul (1 Tim. 2:7; 4:14; 5:22; 2 Tim. 1:6; Titus 1:5). This eventually gave rise to regular offices in the local churches, namely the 'elder' (*presbyteros*), who were many and formed the 'presbytery' (1 Tim. 4:14) and who were led by an 'overseer, bishop' (*episkopos*), as we see in 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

6. From 1 Timothy and Titus, we may conclude that the terms 'elder' and 'overseer' were initially interchangeable. In Timothy 3:1-7, Paul instructs Timothy regarding the qualifications of the 'overseer' (*episkopos*), but later on in 5:17-21 he gives other instructions regarding 'the elders' (*presbyteroi*) who 'direct the affairs of the church and are worthy double honour, especially those whose work is teaching and preaching'. In Titus 1:5-9, Paul acknowledges that Titus was left in Crete in order to 'appoint (*kathistemi*) elders (*presbyteroi*) in every town' according to Paul's instructions. It seems that these instructions are summarised in 1:6-9, where Paul describes the qualifications of an 'elder'. It is noteworthy, however, that Paul uses 'elder' (*presbyteros*) and 'overseer, bishop' (*episkopos*) interchangeably here (1:5, 7). These terms may either refer to the same office, or they overlap in some way; the

⁵⁵⁶ As convincingly demonstrated by R. M. Johnston, 'Shapes of Ministry in the New Testament and Early Church', 1998, pp. 48-51.

'overseer' may have had an overseer's functions and responsibilities while being at the same time an 'elder' who belonged to the 'presbytery'.

7. Paul also mentions another office in 1 Timothy 3:8-13, which is the 'deacon', servant' (*diakonos*). Again, all we have is a list of qualifications, but no information on the procedure of appointment or 'ordination' or the imposition of hands. In Philippians 1:1, Paul addresses the readers as 'all the saints in Christ Jesus in Philippi, together with the overseers (*episkopoi*) and deacons (*diakono*i). It may be that the deacon was a 'servant' to the 'overseer', an assistant in leadership, in the same way that the 'judges' (Ex. 18:22) and the 'seventy elders' (Num. 11:16-17, 24-25) assisted Moses, and the seven assisted the apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 6:1-6). Both church officials would at the same time qualify as 'servants of God' or 'servants of Christ'.

8. It is possible that the model of an overseer and deacon besides a 'presbytery' was influenced by the practice in the Jewish synagogues, where there were two offices leading the worship. One was called the 'head of the synagogue' (*archisynagogos*) and the other 'servant' (*hyperetes*).⁵⁵⁷ The direction of the synagogue was in the hands of the presbytery or council of elders, and this is an institution that we find in the church in Ephesus according to 1 Timothy 4:14.

9. For churches that had been built essentially on Jewish converts, it would be natural to expect that the practice of the synagogue would have a determining impact. As the church continued to grow among the Gentiles, however, this Jewish influence may have been less strong and various kinds of models may have been used, thus producing a growing variety and flexibility.

10. In the local church setting, however, as we see from Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus, a variety of 'services' were offered based on spiritual gifts or *charismata* which Jesus has apportioned to each one (Eph. 4:7). In Ephesians 4:11 we have a set of functions that existed in the church in Ephesus (and in many other places): apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. The term for 'pastor' (*poimen*) occurs only here in the New Testament and is not defined, but it may be originally connected with the concept of a leader as 'shepherd' of the flock.⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵⁷ H. W. Beyer, Article '*diakonos*', in: *ThDNT*, vol. 2, pp. 89-93.

⁵⁵⁸ See Num. 27:17; Mat. 2:6; John 10:11; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 2:25; 5:4; Rev. 7:17.

In conclusion, the New Testament church reveals a *developmental process* regarding appointments to leadership. This ‘progressive revelation’ is vital in a biblical theology of ordination. The following points are particularly relevant:

1. The initial council of elders in Jerusalem, which seems to have been led by the family of Jesus, eventually disappeared. The leadership of the twelve eyewitnesses-apostles was supplemented by the seven in Acts 6, for whom prayer and imposition of hands was applied, and by the charismatic role as (itinerant) apostle that was carried by Paul and others, who were directly called by Christ and the Spirit. Paul and Barnabas were set apart for an itinerant role of visiting churches and appointing elders in every church (Acts 13:1-3; 14:23; cf. Tit. 1:5), and for this itinerary, they received the imposition of hands in Antioch. However, the role of apostle never developed into a formal office, but those of elder/overseer and deacon in the local church did. The latter had precedence in the Jewish organisation of the synagogue and their formal nature may have been taken over from there. However, there is no clear, final conclusion of the structure, function and ordination of any church office in the New Testament. This comes in the post-biblical era during struggles with threats from Gnosticism, heresies, and the pressure from the persecuting Roman authorities.

2. While the New Testament is explicit in regard to the fundamental importance of being called by the Spirit and equipped by spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12), it also supports *pragmatic* reasons for leadership selection. For example, virtually all leaders in the church were bi-lingual, which was vital in the multi-cultural Roman-Hellenistic-Jewish environment and aided them in their itinerant ministry. At times, we see that specific pairs of ‘apostles’ were formed simply because of abilities and compatible personalities (Acts 15:36-41). These considerations give force to the conclusions that (a) the needs of the church also determine leader selection, and that (b) dependence on gender is irrelevant in principle but may be resorted to in certain settings where the internal order and external environment of the church renders it temporarily practical.

3.1.3.11 The Gender of Overseers and Deacons of the Church. In 1 Timothy 3:1-13, the apostle Paul outlines to young Timothy his instructions regarding overseers (*episkopoi*) and servants (*diakonoï*) in the church in Ephesus. Does the

male gender of these officials in the text mean that, today, only males can be overseers and servants in the church? We think not, and the reasons are as follows.

Taken as a whole, Paul's First Letter to Timothy contains instructions for dealing with the issues of false teaching and making the church in Ephesus prosper and function well. The section in 3:1-13 is part of the extended passage in 1:18-3:16 where Paul deals with public church worship and the responsible leaders of the church. This passage is framed by hymnic passages in 1:17 and 3:16. In its beginning (1:18) and end (3:14-15), Paul explains why he gives his instructions: 'Hoping that I will come to you soon, I am writing this to you, so that if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth' (3:14-15).⁵⁵⁹

The two sections in 3:1-7 and 3:8-13 describe the qualifications of an overseer and a servant, but also the ethical standards by which they accomplish their tasks. The passage in 3:1-7 is virtually repeated in Titus 1:5-9 with the same words or similar concepts, and the parallel passage for the servant in 3:8-13 is also very similar, albeit somewhat shorter. The charge to Timothy in 5:11-16 also covers essentially the same features.

The recurring concept in all these passages is that of being 'blameless' (*anepileptos*, 1 Tim. 3:1; 6:14; *anegkletos*, 1 Tim. 3:10; Titus 1:6). In the following, therefore, we will focus our attention on 3:1-7 as a model passage. A fairly literal translation reads as follows:

1 Timothy 3:1-7 ... if someone aspires to the office of oversight (*episcopo*) he desires a good work. **2** Now an overseer (*episkopos*) ought to be blameless, the husband of one wife, sober, temperate, orderly, hospitable, with a gift of teaching, **3** not over-fond of wine, not violent but considerate, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money. **4** He must supervise his own house well, keeping his children in submission in all dignity **5** (for if somebody does not know how to supervise his own house, how will he look after the church of God?). **6** He must not be a recent convert, so that he is not conceited and falls into the same condemnation as the devil. **7** He must also have a good reputation among those outside, so that he will not fall into disgrace which is a snare of the devil.

The '[office of] oversight' (*episcopo*) is the office or function of the overseer (cf. Acts 1:20), and it is an office that may be sought and aspired to. However, the passage does not define the tasks of the office and there is no reference to an 'ordination' for

⁵⁵⁹ For the central role of 3:14-16 in the letter as a whole and the translation of Greek *hedraioma* as 'foundation', see A. T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 1982, pp. 81-86.

it. If we were to assume that the overseer/servant in Ephesus was based on the Jewish synagogue model, it is important to recognise that those offices were not associated with ‘ordination’, for in the Jewish setting ‘ordination’ was a scribal ordination with the specific idea of duplicating Moses (3.4).

Paul’s instruction in 3:1-7 is stated in the third person with reference to the order of the local church. He does not apply his instruction directly to Timothy, who is nowhere referred to as an ‘overseer’ or ‘elder’ in the Bible. Consequently, we are looking at a list of qualifications of a local church leader, not an itinerant apostolic servant like Timothy or the apostle Paul. The local nature of the office means that issues pertaining to the Graeco-Roman city of Ephesus in Asia Minor are relevant for an understanding of the passage.

In view of the interchangeability between ‘overseer’ (*episkopos*) and ‘elder’ (*presbyteros*) – see 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 4:14; 5:17-21; Titus 1:5-9 – it is not clear if this office is to be held by a local church ‘elder’ in the ‘presbytery’, or the ‘head’ of the local church. The church in Ephesus may have followed the Jewish synagogue practice of having two officers leading the worship, one being called the ‘head of the synagogue’ (*archisynagogos*) and the other ‘servant’ (*hyperetes*).⁵⁶⁰ The direction of judicial matters in the synagogue was in the hands of the presbytery or council of elders, and this institution existed in the church in Ephesus (1 Tim. 4:14). The overseer in our passage may therefore be a ‘presbyter/elder’ with certain responsibilities, or an ‘overseer’ who governed while being at the same time an ‘elder’ and the leading member of the presbytery (3.1.3.6). The uncertainty derives from the fact that our passage does not describe the tasks and responsibilities of the overseer, but only the qualifications.

Three things stand out in the passage of 3:1-7 as a whole:

1. The qualifications listed for the overseer illustrate the spiritual Christian values according to Paul’s teaching in Galatians 5:13-26, for they systematically refer to the ‘desires of the flesh’ that must be avoided (Gal. 5:19-21) and the ‘fruit of the Spirit’ that is to be displayed (Gal. 5:22-23). Thus, they describe the inner, spiritual qualifications of the candidate and express the ideal of *eusebeia*, ‘godliness’ or ‘piety’, which Paul places at the centre of his instructions in 1 Timothy 4:1-16 (note 4:7-10; cf. 6:11). Thus, these are qualifications that pertain to all Christians, men and

⁵⁶⁰ H. W. Beyer, Article ‘*diakonos*’, in: *ThDNT*, vol. 2, pp. 89-93.

women. The concept of *eusebeia* is one of the key virtues in Graeco-Roman Hellenism, and we see how the apostle Paul builds on it, for example, in his speech to the Athenians in Acts 17:22-34, where it is used in 17:23 to establish a positive, common ground with the audience. Not the least in the city of Ephesus, where the goddess Diana was fervently worshipped (see our exegesis of 1 Tim. 2:8-15; 3.1.3.2), *eusebeia* would be expected by a religious leader and give him honour and respect: ‘The true content of *eusebeia* for the educated Greek is reverent and wondering awe at the lofty and pure world of the divine, its worship in the cultus, and respect for the orders sustained by it. It is not being under the unconditional claim of a personal power. Hence *eusebeia* can be an *arete* [“virtue”] in the Greek sphere; it is one virtue among others, e.g. *sofrosyne* [“self-discipline”].’⁵⁶¹

Thus, Paul describes in our passage the qualifications of an overseer who has *eusebeia*, that special virtue that commanded respect among the church members (especially various factions arguing about true and false teachings) but also among those outside, who valued *eusebeia* highly, albeit in worshipping pagan gods, and to whom the gospel could only be conveyed if they respected and honoured the leaders of the church.

2. A second point of interest in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 is that the qualifications include only one element relating to the actual performance of the overseer’s tasks, namely ‘having the gift of teaching’ (*didaktikos*), while there is an overwhelming number of terms describing aspects of ‘self-discipline’ (*sofrosyne*): ‘sober, temperate, orderly, not over-fond of wine, not violent but considerate, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money, not being conceited’. We may note here that ‘self-discipline’ is a repeated virtue in 1 Timothy 2:9, 16; 3:2; and Titus 1:8. In view of our first observation above, this points in the direction of a need to describe the overseer as a virtuous person, one with *eusebeia*, and *sofrosyne*, who would command respect of church members and outsiders alike.

3. A third point of interest concerns the emphasis on being ‘blameless’, which, as noted previously, occurs in the parallel description of the overseer/elder in Titus 1:5-9, as well as in the description of the deacon in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and the charge to Timothy in 6:11-16. This concept is connected with a series of references to actions that preserve the overseer’s reputation and especially gives him honour

⁵⁶¹ W. Foerster, Article ‘*eusebeia*’ etc., in: *ThDNT*, vol. 7, p. 178; note also the function of this concept in Hellenistic Judaism and the New Testament (*ibid.*, pp. 179-181, 181-184).

according to the customs widely accepted in the Graeco-Roman (including Jewish-Hellenistic) society. A review of these customs tells us the following:

(a) If we understand 'being the husband of one wife' as referring to the act of avoiding a second marriage after the death of the spouse, this was held in high regard as being an act of honour in Graeco-Roman society;⁵⁶² if we understand it as a reference to the rules for the high priest in Israel, who could only marry a virgin and not a widow, a divorced woman, or a prostitute (see Lev. 21:13-14), the same act would generate honour and respect among Jewish people.

(b) The qualification of 'hospitality' is another honourable virtue rooted in *eusebeia* in both Graeco-Roman and Jewish society (besides the divine obligations in Ex. 22:20; 23:9; Lev. 19:22, see also Rom. 12:13; 1 Tim. 5:10; Titus 1:8; Hebr. 13:2; 1 Pet. 4:9).⁵⁶³

(c) Being able to supervise one's own house and keeping one's children in submission 'with all dignity (*semnotes*)' was another highly regarded virtue at the time.⁵⁶⁴

(d) The emphasis on 'not being conceited' and thus avoiding *hybris* is yet another example; in Homer, *hybris* is 'to trespass beyond one's own sphere', and 'often the arrogant, wild and unrighteous are contrasted with the hospitable who are minded to fear God'.⁵⁶⁵

(e) The list in 1 Timothy 3 sums up these features by finally underlining the needs to maintain a 'good reputation' among outsiders and avoid any 'disgrace' (*oneidismos*). Thus, *the overseer's qualifications are meant to keep him blameless in the public eye, to preserve his good reputation and make him honourable to outsiders as a man with true eusebeia, 'godliness'*.

What is then the purpose of these qualifications in view of the wider context in 1 Timothy 1:18-3:16? The answer is found in the key passage in 2:1-7. Paul urges that the worship in the church be characterised by 'supplications', prayers,

⁵⁶² See the four main interpretations of this expression in: Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 1982, pp. 77-78. Note especially the evidence provided for the high regard in Graeco-Roman society for avoiding a second marriage after the death of a spouse (p. 77).

⁵⁶³ V. H. Kooy says: '[Hospitality] was recognised as a sacred duty throughout the Mediterranean world, and more heartily and stringently kept than many a written law.' (Article 'Hospitality', in: *IDB*, vol. 2, p. 654). The same author also outlines the examples in the Old and New Testaments (*ibid.*). For a careful review of biblical hospitality and its cultural context, especially its roots in *eusebeia*, 'godliness', see S. Thompson, 'The Boundaries of Christian Hospitality in a Postmodern Setting', 2009, pp. 327-331.

⁵⁶⁴ Cf. B. J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 2001, pp. 30-31.

⁵⁶⁵ G. Bertram, Article '*hybris*' etc., in: *ThDNT*, vol. 8, p. 296.

intercessions, and thanksgivings for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness (*eusebeia*) and dignity (*semnotes*) (2:1-2; cf. 3:4). The reason is who God is and what he wants: 'This is right and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth. For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself a ransom for all' (2:3-6). It is for this gospel of God about Jesus Christ that Paul has been 'appointed a herald and an apostle ... a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth' (2:7). Thus, *the qualifications of the overseer are motivated by the mission of God to the world and serve to build trust and acceptance of the gospel of Christ among outsiders*. This is, consequently, an important principle that needs to be considered in a theology of ordination.

Before we draw some conclusions from these observations, a word is appropriate on the major difference between the culturally conditioned views of the status and role of women in Ephesus during the first century and modern 'western-type' societies. Both in first-century Judaism and Christianity, the offices of overseers and elders seem to have been reserved for males. Ephesus was a Graeco-Roman, Hellenistic city with a Jewish minority. The Jewish institution of elders went back to the patriarchal customs of letting the first-born male represent the clans and families in Israel.⁵⁶⁶ The Graeco-Roman and Jewish customs of using 'overseers' (*episkopoi*) reveal that this could be both a general term for anyone who had the responsibility of a 'protective care' or 'supervisory' function, and a technical term for specific office holders like 'state officials or governors'.⁵⁶⁷ The Graeco-Roman and Jewish laws as well as the common cultural values of the society created a situation where 'women had, in comparison to men, a clearly restricted access to various political, economic, and social resources of public life'.⁵⁶⁸ Thus, 'women were generally excluded from holding public office as senators, equestrians, decurions, or judges, as well as subordinate positions'.⁵⁶⁹ Particularly the inferior legal status of women prevented them from functioning as rulers and judges,⁵⁷⁰ which were functions included in the

⁵⁶⁶ See G. Bornkamm, Article '*presbys, presbyteros*' etc., in: *ThDNT*, vol. 6, pp. 651-683.

⁵⁶⁷ See H. W. Beyer, Article '*episkopos*', in: *ThDNT*, vol. 2, pp. 608-622.

⁵⁶⁸ E. W. Stegemann & W. Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 1999, p. 364.

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 365.

⁵⁷⁰ See K. Thraede, Article '*Frau*', in: *Reallexicon für Antike und Christendom*, vol. 8, pp. 197-269; cf. E. W. Stegemann & W. Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 1999, p. 369.

offices of both overseers and elders. It is therefore no surprise that 1 Timothy 3:1-7 describes the qualifications of only male overseers in the church. It was the right thing to do in Ephesus in the first century, because it served the mission of God and helped build the church and promote the gospel among Graeco-Roman outsiders.

Thus, in its specific historical setting, the overseer's qualifications are *subordinate* to the overarching *purpose* of ensuring trust among outsiders, actually *both* in the overseer (3:1-7) and the deacon (3:8-13) as church representatives, and to facilitate an acceptance of the gospel of Christ among outsiders. The lists of qualifications both for the overseer and the deacon conclude emphatically with references to their reputation among outsiders and warnings against 'falling into disgrace' and exhortations to 'gain a good standing for themselves' (3:7, 13).

The fact that 'being the husband of one wife' is used here about both the overseer and the deacon, while *diakonos* in the masculine form and used in a formal office title ('servant of the church in Cenchreae') was used by the same author, Paul, about a woman (Rom. 16:1), shows that the mere wording 'husband of one wife' is not an indication that an overseer and a deacon *must be males*. The phrase 'husband of one wife' is a culturally accepted set-phrase or a *cliché* which was applied to both men and women to demonstrate their decency and honour. In Graeco-Roman society, 'the woman who had remained with one husband all her life, or who when widowed had not remarried, was honoured'.⁵⁷¹ The epithet *unavira* ('married to one man only') is often found on epitaphs,⁵⁷² and Paul applies it to the widows in Ephesus in 1 Timothy 5:9. The fact that Paul nevertheless urges remarriage for younger widows in 1 Timothy 5:14 shows that he did not apply the set-phrase 'married to one man/woman only' as a dictate for the Christian community, but that it had to do with decency, propriety, and respect among outsiders in the specific local culture in Ephesus.

Focusing on the wording of the Greek text as a de-contextualised, propositional *text*, we note some gender-neutral elements:

1. Paul says in 3:1: 'If *someone* (*tis*, which can refer to male or female) aspires to the office of oversight, he/she (the verb is in the third person singular and may refer to male or female) desires a good work' (cf. Titus 1:6). He continues in 3:2,

⁵⁷¹ A. T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 1982, p. 77.

⁵⁷² See M. Lightman & W. Zeisel, 'Unavira: An Example of Continuity and Change in Roman Society', *Church History* 46, 1977, pp. 93-104.

saying, literally: ‘thus, it is appropriate for an overseer (*episkopos*) to be blameless’. In the same way that masculine forms of words in modern languages may refer to men and women, the form *episkopos* is not in itself gender-exclusive.

2. The entire list of qualifications in 3:1-7 follows the same formal pattern: nouns and adjectives are in the masculine, but this may represent both a male and female reference, and the verbs are in the third person singular, which may refer to male and female. The only possible exception might be ‘the husband of one wife’ in 3:2, but the same phrase is used in a feminine form about the widows in 5:9, and we have pointed out earlier that this phrase is a standard *cliché* referring to respectability and that it was applicable both to males and females in the local culture of Ephesus. All the seventeen qualities, therefore, can be attributed to both a man and a woman.

3. What we have noted in points one and two may be further supported by the way in which the use of the masculine form is used for inclusive reference to male and female in Hebrew and Greek. As in many languages and societies today, gendered (usually male) word-forms are used anytime one wishes to refer to both men and women together. It is well-known that in the Hebrew Old Testament, the masculine gender is always inclusive of both male and female, unless the context would indicate that the reference is specifically male. The same applies to New Testament Greek. For example, in Exodus 20:17 the Israelites are told ‘You shall not covet your neighbour’s house ... wife ... or male or female slave ... or ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour’ (NRSV). The masculine form of the acting person includes both men and women. The fact that the commandment does not mention a woman’s ‘coveting of a husband’ does not mean that the commandment allows a woman to covet her neighbour’s husband. Similarly, in 1 Timothy 3:2 (and Titus 1:6), ancient Greek had no word for the gender-neutral ‘spouse’, so the expression ‘husband [of one wife]’ in 1 Timothy 3:2 does not indicate that the list of qualifications concerns only men, but the list is formally gender-neutral.

These observations simply mean that the *wording* of the text in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 does not exclude women from being included as ‘overseers’.

The crucial evidence for an interpretation must be found in the literary context of 1 Timothy and the situational and cultural context in Ephesus. We have seen earlier that, in 1 Timothy 2:8-15, Paul is addressing specific challenges to peace and

harmony in the Ephesian church which emanated from women serving as false teachers and wielding inappropriate influence over the congregation. Coupled with that concern, the normal rules of propriety at the time would imply that a wife was in submission to her husband. Thus, in 1 Timothy as a whole, Paul is addressing specific local issues in Ephesus where women posed a threat to the gospel, to a harmonious worship of God, and to the spiritual unity of the congregation. Although the list of qualifications for an 'overseer' in 3:1-7 does not literally or in-principle exclude a woman from such an office, it is quite likely that the situational context in Ephesus at the time made it prudent and wise not to place a woman in that role. If a woman was married, submission to her husband would be expected in the patriarchal setting. If she was not married, the male and female false teachers and their dangerous threat to the harmony of congregational life would have made her leadership role questionable, simply because of the distorted doctrines of womanhood that were included in the on-going church conflict (3.1.3.2, passage 5). Paul is explicitly concerned with the inner harmony in the Ephesian church and the honour and respect that the church manifested towards outsiders, for the sake of the gospel.

For the purpose of the present study, therefore, the appropriate way to look at the matter is to say, firstly, that the historical and cultural setting on this particular occasion created a need for a male overseer (not necessarily for the servant; note the references to women in 3:11 in the midst of the list of instructions for the servant). However, this need (a) emerged *ad hoc* in the specific Ephesian setting due to unique circumstances related to this particular city, and it (b) addressed cultural values of propriety, decency, and honour, which were peculiar to the first-century Ephesian setting, and which had to be adhered to if the gospel was to have a chance of being accepted by outsiders.

Secondly, the principle underlying 1 Timothy 3:1-7 is that *the overseer should be in good standing among the outsiders*. It provides a model for any overseer, man or woman, provided that the environment of mission is such that either of the two genders is considered 'decent' by the church and the people it seeks to reach with the gospel. A list of the overseer's qualifications in a matriarchal society in India, for example, would not say 'husband of one wife', but 'wife of one husband'. And in egalitarian modern societies where it is a serious offence to violate egalitarian

principles and prohibit a woman from leadership, the gospel will be best served by both men and women serving as overseers.

The church needs to apply today the same principle that was applied by Paul for the early church in Ephesus – this is how we show faithfulness to Paul’s teaching in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 (cf. the principle of biblical interpretation outlined in 2.4 above). The principle is to request an overseer in the church, even a gospel minister, to provide qualifications and virtues that generate trust and a good reputation for the church and for the gospel, so that God’s mission of salvation may become successful. (Certainly, the boundaries for those qualifications are to be defined by the ethical teachings of Christ.)

3.1.3.12 The Role of Women in the Expansion of Early Christianity. The second-century pagan intellectual and critic of Christian faith, Celsus, made some radical statements regarding women’s central involvement in the evangelising strategies of the early Christians.⁵⁷³ Starting from this point of view, Margaret MacDonald has examined the role of women in the expansion of early Christianity. Her conclusion, based on the available historical sources, may be summarised as follows:

1. Women were central in the evangelistic expansion of Christianity in the Roman Empire.

2. They were involved in diverse roles, such as patrons, heads of households, mothers, teachers, and various kinds of ambassadors of the new faith.

3. The unifying element was the household life. Women were either meeting together in a house or home, seeking to build believing homes, or they were struggling to preserve Christian allegiance in the home of a pagan householder.

4. Women did move in and out of houses and shops, taking risks and leading people – including children – to join the movement without permission from the ‘proper’ authorities. They did so, it seems, while conducting their daily business. No doubt they sometimes remained largely invisible, but in other cases they met with real resistance both inside and outside of church groups. They displayed a

⁵⁷³ See Origen, *Contra Celsum* 3.44 and 3.50; quoted in M. Y. MacDonald, ‘Was Celsus Right? The Role of Women in the Expansion of Early Christianity’, 2003, pp. 157-158.

combination of boldness, affront, and concealment, which is a significant explanation of the rise of early Christianity.⁵⁷⁴

In her comprehensive study, MacDonald traces this major force in the growth of the Christian church to the New Testament with numerous references to women working as evangelists and heads of house churches, using their household as a basis. Reference is made to many of the instances we have noted in the previous presentation. Thus, the prominence of women in church work as widows, teachers and prophets is carefully reconstructed on the basis of the biblical evidence.⁵⁷⁵ Attention is also called to the evangelistic and ministerial *partnerships* created between the male and female gospel workers, sometimes between male and female, sometimes between male and male, and sometimes between female and female: Priscilla and Aquila (Rom. 16:3-4; 1 Cor. 16:19), Andronicus and Junia (Rom. 16:7), Euodia and Syntyche (Phil. 4:2-3), Tryphenia and Tryphosa (Rom. 16:12). The nature of this partnership was not limited to husband and wife,⁵⁷⁶ but it was formed for strategic and practical purposes and following the instruction of Jesus' when he sent out of the seventy-two apostles, two and two (Luke 10:1).

3.1.4 Summary and Conclusions

We will summarise our findings regarding what the Bible teaches on men and women as servants or ministers of God. Some conclusions will be added.

1. Man and Woman Equally 'Ordained' as Royal-Priestly Servants or Ministers. According to Genesis 1:1-2:4a (3.1.1.1), from the beginning, God commissions ('ordains') man and woman as equal royal-priestly servants and ministers under his oversight in a world alluded to as a sanctuary and dwelling-place of God. Being created in the image of God, man and woman have dominion over the created world, they represent God to the world, and function as mediators. They are already the 'royal priesthood' which God establishes in Israel (Ex. 19:5-6), in the Christian church (1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10), and in the end-time church which carries on in the new heaven and the new earth (Rev. 1:5-7; 5:9-10; 20:3; 21:1-22:6). Having

⁵⁷⁴ M. Y. MacDonald, 'Was Celsus Right? The Role of Women in the Expansion of Early Christianity', 2003, p. 184; cf. pp. 157-184.

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 168-172.

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 162-168.

dominion over the world implies being fruitful, increasing, and filling the earth with human descendants, and, for this purpose, God *blesses* man and woman.

2. Husband and Wife Paired as Equals in the Sanctuary of the Garden of Eden. Genesis 2:4b-25 (3.1.1.2) confirms the fundamental parity between man and woman established in chapter 1. It deepens the relational and intimate aspects of marriage implied in the blessing and charge to be fruitful and increase in 1:28. While joined in marriage 'as one flesh', the environment in the Garden of Eden is in more detail marked as a sanctuary where God lives with the humans. Thus, the *priestly* role of man and woman, while married, is still implied.

Genesis 2:4b-25 provides *no evidence* of an inferiority of woman to man. A point by point study of arguments that have been adduced in favour of an alleged divinely-ordained hierarchical view of the genders shows that the biblical text in Genesis 2 does not express such a view. Man and woman before the Fall are fully equal, related in a cooperative interdependence, and without the slightest hint of headship of one over the other. They share the headship over their mutual relationship, the Garden of Eden, and the world, under God's authority, and function as his royal-priestly servants or ministers.

3. Change and Continuity after the Fall. The human Fall recorded in Genesis 3 (3.1.1.3) changes the conditions of the humans as God's royal-priestly servants, but God and his mission remain the same.

The human guilt and shame change their relationship to God and each other; they now know good and evil, which transcends their humanity, and they can therefore no longer serve as mediators in the Eden sanctuary, so they are expelled from the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:22-24). But their mediatory role continues on earth, although it now requires mediation and atonement for themselves, too (3:21).

The husband and wife have refused to accept their dependence on God, so they become dependent on their origin. The wife's punishment is that she will experience pain in childbearing and childbirth, and she will be dependent on her husband from whom she was taken. The husband's punishment is that he will eat of the cursed ground 'by the sweat of his face' and the ground will yield its food only by his painful toil with it; thus he becomes dependent on the ground from which he was taken. Humans will live only a limited time and will return to dust from where they came. However, God is still committed to uphold his blessing upon male and female

(Gen. 1:28), and he demonstrates not only justice in dealing with their transgression but also care and provision to reduce their misery.

In particular, God rearranges things within his mission. He gives the promise of human salvation from evil by 'the woman's seed' (3:15). He safeguards the marriage relationship, so that the woman's pain in childbearing and childbirth, and the man's painful toil with the ground, will not threaten 'the woman's seed', but through the generations of new humans, men and women, God has the plan to carry out his mission. He also indicates by dressing man and woman with animal skins that their priestly function in the Garden of Eden should continue after their expulsion into the world without God's visible presence. The animal skins symbolise both a priestly role for man and woman but also that humans must live while paying the price of their transgression. God's command not to eat the fruit in Eden was connected with the injunction that humans would die if they transgressed the command. The price of death is symbolised by animals that are to be sacrificed in the place of man (note the important concept in Gen. 9:4-7). Thus, in Genesis 3, the election of Abraham as the father of the people of Israel and the priestly sanctuary service are prefigured, however in a veiled way which is understood only later, in Genesis – Deuteronomy. In the light of the New Testament, of course, these hints are finally fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the 'woman's seed', the final sacrifice for human life, and the high-priest who makes his people, men and women in the church his priestly servants or ministers.

4. The Meaning of Genesis 3:16. This significant passage should be read in the context of the mission of God in the Bible, of Genesis 1-3, of God's judgement as well as his caring provision, and with close attention to the nuances of meaning in each Hebrew term. The preferable translation is:

- a. I will greatly increase your pain in childbearing;
- b. with pain you will give birth to children;
- c. yet your longing will be for your husband;
- d. and he will be responsible for you.

The internal logic of these four phrases is that (a) the pain in childbearing and childbirth may prevent procreation in that the woman may seek to avoid her pain and will be in great need of support during childbearing and childbirth; (b) thus, acting as caring provider, God introduces an antithesis ('yet') in 3:16c: the wife's (positive) 'longing' for man will safeguard human procreation, and the husband's responsible

provision and care for her will alleviate the burden of childbearing and childbirth. The sense of ‘rule over’ for *mashal be* in the Hebrew text of 3:16d is not the only sense in the semantic range of the word. As some examples from Genesis show, the sense is best taken in this context as ‘be responsible for’, ‘take charge of’, or ‘care for’.

Consequently, there is no hierarchic ordering of the status of man and woman in Genesis 3:16. Moreover, the relationship defined here concerns husband and wife in the marriage relationship, not man and woman in general. The egalitarian status of man and woman – as royal-priestly governors and servants of God (Genesis 1:26-28) and as husband and wife in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2-3) – continues, although with serious restrictions. The Old Testament contains no indication that Genesis 3:16 was understood and applied as a divine injunction that man was to ‘rule over’ woman or as a divine prohibition against a woman being the ‘head of men’ in public or communal life. The examples of women in leadership roles in the Old Testament are recorded without any criticism or disapproval whatsoever.

4. The Priesthood of Cain and Abel. God’s investiture in the Garden of Eden of man and woman as priests (Gen. 3:20) is *followed* by the story of Cain and Abel – thus, together with their procreation, the first activity of the humans after the expulsion from Eden is to offer priestly sacrifices (Gen. 4:1-5). Cain and Abel, the two first-born humans, serve as priests giving offerings to God for their sins, but only Abel’s offering of animals is regarded by God (4:2-5). God’s corrective action of replacing the clothing of leaves with clothing of skin, the latter presuming the shedding of blood of an animal, is in 9:4-6 directly linked to the explanation of animal sacrifices as a replacement for the death of man which he merits on account of his transgression (2:17). Thus, it is appropriate that the first act of the firstborn human beings is to offer sacrifices. This leads to a discussion about right and wrong offerings and how humans deal with sin (4:6-7).

5. The Priesthood of Noah as a Prefiguration of Israel and the Church. The priesthood is then *confirmed* by Noah on behalf of all humanity after the Flood, when he builds an altar to the Lord and offers burnt-offerings of the clean animals (8:20). This act is a *prefiguration* of the mediating ministry of the male priests in the Israelite sanctuary, *explaining* the basis for God’s election of all men and women in Israel as a kingdom of ‘priests’ (since God provided both man and woman with the priestly investiture in Eden), and Christ’s calling of all his believers, men and women, to be his ‘priests’ in God’s great mission to save the world.

6. The Corruption of Humans. In Genesis 4-11 (3.1.1.4) human life after the Fall is outlined in broad strokes. While genealogical lists mention 'sons and daughters' being born, not one single woman is mentioned by name, but the generations are named after the father. In all the book of Genesis, and in the Bible as a whole for that matter, there is however no instruction preserved from God to do so. The conclusion is that this is therefore a result of human sin, a part of the corruption of man described in 6:5: 'The Lord saw ... that every inclination of the thoughts of [man's] heart was only evil all the time'.

7. The Patriarchal Family Line. The patriarchal line is another consequence of sin which was incorporated over long time in the traditions that Moses and his assistants used in creating the Genesis text before us. Only with the story of Terah and Abram in 12:27-32, do we have wives identified by name together with their husbands, which puts the focus on family relationships and procreation in fulfilment of God's promises.

8. God's Calling of Israel. Israel's calling by God to be a 'priestly kingdom' and a 'holy nation' has to do with his wish to be with his people and to be their God, which is God's mission from creation until the new heaven and the new earth (Ex. 19:5-6; 29:42-46; Rev. 21:1-4). Since the whole earth is his, he is the Sovereign God and King, and his people, therefore, are a kingdom and a holy nation through the presence of God, which is administered by the people, the priests, or servants or ministers. In the story of God meeting his people at Sinai (Ex. 19-20), there is no difference between men and women. They are all priests and ministers. However, there is a special class of 'priests' associated with the sanctuary (19:22, 24), and special circumstances made this necessary in Israel.

9. God's Servants in the Old Testament. While the wife submits in practice to her husband's 'headship among equals' in the home, and the same principle is implied in laws and precepts, this does not bar women from positions of influence, leadership, and authority over men in the covenant community. Thus, the predominant patriarchal structure of Israelite society did not exclude women from positions of influence, leadership, and even headship over men. The leadership roles of Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and others, which are found in the Old Testament, are much fewer than those of men, but the fact that they are evidenced in the Bible shows that *the Bible does not prohibit women from being given leadership roles.*

Women serve in Israel as leaders and ministers for God particularly when Israel is *in transition* and not settled with the central city of Jerusalem and its temple. When Israel was socially institutionalised with a temple and a complex organisation involving priests and Levites, women tended to be excluded from leadership involvement. In addition, women's leadership roles become *more prominent and acceptable in the prophetic movement and in the wisdom circles*. Women serve as spiritually endowed prophetesses, wise women, and spirit-filled 'servants of the Lord ... whom the Lord calls' (Joel 2:28-32). Thus, the resistance against women in leadership comes rather from men in the human patriarchal setting than from God in his divine and spiritual setting. (This point would of course also apply to Ellen White's ministry among Seventh-day Adventists, confirming that God's call to men and women transcends the human social customs and structures.)

Women were leaders as judges at least before the institution of the kingdom, consecrated Nazirites for duty to the Lord, prophetesses, queens, and groups of wise women.

The selection of canonical writings in the Old Testament Bible was clearly not made with the purpose of highlighting the role of women in the Israelite society. Yet, the Old Testament contains books with female names (Ruth; Esther), books where women have a central role (Judges 4-5; Song of Songs), and portions of Scripture written by women (e.g. Ex. 15; Judges 5; 1 Sam 2). In addition, recent studies suggest that in biblical times more women held positions of power and authority than a mere surface reading of the texts may suggest.

10. Limitations for Women's Public Ministry in Israel. There were clear limitations for women in ministry and leadership in the Old Testament (3.1.2.4). None of them was *instituted* or *commanded* by God, but they were part of the Near Eastern culture of the people of Israel, and God accepted to work out his mission through them by 'incarnating' his purposes in human form. Besides the *ritualistic* reasons associated with the sanctuary and the priesthood, the people of Israel came out of a Nomadic family context, where *patriarchy* was the predominant norm. The divine promises of a multitude of descendants (cf. the Messianic promise of salvation by the woman's seed in Gen. 3:15) relegated women primarily to the roles of wives and mothers, while the male line of descent through the firstborns was seen as the carrier of the communal life through generations. However, while the patriarchal socio-cultural setting held women back from leadership roles, God calls and equips

women in a charismatic way to offices as judges, prophetesses and Nazirites. God, who originally created man and women equal as governors and priestly mediators of the world, occasionally 'breaks through' the obstacles of human patriarchal customs and uses women as preachers, teachers and leaders. Thus, women called by the Spirit of God transcended these cultural obstacles, demonstrating that there is no prohibition in the Old Testament against female ministry and leadership, but rather positive examples of an acceptance of women in these roles.

11. The Mission of Christ through the Church. In the central phase of God's mission, he commissions Christ, who calls the church to be a kingdom of priests and servants of God in order to bring the gospel to the world by proclamation, witnessing and various kinds of ministry. Thus, 'servants' or 'ministers' are spiritually called by Christ and when this call is recognised by the church they are put to work. This happens rather through a spiritual commissioning than 'ordination' in the sense that we are accustomed to today. Since Christian service or ministry, including the functions in the church for which individuals may be biblically ordained, is *commissioned by God and Christ through the Holy Spirit*, it is the unique prerogative of God to determine whom he chooses. It is therefore what God says in his Word, the Bible, which determines how the principle of gender applies to service and ministry.

The role of the church – consisting of servants or ministers who have themselves been called by God to serve him, and who therefore are working under the same call and spiritual authority as men and women being considered for ordination – is merely to *recognise and confirm* what God has done. Thus, *the calling that matters for ordination is the calling of God*. The endorsement of the church is merely a practical matter, to make the ordination public and to approve it as appropriate in the situational and cultural setting in which the gospel is to be shared.

12. God's Servants in the New Testament: Husband and Wife. Our detailed exegetical study of all the passages that say something about female submission and male headship resulted in consistent and clear conclusions (1 Cor. 11:2-16; 14:33-35; Eph. 5:21-33; Col. 3:18-19; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; Titus 2:5; and 1 Peter 3:1-7). These may be summarised as follows:

(a) All passages were written in a socio-cultural setting where women were – in the interest of propriety – restricted in holding public offices or even speak at assemblies. (This was the case both in specifically Jewish settings and in the wider

Hellenistic environment.) Deeply rooted social norms of shame and honour governed these restrictions.⁵⁷⁷ The apostolic authors, therefore, were understandably concerned not to overtly challenge the established norms of propriety which would prevent the gospel from being accepted. The New Testament statements that limit women's public role are all part of a mission strategy which seeks to win as many as possible for Christ in a society that gave only limited room for women in public life.

(b) All passages referring to female submission in the life of the church explicitly concern the wife-husband relationship in marriage. Some of them, therefore, are driven by the concern for order in church services (particularly in Corinth due to the issue of speaking in tongues) and female propriety in their relationship to 'their own' husbands who were – by culturally determined rules – dishonoured if a wife behaved inappropriately according to the accepted codes of conduct.

(c) Some passages address particular issues in the local church, where women were teaching and behaving according to pagan or Gnostic ideas that contradicted the Scriptures in regard to childbirth and motherhood, the truth of the gospel, and the accepted rules of male/female propriety.

(d) No passage explicitly states, as God's command, that a woman may not function as a servant or church leader. We shall consider later the numerous examples of women in ministry and leadership according to the New Testament.

Regarding the New Testament concept of 'submission', we found that the universal biblical principle is that all Christians submit to each other as Christ has submitted himself to God for our salvation. This principle overrules the patriarchal model of the wife being submissive to her husband, which the New Testament mentions in contexts where proper conduct is required in order to maintain order, culturally accepted decency, safeguarding the impact of the gospel on outsiders, and safeguarding reverence for God in worship.

13. God's Servants in the New Testament: Disciples, Apostles, Elders, and Servants/Ministers. The New Testament reveals a fundamental emphasis on the *divine* appointment for ministry and leadership, directly through Jesus Christ (Mark 3:14; Luke 6:12; John 15:16; Acts 26:16; 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11), or God

⁵⁷⁷ See J. H. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew*, 1998; B. J. Malina, *The New Testament World*, 2001, pp. 27-57; J. H. Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor in Roman Philippi*, 2005.

himself (Acts 1:21-26), or the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:1-3). It has a predominantly *charismatic* view of ministry and leadership and stands free from an institutionalised view. (This is in some ways modelled by the Old Testament passage on God's 'ordination' of the elders of Moses in Num. 11.) The examples we have in the New Testament are triggered by practical needs as the church grows and expands, showing a strong dependence on contemporary Jewish practices known to all Jewish converts and/or suggesting a use of scriptural models in the Old Testament, which are rearranged and adapted to the needs of new Israel. Even when the imposition of hands comes to the forefront, when a special issue in church life is to be addressed (e.g. Acts 6:1-6), the criterion for the function of leadership is that the candidate is filled with the Holy Spirit.

There is no clear structure of ministerial leadership offices in the New Testament. Ideally, all members of the early church are 'servants or ministers (of God or Christ)' and are filled with the Holy Spirit. Greek terms like *doulos*, *diakonos*, and *hyperetes* are used as general terms for 'servants or ministers', although at times with certain nuances. The term *apostolos* refers initially to the twelve, appointed by Jesus, but later, in the ministry of Paul, this term becomes more general and refers to a charismatic, prophetic-apostolic office, directly based on a divine call, and from there it spreads to 'apostles (of Christ)' in general who are being sent on a mission from place to place. This function disappears altogether in post-biblical times and 'the apostles' become the collective word for the authoritative biblical revelation from Christ to his church which is known and handled by 'apostolic succession' for which ordination is required.

In the New Testament church, there is a council of apostles and *elders* in Jerusalem that seems to have had some general authority. This body leads out in the apostolic council according to Acts 15, where doctrines and policies are decided. Generally, this body has some role of authority in relation to Paul as an itinerant apostle, but Paul himself ranks the direct call from God as more important and is not in complete submission to this body (Gal. 1:15-2:10). But there are no signs of clearly defined offices or ceremonies of appointment or 'ordination'.

There are signs of an organised local church leadership, however. Two offices occur: (a) the office of the 'overseer, bishop' (*episkopos*) which is at least partially overlaps with that of the 'elder' (*presbyter*) (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:6-9), and (b) the 'servant, deacon' (*diakonos*) (1 Tim. 3:8-13). Both are mentioned among the

recipients of Paul's letter to the Philippians (1:1). It is very possible that this dual local church office has been modelled after the Jewish synagogue. However, there is no evidence in the New Testament that any of these offices were connected with a ceremony of 'ordination' involving imposition of hands. Thus, in the two instances where elders are appointed, no reference to imposition of hands is made (Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5). No example of 'servants, deacons' being 'ordained' in such a way exists either.

The conclusion, therefore, is that the predominant New Testament (Pauline and Lukan) view of ministry and leadership in the church gives a strong emphasis on the divine appointment and the charismatic gifts of God for service. In the area of rites and ceremonies linked to the appointment and induction to an office, however, it is flexible and varied and no firm ritual form has been established. For this, we need to wait until Hippolytos' Roman Apostolic Tradition (ca. 200 A.D.).

14. God's Servants in the New Testament: Women as Disciples, Eyewitnesses, Servants/Ministers, and Apostles. We found a strong emphasis on women, too, as being 'servants or ministers' (*douloi, diakonoi*). This is exemplified with Mary the mother of Jesus, the prophetess Anna of the tribe of Asher, Mary of Magdala, Martha and Mary of Bethany, the Samaritan Woman, and the disabled woman called the 'daughter of Abraham'.

We also found significant evidence of the central and primary role of women as eyewitnesses of Jesus death, burial, empty tomb, and resurrection. Many women followed Jesus as disciples and servants all through his public ministry, and they are named (Luke 8:1-3). These women are *the only witnesses to the death, burial, and empty tomb of Jesus*, for the male disciples fled or went into hiding (Luke 23:27-30, 49, 55-56; 24:1-12; Matt. 27:57-61; 28:1-15; John 20:1-18). In terms of evidence, therefore, these women are *fundamental to Christian faith* in that only they could witness to Jesus' death on the cross, that he was buried where he was buried, and that this burial place was empty on the Sunday morning. Moreover, these women are *the first disciples to meet the risen Lord*. And they are the first to be 'ordained' in words and blessing by God to proclaim the gospel of Jesus' resurrection to the other disciples and the eleven apostles. There are good reasons to believe that this divine commission led these women to proclaim the gospel of the resurrection to many others, even before the male apostles were able to do so. The women were also present as Jesus gave his disciples the Great Commission (Mark 16:1-19), and they

were also included in the hundred-twenty who met constantly for prayer (Acts 1:12-14), who appointed Matthias as the twelfth apostle (Acts 1:21-26), and who received the power of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost which led to the birth of the church (Acts 2:1-47)/ The women were included in the quotation from the prophet Joel, used by Peter in his sermon, that God would 'pour out his Spirit [in the last days] on his servants, both men and women' (Acts 2:18).

We found that the entire Gospel of John gives a picture of the disciples around Jesus in which original and loving women played a variety of unconventional roles which the Fourth Evangelist presents as approved by Jesus and his followers, despite grumblings from some men. These women are not dependent on husbands or other male authorities, nor are they seeking permission for their activities from male officials. They demonstrate remarkable originality in their relationships with Jesus and extraordinary initiative in their activities within the community. They are the privileged recipients of three of Jesus' most important self-revelations: (a) that he is the Messiah, (b) that he is the resurrection and the life, and (c) that his glorification is complete and its salvific effects given to his disciples.

Thus, in the Gospel of John, women represent the body of the followers of Jesus in expressing their faith (Martha), accept God's salvation through Jesus (Mary Magdalene), and function as witnesses to the gospel.

Besides the 'beloved disciple', two women in John have roles held by Peter in the synoptic gospels: Martha as confessor of faith and Mary Magdalene as recipient of the first resurrection appearance and the commission by the Lord as apostle being sent to the church and its leaders.

Women were disciples in the strict sense of the word as students of the word of Jesus (Mary of Bethany) in the body of Christians using John's Gospel. The openness and the endorsement of women as disciples of Jesus and leaders in the community, which appears in the Fourth Gospel, suggests that the sources of Jesus' involvement with the women recorded in the Gospel were received without restrictions in the early Christian environment where John wrote his gospel and where it was being read. This has preserved to us significant material that was not recorded or preserved in the three Synoptic Gospels.

Further, we found that women who were named functioned in the early church as 'servants and ministers'. As members of Christ's body, men and women were admonished to 'live as servants of God' in the 'royal priesthood, holy nation, and

people belonging to God' that constitute the church (1 Peter 2:4-12, 16), and to 'serve' (*diakonein*) through prayer, love, hospitality and speech, so that each one would be serving others according to the gift of grace received, as good stewards of the grace of God in its various forms' (1 Peter 4:10-11).

We found many named examples of this 'service/ministry'. Phoebe was a *diakonos* of the church in Cenchreae and a patron for many people (Rom. 16:1-2), which means that Paul identified her as his agent or intermediary carrying his gospel message, or most specifically, his letter to the Romans. Phoebe is acting in the same way as the male *diakono*i, such as Tychicus (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7) and Timothy and Erastus (Acts 19:22), i.e. Phoebe acts as Paul's emissary, in Paul's name, and with his authority. As patron she had obligations to care for the members of the church, which implied administration. Thus, the role of 'patron' gave Phoebe status and authority in her home churches.

There are some other similar examples of 'servants or ministers' who are women and who by being wealthy and resourceful exerted a significant influence and had authority in the church: e.g. Lydia from Thyatira (Acts 16:14), Tabitha from Joppa, and the prominent women from Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens recorded by Luke in Acts 17:1-34.⁵⁷⁸

As Paul greets twenty-six people in Romans 16, nine of them are women. Obviously, women occupied a prominent place in Paul's entourage. He thinks highly of them all and singles out four (Mary, Tryphenia, Tryphosa and Persis) as having 'worked hard' (*kopiao*), which in Greek implies strong exertion. This is not stated about anyone else on the list.⁵⁷⁹

Paul also mentions Priscilla. In Romans 16:3 and in three other New Testament instances (Acts 18:18, 26; 2 Tim. 4:19), Priscilla is named before her husband Aquila. Paul calls Priscilla 'my fellow worker in Christ Jesus' (*synergos*), and notes that she and her husband have risked their lives for Paul. Priscilla and Aquila have obviously worked in many churches and seem to be itinerant 'apostles' or 'prophets and teachers', like Barnabas and Paul (cf. Acts 13:1-3 where this was marked by imposition of hands), because 'all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them'. In Acts 18:18-28, Luke records the event when Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus explained 'the way of God more adequately' to Apollos, a learned Jew

⁵⁷⁸ See L. H. Cohick, *Women in the World of the Early Christians*, 2009, pp. 307-308.

⁵⁷⁹ J. Stott, *Romans: God's Good News for the World*, 1994, pp. 394-396.

with 'a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures'. Thus, Priscilla seems to be a co-worker with Paul who has an itinerant 'apostolic' ministry and is thoroughly educated in the Scriptures.

Paul cooperated in ministry with many different women. In Philippians 4:2-3 references are made to Euodia and Syntyche who 'have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life'. The Greek *synathleo*, 'struggle together with', is used in Philippians 1:27-30 in reference to standing firm to the point of suffering as one faces opposition to the faith of the gospel, being the same struggle as that of the apostle Paul. When Paul describes the two women as struggling with him *for the gospel* together with his other fellow workers, he is referring to their active participation in 'the work of evangelisation'.

Thus, we found that women took part in the work of the early church as 'servants/ministers', alongside the apostles. In one sense of the word, they may also be called 'apostles'. Paul uses the term 'apostles' in a broader sense than that of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, who restrict it to the twelve. For Paul the apostles of Christ included not only the twelve but also Barnabas (1 Cor. 9:6), the brothers of the Lord (Gal. 1:19; 1 Cor. 9:5), probably Silvanus/Silas (1 Thess. 2:7), and perhaps Apollos (1 Cor. 4:9), as well as Paul himself. Paul speaks of 'all the apostles' alongside the narrower category of 'the twelve' (1 Cor. 15:5, 7). 'All the apostles' are those who have been commissioned by the risen Christ himself in resurrection appearances, since it is in this sense that Paul can regard himself, the last to be so commissioned, as the least of the 'apostles' (1 Cor. 15:9; cf. 9:1). We found it important to recognise that this category could have been considerably larger than the few names we know.

Thus, there is no difficulty in accepting that Andronicus and Junia in Romans 16:7 belonged to the 'apostles', especially as Paul says specifically that they were Christians before him. We consider it a well-founded conclusion that the name 'Junia' is the original text and that it refers to a woman. Thus, Paul sees her as a prominent apostle (in some sense). Obviously, Junia was not one of the twelve. However, there is a nontechnical sense of the term 'apostle' that Paul uses twice (2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25) to designate official messengers of the churches. However, this cannot be the meaning in Romans 16:7, for such people are clearly designated 'apostles of the churches' (2 Cor. 8:23) and 'your [i.e. the Philippian Christians] apostle' (Phil. 2:25), and it is hard to see how they could form a known body of

people among whom Andronicus and Junia could be said to be outstanding. The unqualified 'apostles' of Romans 16:7 must therefore refer to the apostles of Christ, whom Paul generally refers to simply as 'apostles'.

The established fact of the existence in Rome of Junia, a woman, as prominent among the apostles, is a significant evidence of women being endorsed as servants, ministers and leaders in the Bible.

We found that women were a major force in the growth of the Christian church and we considered numerous references to women working as evangelists and heads of house churches, using their household as a basis. Thus, the prominence of women in church work as widows, teachers and prophets may be reconstructed on the basis of the biblical evidence.

Women's *public* 'ordination' for ministerial work and leadership was on the one hand hampered by ingrained patriarchal bias and social customs that excluded women from unreserved participation in ministry. However, on the other hand, 'ordination' was not necessary in the early church, because men and women were 'ordained' *charismatically*, in much the same way as Ellen White considered herself charismatically 'ordained' ('ordination' for a ministerial servant was in fact not established in the New Testament). Thus, the appointment by God, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the use of the gifts of the Spirit in its various forms for serving and ministering to others, was open to women as well as men. And they used every possibility that their times and social customs allowed them to use, in order to make the church grow and thus bring glory to God.

15. God's Servants in the New Testament: The Gender of Overseers and Deacons. Our study of the qualifications for overseers, elders and deacons in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9 shows that the principle implied is that *the qualifications of the overseer are motivated by the mission of God to the world and serve to build trust and acceptance of the gospel of Christ among outsiders*, so that God's mission of salvation is successful. This is, consequently, an important principle that needs to be considered in a theology of ordination.

Reading these passages requires an understanding of the major difference between the culturally conditioned views of the status and role of women in Ephesus during the first century and modern 'western-type' societies. In first-century Judaism and Christianity, the offices of overseers and elders were strictly reserved for males. Ephesus was a Graeco-Roman city with a Jewish minority. The Jewish institution of

elders went back to the patriarchal customs of letting the first-born male represent the clans and families in Israel.⁵⁸⁰ The Graeco-Roman and Jewish customs of using ‘overseers’ (*episkopoi*) reveal that this could be both a general term for anyone who had the responsibility of a ‘protective care’ or ‘supervisory’ function, and a technical term for specific office holders like ‘state officials or governors’.⁵⁸¹ The Graeco-Roman and Jewish laws as well as the common cultural values of the society had created a situation where ‘women had, in comparison to men, a clearly restricted access to various political, economic, and social resources of public life’.⁵⁸² Thus, ‘women were generally excluded from holding public office as senators, equestrians, decurions, or judges, as well as subordinate positions’.⁵⁸³ Particularly the inferior legal status of women prevented them from functioning as rulers and judges,⁵⁸⁴ which were functions included in the offices of both overseers and elders.

In view of the general socio-cultural norms, therefore, it would not be surprising if there was no female ‘overseer’ in Ephesus when 1 Timothy was sent to the church there. In addition, there were specific conflicts in that church at the time in which women had a dominant role and where women’s superiority to men, among other things, was taught. Despite these *ad hoc* circumstances, the text in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 provides a gender-inclusive description of the qualifications of the local church overseer, for the masculine forms refer both to males and females.

What may have been the right thing to do in Ephesus in the first century was determined on the grounds of how well it served the mission of God and helped build the church and promote the gospel among Graeco-Roman outsiders. However, applying this principle in the modern context of egalitarian societies means that women and men should serve on equal terms as overseers in the church. Gender discrimination is considered a great evil and injustice in these egalitarian societies, and, by preventing women from serving as pastors and leaders on the basis of ‘ordination’ as we practice it today, we violate the biblical principle that is embedded in the descriptions of the qualifications of overseers and deacons in the Bible.

⁵⁸⁰ See G. Bornkamm, Article ‘*presbys, presbyteros*’ etc., in: *ThDNT*, vol. 6, pp. 651-683.

⁵⁸¹ See H. W. Beyer, Article ‘*episkopos*’, in: *ThDNT*, vol. 2, pp. 608-622.

⁵⁸² E. W. Stegemann & W. Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 1999, p. 364.

⁵⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 365.

⁵⁸⁴ See K. Thraede, Article ‘*Frau*’, in: *Reallexicon für Antike und Christendom*, vol. 8, pp. 197-269; cf. E. W. Stegemann & W. Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 1999, p. 369.

16. The Priesthood of the End-Time Church. The priesthood of man and woman established at Creation (Genesis 1-2) and confirmed in Eden after the Fall (3:20) is essential according to the book of Revelation for the end-time church – in the church’s service to God on earth (Rev. 1:6), in the ministry of Christ (Rev. 5:9-10), and in the new heaven and earth (Rev. 5:10; 20:6; 21:1-22:6). The passages in Revelation 5:20 and 20:6 explicitly resume the theme of man and woman as *priests* and *rulers* of the earth in Genesis 1-3, in the context of the sacrifice and blood of Christ which fulfils God’s promise of salvation by ‘the seed of the woman’ (Gen. 3:15) and the priestly mediation instituted in Eden for men and women which is continued in humanity by Cain and Abel, Noah (Gen. 3:20; 4:1-7; 8:20-8:17), and in the old and the new Israel. John sees in vision the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders singing a hymn to Jesus Christ in heaven: ‘By your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; you have made them to be a kingdom of priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth’ (Rev. 5:9-10; 20:6). Thus, in a biblical theology of ordination, it is essential that the priestly role of man and woman in Creation and after the Fall is kept clear.

3.2 ‘Ordination’ in the Old Testament

As God carries out his mission in the world through Israel, his work becomes closely involved with human concepts which develop in the course of history. God becomes engaged with human culture, language, customs, rituals, and laws.

God’s mission stands above human concepts, but he accepts to work with them as a temporary tool to accomplish the love and faithfulness of his people, to keep them close to him, and to save them from evil and destruction.

Throughout the entire history of his people Israel, God has called leaders of various kinds in order to accomplish his purpose. He has called men and women as his servants. The core instrument for this is his call through the Holy Spirit, his instructions, his blessings, and his promise to sustain and protect his servants to grant their success. ‘Ordination’ or commissioning refers to the manner in which God accomplishes his call and his appointed servants are recognised by the people. It includes a *divine* aspect but also a significant *human* aspect, and, in the following, as we study the central passages that describe such ‘ordinations’ in the Old Testament, we will seek to identify the divine and the human.

3.2.1 'Ordination' Is Linked to Organised Institutions

'Ordination' or at least some kind of commissioning belongs to an organisation which needs to induct somebody to a responsibility or an office. Thus, in the story of Joseph, Pharaoh is advised to 'appoint commissioners' (*paqad peqidim*) over the land (41:34). The Hebrew term *paqad*, 'appoint', appears many times in the Old Testament and may be a term originally used in royal administration that came to be used also in religious laws. Its root meaning is not clear, but a cognate word meaning, among other things, 'put into office, commission' is known in Akkadian (Assyro-Babylonian) and other Semitic languages.⁵⁸⁵ One of its various uses in the Old Testament is in the context of administration, where it means 'entrusted with a mission or an office, appoint, commission'.⁵⁸⁶ The term is used about Joseph when he is 'put in charge of' Potiphar's household (Gen. 39:4-5), when the captain of the guard 'assigns' to Joseph the cupbearer and the baker in prison (Gen 40:4), and in Genesis 41:34, already mentioned above, where it is juxtaposed to the noun *peqidim*, 'commissioners'. It is used also in both civil and religious contexts about the appointment of the Levites (Num. 1:50), the priests (Num. 3:10), army commanders (Deut. 20:9), guards (Jos. 10:18), Jeroboam as the one in charge of the labour force of the house of Joseph (1 Kings 11:28), an officer in charge of the gate (2 Kings 7:17), Gedaliah being appointed by king Nebuchadnezzar to be over the remnant in Judah (2 Kings 25:22; Jer. 40:5, 7, 11; 41:2, 18), watchmen on Jerusalem's walls (Isa. 62:6), the prophet Jeremiah over nations and kingdoms (Jer. 1:10), commissioners in every province in Persia (Est. 2:3), and commissioners of the tribes in David's kingdom (2 Chr. 26:32). Thus, the word *paqad*, 'appoint, commission' is the technical term in the Old Testament for assigning someone to an office or a task. However, these officers vary greatly and no procedure is linked to the act of appointment, induction or installation.

In the usage of *pqd*, the one who appoints is always a person of authority, a king, Moses, or even the Lord. The practice of 'ordaining' somebody by decision of an authoritative individual was rather common in antiquity and is commonly termed

⁵⁸⁵ W. Schottroff, Article '*pqd*/heimsuchen', in: *THAT*, vol. 2, cols. 467, 474.

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, cols. 473-474.

*Designation.*⁵⁸⁷ The Designation may be confirmed by a congregation, but this is more of a *pro forma* action. We must bear this in mind, because the appointment in biblical contexts related to 'ordination' nearly always build on the concept that God has made his Designation of the ordinand, and if the congregation confirms it by imposition of hands, this has the character of acceptance and endorsement of the divine decision.

In his appointment of Joseph, Pharaoh follows a certain pattern:

Qualifications:

'One in whom is the spirit of God' (41:38); discerning and wise' (41:39).

Decision:

'You shall be in charge of my palace and all my people are to submit to your orders' (41:40).

Appointment:

'I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt' (41:41).

Investiture:

'Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck.' (41:42).

Pharaoh also puts Joseph in charge (*natan*, 'give') over the land of Egypt as his second-in-command (41:40-42). He is said to 'stand (as servant) before Pharaoh King of Egypt' (40:46). A review of the use in the Old Testament of the Hebrew expression for 'stand before' (*'amad lipne*) suggests that it is associated with serving a lord or a king with respect, i.e. standing before an authority ready to serve (cf. 1 Kings 1:28; 17:1). In this sense, for example, the prophet Elijah is 'standing before' the Lord (1 Kings 17:1).

The kings of Israel and Judah built up a system of administration with offices in which also the cultic and priestly functions were incorporated (see e.g. 1 Kings 4:1-19). The terminology for appointing these officials, including priests, varies. In the following list the basic meanings of the terms are given, although from the context they may often be translated 'appoint' or 'assign':

(a) *mille' yad*, 'fill the hand of': 1 Kings 13:33 (priests).

(b) *natan*, 'give': 1 Sam. 8:5 (king); 2 Kings 23:5 (pagan priests); 2 Chr. 32:6 (military officers).

(c) *he'emid*, 'set someone standing': 1 Kings 12:32 (pagan priests); 1 Chr. 15:17 (Levites appoint singers); 2 Chr. 11:15 (pagan priests); 11:22 (chief prince); 19:5

⁵⁸⁷ See E. Ferguson, 'Selection and Installation to Office in Roman, Greek, Jewish and Christian Antiquity', 1974, pp. 273-284, note especially pp. 274-275.

(judges); 19:8 (priests and heads of families from among Levites); 25:16 (advisor to the king).

(d) *ʿasah*, 'make': 1 Kings 12:31 (pagan priests); 2 Kings 17:32 (pagan priests); cf. 1 Sam. 12:6 (the Lord 'made' Moses and Aaron; cf. Mark 3:14 which says that Jesus 'made' the twelve).

(e) *paqad*, 'appoint, commission': Gen. 39:4, 5 (Joseph in charge of Potiphar's house); 40:4 (prisoners); 41:34 (commissioners over Egypt); Num. 1:50 (Levites); Num. 3:10 (priests); 4:32 (Levites); Deut. 20:9 (commanders); Jos. 10:18 (guards); 1 Kings 11:28 (Jeroboam in charge of labour force); 2 Kings 7:17 (officer of gate); 12:11=2:12 in the MT (supervisors of temple builders); 25:22-23 (Nebuchadnezzar appoints Gedaliah as governor over Judah; cf. 2 Kings 25:22, 23; Jer. 40:5, 11; 41:2, 18); 1 Chr. 26:32 (tribe of Jeriah in charge other tribes); Est. 2:2 (commissioners in each province); Isa. 62:6 (watchmen).

(f) *tsiwwah*, 'order, appoint': 1 Sam. 25:30 (leader, king); 2 Sam. 6:21 (leader, king); 7:11 (leaders); 1 Kings 1:35 (leader, king); 1 Chr. 17:10 (leaders).

(g) *sim*, 'put': 1 Sam. 8:1 (Samuel's sons as judges), 12 (military commanders); 2 Sam. 15:4 (Absalom as judge); 17:25 (military commander); 18:1 (military commanders).

While *paqad* seems to be a preferred technical term for appointment to office, there are several other terms being used. The only technical term for priestly appointment is *mille' yad*, 'fill the hand of' (see Excursus 2).

3.2.2 The Concept of the 'Spirit' in Leadership Appointments

One of Joseph's qualifications for the office given him by Pharaoh was being one 'in whom is the Spirit of God (*ruakh 'elohim*)' (Gen. 41:38). Since this concept occurs in several instances in the Old Testament and has a significant impact on our understanding of 'ordination' in the Bible, we will review here the Old Testament concept of the 'spirit' as it relates to leaders.

The Old Testament appointment-for-office passages mention the 'spirit' (*ruakh*) in three ways:

1. One idea is that a prospective leader already *has* the 'spirit'. The 'spirit' may either be an ability or an attitude (wisdom, skills, knowledge), as in the case of Bezalel (Ex. 31:3; 35:31), or Caleb (Num. 14:24), or Joshua (Num. 27:18), or it may be described as 'the Spirit of God', as in the case of Joseph (Gen. 41:38).

2. A second idea is that the 'spirit' is *given* to the prospective leader or, rather, is being *transferred* from Moses to his assistants or his successor, as in the case of

the seventy elders (Num. 11:17, 25) and Joshua (Deut. 34:9). In the former instance, it is God who ‘takes of the spirit that was on Moses and puts it on the seventy elders’; in the second instance, it is Moses who, on God’s command, lays his hands on Joshua, which conveys to him ‘the spirit of wisdom’ (Deut. 34:9) or the ‘power, authority, majesty’ (*hod*) of Moses (Num. 27:20). In the former case (elders), it is a *divine* power, which only God can convey, and in the latter case (Joshua), it is a *human* gift of skills and wisdom which also, indirectly, was seen as a gift of God. Joshua already has the ‘spirit’ when he is selected for his task. It would therefore seem as if Moses’ imposition of hands *confirms* the spirit in Joshua and visibly symbolises God’s blessing and granting of wisdom before the people, as he had done with Moses.

3. Mingled with these ideas is the concept that the ‘spirit’ given to the seventy elders is the ‘spirit of prophecy’ which is given by God and enables them to ‘prophesy’ (Num. 11:17, 25, 26, 29). The fact that this concept is connected with Moses and the ‘spirit’ of Moses, of which God takes some and puts it on the elders, suggests that it is Moses’ role as *prophet* that impacts this idea of the ‘spirit’ (Deut. 34:10; cf. Num. 12:6; Deut. 18:5, 18).

We will analyse each of these passages as we proceed below, but we suggest that the variety of uses of ‘spirit’ (*ruakh*) noted here is rooted in the Hebrew concept of ‘spirit’ itself. We therefore adduce here some observations on this particular concept.

The sense of the Hebrew term *ruakh* is ‘wind, breath, spirit’. As a concept, it is fundamentally associated with ‘power’, because in its basic meaning is included the ‘power’ that is felt in the ‘thrust’ or ‘impact’ of breath and wind.⁵⁸⁸ It can be used of humans and of God, and has, generally speaking, a rather wide range of uses and meanings. One usage, which is significant for our study, concerns references to human wisdom, counsel, will, etc. In this context, the term occurs in conjunction with the human ‘heart’ which was considered the centre of human will and understanding.⁵⁸⁹ As the ‘spirit’ of human beings, *ruakh* signifies breath and life. It is also connected with the inner man (Gen. 41:8; Ps. 32:2; 106:33; 142:4; 143:4; Eccl. 7:9; Dan. 2:1, 3; 7:15; Mal. 2:15). Thus, *ruakh*, ‘breath’ came to refer to the ‘spirit’ in

⁵⁸⁸ R. Albertz & C. Westermann, Article ‘*ruakh*/Geist’, in: *THAT*, vol. 2, col. 728.

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, cols. 740-742.

a man in the sense of his/her personality.⁵⁹⁰ It refers to the 'seat of emotions, intellectual functions and attitude of will and character'.⁵⁹¹ Since Scripture also teaches that God is Lord of the spirits of all men, he knows who is prepared for the task of leadership (e.g. Num. 27:16). Wisdom and understanding is consequently seen as a gift of God, which is particularly important for leaders, for example, in the cases of Moses and Joshua (Deut. 34:9), and Solomon (1 Kings 3). Thus, Pharaoh's question to his officials in Genesis 41:38, 'Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the Spirit of God?', seems based on the idea that God gives the gift of wisdom and understanding (see 41:39), thus *equipping* or *preparing* a person for a leadership function.

In this context, a 'spirit' of authority or leadership can be *transferred* from one prominent leader to another, as in the case of Moses and Joshua, by imposition of Moses' hand (Num. 27:15-23), and in the case of Elijah and Elisha by anointing and throwing Elijah's cloak around the successor (1 Kings 19:15-21). These acts do not accomplish their purpose, however, unless God, who is the giver of 'the spirits of all men', endorses and confirms them by his blessing. God is the primary actor in 'ordination'.

For the transfer of the 'spirit' by imposition of hands, there seems to be two traditional ways of applying it:

(a) The Hebrew *samak yad* may imply a transfer of Moses' spirit of skills, authority, or wisdom, which are given by God, but are transferred to Joshua by God's endorsement and co-action (Num. 27:18-23; Deut. 34:9).

(b) The Hebrew *sim/shit yad* is specifically used together with prayer for God's blessing (power, spirit) which is given by God's sovereign decision, beyond any human or ritual involvement (e.g. Gen. 48:14, 17, 18).

It is important to note that the spirit of prophecy which provides the ability to prophesy is God's prerogative, and it is therefore God who brings this spiritual gift to the seventy elders without the mediation of Moses or any laying on of hands (Num. 11:16-30).

In conclusion, when the 'spirit' (*ruakh*) is mentioned in connection with appointments and inductions, there is some fluidity in the referential meaning: 'power, ability, knowledge, wisdom'. It either comes explicitly and directly from God

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁹¹ H. Kleinknecht *et alii*, Article '*pneuma* etc.', in: *ThDNT*, vol. 6, pp. 361-362, 369-370.

(prophetic and charismatic concept), or it is conveyed by God in connection with or following the ritual of laying on of hands, but nothing is stated that leads us to understand it as a magical rite that controls or automatically conveys the 'spirit of God'.

However, there is also the idea of the 'spirit' in or upon the outstanding and unique leader Moses – whose leadership and authority is of such nature that his role is non-repeatable in that he had talked to God face to face (Num. 12:6; Deut. 18:5, 18; 34:10) – which is somehow *transferred* to his assistants (judges and elders) or to his successor Joshua. (It must be noted that this act is not repeated by the successors and appears to be a one-off.) The transfer is done in two ways: (a) In the story of the appointment of the seventy elders (3.2.3), God takes some of the 'spirit' of Moses and transfers it to the elders – Moses only deals with the selection. (b) In Moses' appointment and induction of Joshua (3.2.6), reference is made to Moses' 'power, authority, ability' or 'spirit of wisdom' which is transferred by Moses to Joshua by the imposition of hands – on this occasion, God does the selection and instructs Moses on how to proceed. Joshua already has the 'spirit' when he is selected for his task; the imposition of Moses' hand *confirms* the spirit in Joshua and visibly *symbolises* God's blessing and wisdom, which he had bestowed on Moses.

In the following, we will examine in more depth the passages where the 'spirit' plays a role in inductions to an office or a leadership function, particularly Moses' appointment of the seventy elders (3.2.3) and his appointment of Joshua as his successor (3.2.6). The fact that the 'spirit of God' was also involved through the anointing of kings has already been noted in 3.1.2.3 above – this has some importance for understanding the role of Jesus Christ, since 'Christ' and 'Messiah' refer to the Anointed One, a royal title that is applied to Jesus as Lord.

3.2.3 Moses' Assistants: Judges and Elders

In the story of Jethro, father-in-law of Moses and priest of Midian (Ex. 18), we find a variety of terms for 'select' (*khazah*), 'appoint' (*sim*), 'make someone head of the people' (*natan rosh 'al ha'am*) and 'choose' (*bakhar*). As Jethro advises Moses to delegate his function as judge for the people and appoint officials with various responsibilities – over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens – certain elements of 'ordination' for office are found:

(a) *Selection*: 'Select men from all the people' (18:21).

(b) *Qualifications*: 'Capable, God-fearing, trustworthy, hating dishonest gain' (18:21).

(c) *Commission*: 'officials ... serve as judges' (18:21-22, 25-26).

(d) *Divine Endorsement*: 'If you do so, and God so commands' (18:23).

These features are part of a narrative, however, so no strict scheme or ritual is to be expected. The term *sim* 'set, appoint', which has an important role for sacred rituals including the laying on of hands in blessing (*sim yad*, Gen. 48:18), is used in Exodus 18:21 for the 'appointment' of judges in Israel, but without the ritual of imposition of hands.

Another example of Moses delegating his authority to 'leaders and officials among the people' in order to lighten his work load is found in Numbers 11:16-17, 24-25. God commanded Moses to bring before him 'seventy of their elders' and have them stand around the tabernacle:

Numbers 11:25 'Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the spirit that was on him and put it (*natan*) on the seventy elders; and when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did not do so again.' (NRSV)

The 'elders' (*zeqenim*) of Israel are already in existence in Egypt (Ex. 3:16), but we have no evidence of how they were appointed. They were probably the heads of tribes or tribal sub-divisions or families.

Moses is asked to appoint seventy elders, so that God will transfer 'the spirit upon Moses' to rest also upon them. This is not done by human agents but directly by God, and the sign of the accomplishment of this act is that the elders 'prophesy'. The crucial phrase here concerns the transfer of 'the spirit on Moses'. Literally, the text says: 'and [the Lord] took away (*'atsal*) from the spirit that was upon [Moses] and put (*natan*) it upon each of the seventy elders'. This means that the leadership ability and authority of Moses, demonstrated in the past, will be shared with those leaders that will now assist him and make his burdens lighter.

What does 'the spirit upon Moses' refer to? Since the result of receiving the spirit is that the elders prophesy (cf. Balaam in Num. 24:2), this includes the Spirit of God and a manifestation of his power. However, the phrase seems to be part of a conventional language which signifies both the 'Spirit of God' and the ability to lead with wisdom and power: Caleb has a different 'spirit' in comparison with the rest of

the people and follows Moses wholeheartedly (Num. 14:24); Joshua is a man in whom is the 'spirit', a 'spirit of wisdom' (Num. 27:18; Deut. 34:9); the 'Spirit of the Lord' came upon Othniel, son of Kenaz and Caleb's brother, so that he became Israel's judge and went to war to deliver Israel (Judg. 3:18); the 'Spirit of the Lord' came upon Gideon, and he blew the trumpet, summoning the Abiezerites to follow him' (Judg. 6:34); the same is the case with Jephtah and Samson (Judg. 11:29; 14:6); and after Samuel has anointed Saul as king, he says: 'the Spirit of the Lord will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person' (1 Sam. 10:6). The concept of the 'Spirit' coming upon or being given to a leader of the people is associated with God's endorsement but also with the leader being equipped for the task with skills and courage, as we see in the following passage:

Exodus 35:31 [The Lord] has filled [Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah] with divine spirit, with skill, intelligence, and knowledge in every kind of craft ...' (NRSV)

The concept of the 'Spirit' is here related to the concept of 'wisdom', which includes practical and artistic skills, knowledge, and understanding, based on the fundamental understanding that 'wisdom' is that which makes human beings 'well-advised and capable'.⁵⁹² Thus, what is being transferred from Moses to the elders in Numbers 11:25 is certainly from God, publicly displayed by a temporary gift of prophecy, but it is also some of the leadership skills and authority of Moses. The 'ordination' of the seventy elders does not include a laying on of hands by humans but is performed directly by God. It would therefore belong to a charismatic rather than a ritualistic understanding of 'ordination'.

3.2.4 Rites of Consecration, the Priesthood, and the Levites

The purpose of God's mighty act of leading his people out of Egypt was that he wanted to meet and dwell with them, and he did so in the sanctuary (Ex. 29:42-46). God's plan in the Old Testament was, however, based on a careful recognition of the difference between God and sinful man. Thus, he reveals himself to Moses as a burning fire and the ground around it is holy, so that Moses must remove his sandals (Ex. 3), and a similar encounter with God had been Abraham's experience (Gen. 15). God's revelation of himself to the people at Sinai was also characterised by fire,

⁵⁹² See M. Saebø, Article '*khakam/weise sein*', in: *THAT*, vol. 1, col. 560.

smoke and thunder (Ex. 19). Many hundred years later, Isaiah's call as a prophet was an experience of impurity before the holiness and majesty of God (Isa. 6). God does not always reveal himself in this way, however. Elijah's experience was that God was not in the fire and thunder, but in the still voice (1 Kings 19). God evidently chooses how to reveal himself, according to his plan. The plan with the sanctuary, its holiness, and the rituals of purity and atonement connected with it, was the way in which God dealt with the sin of Israel, which included the sanctuary service in which his promise of redemption through Jesus Christ was stated through every sacrifice (cf. Gen. 3:15). In that sense, the sanctuary service is linked with the Expulsion from the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:21-24), which separates sinful man from God and removes man from the sanctuary in the Garden of Eden – as long as man and woman remain in the sanctuary of Eden, their nakedness must be covered as the priests were covered in the sanctuary (see our exposition of Gen. 3:21 in 3.1.1.3 above). In Israel, however, God is bringing back a sanctuary, in order to meet with his people and dwell among them as their God. This concept explains why the commissioning of priests and Levites was dominated by rites that would guarantee absolute ritual purity.

The concept of *purification* in the Old Testament was closely connected with the concept of *sanctification*, and the words used to express these two ideas were used interchangeably. And yet, as pointed out by Roland de Vaux, there is a difference:

Purification meant removing the obstacle which hindered a man from coming near to God, whereas sanctification either prepared a man to meet God or resulted from close contact with God. Purification expressed the negative, sanctification the positive, aspect.⁵⁹³

All persons, things and places which were related to God were holy, and therefore nothing could enter the realm of the divine unless it had first been 'sanctified', which means that it had first to be removed from the realm of things profane or defiled. In reviewing the installation and induction of priests and Levites, therefore, we will see that the verb *qiddesh*, which literally means 'to sanctify, to hallow', can be translated 'to consecrate'.⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁹³ R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 1973, p. 464.

⁵⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

Before we go further, we need to bear in mind the three offices of the priests in Israel. R. Abba gives the following summary: 'The representative sanctity of the priesthood is expressed in the threefold hierarchy. The lowest grade consists of the *Levites*, who are set apart for the service of the sanctuary. They represent the people of Israel as substitutes for the first-born sons who belong by right to God (Num. 3:2, 12-13,41, 45; 8:14-17; cf. Ex. 13:2, 12-13; 22:29; 34:19-20; Lev. 27:26; Num. 18:15; Deut. 15:19). Above them are the sons of Aaron, who are concentrated for the specific office of the *priest*. They alone may represent the nation in the sacrificial ministrations of the altar. And the hierarchy culminates in the *high priest*, in whom the vicarious sanctity of the priesthood is gathered up. By bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel on his breastplate when he goes into the sanctuary, he represents the people as a whole (Ex. 28:29). He alone can enter the holy of holies – and that only once a year to make atonement for the nation's sin.'⁵⁹⁵

Two concepts of consecration stand side by side in the Old Testament. On the one hand, the consecration did not include a special rite, for 'any action which brought a person or a thing in close contact with God or with divine worship automatically consecrated that person or thing'.⁵⁹⁶ Thus, priests were sanctified or holy simply by exercising their office (Lev. 21:6-8; cf. 1 Sam. 7:1). The desert tabernacle and the temple were holy, simply because God dwelt in them (Ex. 29:43). The furnishings of the temple were holy because they served for divine worship. The offerings were holy because they had been presented to God (Lev. 2:3, 10; Num. 18:8-9; Ez. 42:13). From this consecration, certain rules followed (these rules did not bring about consecration, but were the result, not the cause of consecration), for example, the priests were subject to strict rules of ritual purity (Lev. 21:1-8). They were 'set apart' for sacred work and no longer belonged to the profane world (Deut. 10:8; 1 Chr. 23:13).

On the other hand, priests were chosen and installed for service in the sanctuary. This installation took the form of a rite of both purification and consecration.

We will now consider the installations of Aaron and his sons as priests and of the Levites as servants 'joining' the Aaronic priests.

⁵⁹⁵ R. Abba, Article 'Priests and Levites', in: *IDB* 3, p. 877.

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 464.

The consecration of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood is preserved in two versions: Exodus 29 and Leviticus 8. The Exodus version is longer and presented as the Lord's command, while the shorter Leviticus version focuses on Moses' faithful realisation of the Lord's command. For our purposes, it is sufficient to capture the gist of the procedure, and we shall do so here by looking at the version in Exodus, where we have also inserted the Hebrew terms:

Exodus 29:1-46 Now this is what you shall do to them to consecrate (*qiddash*) them, so that they may serve me as priests (*kihen*). Take one young bull and two rams without blemish, **2** and unleavened bread, unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil. You shall make them of choice wheat flour. **3** You shall put them in one basket and bring them in the basket, and bring the bull and the two rams. **4** You shall bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the tent of meeting, and wash them with water. **5** Then you shall take the vestments, and put on Aaron the tunic and the robe of the ephod, and the ephod, and the breastpiece, and gird him with the decorated band of the ephod; **6** and you shall set the turban on his head, and put the holy diadem on the turban. **7** You shall take the anointing-oil, and pour it on his head, and anoint (*mashakh*) him. **8** Then you shall bring his sons, and put tunics on them, **9** and you shall gird them with sashes, tie head-dresses on them. And the priesthood shall be theirs by a perpetual ordinance. You shall then ordain (*mille' yad*) Aaron and his sons.

10 You shall bring the bull in front of the tent of meeting. Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on (*samak yadim 'al*) the head of the bull, **11** and you shall slaughter the bull before the Lord, at the entrance of the tent of meeting, **12** and shall take some of the blood of the bull and put it on the horns of the altar with your finger, and all the rest of the blood you shall pour out at the base of the altar. **13** You shall take all the fat that covers the entrails, the appendage of the liver, and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them, and burn them into smoke on the altar. **14** But the flesh of the bull, and its skin and its dung, you shall burn with fire outside the camp; it is a sin offering.

15 Then you shall take one of the rams, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on (*samak yadim 'al*) the head of the ram, **16** and you shall slaughter the ram, and shall take its blood and dash it all against all sides of the altar. **17** Then you shall cut the ram into its parts, and wash its entrails and its legs, and put them with its parts and its head, **18** and turn the whole ram into smoke on the altar; it is a burnt offering to the Lord; it is a pleasing odour, an offering by fire to the Lord.

19 You shall take the other ram; and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on (*samak yadim 'al*) the head of the ram, **20** and you shall slaughter the ram, and take some of its blood and put it on the lobe of Aaron's right ear and on the lobes of the right ears of his sons, and on the thumbs of their right hands, and on the big toes of their right feet, and dash the rest of the blood against all sides of the altar. **21** Then you shall take some of the blood that is on the altar, and some of the anointing-oil, and sprinkle it on Aaron and his vestments, and on his sons and his son's vestments with him; then he and his vestments shall be holy (*qiddash*).

22 You shall also take the fat of the ram, the fat-tail, the fat that covers the entrails, the appendage of the liver, the two kidneys with the fat that is on them, the right thigh (for this is a ram of ordination [*millu'im*]), **23** and one cake of bread, made with oil, and one wafer, out of the basket of unleavened bread that is before the Lord; **24** and you shall place all these on the palms of Aaron and on the palms of his sons, and raise them as an elevation-offering before the Lord. **25** Then you shall take them from their hands, and turn them into smoke on the altar on top of the burnt-offering of pleasing odour before the Lord; it is an offering by fire to the Lord.

26 You shall take the breast of the ram of Aaron's ordination (*millu'im*) and raise it as an elevation-offering before the Lord; and it shall be your portion. **27** You shall consecrate that was raised as an elevation-offering and the thigh that was raised as an elevation-offering from the ram of ordination (*millu'im*) from that which belonged to Aaron and his sons. **28** These things shall be a perpetual ordinance for Aaron and his sons from the Israelites, for this is an offering; and it shall be an offering by the Israelites from the sacrifice of offerings of well-being, their offering to the Lord.

29 The sacred vestments of Aaron shall be passed on to his sons after him; they shall be anointed (*mashakh*) in them and ordained (*mille' yad*) in them. **30** The son who is priest in his place shall wear them for seven days, when he comes into the tent of meeting to minister in the Holy Place (*Jesharet baqodesh*).

31 You shall take the ram of ordination (*millu'im*) and boil its flesh in a holy place; **32** and Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram, and the bread that is in the basket, at the entrance of the tent of meeting. **33** They themselves shall eat the food by which atonement is made, to ordain (*mille' yad*) and consecrate (*qiddash*) them, but no one else shall eat of them, because they are holy (*qodesh*). **34** If any of the flesh for the ordination (*millu'im*), or of the bread, remains until the morning, then you shall burn the remainder with fire. It shall not be eaten, because it is holy (*qodesh*).

35 Thus you shall do to Aaron and to his sons, just as I have commanded you; over seven days you shall ordain (*mille' yad*) them. **36** Also every day you shall offer a bull as a sin offering for atonement. Also you shall offer a sin-offering for the altar, when you make atonement for it, and shall anoint (*mashakh*) it to consecrate (*qiddash*) it. **37** For seven days you shall make atonement for the altar and consecrate (*qiddash*) it, and the altar shall be most holy; whatever touches the altar shall become holy.

38 Now this is what you shall offer on the altar: two lambs a year old regularly each day. **39** One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer in the evening, **40** and with the first lamb one-tenth of a measure of choice flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of beaten oil, and one-fourth of a hin of wine for a drink offering. **41** And the other lamb you shall offer in the evening, and shall offer with it a grain-offering and its drink-offering, as in the morning, for a pleasing odour, an offering by fire to the Lord. **42** It shall be a regular burnt-offering throughout your generations at the entrance of the tent of meeting before the Lord, where I will meet you to speak with you there. **43** I will meet the Israelites there; and it shall be sanctified (*niqdash*) by my glory. **44** I will consecrate (*qiddash*) the tent of meeting and the altar; Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate (*qiddash*), to serve me as priests (*kihen*). **45** I will dwell among the Israelites and I will be their God. **46**

And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am the Lord their God. (NRSV)

The ultimate purpose of the priestly induction to office is communion between God and his people (Ex. 29:44-46). As we will see in chapter 5, the priestly service was to enable the whole people of Israel to function as a royal priesthood for God, the Creator and Sustainer of the earth (see Ex. 19:1-6). Thus, the priestly 'ordination' in Israel was not intended to commission ministers for working outside the sanctuary or for doing ministry 'in the world' among believers and non-believers. The selection of candidates was based on hereditary criteria, i.e. being a descendant of the tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron, and the induction to office was deeply characterised by the need to achieve ritual purity for the sanctuary service. Therefore, making the priestly 'ordination' in Israel a model for Christian ordination of ministers of the gospel leads into all sorts of contradictions and complications, because it is bound to a specific function in historic Israel and does not apply to the new ministry based on and established by Christ.

The key *theological* element in the description of the priestly induction is found in Exodus 29:44-45:

Exodus 29:45-46 I will dwell among the Israelites and I will be their God. **46** And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am the Lord their God. (NRSV)

Thus, the purpose of consecrating Aaron and his sons as priests for ministry in the sanctuary is to ritually enable God to live among and meet his people. This theme is of great importance for the grand narrative of the Bible as a whole, as we will see in chapter 5. God's plan to rule the creation together with man, by dwelling with him and having communion with him, is now implemented in the community of Israel. The entire purpose of God in leading his people out of Egypt is defined in terms of him meeting them and being worshipped by them (Ex. 25:8; cf. 3:18; 7:16; 8:1, 20; 9:1,13; 10:3, 24-26; 12:31). As King of the world, God is now enthroned among his people, who are to be his 'royal priesthood' (Ex. 19), which, in a biblical perspective, anticipates the first and second comings of Christ and God's creation of the new heaven and earth (note how the wording in Ex. 29:44-45 is reflected in Rev. 21:1-5).

The entire system of the Israelite sanctuary service was meant to enable God in his holiness to dwell among his people: By the presence of his glory he would

'sanctify' (*niqdash*) the tabernacle (29:43). The sacrificial system was based on the concept that God's holiness and man's sin has created a gap which can only be bridged by a *cleansing* from or *atonement* for any ritual impurity. Thus, the priestly induction ceremony centres on purification and making Aaron and his sons ritually clean for serving God in the holy sanctuary. The priestly 'ordination' is described as acts of 'consecration' (*qiddash*) by which God 'consecrates them for *servicing [him] as priests*' (*kihen*) (29:1, 44). Since the same general term (*qiddash*) is used for the 'consecration' of the priests, the garments, the sacrificial animals, the altar, and the tabernacle (27:21, 27, 33, 36, 37, 44), the induction to the priestly office is fully integrated within the ritual of purification and consecration. This ritual is carried out by washings (29:4), being dressed in special vestments (29:5-6, 8), anointment with oil (only Aaron in 29:7), sprinkling with oil (both Aaron and his sons in 29:21), and the accompanying sacrifices and use of blood for ritual purification to bring atonement (29:10-25). Thus, the induction of the priests is conditioned by a continuing sacrificial offering and purification rituals.

A central part in the priestly ceremony of consecration in Exodus 29 is the threefold reference to Aaron and his sons 'laying their hands on' (*samak yadim 'al*) the heads of the sacrificial animals before they are slaughtered (29:10, 15, 19). By this act, Aaron and his sons *transfer* their guilt and ritual impurity to the sacrificial bull or rams. After being slaughtered, the sacrificial animal provides the blood that purifies the priests, their garments, and the altar (see the more detailed remarks in 3.3.3). The same Hebrew phrase, *samak yadim*, was also used for the 'ordination' of Joshua (3.2.6). However, *nowhere is imposition of hands applied to the priests themselves in Exodus 29 and Leviticus 8*. Their induction was not one of handing over an authority or office – this was already regulated by the condition of belonging to the tribe of Levi – but of receiving ritual purity.

Another important aspect is that Aaron and his sons are to eat the breast and the thigh that have been waved before the Lord (but not burnt) together with the bread that has been placed in the basket (29:26-34). This symbolises their fellowship with the Lord (since this food is now holy, 29:33-34) and with the Israelites (since this is the contribution they are to make from their fellowship offerings, 29:28). Thus, the priestly office and the 'ordination' for it are deeply rooted in the concept of *mediation* between God and his people.

Two things are clear from Exodus 29:9, 29-30, namely that (a) the priesthood belongs to Aaron and his sons by ‘a lasting ordinance’, in other words, the lasting appointment is made by God through Moses, and the office is *inherited*; and that (b) ‘the holy vestments of Aaron shall be his sons’ after him, to be anointed in them and to be ‘ordained’ (*mille’ yad*) in them (29:29). Thus, there is a *succession* of this hereditary office: ‘That son who becomes priest in his place shall put [Aaron’s holy garments] on for seven days, when he enters the tabernacle of meeting to minister in the Holy Place’ (29:30).

Nevertheless, *no imposition of hands is part of the appointment for this succession*. Thus, the imposition of hands was not a standard feature in priestly inductions, but, as we will see in the course of this study, this gesture was practised for specific purposes, in specific situations, and were then not repeated (note the unique inductions of the Levites and Moses’ successor Joshua).

In order to avoid any misunderstanding, it needs to be pointed out that the English terms ‘ordain’ and ‘ordination’ that are used in this NRSV version of the passage translate two related and distinct Hebrew expressions, *mille’ yad*, ‘fill the hand’, which is used as a technical term for inductions to priestly office (often translated ‘appoint’ or ‘install’), and *millu’im*, ‘consecration’ or ‘induction’. The induction of priests is described in three words | Exodus 2*;41:

Exodus 28:41 So you shall put [these clothes] on your brother Aaron, and on his sons with him, and shall *anoint* (*mashakh*) them and *ordain* (*mille’ yad*) them, and *consecrate* (*qiddash*) them, so that they may serve me as priests. (NRSV)

According to this passage, a priest was *consecrated* as a priest for the Lord by *anointment*, priestly *induction*, and *consecration*. The key term is ‘fill the hand of’ (*mille’ yad*), i.e. ‘fill somebody’s hand for the Lord’. The use of this expression in the story of Micah (Judges 17:1-13; note vv. 5, 12) reveals that this was a general, technical term for the appointment or installation of a priest (see also Ex. 28:41; 29:9, 29, 33, 35; 32:29; Lev. 8:33; 16:32; 21:10; Num. 3:3; 1 Kings 13:33; 2 Chr. 13:9). In our passage in Exodus 29, the same technical usage is found: in 29:9 God first defines the lasting priesthood of Aaron and his sons, and then he introduces the ritual of consecration in 29:10-43 by the phrase: ‘And thus you shall let Aaron and his sons assume office (*mille’ yad*)’. Unfortunately, we don’t have sufficient knowledge about the origin and meaning of this expression.

2. Excursus on Hebrew *mille' yad*

There is no full certainty on the origin of *mille' yad*, 'appoint to priestly service'. One explanation is found in Exodus 29:24-25 and Leviticus 8:27-28. Moses puts what is to be sacrificed in the hands of Aaron and his sons, performs the wave offering, and then takes it back from their hands to have them burnt on the altar. According to these *millu'im* offerings, 'fill the hands' would mean that the offerings are placed firstly into their hands. Another explanation concerns the payment of the priests who were paid by 'filling their hands'. This assumption can be supported by Judges 17:10; 18:4 where the Levite, whose hand Micah fills, is offered 'ten shekels of silver a year, his clothes and food'. A third explanation is based on one of the so-called Mari-letters, where *mil qatishunnu*, 'filling their hand', refers to the portion of the spoils that is due to any officer. For a priest, this would apply to his share of the income of the sanctuary and the offerings (cf. the priests rights, 1 Sam. 2:13).⁵⁹⁷ A fourth possibility is to connect the phrase with the Akkadian expression 'to fill someone's hand' which meant 'to put a man in charge of something', to give him a task to perform.⁵⁹⁸ It seems clear, however, that this *mille' yad* is an ancient phrase that had lost its precise meaning by the time the Israelites began to use it and that it does not describe a rite of 'ordination'.⁵⁹⁹

Our final note on Exodus 29 concerns the role of the blood of the offering animals in the induction ritual. Three times, Aaron and his sons must repeatedly lay their hands on the bull and each of the two rams, obviously *transferring* their ritual impurities to the animals which are then slaughtered. The blood of the sacrificial animal is then used to ritually *purify* the horns of the altar (by touching), the base of the altar (by pouring), and around the altar (by sprinkling) (29:12, 16, 20). The blood is also put on Aaron and his sons, 'on the tip of the right ear of Aaron and on the tip of the right ears of his sons, on the thumb of their right hand and on the big toe of their right foot' and some of the blood that is on the altar and some of the anointing oil is to be 'sprinkled on Aaron and on his vestments, on his sons and on the vestments of his sons with him'. Thus, he and his garments shall be 'consecrated' (*qiddash*) (29:20-21). Thus, the priestly function in the sanctuary was closely connected with the handling of blood at the altar and was used for ritual purification. *This is relevant for understanding the absence of female priests in Israel.* The woman's menstrual blood was considered impure and the danger of confusing it with

⁵⁹⁷ M. Delcor, 'ml' voll sein, füllen', in: *THAT*, vol. 1, col. 899.

⁵⁹⁸ R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 1973, p. 347.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 347.

the purifying blood of the sacrificial animal may explain why there were no female priests in Israel (we will come back to this issue under question 2 and in 3.2.5).

A different aspect of priestly installation concerns the Levites – the priestly tribe of the sons of Jacob, although not all Levites were priests (Judg. 19:1). They had no inheritance in the land, for the Lord was their inheritance (Deut. 10:9). They lived scattered across the land (for example, Elkanah was a Levite who lived in Ephraim, 1 Sam. 1:1). The Levites were chosen by God to replace the firstborn which had been pledged to God at the exodus from Egypt (Ex. 13). The Lord recognised the loyalty of the Levites during the incident of the golden calf at Sinai – the tribe of Levi was the only one that remained loyal to God (Ex. 32:26) – and therefore entrusted to them the services of the sanctuary, which originally were to be in the hands of the firstborn sons of Israel (Ex. 13:1, 11-16; Num. 3:5-9, 11-13, 38-51; 8:14-20). Thus, God took the Levites from among the people of Israel to be his own special possession (Num. 3:12, 41, 45; 8:14, 16; 18:6):

Numbers 3:12-13 I hereby accept the Levites from among the Israelites as substitutes for all the firstborn that open the womb among the Israelites. The Levites shall be mine, **13** for all the firstborn are mine. (NRSV)

The record of the induction of the Levites is found in Numbers 8:5-22:

Numbers 8:5-22 **5** The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: **6** Take the Levites from among the Israelites and cleanse them. **7** Thus you shall do to them, to cleanse them: sprinkle the water of purification on them, have them shave their whole body with a razor and wash their clothes, and so cleanse themselves. **8** Then let them take a young bull and its grain offering of choice flour mixed with oil, and you shall take another young bull for a sin offering. **9** You shall bring the Levites before the tent of meeting, and assemble the whole congregation of the Israelites. **10** When you bring the Levites before the Lord, the Israelites shall lay their hands on (*samak yadim 'al*) the Levites, **11** and Aaron shall present the Levites before the Lord as an elevation offering from the Israelites, that they may do the service of the Lord. **12** The Levites shall lay their hands on the heads of the bulls, and he shall offer the one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering to the Lord, to make atonement for the Levites. **13** Then you shall have the Levites stand before Aaron and his sons, and you shall present them as an elevation offering to the Lord. **14** Thus you shall separate (*hibdal*) the Levites from among the other Israelites, and the Levites shall be mine. **15** Thereafter the Levites may go in to do service at the tent of meeting, once you have cleansed them and presented them as an elevation offering. **16** For they are unreservedly given to me from among the Israelites; I have taken them for myself, in place of all that open the womb, the firstborn of all the Israelites. **17** For all the firstborn among the Israelites are mine, both human and animal. On the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I consecrated (*hiqdash*) them for myself, **18** but I have

taken the Levites in place of all the firstborn among the Israelites. **19** Moreover, I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and his sons from among the Israelites, to do the service for the Israelites at the tent of meeting, and to make atonement for the Israelites, in order that there may be no plague among the Israelites for coming too close to the sanctuary. **20** Moses and Aaron and the whole congregation of the Israelites did with the Levites accordingly; the Israelites did with the Levites just as the Lord had commanded Moses concerning them. **21** The Levites purified themselves from sin and washed their clothes; then Aaron presented them as an elevation offering before the Lord, and Aaron made atonement for them to cleanse them. **22** Thereafter the Levites went in to do their service in the tent of meeting in attendance on Aaron and his sons. As the Lord had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so they did with them.

Some Hebrew terms marked in this passage were registered in our reading of Exodus 29. A new term is *hibdal* which means 'separate, distinguish between' (8:14). We should also note that *hiqdash* in 8:17, which NRSV has translated 'separate' literally means 'designate someone as being made holy, consecrated, dedicated'.

Due to the inclusion of imposition of hands in the induction of the Levites, we will apply here the eight search questions adopted for this study:

1. What is the theological significance of 'ordination'?

The whole ceremony has two purposes: By the call of God, the Levites are authorised (a) to serve the Lord in the sanctuary by *assisting* the high priest Aaron, and (b) to perform a priestly service on behalf of God's covenant community (Num. 3:5-7; 18:2-7).⁶⁰⁰

Through their induction the Levites assumed the responsibilities of the firstborn. Their priestly service could only be performed in conjunction with their own atonement, for only then were they and the service they performed acceptable to the Lord. Through them, serving symbolically as the sacrificial offering of the congregation, the covenant people were also accepted. The laying on of hands is therefore an indispensable part of this passage. Because of this rite, the Levites could function vicariously for the congregation as a whole in the sanctuary services.⁶⁰¹ However, the explicit connection between the people of Israel and the Levites serving as a substitution for the firstborn of the people did not diminish the fact that God had made all Israel his royal priesthood (Ex. 19:1-6).

⁶⁰⁰ M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, pp. 13-14.

⁶⁰¹ *Ibid.*

2. For which office or function is 'ordination' practised?

The Levites were assistants to the priests in the Israelite sanctuary, where they were to 'be responsible to [the high priest, Aaron] and perform all the duties of the tabernacle, but they must not go near the furnishings of the sanctuary or the altar' (Num. 18:3, 19). They were to do 'priestly service' to the Lord and his people. The priests' responsibility under the oversight of the high priest was above all to administer the sacrifices on the altar and to handle the purifying and sanctifying power of the blood in making the altar holy and removing his and the people's sins.

It is a common view that the priest dealt with the sacrifices including that of slaughtering the animals. This was not strictly speaking the case. The priest served at the altar and handled the sprinkling of the blood to bring atonement (Lev. 17:11, 14), while placing the various pieces of the sacrifice on their proper place according to a carefully regulated ritual.⁶⁰² According to Exodus 24:3-8, Moses used young men for the practical work, but he performed the blood ritual himself. Sacrificial animals were usually killed by the person who made the offering, but if he was defiled others did it for him (Lev. 1:5; 3:2, 8, 13; 4:24, 29, 33; 2 Chron. 30:17; Ez. 44:1). It was the priest's role to go up to and serve at the altar. When a priest was deposed, it was said that he 'could not go up to the altar' (2 Kings 23:9). It was said that 'priests chose to go up to the altar' (1 Sam. 2:28). Offering incense, however, was the privilege both of the Levites, because it had to be burnt on the altar (Deut. 33:10), and of the descendants of Aaron (Num. 17:5). King Uzziah was punished for usurping this right (1 Chron. 23:13). Thus, we see, again, that it would be impractical and inappropriate for a woman to serve as a sacrificial priest, since her 'impure' menstrual blood could be a threat to ritual purity in the sanctuary.

3. What authority does 'ordination' convey?

The Levites are appointed to 'do the work of the Lord' (Num. 8:11). God has 'given the Levites as gifts to Aaron and his sons to do the work at the tabernacle on behalf of the Israelites and to make atonement for them so that no plague will strike the Israelites when they go near the sanctuary' (Num. 8:19). Thus, their authority in

⁶⁰² Cf. R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 1973, p. 356.

Israel is subordinate to Aaron and the priests and they make atonement for the Israelites as they approach the sanctuary.

4. How is the selection of an 'ordinand' made? Who decides it?

God commanded Moses to 'take' the Levites from the people (Num. 8:6) on the basis of two circumstances: (a) all Levites were eligible for office due to their birth within the tribe of Levi, and (b) God had 'consecrated (*hiqdash*) them for himself' (Num. 8:17; Ex. 32:29) by substituting every firstborn in Israel with them, so that they represented those Israelites who were to be given wholly to the Lord, being his own – Exodus 13 stipulates that all that is firstborn belongs to the Lord (Num. 8:16-18).

5. What are the qualifications of an 'ordinand'? What about gender?

A condition was to have been born in the tribe of Levi in Israel. God had 'set them apart' as his own because of their loyalty to him. After demonstrating their boundless faithfulness to the Lord at the event of the golden calf at Sinai, Moses had told them: 'fill your hands (*mille' yad*) for the Lord today', adding that God had 'blessed' them (Ex. 32:26-29). The peculiar verbal expression 'fill the hands' (*mille' yad*) is the technical term for appointment to priestly service, as noted above.

However, another condition for service was the 'ordination' ceremony itself, since this act (a) made the Levites ritually clean to serve the Lord (the concept of 'ordination' is here merging with the concept of 'consecration'); it also (b) made them representatives of the whole people of Israel who were God's 'kingdom of priests'.

The gender qualification was given. Since the tribe of Levi was a family institution and the heads of families, clans, and tribes were first-born men in Israel, only men would be 'ordained' for the levitical office (Num. 3:1-4:49). Moreover, the whole idea with 'Levites' was that they were to *replace* the first-born sons of all Israel originally selected for the sanctuary service. When the people laid their hands on the Levites, they *reproduced* their first-born sons in the Levites. But there were other reasons for the male gender of the Levites. The name of the ancestor Levi had an affinity with the concept of a wife not being loved and making her husband 'attached' (*lawah*) to her by the sons she had borne for him (note Leah and Jacob in Gen. 29:31-35 and the word play between *lewi* and *lawah*). A married woman who was not loved was counted as a thing 'under which the earth trembles and cannot bear up'

(Prov. 30:20). In that context one can understand the emphasis on 'sons' in the family of Levi.

However, a Levite woman did achieve a leadership position, namely Miriam, Moses' and Aaron's sister, 'the prophetess' (Ex. 15:20). These three joint leaders of the people, Moses, Aaron and Miriam, are addressed by God personally where he rebukes Aaron and Miriam but also gives them instructions regarding the institution of prophets in Israel (Num. 12:4-8). In the book of Micah, God speaks to his people and, referring to the delivery from Egypt and the redemption from the land of slavery, he says: 'I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam' (Mic. 6:4, NRSV). Miriam is even recorded among the sons of Amram (1 Chr. 6:3), which confirms her leadership prominence. Thus, the absence of women among the Levites that were 'ordained' to serve in the sanctuary is not a biblical evidence that women *could not* minister as leaders with authority. The reasons that Levites serving in the sanctuary had to be male emanated from (a) the patriarchal custom of giving the first-born son to God (the first-fruit), i.e. for service in the temple, and then (b) the replacement of the first-born in Israel with the Levites based on their faithfulness at the incident with the golden calf. (Cf. 3.2.5.)

6. How are the qualifications examined?

Lists of the members of the tribe of Levi were kept and their number was counted (Num. 3:1-4:49; 26:57-63). By making the 'ordination' of the Levites a public event and involving all Israel, their qualifications were public knowledge. This is implied in God's command to Moses: 'Take the Levites from among the other Israelites and make them ceremonially clean' (Num. 8:6).

7. How is the ceremony of 'ordination' conducted: by whom, where, when, and how?

The Levites are first cleansed with water (Num. 8:7). Where this is done is not stated, but it was a condition for approaching the tabernacle.

The congregation is then to 'place their hands on' (*samak yad 'al*) them. By this act, the obligation of the whole people to serve the Lord is transferred to the Levites who substitute the firstborn. The Levites in turn accept the responsibility for serving the people.

Atonement is then made for the Levites. Through the imposition of hands on the sacrificial animals, the Levites present themselves to the Lord as a living sacrifice well pleasing to him. It is only by presenting an offering for their own atonement that the Levites can then be presented as a wave offering, that is, as a gift to the Lord.

After these rituals, 'the Levites went in to perform their service in the tent of meeting in attendance on Aaron and his sons' (Num. 8:22).

8. What functions do prayer and laying on of hands have in the ceremony?

There is no mentioning of prayer. However, Moses indicated to the Levites (as a tribe) after the event with the golden calf that 'God has blessed you this day' (Ex. 32:29), and this blessing as well as God's special ownership of the Levites may explain why prayer or blessing is not made explicit. It should also be kept in mind that the entire ritual outlined in Numbers 8 is commanded by the Lord, so by implementing it Israel knew they were doing God's will.

'Laying on of hands' has a dual application in the ceremony. The people lay their hands on the Levites and the Levites lay their hands on the sacrificial animals. The former act concerns us here. There is no explanation of the meaning of this act in Numbers 8:5-22. The following points can be inferred from the text:

(a) By the imposition of their hands, the people *identified* themselves with the Levites and their service.

(b) The Imposition of the people's hands also indicated that the Levites in their sanctuary service *substituted* the firstborns of the people and *represented* the congregation as a whole.

(c) The laying on of hands by the people was only part of an extended ceremony that functioned as an induction to the hereditary office of exclusive work in the tabernacle to serve God, Aaron and the priests (who had the main responsibility), and the people. The people's laying on of hands on the Levites was motivated by a special need that did not apply to the induction of priests (Ex. 29; Lev. 8) or elders (Num. 11:16-25): it was meant to *replace* the first-born of the people with the Levites, and this was not based on custom and practice, because the Levites were not of the first-born son/tribe of Jacob/Israel – it was based on God's decision at the incident of the golden calf and his recognition of the loyalty and obedience of the Levites.

The Levites did not 'ordain' new Levites. The office was theirs by birth and inheritance, but a ceremony was needed to consecrate them for the special duty in

the sanctuary. The high priests (successors of Moses and Aaron) would have ritually *purified* the Levites (see e.g. Num 8:6-7, 15, 21-22), thus separating them from the people (8:12-14, 21), but they did not ‘ordain’ them.

Summing up, we see that Israel did not practice a consistent ceremony of ‘ordination’ for priests and Levites. For the priests there was no prayer or imposition of hands. For the Levites, there was no prayer but imposition of hands by the people was included. The fact that the induction to the senior office of the priests excluded imposition of hands, while the induction of the Levites with the lower rank included imposition of hands was not an issue, because the function of the imposition of hands was not to ritually purify men from the tribe of Levi, which was the main need for the sanctuary service. The imposition of hands for the Levites is a unique feature motivated by the fact that they *represented* the firstborn of the people of Israel. This idea has no place in Christian ‘ordination’. The priests and Levites were appointed by God and the office was inherited, which is another element that is inapplicable to Christian ‘ordination’. There is no support in the New Testament for maintaining any of these offices in the Christian church, or the rituals accompanying them.

3.2.5 The Absence of Female Priests in Ancient Israel

Although priestesses were common among most peoples in the ancient Near East, judging from the Old Testament collection of writings, Israel was an exception. The Hebrew term *kohen*, ‘priest’, seems to have originated in Canaanite⁶⁰³ where the cognate noun had both a masculine and feminine ending,⁶⁰⁴ but in the ca. 700 occurrences in the Old Testament the noun *kohen* has only one form, the masculine. Despite its masculine form, this term could include references to a female priest. This is the case in Isaiah 61:6, where God says that men and women in Israel will be called ‘priests of the Lord (*kohane jhwh*)’ and ‘ministers of our God (*meshartim elohenu*)’ – in the context of Isaiah 60:1-62:12 it is clear that men and women are included (60:4, 9, 21-22; 61:1-4, 10; 62:5, 12).

The term *kohen* is used not only for priests in Israel, but also for priests of foreign gods, such as Egyptian (Gen. 41:45; 47:22), Phoenician (1 Kings 10:19;

⁶⁰³ A. Fridrichsen & K. Stendahl, Article ‘Präster’, in: *SBU*, vol. 2, p. 610; reference is made to the so-called Ras Shamra texts (I AB, VI: 18) where *rab kahinima* means ‘high priest’. (610-617)

⁶⁰⁴ See H. Ringgren, *Främre Orientens religioner i gammal tid*, 1967, p. 200; cf. Ringgren’s review of the West-Semitic religions and their sources (pp. 148-213).

11:18), Philistine (1 Sam. 5:5; 6:2), Moabite (Jer. 48:7), or Ammonite (Jer. 49:3). Another Hebrew noun for 'priests' is *kemarim* (only attested in the plural), but this is used only of priests of false gods (2 Kings 23:5; Hos. 10:5; Zeph. 1:4). In addition, we will see shortly that the Old Testament does refer to priestesses of foreign cults and, while strongly rejecting them, certain standard terms are being used as well as derogatory circumscriptions.

The question we ask here is: Why are female priests absent from the sanctuary service in Israel?⁶⁰⁵ Let us first acknowledge what was the task of the priest in Israel. On the basis of Deuteronomy 33:8-10, three types of duties may be noted:⁶⁰⁶

1. Didactic and administrative functions were carried out by priests and Levites in daily civil life in Israel. They participated in the courts as judges (Deut. 17:9; 21:5; cf. 19:17), they provided wise or prophetic oracles (see below), and this qualified them also to function as teachers of the law (Deut. 33:10; cf. Mal. 2:6-7; Jer. 18:18).

2. Prophetic functions were exercised in which knowledge of God's will, of the future, and of wisdom were required for decisions that had to be made. Oracular techniques included the use of Urim and Thummim (Num. 27:21), dreams, and prophecy (Deut. 18:15-22; 33:8-10; 1 Sam. 28:6). Moses was perceived as a prophet (Deut. 18:15), and some prophets were linked to priestly families (e.g. Jer.1:1) or received their call in the temple (Isa. 6). The Urim and Thummim were handled by Eleazar (Num. 27:21) and the Levites (Deut. 33:8). After David's reign, these lots disappear and the kings seek counsel from prophets, even the female prophet Huldah.⁶⁰⁷

3. Cultic functions included ministering in the sanctuary, dealing with ritual impurity, illnesses, and atonement for sin. Central in this function was the performance of sacrificial offerings and various rites connected with them (Leviticus 1-16).

⁶⁰⁵ This question is also asked in J. Doukhan, 'Women Priests in Israel', 1998, pp. 29-43. His contribution has met with rejection in G. Damsteegt, 'Eve, a Priest in Eden?', 2000, pp. 123-128.

⁶⁰⁶ J. Doukhan, 'Women Priests in Israel', 1998, p. 32; J. Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, Parts 3-4, 1963, pp. 157-164; R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 1973, pp. 349-356.

⁶⁰⁷ Cf. R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 1973, p. 353.

In all three of these functions, the priest functioned as *mediator*.⁶⁰⁸ When he delivered an oracle, he was passing on an answer from God. When he gave an instruction and explained the Law, he was passing on and interpreting teaching that came from God. When he took the blood and flesh of the victims to the altar, or burned incense upon the altar, he was presenting to God the prayers and petitions of the faithful. In the first two roles, he *represented* God before men, in the third men before God. All along, he was always an *intermediary*.⁶⁰⁹ Thus, Hebrew 5:1 is true of every priest: 'Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins' (*NRSV*). The priest was a *mediator* both as prophet and king. But the king and the prophet were mediators by a personal spirit and because they were chosen and called by God. The priest was *ipso facto* a mediator for the priesthood as an *institution* for mediation, in which the office was hereditary exclusively for male descendants of Aaron and the Levites.⁶¹⁰ This means that when the hereditary institution of the priesthood is made obsolete in Christianity (see especially Hebrews), *the priesthood remains only in terms of a spiritual gift, a call from God, and an endorsement of the church*.

Women were allowed to perform the first two of the above-mentioned functions of the priest: prophecy and administration, as we see by the examples of Miriam (3.2.9), Deborah (3.2.7), and Huldah (3.2.9). The prophet Joel does not hesitate to use the technical verb 'prophecy' in referring to women (Joel 2:28). Women were allowed to be Nazirites, based on a vow and with full consecration to the Lord (3.2.8). Israel allowed women to hold offices of leadership: judge (3.2.7), queen (3.2.10), and wise women forming a special social class (3.2.11).

There were even some ritual functions in Israel that women could perform. They participated in the sacrificial meals (Num. 18:8-19; Deut. 12:12; 14:22-29; 15:19-23; 16:9-15; 1 Sam. 1:4), religious gatherings (Neh. 8:2, 13; 12:43) and were physically present at the ceremony of sacrifice (1 Sam. 2:19). They also ministered at the entrance to the tabernacle (Ex. 38:8; 1 Sam. 2:22) and served as singers in the temple (Neh. 7:67; Ezra 2:65; Ps. 68:24-25).⁶¹¹

⁶⁰⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 357.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*

⁶¹¹ J. Doukhan, 'Women Priests in Israel', 1998, p. 33.

However, the ritual acts of slaughtering the sacrificial animals and serving at the altar by administering the blood of the victims were not performed by women according to the Old Testament, and 'it was perhaps the only religious domain that was denied to women, a prohibition which seems to have been peculiar to Israel'.⁶¹² Various plausible reasons may be considered as explanations of this circumstance:

1. Patriarchal Customs Accepted by God: Going back to the origins of the Israelite priesthood, it seems that at the time of the Patriarchs, acts of public worship, especially sacrifice, were performed by the male head of the family (Gen. 22; 31:54; 46:1). At the time, the male head was seen as a representative of the family, clan, or tribe. The Patriarchs, who were nomads, offered their sacrifices in the sanctuaries they visited, but the book of Genesis never mentions priests except in reference to foreign nations, which were not nomadic (e.g. the Egyptian priests in Gen. 41:45; 47:22, and Melchizedech, the king-priest of Salem in Gen. 14:18).⁶¹³ The priesthood in a proper sense appear in God's instructions to Moses in the desert. They were first implemented as a desert model, in the temporary sanctuary of the tabernacle. and later on, after the settlement in Canaan and especially during the kingdom, as a developed organisation with an officially organised priesthood. By God's call, Moses and Aaron, initially joined by their sister Miriam, became the heads of Israel and from them descended the priests, possibly in various lines, although the predominant one was that of Aaron. Thus, a strong patriarchal custom from Israel's nomadic origins may partially explain the exclusively male priesthood. This custom is, as mentioned above (3.1.1.5), nowhere instituted by God according to the Bible, but develops together with the human corruption and the struggle for survival described in Genesis 4-11.

2. A Hereditary Priesthood of the Tribe of Levi. A woman could in theory only be considered for priesthood if she belonged to the tribe of Levi (like Miriam). This was the priestly tribe which did not receive an allotment of the land of Canaan. The priests therefore lived spread out in all the lands of the other tribes, which made their living dependable on the right to own their land by a deed of purchase, not by the original 'covenantal' distribution of land under Joshua which was then kept according to laws of heredity. However, the patriarchal laws at the time prevented women from making deeds and own land. Although the case of Zelophehad's

⁶¹² Ibid.

⁶¹³ R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 1973, p. 345.

daughters was an exception applicable when a father died without sons, still, only widows and divorced women were allowed to own land (Num. 27:1-11; 36:1-12). However, widows and divorced women were considered as ritually 'defiled', which we see by the rule that a priest could not marry them since he was holy and they were not (Lev. 21:7, 13-14; Ez. 44:22).

While all priests belonged to the tribe of Levi, not all of them were 'Levites' in a technical sense, i.e. the specific group of priestly servants in the sanctuary. The senior rank was held by priests of Aaronic descent who, while being of Levi's tribe, were still distinct from the 'Levites'. The Levites were appointed by God as his priestly servants *in replacement of* the first male offspring of every Israelite woman (Num. 3:12-13; cf. 3:14-39). (This focus on the firstborn male seems to be a heritage from Israel's early, nomadic or semi-nomadic existence – see 3.1.1.5 above.) Thus, the gender of a woman from the tribe of Levi would also bar her from the 'levitical' role of replacing a firstborn male.

Thus, a complex system of patriarchal rules current at the time made it practically impossible for a woman to serve as priest. These reasons for the exclusion of female priests would however become irrelevant with the abolishment of the Old Testament priesthood in Christ. There is no biblical warrant for the permanence of the Sinai priesthood within the body of Christ. No Christian in the New Testament carries the official title of 'priest'.

3. The Central Function of Blood in Maintaining Ritual Purity. The high concept of 'holiness' and ritual 'purity' linked to the sanctuary service and the presence of God did not relate well to the woman's regular 'ritual uncleanness and sexual nature as a woman'.⁶¹⁴ Not only the priestly induction ritual, but the entire sacrificial system was founded on the understanding that the blood of the sacrificial animals was able to purify persons and things from ritual uncleanness of every kind. Thus, the blood was associated with 'life' (Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:10-14; Deut. 12:23-24), and the life of the Israelites was 'redeemed' by the blood of the Passover lamb (Ex. 12:7, 13, 22-23). The purifying and consecrating role of the sacrificial blood would make priestly service almost impossible for women who, by their menstrual blood became ritually unclean at least seven days each month (Lev. 15:19-24; cf. vv. 25-30), and who were unclean after childbirth for seven plus either thirty-three days or

⁶¹⁴ Doukhan (ibid., p.33) refers, among others, to V. E. Hannon, *The Question of Women and the Priesthood: Can Women Be Admitted to Holy Orders?*, 1967, p. 60.

sixty-six days depending on the gender of the child (Lev. 12). The law in Leviticus 12 stated that ‘she must not touch anything sacred or go to the sanctuary until the days of her purification was over’ (Lev. 12:4).⁶¹⁵ The central importance of the priestly administration of the purifying blood at the altar would have been endangered by a female priest. The offering blood was also to be placed on the priest’s body parts and clothes in the priestly induction for office (see 3.2.5 above). All this would have made a mix-up of the purifying blood with the woman’s ‘impure’ menstrual blood likely, and that would have endangered the sanctity and purity of the sanctuary service. Again, this reason for not allowing female priests becomes obsolete when the Old Testament sanctuary service was abandoned in Christianity. However, there are indications that the Mosaic rules are still impacting Judaism today.⁶¹⁶

4. A Monotheistic Faith in a Powerful Polytheistic Environment. Pagan peoples surrounding Israel, especially in Canaan, had a polytheistic view of ‘god’ which included both male and female gods, while Israel had a strictly monotheistic view of God, seeing him as a male. After its entry into Canaan, Israel would encounter a powerful pressure from a polytheistic, developed culture, and, therefore, its priesthood would be a vital tool of God to remind them of the one God. Since sacrificial priests were both representatives of the people (towards God) and of God (towards the people), male gender may have been seen as the more appropriate thing for priests that performed and handled the sacrifices and the atoning blood. However, the male gender of the priest on this ground would cease to have a reason for existence when the Old Testament sanctuary service became obsolete in Christ.

5. Avoiding Association with the ‘Holy Women’ in the Widespread Temple Prostitution. Priestesses were very common in the sanctuaries of Israel’s neighbouring people. Particularly in Canaan they were associated with the idea of

⁶¹⁵ For a general review of this and related issues, see, for example, L. H. Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians*, 2009, pp. 218-221, cf. pp. 208-209.

⁶¹⁶ According to information from Rainer Refsbäck, a Seventh-day Adventist Pastor in Sweden, and based on his conversations with a practising conservative Jewish woman, ‘there is in contemporary Judaism a number of religious duties that govern life in relationship to society, the congregation, and the family, called the 613 *mitzwot* (found in the Mosaic *Torah*). Two of these duties can only be fulfilled by women - they concern the woman’s impurity around menstruation and giving birth. The other duties may be fulfilled by all, but it is the man who is responsible for fulfilling them. Since the woman during part of her life regularly becomes unclean and gives birth, she is prevented from fulfilling several of these duties which constantly concern the temple. Therefore, the woman is exempt from the duty of fulfilling all those duties, but she is not exempt from doing it when she is clean.’ (Our English translation of parts of the Letter, 10 October, 2013.) Cf. ‘The Role of Women’ at www.jewfaq.org/women.htm; Rabbi Hayim Halevy Donin, *To Pray as a Jew: A Guide to the Prayer Book and the Synagogue Service*, 1980, pp. 192-197.

‘sacred marriage’, temple prostitution, syncretism, and sexual immorality. By exclusively male priests the Israelites avoided such associations and kept their sanctuary services pure.

The biblical support for this view is outlined in the following:

Firstly, the Bible indicates that Israel prohibited practices associated with the Canaanite cult. We note, for example, the peculiar prohibition against ‘cooking a young goat in its mother’s milk (Ex. 23:19; 34:26); the prohibitions against ‘cutting your hair at the sides of your head or clipping off the edges of your beard’ (Lev. 19:27), against ‘cutting your bodies for the dead or putting tattoo marks on yourselves’ (Lev. 19:28), against ‘degrading your daughter by making her a prostitute’ which may be a prohibition against temple prostitution (Lev. 19:29), against ‘turning to mediums or seeking out spiritists’ (Lev. 19:31). If we add the material provided in the prophetic part of the canon, we will see shortly that the examples of strong rejection of any form of idolatry abound, not the least of temple prostitution.

Secondly, sexual ‘impurity’ was considered a violation of God’s view of ‘holiness’ in Israel. Priests were not allowed to marry a prostitute or a divorced woman, because priests were ‘holy’ (Lev. 21:7). For the same reason, the high priest was allowed only to marry ‘a virgin from his own people’ (Lev. 21:13-15). The law in Israel contained outright prohibitions against a shrine prostitute, *qedesha*, ‘holy woman’ (Deut. 23:17). Priests from the local shrines, where there might have been impure practices such as shrine prostitution, were not allowed to minister in the temple of Jerusalem after the reform of King Josiah (2 Kings 23:8-9, 20).⁶¹⁷ This rule of keeping the Israelite cult of God pure went so far as to forbid the earnings of a prostitute (*zonah*) to be brought into the house of the Lord as payment of any vow ‘because God detests it’ (Deut. 23:18). Thus, any connection whatsoever with temple prostitution was severely prohibited in Israel. It was incompatible with the Lord’s holiness.

Thirdly, when God revealed the law to Moses at Sinai, he stipulated rules for the priesthood in view of the *future history of Israel*. There is a prophetic element in the rules for the priesthood. Many times, laws are introduced with phrases like ‘and when you enter the land ...’. From the perspective of the Bible as a whole, God was

⁶¹⁷ See Brown, Driver & Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, pp. 436-437.

also aware that a day would come when the sanctuary service would be fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Christ, leading to the abolishment of Israel's priesthood and its replacement with the church of Christ ca. 30 A.D. and with Rabbinic Judaism in the decades after Jerusalem's destruction in 70 A.D. It was therefore God's intention that the Old Testament priesthood would function for a limited time, to serve the people of Israel and the specific needs Israel would face for about 1,400 years, until the time for a 'better covenant' would come (Heb.7:22; cf. 7:18-19; 8:13). With this in mind, we may consider the history of Israel, particularly the history of the kingdom ca. 1000 – 587 B.C., from the point of view of how the Israelite priesthood established by God at Sinai would keep Israel faithful to him.

It is in this context we must see the frequent references in the Old Testament to widespread idolatry and the practice of using 'holy women' in practices like 'sacred marriage' and shrine prostitution. Through Israel's history from Sinai to the destructions and deportations of Israel (721 B.C) and Judah (587 B. C.), we can trace a movement of the prophets and of righteous priests and kings that suppressed the foreign cults, and it is this movement that has preserved the Old Testament writings. We may therefore assume that they made efforts to suppress references to the idolatrous practices in the writings selected for the Old Testament canon. This movement defended the Sinai covenant and the priesthood revealed in the law where all references to priestesses are suppressed, in order to avoid any sexual implication even in the thinking of the Israelite. From the beginning of the monarchy, we see a constant struggle for power between kings and priests which impacted the adherence to the laws for the priesthood. Especially the prophetic representatives of this movement rejected any deviation from the principles laid down in the law and we find traces of their prophecies of doom on account of immoral fertility cults involving priestesses and shrine prostitutes. This movement took its cue from the revealed law at Sinai, and it is quite significant that at the time of widespread apostasy in Judah, which included temple prostitution and the services of fertility priestesses, this law is discovered in the temple under king Josiah, generating a reform (2 Kings 22).

A brief look at how Israel followed the divine regulations for the Israelite priesthood with a view to the use of priestesses in foreign cults shows the following:⁶¹⁸

⁶¹⁸ We follow here the summary in J. Pedersen, *Israel*, 1967, pp. 166, 469-471.

The sexual cult with priestesses in Canaan penetrated deep into Israel. The woman who was in its service was called 'holy woman' (*qedeshah*). In Shiloh there were women who served at the temple (1 Sam. 2:22), and Eli's sons had intercourse with them. The prophet Amos quotes God saying: 'And a man and his father go to the woman to profane my holy name, and upon clothes laid to pledge they stretch themselves at every altar, and they drink the wine of the raped in the house of their God' (Amos 2:7-8). This suggests that men could visit the cult women in the temples without any special rules and have intercourse with them there in connection with a sacrificial meal and the drinking of wine.⁶¹⁹

Hosea condemns the association of the sexual cult with sacrifices: 'They sacrifice on the tops of mountains, and light the fire of sacrifice on the hills, under oaks, poplars and terebinth, for its shadow is good! And then your daughters commit fornication and your young women commit adultery. I will not afflict your daughters because they commit fornication, not young women because they commit adultery. For [the priests] go aside with the harlots, and sacrifice with the sacred women. But foolish people fall.' (Hos. 4:13-14; cf. the central role of the priests in 4:1-12). Here we are told that the sexual cult is practised with the *qedeshot*, 'holy women' or 'shrine prostitutes', by the priests, but it is not stated whether it is a festal custom or a daily habit. Micah says that all the holy images and asherahs of Samaria are derived from the wages of harlots (Mic. 1:7), from which we may infer that men who visited the shrine prostitutes paid a due to the temple.⁶²⁰

Just as Hosea calls the sacred women 'harlots', Jeremiah brands the holy houses in which the cult takes place as houses of harlots (Jer. 5:7). He also charges the prophets with committing fornication with the women of their people (Jer. 29:23), just as Hosea makes the same accusation against the priests. All Israel has behaved like a harlot 'under every green tree' (Jer. 2:20), 'on all hills [a euphemism for foreign cult places] fornication is committed, Jerusalem will never again be clean' (13:27). Ezekiel's accusations are even more vehement (Ez. 16:20, 22-23). Thus, we receive the impression that sexual rites dominated the Israelite cultus throughout the monarchical period.⁶²¹

⁶¹⁹ Ibid., p. 469.

⁶²⁰ Ibid., pp. 469-470.

⁶²¹ Ibid., p. 470.

From Jeremiah's words we understand that Jerusalem, also, had plenty of these cults. Doubtless there were many sanctuaries in monarchical Jerusalem where the sexual cult was practised and it was also entertained in the royal temple. Curiously enough, the book of Kings only speaks about 'holy men' (*qedeshim*) not of 'holy women' (*qedeshot*). The men are also called 'dogs' (Deut. 23:19). Such temple servants, we are told, practised the same abominations under King Rehabeam as were practised among the peoples inhabiting Canaan before the advent of Israel (1 Kings 14:24). It is stated that both Asa and Jehoshaphat expelled them (1 Kings 15:12; 22:47); nevertheless in the time of Josiah they had special chambers in the royal temple (2 Kings 23:7). Of course there is all the more reason to suppose there were cult women in the temple. Like the 'holy men', they would be removed by certain kings, but otherwise they practised their cult unmolested.⁶²²

According to the story of Judah and Tamar, the 'sacred woman' (*qedeshah*) was not only to be met with in the temples, she might sit by the roadside, lying in wait for men like common prostitutes (Gen. 38:14-15).

The remark about Josiah's reform in 2 Kings 23:7 reveals that there were 'holy men', i.e. male priests of a sexual cult, at the temple of Jerusalem. They had special chambers, and their own special organisation as well. We may infer from this information that there must have been priestesses of the same cult at the royal temple, the *qedeshot* known from the sanctuaries of Canaan. To this must be added the priests of the foreign cults who gradually gained access to the royal temple, especially in the Assyrian period, the same who were combated by Josiah, and still flourished in Ezekiel's time (Ez. 8).⁶²³

In conclusion, it is obvious that foreign cults with priestesses known as 'holy women' were a common threat to the faithfulness of God's people in the time of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Since these women acted as shrine prostitutes, the association between women priests and temples, priesthood and sacrifices would have made it important for God to institute a priesthood that kept the cult pure, that kept the thinking about the cult pure, and that would exclude any confusion between the true cult and the abominable idolatrous cults with which Israel was strongly tempted to pursue. This would be another way in which the cult of the true God, the God of Israel, would be kept undefiled and holy.

⁶²² Ibid., pp. 470-471.

⁶²³ Ibid., p. 166.

6. Protection of the Woman as Giver of Life. It is possible that in providing the laws for the priesthood, God sought to teach Israel the special sanctity that he wanted to uphold regarding the woman as the giver of life. Doukhan has expressed this aspect as follows: '[The restriction against female priests in Israel] may well reflect a Hebrew attitude toward women, who were, from Eve on, traditionally associated with the giving of life. And since the woman stands for life, she should be exempt from the act of sacrificing that stands for death.'⁶²⁴ Doukhan calls attention to various restrictions in Israel to safeguard the sphere of life and life-giving, e.g. Genesis 9:4; Exodus 23:19; Deuteronomy 14:21.⁶²⁵ We have seen traces of this concept in Genesis 1-3 above, especially in 3:16-20, where God protects the woman's role in childbearing and childbirth, despite the punishment of the pain inflicted, and where a reason for this protection could be found in the promise of 'the woman's seed' that would overcome the evil/serpent (3:15) followed by an emphasis on birth, descent, offspring, genealogies in Genesis 4-11, preparing for the continued fulfilment of the promise to Abraham that he would become a father of a great people and that all clans on the earth would be blessed by his seed (Gen. 12-50). This line of reasoning fits the concept that God works according to a clear plan in the Bible: he first calls man and woman to be his priestly servants in the world (Gen. 1-2), then accommodates the consequences of the Fall by protecting the woman's life-giving function (3:16) so that his promise of a saving 'woman's seed' may be fulfilled, then confirms the priestly, mediating role of man and woman and the need to bring atonement for their guilt (3:20), then accepts man's development of a patriarchal social structure (4-11), then leads Israel from Egypt into the desert and arranges for the priesthood that leaves the woman out as a life-giver and wife while preventing Israel from associating any cultic practice in the sanctuary with the detestable Canaanite practices of temple prostitution, then brings the priesthood to an end and introduces Christ to the world with men and women serving him to complete God's mission in the world.

What we have said so far about the absence of female priests in Israel clearly suggests that this absence is irrelevant for the issue of women's ordination for the Christian gospel ministry today. The absence is linked to the election of Israel as a people, in a different historical setting, and concerns a kind of office which no longer

⁶²⁴ J. Doukhan, 'Women Priests in Israel', 1998, p. 33.

⁶²⁵ Ibid.

exists in the church. The requirements for 'ordination' of priests and Levites are not fulfilled even by male ministers in the Church today which makes them irrelevant for application to female ministers, too.

3.2.6 Moses and Joshua

In our study of the practice of the laying on of hands (3.3), we have found that, generally, the Old Testament does not say that prophets, priests, kings, or elders received the imposition of hands for the purpose of either endowment with God's blessing or installation into office. This rite was reserved exclusively for use within the sacred cult. There is an important exception to this, however, and that is Moses' induction of Joshua into the office of being his successor as Israel's leader in the conquest of Canaan and the distribution of the land among the tribes of Israel. This act has cultic overtones, although Joshua was neither a Levite nor a priest.

Two texts describe the laying on of hands in the installation and induction of Joshua: Numbers 27:15-23 and Deuteronomy 34:9. The former passage reads as follows (the Hebrew terminology is marked for convenience):

Numbers 27:15-23 Moses spoke to the Lord, saying, **16** 'Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint (*paqad*) someone over the congregation **17** who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, so that the congregation of the Lord may not be like sheep without a shepherd.' **18** So the Lord said to Moses, 'Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand upon (*samak yad 'al*) him; **19** have him stand before (*'amad lipne*) Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and commission him in their sight. **20** You shall give him some of your authority (*hod*), so that all the congregation of the Israelites may obey. **21** But he shall stand before (*'amad lipne*) Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the decision of the Urim before the Lord; at his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the Israelites with him, the whole congregation.' **22** So Moses did as the Lord commanded him. He took Joshua and had him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole congregation; **23** he laid his hands on (*samak yad 'al*) him and commissioned (*tsawwah*) him – as the Lord had directed through Moses. (NRSV)

Two words are used for the act of 'ordination', namely, 'appoint' (*paqad*), which we have considered more closely in 3.2.1 above, and 'commission' (*tsawwah*). The latter term can mean 'order, direct, appoint, charge someone to do something'. The sense 'charge' was also found in the Flood Story in Genesis 6:22 (see 3.1.1.4 above).

Because of its general significance – Joshua’s ‘ordination’ by Moses has been considered the prototype for all ordinations to follow (it certainly was central to the scribes in first-century Judaism (see 3.4 below) – we will again apply the nine search questions:

1. *What is the theological significance of ‘ordination’?*

Moses asks God in prayer to ‘appoint someone over the congregation’ (27:16). Thus, Moses is the one that takes the initiative, and Joshua’s appointment is the result of God’s answer to Moses’ prayer in a specific situation of need (27:15-17).

Joshua already has ‘the spirit’ (*ruakh*, 27:18) – and that is why he is appointed – which means that the imposition of hands *follows* the recognition of Joshua’s qualification of having the spirit (27:18, 23). The ‘spirit’ is not defined in Numbers 27:15-23, but it is explained as ‘spirit of wisdom’ in Deuteronomy 34:9, which is fully in harmony with the general usage of ‘spirit’ (*ruakh*) (3.2.2).

The laying on of Moses’ hand (note the singular in Num. 27:18) is accompanied by a ‘commissioning’ which defines the act as an appointment for leadership at a critical moment of Israel’s history according to God’s plan for his people.

In both passages, Numbers 27:15-23 and Deuteronomy 34:9, the imposition of his hand(s) links Moses’ authority with Joshua (Num. 27:20), so that the people who witnesses the ritual (Num. 27:19) will ‘listen to Joshua and do what the Lord had commanded Moses’ (Deut. 34:9). However, Deuteronomy 34:9 links Moses’ imposition of hands with Joshua’s gift of the spirit of wisdom. Literally, the phrase reads: ‘Joshua ... was filled with the spirit of wisdom, *for (ki)* Moses had laid his hands on him’. This can be understood in two ways:

(a) Joshua received the spirit of wisdom *through* Moses’ imposition of hands (the preposition ‘for’ expresses cause), or

(b) Joshua was filled with the spirit of wisdom (through his long companionship with Moses), for Moses (confirmed this) by laying his hands on him’ (the preposition ‘for’ is ‘explicative justifying a statement by unfolding the particulars which establish it’).⁶²⁶

⁶²⁶ For this function, see F. Brown, S. R. Driver & C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. 473.

The passage in Numbers 27:15-23 supports the second option, since Joshua has the 'spirit' *before* Moses lays his hand on him. If we nevertheless prefer option one, which is the more obvious reading, it means that Moses act of laying his hand on Joshua, implying his 'leaning upon' Joshua (*samak yad 'al*), does refer to a real *transfer* of Moses' spirit of wisdom'. This act is then accomplished by God through Moses, not magically or sacramentally, but because Moses is acting on God's explicit command and under God's supervision and involvement. The fact that this is a unique and non-repeatable event of 'ordination' for office in the Bible would support this understanding. (Note also our discussion of the transfer of Moses' *hod*, 'majesty, honour' under question 8 below.) In any case, Joshua is here described as a military and civil leader, while the ecclesiastical leadership remains with the high-priest Eleazar, so the application of the Moses-Joshua 'ordination' to Christian ordination is highly questionable also for that reason.

2. For which office or function is 'ordination' practised?

The position is that of a civil and spiritual leader succeeding Moses. Joshua is taking on the political, military civil and legal responsibilities but is connected with the high priest Eleazar (Aaron's son and successor and the head of the Levites) and the entire worshipping community (27:19, 22). The office is clearly a leadership function. The term 'shepherd' was common in Israel and the ancient Near East, both for leaders and kings (e.g. Ez. 34:2; 2 Sam. 5:2).⁶²⁷

3. What authority does 'ordination' convey?

The authority conveyed to Joshua is one of leadership – a political, administrative, and military leadership rather than 'ecclesiastical', since the high priest Eleazar holds the latter role. Joshua is to be the head of the community who 'leads them out and brings them in', like a shepherd for the sheep (27:16-17, 21b). However, while the spirit is already in Joshua, he is to receive some of Moses' authority by the imposition of his hand, and is to consult the high priest through Urim and Thummim to discern the will of God.

4. How is the selection of the 'ordinand' made? Who decides it?

⁶²⁷ For more information and references, see J. A. Soggin, Article 'r'h/weiden', in: *THAT*, vol. 2, cols. 793-794.

God makes the selection by Designation in his answer to Moses' prayer (27:18). He asks Moses to 'take' (*laqakh*) Joshua, which also means 'select, summon'.

5. What are the qualifications of the 'ordinand'? What about gender?

The main qualification is that Joshua is 'someone in whom is the spirit' (27:18). This is explained in Deuteronomy 34:9 as a 'spirit of wisdom', which may refer both to leadership gifts and the fact that he 'followed the Lord wholeheartedly' (Num. 32:12). He must be capable of 'being over this community', 'going out and coming in before them', 'leading them out and bringing them in', and thus ensuring that 'the Lord's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd' (27:16-17). The fact that Moses had 'known' Joshua since his youth (Num. 11:28) may also be relevant, because the concept of 'knowing' is of some importance in Jeremiah's appointment as a prophet (Jer. 1:5).

In the wording 'a man over this community' (27:16) and 'a man in whom is the spirit' (27:18), it seems most likely that the male gender is intentional. Although Deborah later on assumed a similar leadership role for Israel (see 3.1.2.3 above), the person named by God, 'the God of the spirits of all mankind' (Num. 27:15), is Joshua who had also been with Moses. The nature of the task and the critical moment in Israel's history may have made Joshua the appropriate successor. However, there is no in-principle-declaration in the passage that leadership must be male.

6. How are the qualifications examined?

There is no record of an examination linked to the process of appointment and induction, but in this case it seems that Joshua had been with Moses since his youth and had served the Lord, Moses, and the people, with success (e.g. Num. 13-14).

7. How is the ceremony of 'ordination' conducted: by whom, where, when, and how? This is outlined in some detail in Numbers 27:18-21 (divine instruction) and 27:22 (Moses' implementation). The central element is the 'laying on of Moses hand on' Joshua (27:18), but the ceremony includes the following steps:

(a) *Joshua and Moses stand before Eleazar the priest and the entire assembly* (27:19) We noted in the Joseph story in 3.2.1 above that the Hebrew expression 'stand before' (*'amad lipne*) implies 'standing at the service of somebody

with authority', i.e. serving a lord or king with respect (cf. 1 Kings 1:28; Elijah is 'standing before' the Lord, 1 Kings 17:1). This would mean that the priest and the entire assembly are seen in Joshua's appointment as an authority that the leader serves. The act of 'standing before' has several functions, however: (a) Joshua is introduced to the congregation in a legally valid setting; (b) he indicates his acceptance of his responsibilities and the congregation's acceptance of him; and (c) the ceremony takes place in a cultic setting in the tabernacle where the Urim and Thummim of the high priest will be used to obtain decisions that indicate the will of the Lord (27:21).

(b) *Moses lays his hand upon Joshua and gives him some of his authority* (27:18, 20). For more detailed comments, see question 8 below.

(c) *Moses commissions Joshua in the presence of the community* (27:19). The content of this commissioning is not recorded in the Lord's instruction but may be reconstructed from Moses' prayer in 27:15-17 which was quoted above.

There is no evidence that Joshua in turn laid hands on a successor as leader or that a pattern of office was established by Moses. This 'ordination' is therefore a unique event at a decisive point in Israel's history.

8. What function does prayer and imposition of hands have in the ceremony?

Moses' prayer for a successor sets the process in motion (27:15-17). The 'ordination' ritual is therefore a divine answer to a particular need at a particular point in time. However, prayer is not mentioned as part of the act of 'ordination'. It appears that this circumstance was noted by the Jewish scribes who did not include prayer in their 'ordination' practice (see 3.4 below). In the New Testament, however, it seems that prayer was an important part of inductions to tasks and offices (cf. Acts 6:1-6; 13:3; 14:23).⁶²⁸

The Hebrew expression for 'laying on of hands' (27:18, 23) is *samak yad 'al* (note the singular form here). The verb *samak* is used in the Old Testament in the case of consecration and offering, and it is used here about Joshua's 'ordination', as well as of the people placing their hands on the Levites (3.2.4). However, there are other terms too: the terms *sim* and *shit* are used with the sense 'place, put' in normal blessings and acts of healing (see 3.3.2 below). While the latter terms are

⁶²⁸ E. Ferguson, 'Jewish and Christian Ordination: Some Observations', 1963, p. 15.

characterised by a light touch, *samak* refers to a heavy touch as in ‘lean upon’. When *samak* is used, the person transfers ‘something’ (depending on the event) to another person or a sacrificial animal who or which then became his substitute or representative. We will study this in more detail in 3.3 below, but it should be noted that the ‘ordination’ of Joshua clearly marks that he had the ‘spirit’ *before* the ceremony and that the imposition of Moses hand serves primarily to convey Moses’ authority’. Deuteronomy 34:9 may describe Moses imposition of hands in a way that suggests a transfer of Moses’ ‘spirit of wisdom’, but the passage can be read in different ways and describes a unique event which is taking place on God’s command and under his supervision and co-involvement (see our discussion above).

Keeping in mind the symbolic meaning of ‘hand’ and its association with ‘power, authority, honour, majesty’ (see 3.3.1 below), God’s instruction to Moses to ‘give [Joshua] some of your authority (*hod*) so the whole Israelite community will obey him’ (27:20) is an act accomplished by the imposition of Moses’ hand on Joshua. The purpose is to ensure that the people respect and obey Joshua (cf. Deut. 34:9). In order for them to do so, some of Moses’ ‘authority’ is visually and publicly conveyed to Joshua by Moses’ hand being laid on him.

In the implementation of the Lord’s instructions (Num. 27:22-23), all elements from the instruction (Num. 27:18-21) are present, except for the mentioning of Joshua receiving Moses’ authority or honour (*hod*). The transfer of honour is associated with the laying on of hands.⁶²⁹ In order to understand this connection, the following summary by Marjorie Warkentin is instructive:

By the imposition of hands, Moses gave public testimony to the divine appointment of Joshua as Israel’s leader, that the people might obey him (Num. 27:20). Joshua, already a man of spiritual endowment (Num. 11:25; cf. Gen. 41:38), received some of Moses’ majesty (Hebrew *hod*; Greek *doxa*, ‘glory’). Moses’ majesty is, perhaps, a reference to the divine authority conferred on Moses at Sinai, when God gave him the Law for Israel. ‘Majesty’ (*hod*) refers to kingly position (Ps. 45:3, 4; Jer. 22:18), and denotes the authority by which a king rules. It is used in parallel with ‘oz and *koakh* (‘strength’, ‘power’) in contexts suggesting the might of God, expressing God’s power in creation (Ps. 104:1; 148:13), and characterizing his work (Ps. 45:4; 111:3; 145:5). It is transferable to his creatures (Hos. 14:6; Zech. 10:3). Thus David rejoices in the *hod* that God has given him (Ps. 21:5). The writer of Deut. 34:9 interprets the *hod* Joshua receives from Moses as none other than ‘wisdom’ (*khokmah*), the characteristic of the prophets, the khakamim,

⁶²⁹ ‘Toward a Theology of Ordination’, Paper prepared by the GC Biblical Research Institute for the Theology of Ordination Study Committee, presented on January 16, 2013, p. 6.

the wise men of Israel who spoke by inspired utterance. Joshua was already a man 'in whom is the spirit'; this was additional power to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land. The Covenant people publicly witnessed God's choice; Joshua's authority to wield power was divinely authorized. When Moses instructs Joshua to stand before the high priest Eleazar, in the presence of the people (Num. 27:22), the dualistic character of his ordination is demonstrated. Joshua is responsible to Yahweh through Eleazar; he also bears responsibility to the people. The 'church in the wilderness' is now prepared to take Canaan (Acts 7:38).⁶³⁰

The function of Moses' 'laying on of his hand' and doing this 'in the presence of the entire assembly' is twofold: to convey to Joshua some of Moses' authority and demonstrating to, and thus convincing, the assembly that this is actually done. For the purposes of this study it is vital to point out that *hod*, 'authority, honour' neither denotes the Holy Spirit nor any specific 'indelible character'.

While there is no indication that Joshua laid hands on successors as leaders for the people in a formal 'ordination', an episode in the book of Joshua informs us about Joshua implementing the Lord's command to 'take' (*laqakh*) or 'appoint' (*hekin*) twelve men from the people, one from each tribe, to bring twelve stones from the middle of Jordan where the priests stood with the ark of the covenant and to build a memorial on the shore (Judg. 4:1-9). The term *hekin*, 'appoint' in 4:4 is the hifil form of *kun*, 'stand firm', and means 'appoint' or 'install' somebody in an office: both king David and king Solomon knew that God had 'securely established' them as kings of Israel (2 Sam 5:12) or, in Solomon's case, on the throne of his father (1 King 2:24).

Towards the end of his life, Joshua gathers 'all Israel – their elders, leaders, judges and officials' – and gives them spiritual instruction as a basis for the covenant at Shechem (Josh. 23-24). There is no information of how those leaders were installed or how Joshua cared for the continuation in leadership.

3.2.7 Summary and Conclusions

As God carries out his mission in the world through Israel, his work becomes closely involved with human concepts which develop in the course of history. God becomes engaged with human culture, language, customs, rituals, and laws.

⁶³⁰ M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, pp. 11-12.

In its history with God, Israel's challenge from beginning to end is its inability to stay close to him, that is, to obey his word. The failure to do so explains the painful history of Israel through the ages, and, eventually, it leads to God completing his mission by Jesus Christ, 'in whom the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily' (Col. 2:9).

God's mission stands above human concepts, however, and he accepts to work with them as a temporary tool to accomplish the love and faithfulness of his people, to keep them close to him, and to save them from evil and destruction.

It is clear from the Old Testament that throughout the entire history of his people Israel, God has called leaders of various kinds in order to accomplish his purpose, his battle with evil in the Great Controversy, his pursuit of the Plan of Redemption, in short, his Mission. He has called men and women as his servants. The core instrument for this is his call through the Holy Spirit, his instructions, his blessings, and his promise to sustain and protect his servants to grant their success.

'Ordination' or commissioning refers to the manner in which God accomplishes his call and his appointed servants are recognised by the people. It is a spiritual event and a formal, human event which belongs to an organisation when it inducts somebody to a responsibility or an office. Thus, it includes a *divine* aspect but also a significant *human* aspect.

1. As God leads the people out of Egypt and forms a covenant community named 'Israel' through the leadership of Moses (Exodus-Deuteronomy), institutions and offices are regularised. Moses appoints assistants, both judges and elders. These are all male, based on the patriarchal custom of the firstborn male being the head of the clan or tribe. No 'ordination' is mentioned here, but God alone performs the act of placing Moses' spirit on the seventy elders. However, Miriam takes part in the leadership of the people, proving that female gender is not an obstacle to leadership, but familial ties within the Levitic-Mosaic family overrules the gender issue.

2. In regard to terminology, the Old Testament uses a wide range of expressions for 'appointment' to an office. The general technical term for 'appoint' is Hebrew *paqad* which is an international word rooted in royal administration. The technical term for 'appointing or consecrating' a priest is *mille' yad*, 'fill the hand of', which has an uncertain etymology and origin, but possibly refers to the giving of part of the sacrificial offerings to the priests themselves. The rite of imposition of hands is referred to by various expressions, primarily *samak yad 'al*, which presupposes a

leaning upon with some pressure, and is also used for laying hands on the sacrificial animals or a blasphemer before he is executed. Other expressions are *sim*, *shit*, or *natan yad 'al*, which are common terms for 'put' or 'give'.

3. In the sanctuary service, priests and Levites are consecrated. The rituals focus on removing ritual impurity and consecrating men for service in the sacred area of the tabernacle/temple. The Levites alone experience imposition of hands by the people at their induction. This is explained by the Levites being the people's *representatives* in replacing the firstborn among the people as God's special possession. Thus, imposition of hands is not a standard feature in priestly 'ordination', but is used when there is a need to *duplicate* or create a *substitute* for somebody else. The 'ordination of the Levites is not repeated through history, but only the ritual cleansing before assuming office.

4. Women could perform two of three duties of the priests, namely: (a) didactic and administrative functions; and (b) prophetic functions. They were consistently excluded from cultic functions, i.e. serving as sacrificial priests in the sanctuary, which makes Israel unique in the ancient Near Eastern environment. The reasons for this are several: (a) the woman's ritual impurity due to the blood flow connected with her menstrual cycle and childbirths, (but it should be noted that men could also be excluded from the sanctuary services, due to 'impure' discharges), (b) the need to avert pagan influences from priestesses who were involved in sacred marriage and temple prostitution among the surrounding peoples, (c) the old patriarchal tradition of the male elder of the family and clan having a priestly role which was transferred to the priesthood of the sanctuary, and (d) reverence for the woman's role of giving life, which did not lend itself to the function of slaughtering animals and handling offerings.

5. Moses inducts Joshua as his successor upon God's command and instructions, but this is a unique act for a unique office which is not repeated. Imposition of hands is a key ingredient in the ceremony. By this act, Moses conveys upon Joshua some of his 'authority, honour' (*hod*) or 'spirit of wisdom'. It is not clear in the text if Moses' imposition of hand automatically conveys this 'honour/wisdom', or if it is merely a symbolic act that demonstrates Joshua's endorsement by Moses, or if the transfer of Moses 'honour/wisdom' is God's work (since Moses acts fully in compliance with God's commands). It is clear, however, that Joshua is selected by God, because he already has the 'spirit'. It is also clear that Moses is seen as a

unique spiritual leader, because he is the only man who had talked to God face to face (Num. 12:6; Deut. 18:5, 18; 34:10). Thus, Joshua's 'ordination' is non-repeatable, and it was not followed by any recorded acts of 'ordination'.

6. The 'spirit' (*ruakh*) is involved in Moses' appointments of the seventy elders and of Joshua. There is some fluidity in the referential meaning: 'power, ability, knowledge, wisdom'. It either comes explicitly and directly from God (prophetic and charismatic concept), or it is conveyed by God in connection with or following the ritual of laying on of hands, but nothing is stated that leads us to understand it as a magical rite that controls or automatically conveys the 'spirit of God'.

7. The nearest we come to 'ordination' in the Old Testament are the inductions of the seventy elders, the Levites, and Joshua's appointment as Moses successor:

(a) In the *appointment* of the seventy elders, a *charismatic* rather than a ritualistic understanding of induction to office is displayed, where God is the only agent, not Moses or any other human. No imposition of hands is involved.

(b) In the *consecration* of the priests and the Levites, a *ritualistic and 'sacramental'* concept of induction is applied. Thus, attempts to exclude women as 'priests' in the history of the Christian church have often been closely linked with sacramental interests and attempts to strengthen the authority and status of leaders, and, consequently, those attempts have often drawn on the priestly and levitical 'ordinations', as we will see in the patristic material (especially Irenaeus, 4.1.4)⁶³¹ and as is obvious also in parts of the contemporary discussion.⁶³² The levitical 'ordination' includes the idea that imposition of hands (no prayer), which is referred to in Hebrew as *samak yad 'al*, is a symbolic way of expressing the creation of a *substitute* – the Levites replaced the first-born and represented the Israelites. This also occurs in Moses' 'ordination' of Joshua. Although the Levites may have had other duties, too, such as teaching and administration, the 'ordination' recorded is clearly focusing only on their ritual purity for serving in the sanctuary.

(c) In Joshua's 'ordination' by Moses, a *civil and priestly-political* concept is applied. Joshua is 'ordained' by Moses who is asked to transfer some of his 'authority and honour' to Joshua by *samak yad 'al* (no prayer). This is based on

⁶³¹ Cf. *Ibid.* p. 39.

⁶³² A modern example is T. B. Dozeman, *Holiness and Ministry: A Biblical Theology of Ordination*, 2008, pp. 35-103.

Moses's unique role as the only man who had talked to God face to face. Joshua's duty is to be a civil, military and spiritual leader as Moses is taken away and the people are to enter Canaan. This 'ordination' is therefore not repeated in the Old Testament. It is a unique event and is conditioned by Moses' special status and Israel's decisive challenge on the other side of the Jordan River.

8. No consistent ceremony of 'ordination' is found in the Old Testament. With imposition of hands it occurs only in the unique cases of the Levites and Joshua. Since these two 'ordinations' aim at creating a *substitute* (Levites replacing the firstborn Israelites and Joshua as a substitute for Moses), no prayer is involved. The creation of a substitute is a conferral of personal qualities or some authority by a personal decision and is not a spiritual event which requires blessing. However, in the few examples of 'ordination' in the New Testament that exist, prayer is included (Acts 6:1-6: 13:1-3). Together with the fact that neither the Levites' nor Joshua's 'ordination' is mentioned in the New Testament, these observations suggest that Old Testament 'ordination' is not applicable to Christian ordination.

3.3 Imposition of Hands in the Bible

The practice of imposition of hands has various meanings and functions in the Bible, both in the Old and New Testaments.⁶³³ It occurs in blessings (e.g. Gen. 48:14, 18, Hebrew *shit, sim*); in sacrifice (e.g. Lev. 4:4, Hebrew *samak*); in stoning for blasphemy (e.g. Lev. 24:14, Hebrew *samak*); in induction into office (e.g. Num. 8:10, Hebrew *samak*); and in commissioning for a special task (e.g. Num. 27:23; Deut. 34:9, Hebrew *samak*).⁶³⁴ The practice found in the New Testament of laying on of hands in the context of healing does not occur in the Old Testament.

Generally speaking, the imposition of hands almost always functions as a means of connecting two parties so that something that belongs to the agent is shared with the recipient. This may be a divine blessing or human authority given by God, or both of these. It may also involve a transfer of sin and ritual impurity. The act of imposition of hands may be accompanied by words that define the nature of the act, a blessing, a confession, a commissioning or appointment. At times, the context may make it clear which kind of act is intended and which accompanying words are implied.

⁶³³ See the survey by M.H. Shepherd, 'Hands. Laying on of', *IDB*, vol. 2, 1982, pp. 521-522.

⁶³⁴ M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, p. 9.

3.3.1 The Symbol of the Hand in the Old Testament

The 'hand' was a powerful symbol in the Old Testament and the ancient Near East. It is by far the most frequently mentioned extremity in the Old Testament – more than 1600 times.⁶³⁵ It is known that parts of the body were thought to serve 'as seats of various attributes, even as the seat of life itself'.⁶³⁶ The hand is the part of the body that grasps and can be grasped, and the meaning 'strength' therefore belongs to the hand as the primary means of power.⁶³⁷ It is also the body part that gives and receives, and may therefore stand for the person in respect to his exertion (as in Isa. 1:12).⁶³⁸ When the scapegoat is handed over to a man's care, it is said that it is given into 'his hand' (Lev. 16:21). Thus, the Hebrew word for 'hand', *yad*, may be associated with individuality, ability, possession, strength, power, authority, and creativity.

As a symbol, 'hand' is also connected with God. When 'the Lord's hand' comes or falls upon a prophet, it means that he is under God's power through his Spirit, implying that something of God is conveyed (1 Kings 18:46; Isa. 8:11; Jer. 15:17; Ez. 3:22; 8:1; 33:22). Thus, 'the Lord's hand' may be understood as a symbol of the presence or power of the Lord, equipping human beings with extraordinary power or wisdom.

Drawing on these general insights regarding the meaning of 'hand', the 'laying on of hands' in various situations of blessings, sacrifices, punishments for blasphemy, consecrations and inductions for a duty may imply a conveying of presence, strength, authority, sins and defilement, and vicarious representation.

While many different verbs are used to express 'laying on [of hand]' in the Old Testament, the most important is *samak [yad] 'al*. The verb *samak*, appears twenty-five times in a variety of contexts. Eighteen times hands are laid on animals in the context of sacrifice or on the scapegoat, five times on people, once on an inanimate object, and once expressing the Lord's support of one who stumbles. The texts witnessing to laying on of hands as an act of blessing use different verbs. The phrase is rarely used in the context of 'ordaining' someone to serve in a particular

⁶³⁵ A. S. v. d. Woude, Article 'yad/Hand', in: *THAT*, vol. 1, col. 668.

⁶³⁶ F. R. McCurley, 'A Semantic Study of Anatomical Terms in Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Biblical Literature', 1968, pp. 6-7.

⁶³⁷ H. W. Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, 1974, pp. 67-68.

⁶³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

office. In the Old Testament, we only find two such instances: laying on of hands on the Levites for ministry in the sanctuary and on Joshua for succeeding Moses as leader of Israel for the entry into Canaan.⁶³⁹ In New Testament Greek the Hebrew distinction is lost and we find a variety of Greek verbs being used usually meaning 'set, place, appoint'.

The word *samak*, 'lay', suggests a leaning pressure, a gesture by which pressure is applied to the recipient and includes the concept of sustenance and support. A combination of the symbolism of hand (*yad*) with that of *samak* is a picture of either a hand that powerfully leans on something or supports it, or hand as an expression of power or support.

Thus, imposition of hands, generally speaking, seems to be used for support of someone who is needy, who needs restoration, or who faces a difficult or dangerous task. This is the common denominator in the various usages, such as blessing (strength and well-being), sacrifice (forgiveness or expiation of sins or ritual defilement), dealing with blasphemy among God's people (forgiveness or cleansing of sins or ritual defilement), induction for office (authority and wisdom), or commissioning for a particular task (authority, power, protection). It is noteworthy that the function of restoration by forgiveness of sins is central in contexts dealing with sacrifice and cleansing from blasphemy. Many of these associations live on in the New Testament, as we shall see in 3.3.7 below.

3.3.2 Blessing

The patriarch Jacob (Israel) laid his hands on Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh as he pronounced a blessing upon them:

Genesis 48:12-20 Then Joseph removed them from his father's knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth. **13** Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right, and brought them near him. **14** But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid (*shit*) it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh, crossing his hands, for Manasseh was the firstborn. **15** He blessed Joseph ... **17** When Joseph saw that his father laid (*shit*) his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him; so he took his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's

⁶³⁹ The text in this introductory statement is more or less verbally taken from 'Toward a Theology of Ordination', Paper prepared by the GC Biblical Research Institute for the Theology of Ordination Study Committee, presented on January 16, 2013 (unpublished).

head. **18** Joseph said to his father, 'Not so, my father! Since this one is the firstborn, put (*sim*) your right hand on his head.' **19** But his father refused, and said, 'I know, my son, I know; he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great. Nevertheless his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his offspring shall become a multitude of nations.' **20** So he blessed them that day, saying, 'By you Israel will invoke blessings, saying, "God make you like Ephraim and like Manasseh.'" So he put (*sim*) Ephraim ahead of Manasseh. (NRSV)

The act of blessing is performed by the patriarch, grandfather Israel, who is treated as a man of honour by his son Joseph (48:12). The imposition of hands is an accepted custom which is not explained. Based on hints in the text we may conclude that this ritual gesture (a) *connects* the grandsons with the patriarch; (b) the hands seem to *convey* some of his strength and authority; (c) through the right and left hands Israel has *power to rank* the grandsons internally and convey the firstborn's rank to the younger and vice versa; (d) the blessing (*berakah*) which accompanies the gesture invokes God's promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, which have been fulfilled in the life of Jacob/Israel and which will make the grandsons 'increase greatly upon the earth' – thus, there is a prophetic element in the act and a look to the future.

The distinction between the patriarch's right and left hand and his crossing of the hands may indicate that the significance of the gesture of laying on of hands is connected with his personal strength and wisdom – the right hand is normally stronger than the left and 'the heart of the wise inclines to the right, but the heart of the fool to the left' (Eccles. 10:2).

The order of rank between the firstborn and his younger brother was expected to be marked by a corresponding order of rank between right and left hand. In the history of Israel, however, the cases of Esau/Jacob and Manasseh/Ephraim are cases where the younger son received the blessing normally given to the firstborn. The patriarch evidently had the authority to violate social customs, and God allowed his plan of salvation to be carried out even through such deviations. In our passage in Genesis 48, the switching of the patriarch's hands is based on his prophetic foreknowledge of the future of Ephraim and Manasseh, which overrules the social custom of the rights of the firstborn.

In another setting, the hands of the priest could also be used for blessing the entire congregation, but in this case they were not 'laid on' but 'lifted toward' the recipients:

Leviticus 9:22 Aaron lifted his hands toward the people and blessed them; and he came down after sacrificing the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the offering of well-being. **23** Moses and Aaron entered the tent of meeting, and then came out and blessed the people; and the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people. (NRSV)

The issue of the similarity and distinction between 'laying on of hands' and 'lifting up the hands' may be further explored in connection with the Greek *cheirotonein* and *cheirotithemi*.

3.3.3 Sacrifice

Imposition of hands played a key role in the inductions of priests and Levites, where the ordinands placed their hands on the head of the offering animal in order to become ritually clean. The gesture also played an indispensable role in the ritual performed on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16), and this is where we find the basic meaning of this act. It has here the role of cleansing from sin or ritual defilement. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest Aaron laid his hands on the live goat in order to put the transgressions of the children of Israel 'on the head of the goat':

Leviticus 16:20 When he has finished atoning for the holy place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall present the live goat. **21** Then Aaron shall lay both his hands on (*samak yad 'al*) the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins, putting them on (*natan [yad] 'al*) the head of the goat, and sending it away into the wilderness by means of someone designated for the task. **22** The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a barren region; and the goat shall be set free in the wilderness. **23** Then Aaron shall enter the tent of meeting, and shall take off the linen vestments that he put on when he went into the holy place, and shall leave them there. **24** He shall bathe his body in water in a holy place, and put on his vestments; then he shall come out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people, making atonement for himself and for the people. (NRSV)

Through Aaron, the confessed guilt of the people is being transferred by the laying on of hands to the scapegoat who is brought into the desert. The act of laying on of hands is accompanied by a confession which defines the nature of the act.

A special function emerges in connection with offerings at the altar. The priests, Aaron and his sons, and the lay persons bringing the offering are said to put their hands on the head of the sacrificial animal's head to 'bring atonement'. By the laying on of hands, the officiating high priest is personally *sharing in* the expiatory function of the sacrificial animal and is himself made ritually clean.

3.3.4 Purging Blasphemy

The laying on of hands in the context of purging the impact of blasphemy seems to represent the concept of real transfer of defilement from one person to another:

Leviticus 24:14 Take the blasphemer outside the camp; and let all who were within hearing lay their hands on (*samak yadim 'al*) his head, and let the whole congregation stone him. (NRSV)

The act of blasphemy is seen as polluting all those who *heard* the blasphemer, and by the imposition of their hands upon his head they transfer the effects of the offence which is then atoned for by his death. The concept here is related to that of laying hands on the sacrificial animal. The passage does not record if the act was accompanied by some pronounced words. Again, the central point is ritual removal of defilement and restoring the people to a state of 'peace' (*shalom*) in order to meet the requirements of God's holiness.

3.3.5 Consecration of the Levites

The consecration of the Levites for service in the sanctuary has been covered in some detail above (3.2.4). We will therefore briefly summarise the relevant parts here.⁶⁴⁰

The ceremony (Num. 8:5-26) began with a divine command to 'take' (8:6) the Levites *from among* the other Israelites. This is to visibly demonstrate that they are *chosen* by the Lord, and Moses is to confirm this by *setting them apart*. After their purification, Moses was to summon them to a public ceremony in front of the sanctuary. There, 'the Israelites are to lay their hands (*samak yadim 'al*) on them' (8:10). The Levites were then to lay their hands on bulls for a sin-offering and a burnt-offering to make atonement for themselves. Aaron then presented the Levites to the Lord as a wave-offering. They were 'separated' (*hibdil*, 8:14) from the rest of the Israelites and dedicated to the Lord ('given unreservedly to me', 8:16), so that they might work in the sanctuary in place of the firstborn males and make atonement for the whole congregation.

⁶⁴⁰ We are indebted here to 'Toward a Theology of Ordination', Paper prepared by the GC Biblical Research Institute for the Theology of Ordination Study Committee, presented on January 16, revised in February, 2013, pp. 3-5.

The significance of imposition of hands on the Levites can be divided into five aspects in a pattern:

(a) *Identification*: The imposition of hands identified and designated the Levites as the specified ones to become an offering of the whole congregation. At the same time, through the imposition of hands, the people identified themselves with the Levites and their service.

(b) *Setting apart*: The imposition of hands was an act of consecration in which the Levites were set apart from the rest of the congregation in order to be completely dedicated to cultic service.

(c) *Transfer*: By the imposition of hands, the congregation symbolically transferred to the Levites their obligations in the cultic service: the Levites acted there on behalf of the people, since they were ritually pure and belonged to the Lord.

(d) *Substitution*: The imposition of hands also expressed an act of substitution in that the Levites replaced the firstborns and represented the congregation as a whole.

(e) *Appointment to office*: The imposition of hands marked an appointment to the office of working exclusively in the sanctuary on behalf of the people.

The ceremony was not only an acknowledgment of God's decision but also a public proclamation of God's instructions. The only thing that was transferred to the Levites was the authority to function within their assigned office. There is no mentioning of any special manifestation of God's power during the ceremony.

3.3.6 Appointment of Moses' Successor: Joshua

The appointment of Joshua as Moses' successor and the leader to bring Israel into the Promised Land has been covered in some detail above (3.2.6). The pattern is:⁶⁴¹

(a) *Procedure*: It is significantly different from the case of the Levites, because the purpose of the procedure and the nature of the office are different. Moses laid his hand (singular) on Joshua in order to convey to him some of his own 'authority and honour' – the people laid their hands on the Levites in order to acknowledge them as substitutes for the firstborns of Israel. The office of Joshua was a unique, non-repeatable one, since Moses was the only one that could convey his own authority

⁶⁴¹ Cf. *ibid.*

and since only one person could be Moses' successor and Israel's commander leading Israel into Canaan.

It is possible to deduce from the text in Numbers 27:12-23 that the presentation of Joshua informed the congregation that he was the new leader and that it identified for him the people he was to lead. Joshua was also presented to the high priest, from whom he was to seek the will of the Lord through Urim and Thummim before he undertook any serious actions. Thus, Israel is described here as having two leaders, Joshua and the high priest.

The ceremony may have included a charge, but we do not have an accurate record of its content. It is possible, however, that Moses' prayer, which led to the outline of the procedure by the Lord, contained the essence of an implied charge, and there are parallel passages in Numbers, Deuteronomy and Joshua that suggest concepts that included the assurance of God's blessing and encouragement. However, all this depends on our combinations of passages from different contexts and is therefore not made explicit in the Bible.

(b) *The Significance*: Imposition of Moses' hand indicated acknowledgment of Joshua's gifts and talent for leadership ('in whom is [already] the spirit', Num. 27:18). It was an act of validation recognising that the Lord gave Joshua capacity to lead, both in the past and in the future. Thus, it confirmed an inner endowment by an external and public gesture.

Moses was to give Joshua 'some of' his authority, power, majesty, spirit (of wisdom), and ability. This was done by the hand, a symbol of power and authority, being placed on Joshua's head. Something of Moses' personality and gifts from God was touching Joshua. This did not have any magical function, as if the gesture would have generated an act of God, but it means something more than pure symbolism. It seems to have meant (a) that Moses is *giving* (*natan*) some of his 'authority' (*hod*) to Joshua (27:20), (b) that Joshua was thus *supported* by Moses, (c) that the people would *obey* him (Num. 27:20), that they 'listened to Joshua and did what the Lord had commanded Moses' (Deut. 34:9), and (d) that God *confirmed* that he *knew* Joshua's spirit (Num. 27:15) and that he had *appointed* Joshua (27:18); it is perhaps implied in the passage that God's presence would be with Joshua as he had been with Moses.

The imposition of Moses' hand was an induction to a leadership role, *not an office*. Moses' office was non-repeatable and was rather a prophetic role, and

Joshua's appointment was never repeated as far as we know. The ceremony set Joshua apart from the congregation and distinguished him from other leading persons. It signified an official investiture of responsibility and authority, a dedication to leadership, and a conferral of formal and public appointment to leadership.

In no way does the Bible support an understanding that the laying on of Moses' hand established a dynasty, a succession, or changed Joshua, giving support for an 'apostolic succession'. While Moses laid his hand on Joshua, Joshua's authority was rooted in the Lord who had worked through Moses; and, to be sure, there is no indication that Joshua laid his hand on a successor before his death.

(c) *The Outcome*: The laying on of Moses' hand is rooted in a command from the Lord and, therefore, it is associated with two things: the spirit of wisdom manifested in leadership skills (Deut. 34:9a) – the skills that Moses had described in his prayer for a leader to God (Num. 27:15-17) – and the congregation's receptivity and obedience to Joshua's important leadership (Deut. 34:9b).

3.3.7 Imposition of Hands in the New Testament

The New Testament practice and significance of the laying on of hands as part of 'ordination' is somewhat difficult to ascertain. From a total of twenty-one references in the New Testament, the phrase 'lay hand(s) on' is used only five times, with some certainty, for someone being set apart or reinstated for an office or a ministry: Acts 6:6; 13:3; 1 Timothy 4:14; 5:22; 2 Timothy 1:6. In the following, we will give a general picture of imposition of hands in the New Testament. Later on, in section 3.5, we will consider the imposition of hands in the context of induction or commissioning to a task of responsibility and leadership.

3.3.7.1 The Hand of God in the Early Church.⁶⁴² The mighty hand of God was fundamental in the foundation of the early church.

According to Acts 4:4, five thousand men had accepted the gospel when Peter and John were brought before the Sanhedrin. 'Filled with the Holy Spirit' (4:8), Peter gave a short speech. The Sanhedrin conferred and decided to let them go but denied them the right to preach again. As they returned to their own, they prayed

⁶⁴² This section is an abbreviation and slight adaptation of V. Norskov Olsen, *Church, Priesthood and Ordination*, 1990, pp. 139-140.

together to God: 'Stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus' (4:30). This is then what happens, and in 5:12 we read that 'through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people'. And later on, Stephen in his speech before the Sanhedrin compares the New Israel with the Old and speaks about God's active 'hand' (7:50).

The Samaritans who had only been baptized by the baptism of John the Baptist received the Holy Spirit when the apostles laid their 'hands' on them (8:17).

When Ananias came to Paul he laid his 'hands' upon him. Paul regained his sight, was filled with the Holy Spirit, and was baptized (9:17-18).

The persecution following the stoning of Stephen became a blessing by the fact that believers were scattered and witnessed everywhere. Some preached in Antioch and 'the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number became believers and turned to the Lord' (11:21).

Having been set apart by laying on of 'hands' (13:1-3), Paul and Barnabas reached Iconium in Asia Minor and spent a long time there, 'speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands' (14:3).

In Ephesus, we also find a group who had been baptized with John's baptism and had never heard of the Holy Spirit. They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and when Paul had laid his hands on them, 'the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied' (19:1-6). A little later, Luke says that 'God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul' (19:11).

There is no doubt that the Old Testament view of the 'hand' as a symbol of authority, power and strength has influenced the choice of language here (see 3.3.1 above). The link that connects the laying on of hands in healing, 'ordination', and the giving of the Spirit at baptism, with the working of God's mighty hand through miracles and wonders and the fast growth of the gospel work is *the concept of authority and power*.

However, it needs to be underlined from the beginning that God's power and authority may be granted without any ceremonial gesture whatsoever. As he calls and appoints leaders in the New Testament church, he does so, generally speaking, *without a formal ordination act with human imposition of hands*. The imposition of hands is rather used in three ways: (a) as an *ad hoc* initiative at a crucial point of

transition in the mission of the church (e.g. Acts 6:1-6; 13:1-3), (b) as an *ad hoc* blessing (2 Tim. 1:6), and (c) as part of the pattern of local church elders and the council of elders that was taken from the Jewish synagogue (1 Tim. 4:14; 5:22).

3.3.7.2 Blessing and Healing. Jesus blessed the children by laying his hands on them (Matt. 19:15; Mark 10:13). In Luke 24:50, when he blessed his disciples, he lifted up his hands (*epairo tas cheiras*) in the manner of the priestly blessing in Leviticus 9:22. The implication is that someone with authority of some kind conveys his personal strength to the recipient and this is visualised by the gesture of imposition of hands. It is thus a visible gesture that *expresses* the invisible, divine transmission of some kind of strength or well-being which is being prayed for.

The act was also used by Jesus in healing the sick and the Greek expression is consistently *epitithemi tas cheiras* (Mark 5:23; 6:5; 16:18; Luke 4:40; 13:13). The rite was then used by Ananias in healing Paul (Acts 28:8), and then by Paul healing the father of Publius (Acts 28:8). It should be noted, however, that Jesus also performed acts of healing without the laying on of hands (e.g. Matt. 8:8-13; 15:22-28; 17:14-18). The imposition of hands was therefore not a condition for bestowing healing powers.

There is no explanation in the New Testament of the meaning of the imposition of hands in healing. On the surface, it seems to have been a common practice that (a) symbolically visualised the prayer for healing and gave an external picture of the bestowing of any gift, although God was not required to act; (b) provided we draw on what we have found in the Old Testament, the gesture also connected the healer with the needy; by placing the ‘hands’ – symbolically representing the person, his strength and authority – upon the sick, the healer conveyed his authoritative strength and visibly demonstrated the impact of the divine gift of healing.

In the gospel story of the woman who was healed from bleeding by touching Jesus in the crowd (Mark 5:24-34), Mark makes the comment that, as the woman touched Jesus and was healed, ‘Jesus recognised that power (*dynamis*) had gone out of him’ (5:30). Evidently, prayer and the imposition of hands for the purpose of healing also implied that healing ‘power’ was conferred on the needy. However, Jesus attributes the healing of the woman to her ‘faith’ that was behind the touching, not to the touching as such.

It is clear from James 5:14 (see below) that (a) it was the *prayer* for healing from God that could bring healing and that the imposition of hands or of anointing were complementary gestures, and that (b) the Lord effectuated the healing, not the healer. James 5:16 also shows, that a key element in acts of healing was the spiritual authority of the healer: ‘The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.’

As healing the sick became an established practice exercised by the elders in the young church, the rite used was not always the imposition of hands. James 5:14 gives an example of anointing by oil being used instead:

James 5:14-16 Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. **15** The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. **16** Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. (*NRSV*)

The practice described by James suggests possible links with the role of the imposition of hands in Hebrews 6:2 (see 3.3.7.4 below) – note the contextual links in both passages with ‘faith’, ‘raising up’, ‘repentance and forgiveness’. The words of James may also be connected with the imposition of hands to forgive sins (similar to healing), which is the point in 1 Timothy 5:22 (3.3.7.7). Early Christians obviously believed that the gospel of Jesus Christ with its forgiveness of sins had the power of healing when combined with prayer by a person of strong faith.

3.3.7.3 Baptism and the Holy Spirit. In some instances in the book of Acts the laying on of hands is connected with baptism and the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17; 19:1-7). The key to these passages must be sought within the book of Acts where there is an implied connection between coming to faith in Jesus, baptism, and receiving the gift of the Spirit. This connection is proclaimed by Peter in his sermon at Pentecost:

Acts 2:38 Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (*NRSV*)

The sequence of preaching/teaching, faith, baptism, and Holy Spirit is not firm in Acts. As we see in 2:4-39; 8:5-18; 10:34-48; 19:1-6, there is considerable variation, based on the sovereign work of the Spirit.⁶⁴³

⁶⁴³ Cf. C. Vine, ‘Listening to the Spirit: Lessons in Decision-Making from the Book of Acts’, 2012, pp. 14-16.

Receiving the Holy Spirit is a crucial condition in Acts for being a witness to Jesus Christ (1:8). The Spirit is received at baptism from the risen Jesus Christ who has received it from God (2:33). Thus, Peter and the early Christians considered 'repentance – baptism – forgiveness – gift of the Holy Spirit' as ingredients in the process of conversion. The issue emerging in Acts 8 and 19 is caused by the conversion process being incomplete due to the lack of the gift of the Spirit. This lack puts the genuineness of the conversion in doubt. Do the converted belong to God's family? Are they filled with the same Spirit as the apostles in Jerusalem? Have they been equipped with the Spirit that enables them not only to believe but also to witness?

The conclusion that we are dealing with special circumstances in Samaria and Ephesus is supported by various circumstances. In both cases the following two elements need to be remembered:

1. In other situations, the Holy Spirit was given *without* the imposition of hands and simply by people hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:32-41; 10:44).

2. The cases in Acts 8 and 19 are both about conversions among *Gentiles*, in Samaria and in Ephesus, and there was an uncertainty among the Jewish-Christian leaders at this time about whether or not the Spirit would be poured out also on them (see e.g. Acts 10-11). This also raised the issue of what connection the scattered Gentile converts would have with the apostolic body in Jerusalem (see Acts 8:14-17) or with a larger, recognised church as in Ephesus (see Acts 19:1-7).

In Acts 8, Philip's preaching in Samaria had been accompanied by miraculous wonders (8:4-13), which led many to believe and be baptised, but mainly under the awesome impression of miraculous powers. Among them is Simon the Sorcerer and 'all the people' who believe that Simon has 'the divine power known as the Great Power' and who followed him (8:10-11). Peter rebukes him in 8:20-23 and says 'you have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God'. This lack of genuine conversion is what Peter and John then address by the imposition of their hands. As two of the twelve apostles, they carry the authority as eyewitnesses of Christ's resurrection and 'exaltation to the right hand of God' (2:32-

33) and have been sent by the Jerusalem Council (8:14). They pray (8:15) and lay their hands on them (8:17), and they receive the Holy Spirit.⁶⁴⁴

This miracle is to be seen in light of the work of the comprehensive work of the Spirit in Acts, which directs and spreads the gospel across Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and beyond (1:8). It is an answer to the special prayer by the believers in 4:23-31 (see 3.3.7.1 above) and a repetition of the record in 5:12 which says that ‘through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people’. Through the Holy Spirit, God has a special mission according to Acts, namely to give birth to the Church and to lead it forward to fast and powerful growth. He grants power to his servants even to pray and bring the Holy Spirit upon people.

The same result is obtained by a close reading of Paul’s visit to Ephesus in Acts 19:1-6.⁶⁴⁵ Paul finds some disciples in Ephesus and asks them about whether they received the Holy Spirit when they believed. They answer ‘No’ and inform him that they have ‘not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit’. They also tell him that they have not been baptised with the baptism in the name of Jesus but with John’s baptism (note the difference here from Acts 8:12, 16). So, they are baptised ‘into the name of the Lord Jesus’, and when Paul places his hands on them, ‘the Holy Spirit came on them’, and ‘they spoke in tongues and prophesied’. Here, we see that the Spirit *confirms* the right baptism in the name of Christ. Apart from that, the observations on Acts 8 apply here as well. This is also a special case, where the true conversion and baptism in the name of Jesus is safeguarded by adding the gift of the Spirit.

3.3.7.4 The Case of Hebrews 6:2. Imposition of hands in some sense seems to have been important in the New Testament church. Although it is not possible to determine what kind of laying on of hands is implied in Hebrews 6:2, it is included in a list of fundamental teachings and practices:

Hebrews 6:1-3 Therefore let us go on toward perfection, leaving behind the basic teaching about Christ, and not laying again the foundation: repentance

⁶⁴⁴ It should be noticed, however, that in Acts the order of the process of (1) preaching, (2) baptism, and (3) reception of the Holy Spirit varies from story to story. In 2:4-39 the order is Holy Spirit, preaching, baptism; in 8:5-18 it is preaching, baptism, Holy Spirit; in 10:34-48 it is preaching, Holy Spirit, baptism. The point is that one cannot package the process into neat sequential stages. The Holy Spirit is characterised as dynamic and always one step ahead of the game. (Cf. C. Vine, ‘Listening to the Spirit’, 2012.)

⁶⁴⁵ Compared to Acts 2:4-39; 8:15-18; and 10:34-48, we have here another variation of the process: (1) Baptism into John, (2) baptism into Jesus, (3) laying on of hands, and (4) Holy Spirit.

from dead works and faith toward God, **2** instruction about baptisms, laying on of hands, (*epithesis cheiron*) resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. **3** And we will do this, if God permits. (NRSV)

The connection with repentance, faith in God, and baptism suggests that the imposition of hands is here part of an act of blessing and the gift of the Holy Spirit at baptism rather than with an appointment for an office. The first Christians used imposition of hands for blessing, healing, baptism, special missionary asks, and induction to a leadership role. It is not possible, therefore, to determine if Hebrews 6:2 has any relevance for the objective of the present study. Even if it did refer to the use of the rite in an appointment, no information is given about its purpose.

3.3.7.5 The Seven (Acts 6:1-6). We will examine this passage in detail later (3.5.3.1). At this point, we merely call attention to the fact that this is the first instance that we find in early Christianity of a ceremony of imposition of hands for appointment to a responsibility in the church. Further, it is the only instance in the New Testament where prayer and the imposition of hands are explicitly used for some kind of *office* or *function* (as assistants to the twelve). Finally, it is the only instance where a procedure of congregational nomination is followed by prayer and imposition of hands in an appointment procedure. However, there is no explanation of the significance of imposition of hands. It is used as a practice that was known to the intended readers, although it has not been mentioned in Acts 1-5.

3.3.7.6 Barnabas and Paul (Acts 13:3). The elements of the appointment of Barnabas and Paul in Acts 13:1-3 will be studied in more detail later (3.5.3.2). Our focus here is rather on the function of the imposition of hands.

There is no information in this passage about the meaning of this practice or where it comes from. It seems, rather, that it was known to the ‘prophets and teachers’ in the church in Antioch (Acts 13:1), and Luke, the author, assumes it is known to the intended readers. The Holy Spirit is explicitly directing the ceremony, perhaps through a prophet, and it is preceded by prayer and fasting.

The ceremony applied here is not an ‘ordination’ to a church office or a leadership role in the church.⁶⁴⁶ Barnabas and Saul (Paul) are already among the

⁶⁴⁶ For a comprehensive argument along this line, see A. Barnes, *Notes on the Acts of the Apostles*, 1975, p. 198.

‘prophets and teachers’ in the church of Antioch and serve as itinerant prophets or missionaries (cf. 11:19-30; 12:25; 13:4-14:28). The appointment and induction service recorded in 13:1-3, therefore, is an induction to serve as a missionary, i.e. to fulfil a particular and dangerous task far away from home, for which the blessing of God and presence of the Spirit is needed, and to extend the power of the Gospel from Antioch to Asia Minor. It may, however, imply that Barnabas and Paul were seen as *representatives* of the church in Antioch where the Spirit was in charge. This reading is facilitated if we assume that the ‘ordination’ of the Levites and of Joshua served as the model: the Levites were substitutes for the firstborn of the Israelites and Joshua for Moses. The understanding that this is not an ‘ordination’ is further supported by the fact that Paul was called directly by Christ in a charismatic experience (Acts 26:12-18; cf. 1 Tim. 2:7) and there is no record of any apostle being subject to imposition of hands or ‘ordination’ in the New Testament.⁶⁴⁷

The same ambiguity exists in the Greek text of Acts 13:3 as in Acts 6:6 regarding whose hands are being laid upon Barnabas and Saul. From the immediate context in 13:1-3, it may be the ‘church (*ekklesia*) in Antioch’ or the specific group in that church called ‘prophets and teachers’ (five being named), who are both introduced in 13:1. Following that introduction, the Greek text uses only the personal pronoun ‘they’ in referring to the agents of the rite in 13:3. The issue of interpretation that this textual feature presents will be addressed in 3.5.5 below.

The imposition of hands may be accompanied by fasting and prayer, but it is not entirely clear if the fasting and prayer is part of a formal ritual of induction, or if it is part of a current activity that was on-going when the Spirit revealed his calling to Barnabas and Saul (see 13:2-3).

What is clear, however, is that the imposition of hands is a formal way of ‘setting them apart for a special work to which the Holy Spirit has called them’ (13:2). The ‘hands’ of the prophets and teachers may symbolically *confirm* the authority and power of the Spirit as well as the human acknowledgement of the two being extended representatives of the church in Antioch or of the group of prophets and teachers who had received the revelation of the Spirit. The content of Acts 13-14 illustrates the manifestation of ‘power’ and ‘authority’ that was exercised by Barnabas and Paul during their journey. However, due to the nature of their itinerant

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid.

ministry, and in view of Paul being ‘ordained’ by the Lord, the imposition of hands may well be understood simply as a blessing and not at all as an ‘ordination’.

3.3.7.7 An Elder in Ephesus (1 Timothy 5:22)

We have seen so far that imposition of hands could have a variety of functions in the New Testament. Of twenty-two references, only four may be securely connected with some form of induction for a special task. If the passage in 1 Timothy 5:22 is understood as referring to ‘ordination’ of an elder, it would be the only occurrence of local church elders being appointed by imposition of hands in the New Testament. Thus, the view that this passage is relevant to our study of ‘ordination’ is not strengthened by the New Testament as a whole. The passage says:

1 Timothy 5:17 The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. **18** For the Scripture says, ‘Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain’, and ‘The worker deserves his wages’. **19** Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. **20** Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning. **21** I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favouritism. **22** Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands (*epitithemi cheiras*), and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure. (NIV)

Two alternative views have been advanced, both connecting 5:22 with the preceding context in 5:17-21, which deals with elders:

1. 1 Timothy 5:22 deals with ‘ordination’ of elders: According to this view, Timothy is advised to be circumspect with whom he ‘ordains’. If the appointee turns out later on to be a sinner, Timothy will be held responsible for his sins.⁶⁴⁸

The arguments against this reading are however substantial. Judging by 4:14, laying on of hands was carried out in Timothy’s context by the *group* of elders, presumably presided over by the ‘overseer, bishop’ (*episkopos*), but it is unlikely that an ‘overseer, bishop’ alone would be in a position to ‘ordain’ anyone hastily, even if he wished to, seeing that it was a collective act. Moreover, this reading does not explain the phrase ‘do not share in the sins of others’ but ‘keep yourself pure’. The

⁶⁴⁸ For references to scholars who support this view, and the arguments, see A. T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 1982, p. 103.

examination of a candidate (see 3:1-7) would ensure that there could be no haste in the imposition of hands for an 'ordination', if this is what is being referred to.

2. 1 Timothy 5:22 refers to the reconciliation of an elder under discipline (see 5:19-21): According to this view, Timothy is advised to be careful not to be partial or be influenced by favouritism in reinstating an erring elder to office by imposition of hands.⁶⁴⁹

The only argument against this reading is that the actual practice of an 'overseer, bishop' laying hands on an erring elder who is reinstated after committing a sin is not attested in the New Testament. It is however strongly attested in the post-biblical practice of the church, and it is therefore plausible that this instance gives biblical evidence of the early occurrence of this practice.

The arguments in favour of this reading are fairly persuasive. In particular, it fits the context extremely well. The statement that Timothy by hasty admission of sinners will 'share in the sins of others' follows on more naturally than if this were a warning against an 'ordination' in haste. It also preserves the topic of the section, which is the discipline of elders.⁶⁵⁰ In 5:19, we have the *accusation*; in 5:20, the *conviction and sentence*; in 5:22, the *restoration to church fellowship*.⁶⁵¹ The whole point of 'sharing in the sins of others' is meaningfully born out if the act implied is one by which Timothy, driven by partiality or favouritism, would too hastily restore an erring elder by imposition of hands. A hasty reconciliation would give the offender the wrong message and threaten a full repentance, while making Timothy partaker of the offender's sin, thus making the final injunction to 'keep yourself pure' meaningful.

In conclusion, therefore, 1 Timothy 5:22 does not speak of the imposition of hands in 'ordination'.⁶⁵² It is closer to the case in Hebrews 6:2, where the imposition of hands by the elders of the church is a symbol of healing and forgiving sins. It is noteworthy, however, that the imposition of hands in 1 Timothy 5:22 plays a role when God is being asked to accept someone for service – only after Timothy has laid his hands on the erring elder can he be restored to serve as an elder.

Given this meaning of the act of the imposition of hands, we may also conclude that the act seems to have a dual function. On one hand, it imparts the

⁶⁴⁹ For references to scholars who support this view, and the arguments, see *ibid*.

⁶⁵⁰ *Ibid*.

⁶⁵¹ K. S. Wuest, *The Pastoral Epistles in the Greek New Testament*, 1953, pp. 87-88.

⁶⁵² This view is also supported by *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, 1957, p. 314; A. T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 1982, p. 103; V. Norskov Olsen, *Church, Priesthood and Ordination*, 1990, p. 147.

grace of God, his forgiveness, and the power of the Holy Spirit following the forgiveness of sins, as firmly set out by Peter in his sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38-39); this function of imposition of hands comes closer to the rite being performed at baptism than when performed in inductions to office. One the other hand, it visibly demonstrates to the forgiven elder and the church he serves that he has the forgiveness and trust of the congregation and he is thereby restored to full participation in the community of the church.

3.3.7.8 Timothy (1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6). It is possible that the passages considered here do refer to the imposition of hands in some kind of 'ordination' process. It is not immediately clear from the text, however, to what office Timothy is 'ordained' and if the two instances refer to an induction to the same function or office. Due to the scant information on the function of imposition of hands and the serious challenges in understanding the two passages, we will defer further examination until we provide a full exegetical study later (3.5.3.4).

3.3.8 Summary and Conclusions

The imposition of hands was a gesture used for many different purposes in both the Old and the New Testament: (a) blessing; (b) confession of sins and cleansing in sacrificial rites; (c) removal of the effects of the crime of a blasphemer; (d) forgiveness of sins and receiving the Holy Spirit at baptism; (e) forgiveness of sins and restoring an elder to office; (f) forgiveness of sins and healing; and (g) appointment, consecration and induction to an office or a task with specific responsibilities.

The 'hand' is associated in the Bible with rich symbolism. Drawing on general insights regarding this symbolism, the 'laying on of hands' applied in various situations may imply a conveying of presence, strength, power, authority, removal of sins and defilement of a person, and vicarious representation. However, there is no explicit statement in the Bible that defines the imposition of hands along these lines.

Based on our study so far, the key texts in the Bible for an understanding of the imposition of hands in appointments are found in Numbers 8:5-26 (Levites), Numbers 27:12-23 and Deuteronomy 34:9 (Joshua), Acts 6:6 (the seven); Acts 13:3

(Barnabas and Saul), and 1 Timothy 4:14 and 2 Timothy 1:6 (Timothy). These passages are linked to a total of five cases in the whole Bible.

In the Old Testament, the imposition of hand(s) (*samak yad/yadim*) is part of some kind of 'ordination' only in the consecration of the Levites and the induction of Joshua:

1. In the case of the congregation of Israel laying their hands on the *Levites* (3.2.4; 3.3.5), this gesture transmits three things:

(a) The people's obligations to be holy and pure before God, and to serve him, are transmitted to the Levites who thus represent and serve the people and God; (b) the act also transmits to the Levites their status as substitutes for every firstborn in Israel, which belonged to the Lord; (c) the transmission of a recognition of the Lord's appointment of the Levites for service is implied.

All this, however, takes place in a ritualistic and cultic context and is deeply rooted in Israel's history and the ceremonial parts of the Mosaic Law.

2. In the case of Moses imposing his hand on *Joshua* (3.2.6; 3.3.6), it transmits:

(a) A spirit of wisdom in leadership skills and Moses' personal support; (b) the congregation's acceptance of and obedience to or support of Joshua's leadership role; and (c) a validation of God's gift of the Spirit and the talents that the Spirit provides, together with a promise of God's continuing presence and support.

It is important to note that *there is no laying on of hands for succession in the Old Testament*. The Levites did not appoint or 'ordain' more Levites. The office was hereditary. New Levites would however be installed through consecration, not by themselves, but by the high priest. Neither did Joshua appoint a successor. There is no evidence that a pattern of office was established by Moses in 'ordaining' Joshua. The essence of Joshua's 'ordination' lay in its temporal and historical significance.

The occurrences of the imposition of hands in the context of appointments in the New Testament are not only very scant, but they explain very little of the significance of the practice. Above all, the Gospels are silent on 'ordination' by the imposition of hands and this silence continues until Acts 6 (3.5.1).

Thus, the teaching of the Bible on the imposition of hands in 'ordination' is very limited, and the few New Testament references are not clear in important ways: no church office is involved; the significance of the act of laying on of hands is not

explained; and there is no unambiguous reference to the body that performs the act of the imposition of hands – the congregation, or a select group, or both.

However, a focus on some sort of *authorisation* for spiritual leadership can be discerned, and this is linked to a *confirmation* of God's designation of the appointee by the Holy Spirit. When the act takes place in the presence of the congregation (Joshua, Barnabas and Paul), or is performed by a group of leaders (apostles, prophets and teachers, elders), the idea of making the appointment publicly known and endorsed by the congregation may perhaps be present, but whether or not this is an intentional feature is not explicitly stated in the biblical text. The individual authorisation of Timothy by Paul in 2 Timothy 1:6 stands out, but the passage does not state any of the external circumstances when the act was performed.

The imposition of hands in the early church may be simply an act of blessing, not necessarily 'ordination'. In order to speak of a formal 'ordination', we need to connect it with the Jewish scribal ordination, but this is uncertain because of our scant knowledge of the practice in first-century Judaism, and especially by the fact that Jewish ordination did not include prayer, while the early Christian examples of imposition of hands related to leadership did (Acts 6:6; 13:3). The local church customs of having a 'presbytery' of elders (1 Tim. 4:14), an overseer and a servant (1 Tim. 3:1-13), may have been taken over from Judaism, but it is not clear if first-century Judaism included 'ordination' of elders and local synagogue leaders, and the New testament is silent on this, too. What is clear, however, is that there are no magical biblical formulas for the ministry of the church. Imposition of hands has no power in itself. It is only used by God when it is done in agreement with his word.

3.4 Ordination of Scribes in First-Century Judaism

In the following summary of ordination of scribes in first-century Judaism, we draw particularly on Joachim Jeremias' work from 1967 (English edition 1969), which strikes a sound balance between prudent source-criticism of *Talmud* and *Mishnah*, and a close attention to the facts emerging in the New Testament itself.⁶⁵³

⁶⁵³ We will essentially follow the comprehensive treatment, with abundant references to the source material, in J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 1982, pp. 233-245; cf. S. Westerholm, *Jesus and Scribal Authority*, 1978, pp. 31-39; E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.-A.D. 135)*, vol. 2, 1979, pp. 199-463; M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, pp. 16-28; V. Norskov Olsen, *Church, Priesthood and Ordination*, 1990 pp. 130-138; *idem*, 'Called to be a Minister', 1995, pp. 11-17, 28, 31. See also A. Rothkoff,

The scribes became a new upper class in Palestinian Judaism in the last centuries B.C. They had a supreme influence on life in Jerusalem and Judea, and significant influence elsewhere during the first century A.D., that is, in the lifetime of Jesus and the first seventy years of the history of the Christian church.

In Jerusalem before A.D. 70 there is evidence of a large number of priests who were scribes – thus, the comment in Acts 6:7 that ‘a large number of priests became obedient to the faith’ would have included ordained scribes. They were from all classes of priests: the priestly aristocracy, ordinary priests, and members of the lower orders of clergy. However, the scribes were also men from every other class of people, and these outnumbered the rest.⁶⁵⁴ Thus, when the members of the Sanhedrin in Acts 4:13 take note of the fact that Peter and John are ‘unschooled, ordinary’ men (*agrammatoi, idiotai*), they are impressed by their ‘scribal’ ability to teach and explain the Scriptures, although a majority of scribes were in fact from all classes of people. The amazement of the Sanhedrin seems to relate to the fact that Peter and John were not ‘ordained’ and certainly not members of any councils of ‘elders’ or the Sanhedrin. Ordination was associated with authority to teach. This recognition is relevant for our exegesis of the first Christian ‘ordination’ in Acts 6:1-6 (3.3.7.5; 3.5.2; 3.5.3.1)

One that wished to join a company of scribes by ordination had to pursue a course of study for several years as a disciple (*talmid*). The disciple was in personal contact with his teacher and listened to his teaching. When he could master the traditional material and the methods of *halakah* (i.e. interpretations of legal principles in the Torah) and was able to take personal decisions on questions of religious legislation and penal justice, he was a ‘non-ordained scholar’ (*talmid khakam*). Only when he had attained the canonical age of forty, he could by ‘ordination’ (*semikah*, ‘leaning of hands’) be received in the company of scribes with full rights as an ‘ordained scholar’ (*khakam*). This allowed him to make his own decisions on religious legislation and ritual, to be appointed as judge, and to pass judgment in civil cases, either as a member of the court or as an individual.⁶⁵⁵ There were local courts

Article ‘semikah’, in: *EJ*, vol. 14, cols. 1139-1147; J. Z. Lauterbach, Article ‘ordination’, in: *TJE*, vol. 9, s.v. ‘ordination’, pp. 428-430; T. M. Ludwig, Article ‘ordination’, in: *ER*, vol. 2, pp. 102.

⁶⁵⁴ See the references in J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 1982, pp. 233-234.

⁶⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 235-236.

or 'Sanhedrins' in each city, and these were related to the higher court, the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem.⁶⁵⁶

The *semikah* or 'imposition of hands' was performed by the teacher with the co-operation of two assistants who served as witnesses. By the imposition of hands, it was openly indicated that the chain of tradition reaching back to Moses would be lengthened by the addition of another link, the gift of wisdom being imparted to the authorised scholar by his teacher⁶⁵⁷ – note the biblical phrase 'Joshua was full of the *spirit of wisdom*, for Moses had laid his hands upon him' (Deut. 34:9) .

Based on the use of terms in the Old Testament, where there is a distinction between 'lay, put' as *sim* or *shit* on the one hand and 'leaning' as *samak* on the other (3.2), the scribes used the latter which, having the sense of 'lean', implies a pressure of the hand and involves 'the exercise of some force, and the force is concentrated at the base of the hand, near the joint'.⁶⁵⁸ This is not the typical attitude of one pronouncing a blessing, where touching is sufficient. The *samak* was used in the Old Testament when Aaron and the priests conveyed their sins on the offering animals (Ex. 29:1-46; Lev. 8:1-36; see 3.2.4 above), when the congregation laid their hands on the Levites to make them their representatives (Num. 8:5-22; see 3.2.4 above) and when Moses transmitted some of his authority and honour to Joshua (Num. 27:12-23; Deut. 34:9; see 3.2.6 above).⁶⁵⁹ The concept of *samak* has been explained thus: 'In all probability, in leaning your hands upon somebody or something, by pressing in this way upon a person or an animal, you were pouring your personality into him or it (the simile of pouring also may be found in Rabbinic literature); or in other words, you were making him or it into your substitute'.⁶⁶⁰ Thus, in scribal ordination, the idea is to create a substitute, a representative, a duplicate, or an extension of the person(s) whose hands lean on the appointee.

Prayer or blessing was not usually part of the scribal ordination – the creation of a duplicate did not require blessing. No prayer was included in God's instructions to Moses in Numbers 27, but God's good will was already given in his instruction. Moreover, scribal ordination was a matter of passing on the succession of judicial functions and the teaching chair from Moses. This purpose was radically different

⁶⁵⁶ E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Christ*, vol. 2, 1979, pp. 218-219.

⁶⁵⁷ E. Lohse, Article '*cheir*', in: *ThDNT*, vol. 9, p. 429.

⁶⁵⁸ D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*, 2011, p. 225.

⁶⁵⁹ For a comprehensive review of the usage of *samak* in the Old Testament, see *ibid.*, pp. 224-229.

⁶⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

from the *charismatic* and *prophetic* understanding of leaders that was prominent among the early Christians, based on the teachings of Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

The scribe had the right to be called 'Rabbi', and it is certain that this title was already used for scribes at the time of Jesus (Matt. 23:7-8). Other men who had not gone through the regular course of education for *semikah* were also called 'Rabbi', and Jesus of Nazareth is an example of this – note his warnings to his disciples concerning abuse of the title 'Rabbi' (Matt. 23:7-8; cf. 3.5.1). A man who had not completed a rabbinic education was known as one 'without education' (*me memathekos*), and it is used about Jesus in John 7:15 where the Jews are amazed at his learning and about Peter and John in Acts 4:13 where the Sanhedrin expresses similar amazement. A man without education had no right to the privileges of an ordained teacher. The reactions of the Jewish leaders, therefore, seem to result from their perception that neither Jesus, nor his disciples, were approved parts of the established 'ecclesiastical' system of Judaism, and therefore their 'authority' to teach and preach was questioned. The Christians objected to this by referring to the direct guidance of God through the Holy Spirit. The Old Testament model of God's 'ordination' of the seventy elders (Num. 11) would serve as their scriptural basis (3.5.2).

Only ordained scribes transmitted and created the tradition from the Torah. Their decision had the power to 'bind' or to 'loose' for all time the Jews of the entire world. Jesus' words to Peter (Matt. 16:18) and the assembly of disciples as a whole (Matt. 18:18) seem to build on the same kind of concept. This gave the scribe an authority which was well received if he assumed various positions in administration of justice, in government and in education.

The scribe was the only person who could enter the Supreme Court, i.e. the Sanhedrin. The Pharisaic party in the Sanhedrin was composed entirely of scribes (cf. Matt. 21:45; Luke 20:19). The Sanhedrin in Jerusalem was not merely a court of government, but primarily one of justice (cf. Acts 5:34-40). The knowledge of scriptural exegesis was the crucial factor in judicial decisions, and this was exercised by privileged scribes being part of the court.⁶⁶¹ Sometimes the scribe would be referred to as 'elder' (*zaqen*), and in the local synagogue there were councils of

⁶⁶¹ J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 1982, pp. 236-237; E. Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, 1979, pp. 199-226.

elders or presbyteries.⁶⁶² In each city, there could also be a special judicial body of elders, the 'Seven of a City', but membership of this body was not made by imposition of hands.⁶⁶³ It was customary for the Jewish inhabitants of a Palestinian city to 'choose seven worthies to look after the common affairs, and these administrators had full power of representation' and the Seven of a City are 'as if they were the city itself'.⁶⁶⁴ We will later on consider the relationship of this concept to the seven in Acts 6:1-6 (3.5.2; 3.5.3.1).

When a community had to make a choice between a layman and a scribe for nomination to the office of elder of a community, of 'ruler of the synagogue', or of judge, it invariably preferred the scribe. There was great prestige in being a scribe, and Jesus is addressing this in Matthew 23:2-7.⁶⁶⁵

What was it that made the scribes so prestigious? It was primarily that they were the guardians of secret knowledge, of an esoteric tradition. To this belonged the deepest secrets of the divine being and probably the holy name of the Lord. In addition, the sacred writings of the Old Testament were not immediately accessible to the masses, for they were written in the old sacred language, Hebrew, while the common language was Aramaic. In the first century A.D., scribes were fighting against the spread of Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Scriptures, because they wanted to protect their power and status. There is a wealth of evidence testifying to the high esteem in which the majority of people held the scribes,⁶⁶⁶ and even Jesus commented on it (Matt. 23:2-39).

Despite our knowledge that scribal ordination (*semikah*) did occur and was an important instrument of power and influence that gave authority and brought the respect of the people, the question of how this 'ordination' was performed is difficult to answer with certainty.⁶⁶⁷

After the model of the installation of Joshua, and with express appeal to it, the scribes had developed their own practice of ordination. Imposition of hands was

⁶⁶² E. Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, 1979, pp. 427-439.

⁶⁶³ D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*, 1982, p. 237.

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁵ J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 1982, p. 237.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 237-245.

⁶⁶⁷ See the different views and literature presented in M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, pp. 16-28; V. Norskov Olsen, *Church, Priesthood and Ordination*, 1990, pp. 130-138.

included, but prayer was not.⁶⁶⁸ The usual verbal expression was *samak yad/yadim* ('laying on of hand/hands'), implying some pressure of the hand (see our comments above).

Concerning the involvement of the Spirit in imposition of hands (cf. Deut. 34:9), the scribes had different ideas. On one hand, most of them held firmly to the belief that the Holy Spirit had departed from Israel after the last prophets of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, while, on the other hand, there are examples of scribes actively teaching the presence of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁶⁹ However, the fact that the Jewish *semikah* did not include prayer suggests that the imposition of hands did not *confer* the Spirit of God,⁶⁷⁰ for that would be only God's prerogative. Instead, as already pointed out, it focused on pointing out and providing a substitute or a representative that could be linked into the unbroken chain of scribes from Moses.

The important element in *semikah* was the connection with Moses who spoke face to face with the Lord (Num. 12:8), and the central passage of Moses' appointment and installation of Joshua. The scribes believed that Moses imparted some of *his* wisdom to Joshua in ordination, and that through *succession* they also received some of this God-given Moses-wisdom. The *Mishna* (*M. Aboth* 1:1) states what many scribes believed: 'Moses received the Law from Sinai and committed it to Joshua, and Joshua to the Elders, and the Elders to the Prophets', and from there to themselves, the *khakamim*.⁶⁷¹ Obviously, two passages from the Torah were combined here: the imposition of hands on Joshua by Moses (Num. 27:22-23; Deut. 34:9) and the selection of the seventy elders (Num. 11:16-17, 24-25). The observation has been made that, while there was no mention of imposition of hands upon the seventy, rabbinical exegesis applied the hermeneutical principle that 'in two analogous texts, a particular consideration in one may be extended to the other as a general principle', and, therefore, the scribes took for granted that hands were placed also on the seventy elders.⁶⁷² Thus, the ordained scribes were perceived as

⁶⁶⁸ E. Lohse, *Die Ordination im Spätjudentum und im Neuen Testament*, 1951, pp.77-79; E. Ferguson, 'Jewish and Christian Ordination', 1963, p.15.

⁶⁶⁹ Note the examples in H. Kleinknect *et alii*, Article '*pneuma*' in: *ThDNT*, vol. 6, 1968, pp. 385-386.

⁶⁷⁰ E. Ferguson, 'Jewish and Christian Ordination', 1963, pp. 15-16; *idem*, 'Selection and Installation to Office in Roman, Greek, Jewish and Christian Antiquity', 1974, p. 284.

⁶⁷¹ M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, p.24.

⁶⁷² V. Norskov Olsen, 'Called to Be a Minister', 1995, p. 13, partially quoting M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, p. 17.

the successors of Moses, the bearers of Torah and tradition. They possessed the prophetic Moses-wisdom.

Consequently, the key feature in the *semikah* of the scribes was the seating of the ordinand in the teaching chair, since teaching was associated with occupying the chair.⁶⁷³ This understanding is implied in Jesus' reference to 'Moses seat' in Matthew 23:2 as a position of power, albeit abused.

It may be concluded from this that Jewish scribal ordination signified mainly a linking of the ordinand with the succession from Moses and authorised him to assume the teaching chair, which meant that he would now share his Moses-wisdom. 'Ordination in early rabbinic Judaism had become a rite administered to rabbinic scholars on the basis of intellectual proficiency, qualifying them for authoritative judicial and religious office. With "ordination", the number of scholars increased – as did their status. As those who interpreted both Torah and tradition, the rabbis became mediators of the will of God to all Israel.'⁶⁷⁴

Excursus 3: Sources for First-Century Judaism

The *Mishnah* and *Talmud* represented and guided Judaism after A.D. 70. The *Mishnah* codified rabbinical oral tradition and provides information from the first century. A key issue in the scholarly debate, however, is to what degree we can believe that the material in *Mishnah* reflects what was believed and practised in Judaism before A.D. 70.

Thus, in regard to ordination of scribes, Hugo Mantel strongly believes that 'the early Jewish Christians, especially in Jerusalem, borrowed their customs from Judaism. They regarded themselves as a Jewish sect separated from the Pharisees only by their belief in Jesus. It is clear that the early Christians did not invent this laying on of hands, nor could they have borrowed it from the Hellenistic world'.⁶⁷⁵

Another view is taken by Arnold Ehrhardt who argues that the *Mishnah* is not historically reliable and does not prove rabbinical ordination in New Testament times. He argues, for example, that the title of 'Rabbi' was clearly used in Judaism in Talmudic times, but before A.D. 70 this title was freely given also to non-ordained Jewish scholars – a fact borne out by the evidence in the New Testament.⁶⁷⁶ He also points out that the title given to the members of the Sanhedrin was 'presbyter' (or 'elder'), which was not synonymous with 'scribe' or 'rabbi'. In the New Testament, 'the elders and scribes are mentioned side by side as separate groups in Matthew 26:57 and Acts 6:12, which suggests that the elders were not necessarily scribes'.⁶⁷⁷ Ehrhardt does concede, however, that (a) 'the first and best founded [conclusion] is

⁶⁷³ E. Ferguson, 'Selection and Installation to Office in Roman, Greek, Jewish and Christian Antiquity', 1974, p. 279.

⁶⁷⁴ M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, pp. 24-25.

⁶⁷⁵ H. Mantel, 'Ordination and Appointment in the Period of the Temple', 1964, p. 341.

⁶⁷⁶ A. Ehrhardt, 'Jewish and Christian Ordination', 1954, p. 131.

⁶⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

that the development of Jewish ordination confirms our assertion that the Christian description of ministers as presbyters was derived from the title of the members of the Jerusalem Sanhedrin'; (b) 'in the matter of ordination the church and the synagogue appear not in the relation of son and mother, but as half-brothers, like Isaac and Ishmael (Gal. 4:22-23), both in their way appropriating the Old Testament example'; (c) 'it may be wise, especially with regard to the rites of imposition of hands and enthronement of bishops, to allow for a period of development extending right down to the middle of the second century'.⁶⁷⁸

However, significantly more research has taken place since 1954 when Ehrhardt presented his paper, both generally speaking regarding the intimate relationship between New Testament Christianity and contemporary Judaism through the unfolding of the content of the Qumran texts and particularly regarding methods for establishing the historical reliability of various materials in the *Mishnah* and *Talmud* for the period before A.D. 70.⁶⁷⁹ Thus, concerning imposition of hands as being part of 'ordination' and the concept of a succession from Moses to Joshua, these concepts are clearly set out in the Torah. The strength of Jewish tradition before and after A.D. 70 is also confirmed and the idea of a succession from Moses and Joshua to the first-century scribes, while not being explicitly mentioned in the Old Testament writings, is confirmed by Jesus' reference to the scribes in 'Moses' seat' in Matthew 23:2.

3.5 'Ordination' in the New Testament

The evidence of 'ordination' in the New Testament is not extensive, and we hesitate even to use this term for the kinds of practices we find. The book of Acts and the Pastoral Epistles contain the four references that include the imposition of hands. In other parts of the New Testament we find prayer accompanied by the imposition of hands, but these instances are unrelated to appointments for ministry or inductions for a church office. Concerning prayer and imposition of hands, it has been appropriately remarked that 'neither of these, nor yet the conjunction of the two, is peculiar to ordination'.⁶⁸⁰

What is the role of 'ordination' in God's mission to grant all authority to Christ, who has called the church to bring the gospel to the world, and who gives gifts and appoints the members of the church for various kinds of leadership service? In the following we will seek answers to this question in the New Testament, beginning with the Gospels.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 137-138.

⁶⁷⁹ See, for example, S. Westerholm, *Jesus and Scribal Authority*, 1978, pp. 31-39; M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, pp. 16-28; V. Norskov Olsen, *Church, Priesthood and Ordination*, 1990, pp. 130-138.

⁶⁸⁰ W.H. Frere, 'Early Forms of Ordination', 1918, p. 265.

3.5.1 The Silent Gospels

No information is given in the New Testament concerning when and how ‘ordination’ through the imposition of hands was first introduced in the Christian church. The first time the imposition of hands is mentioned in connection with some kind of leadership role – in Acts 6:6 – there is no attempt to explain its origin. It is simply taken for granted.

This silence can be explained in various ways, but any such explanation is a matter of hypothesis. It seems to us that it is feasible to assume two things initially. Firstly, that Jesus himself had a role that explains this general silence, and, secondly, that the imposition of hands for blessing was a well-known and commonly accepted practice in contemporary Judaism from which the first generation of Christians emanated and in the context of which, through the Holy Spirit, early Christian faith, mission, and practice developed.

Jesus was a non-ordained scholar appointed directly by God through the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22). We know that Jesus established the church by authorising the baptism of believers (John 3:22-30; 4:1-3; Matt. 28:19-20) and by appointing the twelve apostles. The number ‘twelve’ was intentionally associated with the fathers of the twelve tribes of all Israel in Old Testament times, suggesting that Jesus invited his twelve disciples to *represent* as well as to *reform* God’s people through his ministry and teaching. What seems to have mattered primarily, however, was the disciples’ intimate relationship with Jesus, their ‘heart’, and not a formal ordination rite. Furthermore, according to the Gospels, the disciples obviously failed in their heart-related intimacy with the person of Jesus, and it is only as they meet the resurrected Lord and receive the authorisation of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost that the church is born while the twelve emerge, for some decades, as leaders.

The twelve were chosen from a larger group of followers in order to be close to Jesus, their Master and Teacher. They were to watch his example and receive his teaching, as disciples of scribes would do at the time.⁶⁸¹ During his ministry, however, as part of his mission to preach the ‘kingdom of God’, Jesus also ‘sent’ (*apostello*) the twelve to ‘the lost sheep of Israel’, ‘authorising them to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness’, to preach the message that ‘the

⁶⁸¹ See J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 1982, pp. 232-245. See also 3.4.

kingdom of heaven is near' (Matt. 10:1-8). In this context, Matthew refers to the twelve as both 'disciples' and 'apostles' (10:1-4). However, in none of these figuratively described actions – the images of the teacher calling his *disciples* and of the king sending out his authorised *apostles* – do we find any trace of the use of the imposition of hands for appointments. The same is true of the sending of the seventy-two disciples whom Jesus 'appointed' (*anadeiknym*), literally: 'show clearly, make public an appointment' (Luke 10:1).

Later on, as the church was equipped with the power of the Spirit at Pentecost, the twelve were the leaders of the young church. They were Jesus' appointed disciples and eyewitnesses to the risen Lord – although it must be kept in mind that there were also other eyewitnesses (see 1 Cor. 15:1-8), and some women were in fact the first ones to see and talk to the risen Saviour (Mark 16:9-11; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-18). And yet, there is still no mentioning of any imposition of hands in appointments by Jesus.

It has been argued that because Jesus chose twelve *male* disciples the church today should only have *male* pastors. However, a careful reading of the Gospels shows that in the plot of the Gospels the disciples start out well (note the stories of their calling) and then get worse (note 'O, ye of little/no faith', 'Get behind me, Satan', etc.) to worst when they deny Jesus.⁶⁸² Thus, the disciples serve as a case study of how *not to be a follower of Jesus*, and the readers are not meant to imitate them. Instead, it is those characters that appear only once and exhibit only one characteristic – usually faith – which the intended readers of the Gospels are to imitate. Thus, the point made by the Gospels is that we should not pattern ourselves after the twelve disciples – although Luke redeems them and portrays them as the vital initial leaders of the young church after Pentecost – but the reader should rather imitate the less prominent *dramatis personae* including many women.⁶⁸³ Based on

⁶⁸² Cf. E. S. Malbon, *In the Company of Jesus: Characters in Mark's Gospel of Jesus*, 2000, p. 205.

⁶⁸³ Examples in Mark include: the man healed of an unclean spirit (1:21-28); a female healed of a fever (1:29-31); a healed leper (1:40-45); the friends of the paralytic (2:2-5); the Gerasense, the demoniac (5:1-20); the woman with the haemorrhage (5:25-34); the Syrophenician woman (7:24-30); the blind man of Bethesda (8:22-26); the father of a boy with a spirit (9:17-24); blind Barthimaeus (10:46-52); and the anointing woman (14:3-9). In Matthew, positive exemplars include: a man healed of leprosy (8:1-4); a centurion whose faith leads to the healing of his servant (8:5-13); a paralysed man (9:2-8); the leader of the synagogue (9:18-26); two blind men (9:27-31); a mute demoniac (9:32-34); a Canaanite woman (15:21-28); the father of a demon-possessed boy (17:14-18); two blind men (20:3-34); and a woman who anoints Jesus (26:7-13). For significant studies of this feature in the Gospels, see for example: E. S. Malbon, *ibid.* J. F. Williams, *Other Followers of Jesus: Minor Characters as Major Figures in Mark's Gospel*, 1994.

this significant observation, two conclusions may be made: (a) it logically supports the lack of 'ordination' of the twelve by imposition of hands in the Gospels – because they are not there described as models to follow or ready-made leaders; and (b) it removes the argument that the male gender of the disciples is a model to follow in the modern-time church context of the ordination of pastors – especially since many of the models to follow in the Gospels are women. These conclusions have been further supported by our study of the role of women in the Gospel of John (3.1.3.5).

The following added observations may be made at this point: (a) Jesus' calling of the twelve was a unique event in the pre-history of the Christian church and whatever its formal 'ceremony' may have been (of which there is no record in the Gospels), this is not to be taken as an example to follow in modern ecclesiastical practices of 'ordination'; (b) the eyewitnesses to whom Jesus revealed himself were both female and male, which tells us that gender is not an issue in following Jesus and witnessing about him; (c) Jesus 'ordained' none of the disciples/apostles but he *called, chose and appointed* them, in the same way as he called any disciple (including women), and this calling was not for an ecclesiastical office but to form a group of twelve symbolising God's people in Jesus' public ministry, who would 'be with him', who would 'be sent out to proclaim the message', and who would 'have authority to cast out demons' (Mark 3:14-15).

These observations seriously question the relevance of gender restrictions in our modern-day ordination practices. Jesus treated his twelve disciples as any other disciple (including women) and the role of the twelve was unique in the church, not being a repeatable pattern but being intimately associated with Jesus' ministry until his resurrection, ascension and the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. From Pentecost until the death of the twelve, other leadership structures existed in the young church besides the twelve, for example, the family of Jesus, the charismatic and itinerant 'apostles' (like Paul), and the local Jewish models of a presbytery of elders, the overseer and the servant, which came from the synagogue. Eventually, the twelve were not replaced, but different leadership structures were adopted.

When Jesus appeared to his disciples after the resurrection, revealing that he had been given all authority in heaven and on earth and was sending them out to the world to do his work, there is no mentioning of imposition of hands.⁶⁸⁴ However, what

⁶⁸⁴ Matt. 28:16-20; Mark 16:12-19; Luke 24:36-52; John 20:19-21:23; Acts 1:1-9.

we do find, in Luke 24:50-52, is that the risen Christ *blessed* the disciples using his hands after having explained their task as eyewitnesses and preachers:

Luke 24:50 Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands (*eparas tas cheiras autou*), he blessed them. **51** While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. (NRSV)

This passage evidences a blessing, but not laying on of hands. Similarly, John records that the risen Christ ‘sent’ his disciples ‘as the Father has sent me’, and then he ‘breathed on them’ and told them: ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’ (John 20:21-22). Thus, while Jesus authorised and sent his disciples, conveying the Holy Spirit to them, he did not lay his hands on them and no formal ritual was being used.

Jesus’ words and actions in connection with the issuing of the Great Commission may be understood as some kind of ‘ordination’ act – not only of the eleven (the literal, historical sense) but symbolically of all true disciples of Jesus in all times (the figurative, universal sense).

However, as an historical event, it is a unique event that is not repeatable. As a figurative and universal event, it is not only repeatable as a spiritual experience, but it also includes both men and women (women are central as disciples and witnesses in the Gospels, as we have demonstrated earlier). The biblical passages of Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:45-51; John 20:21; Acts 1:8 describe the unique occasion when Jesus, as the risen Lord, ‘has been given all authority in heaven and on earth’, acting as the King who sends out his servants, or ambassadors, or missionaries. The disciples, who are now reduced to eleven (Matt. 28:16) and thus no longer represent all Israel, function as the prototype of all true Christians following them: in making disciples of all peoples, baptizing and teaching them what Jesus has commanded. In this sense, the male gender of the disciples in the text represents both men and women, because all are, figuratively speaking, ‘ordained’ as Christ’s servants, ambassadors, or missionaries in preaching, baptizing, and teaching.

Although Jesus mentioned ‘laying on of hands’ as a gift that he would give his disciples as they served him in the world, this gift is for healing the sick and not for ‘ordination’ (Mark 16:18). Thus, while there is no mentioning of the imposition of hands when Jesus appointed the twelve, or when he commissioned the eleven and all disciples of all times, he nevertheless used laying on of hands for both the acts of blessing and healing (3.3.7.2).

In fact, following Matthew, when Jesus for the first time spoke to the disciples after he had called four fishermen to 'follow him', Simon and Andrew, James and John (Matt. 4:18-22), it is at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 5:3-12, where he verbally 'blesses' the disciples (Matt. 5:1) at least nine times, and when his teaching is finished, the first thing he does is to heal a leper by 'reaching out his hand and touch the man' (Matt. 8:3). It seems, therefore, that if Jesus had laid his hands on his disciples when he called them, Matthew would have recorded it. Since none of the other Gospel authors mention it either, we are left with two options: (a) Jesus did not lay his hands on the disciples when he appointed them (see Matt. 9:35-10:42; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16; John 1:35-51; 6:66-71), or, if he did, then (b) this was part of a normal blessing that was not significant enough to be recorded (while the laying on of hands on the children and the sick apparently was). This would suggest that Jesus did not call his disciples/apostles to an office that was accompanied by a formally structured 'ordination' procedure but his call was based on a *charismatic* understanding of their task as witnesses to him which was based on his *personal* relationship with them, as noted in Mark 3:14 (note that the word 'ordained' in the King James Version is a mistranslation; see 4.5 below).

This understanding is confirmed by the terminology used for 'appointing' the twelve. No technical term was used, but commonplace terms, including *poieo*, 'make' (Mark 3:14) and *eklegomai*, 'choose' (Luke 6:12; John 15:16), and the same can be said about the rest of the instances in the New Testament, e.g. *ginomai*, 'become' (Acts 1:22); *cheirotoneo*, 'stretch out the hand' or 'raise the hand' (Acts 14:23); *tithemi*, 'place, set' (1 Tim. 2:7); *kathistemi*, 'cause to be, appoint' (Titus 1:5). None of these Greek terms function as technical terms for a formal 'ordination' procedure that includes imposition of hands.

However, what we do find in Jesus' appointment and commissioning of his disciples is the use of 'blessing'. If he blessed his disciples when he appointed them, like a father blesses his sons (cf. Jacob who blessed his twelve sons according to Genesis 49), the appointment would be seen under the image of an adoption, or a bestowal of his grace on his beloved children, or an acknowledgement of their being his 'image' or representatives in days to come, rather than functioning as an appointment to an office.

The striking absence of the practice of the laying on of hands continues immediately after Christ's ascension, when the disciples had need for selecting

someone to replace Judas (Acts 1:15-25). In a group of ca. one hundred-twenty believers – the same number that was required in the Babylonian Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 17b) as the minimum population of a city to qualify for a local Sanhedrin which elected an ‘elder’⁶⁸⁵ – the apostles led out in the selection of two names, using lot casting to know which one the Lord had chosen. The lot fell on Matthias and ‘he was added to the eleven apostles’. However, there is no reference to the imposition of hands, but it is clearly affirmed that it was the Lord who chose him ‘to take over this ministry (*diakonia*) and apostleship (*apostole*), which Judas left to go where he belongs’ (1:25). If the apostles acted in this way, leaving the imposition of hands out, it is difficult to believe that Jesus had used the imposition of hands when he first appointed them.

We do not need to speculate as to why there is such silence on the imposition of hands in the Gospels. But in some ways, this is to be expected in view of Jesus’ teaching about the relationship between brother and brother. Jesus had said to his disciples:

Matthew 23:8-12 But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. **9** And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father – the one in heaven. **10** Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. **11** The greatest among you will be your servant. **12** All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted. (NRSV)

Mark 10:42-45 So Jesus called them and said to them, ‘You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. **43** But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, **44** and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. **45** For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.’ (NRSV)

In the light of these and other similar instructions, it is not surprising that in the writings of the New Testament and even hundred years after the last of its books was completed, until around A.D. 200, the early Christian church used a very simple vocabulary for appointment to a leading church office.⁶⁸⁶

The origin of the rite of imposition of hands in appointments for office, therefore, does not seem to be found in the ministry of Jesus or the period of the apostles surrounding Pentecost. We will therefore explore the possibility in the next

⁶⁸⁵ E, Ferguson, ‘Jewish and Christian Ordination’, 1963, p. 17.

⁶⁸⁶ M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, p. 33.

section that it arose in the context of specific issues facing the young church in Jerusalem, issues that reached their peak at the time of the first recorded Christian 'ordination' according to Acts 6.

3.5.2 The Origin of Christian 'Ordination'

The first time the New Testament mentions an act of appointment with the imposition of hands is in connection with the induction of the seven in Acts 6:1-6. As thousands were added to the church, tensions arose between Greek-speaking and Hebrew-speaking Jewish converts, and additional leaders became needed to relieve the twelve in Jerusalem of the growing burdens of work. Seven persons were appointed.

We shall examine in more detail the 'ordination' procedure in the passage of Acts 6:1-6 later on (3.5.3.1). It is enough to note here that the chosen seven were 'placed before the apostles', followed by 'prayer and imposition of hands'. There is no explanation of what this act means or why it was used. However, the connection with prayer may be significant in Christian 'ordination', because prayer was always used in blessings with the imposition of hands. At the same time, prayer was not part of the Jewish practice of ordination of scribes, as noted in 3.4 above.

It deserves to be noticed that the seven who were 'ordained' already had the Spirit. The congregation is asked to find from among them seven men 'who are respected and full of the Spirit and wisdom' (6:3), and Stephen, as representative of the seven, was 'full of faith and of the Holy Spirit' (6:5) before his 'ordination', like Joshua in Numbers 27 (3.2.6). This would suggest that prayer and imposition of hands is perceived as a *confirmation* of the gift of the Spirit already being bestowed on the seven. Thus, if we permit ourselves to make the leap from the induction of the seven to our contemporary pastoral ordination, the act of 'ordination' is a ceremony that *confirms* God's past, present and future giving of the Spirit, it *commits* the appointee to God's Spirit, but it does not prompt God to act. However, in view of the immediate context, the passage does not focus on the spiritual dimension of the act, but rather on the authority and task of the seven.

Before proceeding to the origin of the imposition of hands in Acts 6, a comment needs to be inserted here on the role of the Spirit in Luke-Acts. Being full of the Spirit is a key theme in Luke's writings. Virtually everyone who brings God's mission forward, including Jesus in the early chapters of Luke, is full of the Holy

Spirit. In other words, being full of the Spirit is not exclusively linked with ‘ordination’ in Luke-Acts and cannot therefore be equated by us today with an ‘ordination’ process. This is underlined by the fact that many of those described as being full of the Spirit in Luke’s writings have very different roles, functions and calling stories. Even the two singular examples of the use of the imposition of hands for induction to a task – in Acts 6:1-6 and 13:1-3 – are very different. It is therefore inadvisable to build our understanding of biblical ‘ordination’ only on Luke’s record in Acts. We need to build on the Bible as a whole and a systematic-theological understanding of how God uses, calls, and inducts men and women for his service.

There are two possible keys to the origin of the kind of ‘ordination’ we find described in Acts 6, seen in its wider context in Acts 2-8. The explicit reason for appointing the seven (6:1) was that the word of God spread and the number of disciples increased rapidly. The need emerged for assistants in the growing work. The fast growth, especially among the Hellenistic Jews (6:1) and the Jewish priests (6:7), together with an awareness of being the new Israel which directed the attention towards models of appointments in the Old Testament Scriptures, influenced the decision to draw on the Jewish custom of imposition of hands for the act of induction.

The conflict in the church was between groups of Jews. The Greek-speaking Jews (some living outside Palestine and some being proselytes)⁶⁸⁷ complained against the Aramaic-Speaking Jews because their widows were overlooked at the daily distribution of food (6:1). The seven have Greek or Latin names (Stephanos, Philippos, Prochoros, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, Nikolaos) and were probably ‘Greek-Speaking Jewish Christians, normally resident overseas and temporarily living in Jerusalem, or, having been brought up overseas, now permanently settled in Jerusalem’.⁶⁸⁸ Thus, by extending ‘apostolic’ leadership functions to the seven Hellenistic Jews coming from outside Palestine, the authoritative leadership, up to then centred in Jerusalem, was extended *outside* Jerusalem and Judea, the city of God and the promised land. This would have been a bold step and perhaps it was viewed with trepidation by some, so there was a need for dealing appropriately and

⁶⁸⁷ Note ‘Nicolas from Antioch’ (Acts 6:5) who is presented as ‘a proselyte to Judaism’. This name is however, the last in the list and therefore presumably least important.

⁶⁸⁸ W. Neil, *Acts*, 1981, p. 102.

publicly with the setting up of a new authority and to do so according to the will of God.

Another factor was that among the many that joined the church, a large number of Jewish priests 'became obedient to the faith' (Acts 6:7). If the seven men selected for the new responsibility were predominantly Hellenistic Jews, a peaceful solution that could unite the church would require a decision that appealed also to the Aramaic Jews from Judea and Jerusalem.

Consequently, a solution that appealed to Jewish customs was required. This may have been achieved by using the number 'seven', which would have been associated with the Jewish institution of 'the Seven of a City', but it may also have been achieved by resorting to prayer and blessing (a common Jewish practice used also by Jesus), and to imposition of hands as an 'ordination' procedure, which was reflected in the Scriptures and applied by the Jewish scribes, albeit without prayer.⁶⁸⁹

The Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem had seventy-one members,⁶⁹⁰ but there were also smaller Sanhedrins with twenty-three or seven members, the latter being named 'the Seven of a City'. Josephus, the Jewish historian (37 – ca. 100 A.D.), refers to 'seven men to judge in every city'; if they were unable to make a decision on a matter, they would send the case to Jerusalem where the 'high priest and the prophet and the council of elders meet and pronounce as they think fit'.⁶⁹¹ The same information is found in the Talmud: seven men made up an administrative council in the local towns and as such they were also involved with the administration of the synagogue.⁶⁹² A local Jewish community of one hundred-twenty could choose seven to form the local judicial council named 'Sanhedrin'.⁶⁹³ The interpretation of Acts 6:1-6 that emerges from these historical background facts has been well expressed by Norskov Olsen:

The early primitive church lived as a Jewish Christian community within the framework of Jewish society. We see in the church-council of Jerusalem an analogy to the Jewish Council, and the council of the Seven also has its analogy in Judaism. The Christian councils have their own content and significance, but the analogy can help us locate their purpose in a historical setting.

⁶⁸⁹ See 3.2 and 3.4.

⁶⁹⁰ E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, 1979, vol. 2, p. 226.

⁶⁹¹ Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, viii, 14 (pp. 578-581).

⁶⁹² This information is quoted in J. R. Lumby, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1912, p. 383; V. Norskov Olsen, *Church, Priesthood and Ordination*, 1990, p. 84.

⁶⁹³ T. F. Torrance, 'Consecration and Ordination', 1958, p. 237; *The Mishnah*, H. Danby (transl), 1933, p. 383.

The administration and judicial aspects or work of the Seven resemble in principle that of the Seven of the city, which in turn was related to the major Council in Jerusalem. The Seven represented the interests of the Hellenistic Jews who had become Christians. The apostolate of the Twelve demonstrated that the ministry is one of service (*diakonia*) and involved missionary outreach; the same is the case with the Seven, who have accordingly been described as the apostolate of the Seven. At the time when the apostolate of the Twelve ceased and the Council of Jerusalem came to an end, no doubt the council of the Seven likewise discontinued.⁶⁹⁴

Luke's record of the appointment of the seven in Acts 6:1-6 bears marks of some literary dependence on some of the Old Testament passages on appointments with imposition of hands which we have examined above. We will come back to this as we probe deeper into the nature of the office for which the seven were elected and 'ordained' (see 3.5.3.1 below).

Reading Acts 6:1-6 in light of its wider context in Acts 2-8, the appointment of the seven also occurs in the midst of a mounting conflict between the early Christian Council in Jerusalem and the Jerusalem Sanhedrin. This conflict would result in the great persecution recorded in Acts 8:1; the scattering of the Christians across Judea and Samaria (8:1-3); the gospel being preached in Samaria (8:4-25); the Ethiopian official being baptized; the spreading of the gospel along the Judean coast (8:8:26-40); the conversion of the chief persecutor, Saul (9:1-31); and the opening up of the work to the Gentiles (10:1-11:30). The conflict concerns the *authority* of teaching and preaching of the Christian leaders, and the imposition of hands for 'ordination' was, as we have seen both in the Old Testament and in the Jewish practices, a formal procedure for bestowing authority – cf. the symbol of the 'hand' (3.3.1; 3.3.7.1).

In Acts 4:1-31, we learn about the first confrontation between the Sanhedrin and the leaders of the Christian movement. Peter and John were brought before the 'rulers, elders and teachers of the law in Jerusalem', and they were questioned (4:5). The concern of the Jewish leaders is 'by what *authority*' the Christians preach, teach, and heal (4:7). They are astonished at Peter's courageous preaching of the risen Christ and note that Peter and John 'were unschooled, ordinary men' (4:13). Thus, in the growing tension, the Jewish leaders took issue with the Christian preachers' *authority* and their lack of appropriate *scribal education*. Peter and John responded by referring to God, who had raised Christ (4:10), and appealed to the authority they

⁶⁹⁴ V. Norskov Olsen, *Church, Priesthood and Ordination*, 1990, p. 84.

had *directly from God*: ‘Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God’ (4:10).

Scribal ordination gave a scribe/judge Moses’ authority to teach/apply the *torah* (3.4). It is therefore logical in the historical context that the Sanhedrin is questioning the *authority* of ‘unschooled and ordinary’ Peter and John. The *authority* of the seven to assist the apostles in Acts 6:1-6 is therefore an underlying issue generated by the historical context.

A similar emphasis on the *authority of God* in the Christian movement is found in Peter’s and the apostles’ defence speech after they had been arrested and brought back before the Sanhedrin (5:17-42). It is a key point in Gamaliel’s advice to the Sanhedrin (5:33-39), immediately preceding the ‘ordination’ of the seven in chapter 6. Peter and the apostles again emphasise God’s authority:

Acts 5:29-32 ... We must obey *God* rather than any human authority. **30** The *God* of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. **31** *God* exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Saviour, so that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. **32** And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the *Holy Spirit*, whom *God* has given to those who obey him. (NRSV)

As a Pharisee and teacher of the law, Gamaliel then gave the following advice to the Jewish council of elders (cf. 5:21):

Acts 5:38-39 So in the present case, I tell you: keep away from these men and let them alone; because if this plan or this undertaking is of human origin, it will fail; **39** but if it is of *God*, you will not be able to overthrow them – in that case you may even be found fighting against *God*! (NRSV)

The open conflict between the Christian movement and the Jewish establishment in Jerusalem was visible also in the streets as some men stirred up ‘the people and the elders and the teachers of the law’ (6:8-12a). These activists would have been elders of a synagogue with legal right to arrest someone who disturbed the order, and they brought Stephen before the Sanhedrin (6:12b-15).

Stephen’s speech to the Sanhedrin in 6:8-8:1 expresses not only the Christian position but also exposes the position of the Jewish priests, the elders, and scribes. He is directly addressing the issue of ‘authority’. He begins by referring to ‘the *God* of glory’ who called Abraham (7:2), and then he describes *God*’s initiative and actions, showing that *God* is the authority in the history and life of Israel, including the Mosaic

Law and the temple service.⁶⁹⁵ He consistently appeals to *God's* authority. His issue is that, in their rejection of Jesus and now also of his followers – i.e. the Christian apostles and leaders who preach the resurrection of Christ – the Jewish leaders have rejected God, his word, and the *prophetic* leaders that God has sent (7:51-53). Thus, in the conflict with the Jewish Sanhedrin, the Christian leaders maintained that they have a *prophetic* ministry, like Moses, and that their authority to lead, preach, teach, and heal *comes directly from God*. As spokesperson for the apostles, Stephen does not reject the Jewish establishment with the temple (priests), the synagogues (elders), and the Law (scribes), but he rejects their disobedience to the voice of God through the Holy Spirit as demonstrated in their rejection of Jesus as the Messiah.

In the context of this conflict with the Sanhedrin, the young church needed to underline the spiritual and prophetic office of the apostles as something based directly on *the authority of God*. And, for this reason, the prayer and laying on of hands in Acts 6:6 was deemed to be a most fitting and appropriate sign of saying to the Jewish leaders, the Jewish people, the many converted Jewish priests, and the Christian community itself, that the seven are called directly by God and have a *prophetic office*. This stands above both the priestly and scribal ordinations, because it is based on divine authority, like the office of Moses, which must be accepted and obeyed on account of a prophetic call from God.⁶⁹⁶

The sources of the imposition of hands thus adopted by the congregation and the apostles in 'ordaining' the seven may, on the one hand, have been the Scriptures (see 3.2, particularly Moses' 'ordination' of Joshua, which was used as a model for scribal ordination in first-century Judaism). On the other hand, the imposition of hands was also a living tradition among contemporary Jewish leaders, with which the first Christians were either closely familiar or were made aware of by the growing number of priests and scribes that were joining the church. Forms of 'ordination' were practised among the priests (3.2.4) and the scribal experts and elders (3.4) – all of whom advocating Moses as model and example. By adopting Moses' example and drawing on the practice of ordination (*semikah*) of scribes and elders in contemporary Judaism, the church in Acts 6:1-6 makes a powerful statement to all parties that the 'new Israel' continues God's mission of salvation where Abraham,

⁶⁹⁵ See Acts 7:2, 4-10, 17, 31-33, 35, 37, 42, 44-46, 48-49.

⁶⁹⁶ Cf. 3.2.6; for the strong link between the scribes and Moses, see 3.4.

Isaac, Israel, and Moses and the prophets have gone before and now is reaching its fulfilment in the mission of Jesus and his church.

There were certainly Scriptural models that the young church could draw upon (3.2; 3.5.4.1). And this may have been of great importance as the church and its leaders faced the crisis with the Sanhedrin. The apostles knew that Jesus had not laid his hands on them when he appointed them, and they had therefore not applied this sign when Matthias was elected to supply Judas as the twelfth apostle. There was no instruction from the Master regarding 'ordination'. And yet, the growing tension with the Jewish Sanhedrin and its questioning of the apostles' *authority* to speak the words of God, together with the large number of Jewish priests that were now converted, remained a serious challenge for the continued growth of the work, and it called for an initiative.

The practical issue of the conflict between Hellenists and Hebrews provided the opportunity to add more leaders that could exercise judicial authority. Going back to the Scriptures, models were found for leadership induction which would not violate the absence of 'ordination' in the ministry of their Master. Since they knew that Jesus laid his hands on various people in order to bless them, which included prayer (3.3.7.2), they applied this model often used by the Master, and thus Christian 'ordination' came to include prayer with imposition of hands from the very beginning,⁶⁹⁷ which, as mentioned earlier, differed from the Jewish practice of ordaining scribes where the central point was succession to an office with judicial functions.⁶⁹⁸

It is therefore perhaps not by coincidence that Luke records after the 'ordination' of the seven that 'a large number of priests became obedient to the faith'. To all these priests and scribes who now accepted the Christian faith, the imposition of hands would be the appropriate way to express the confirmation of divine authority through the Holy Spirit, and in the sovereign and divine way (quite apart from the institutional establishment) that had always characterised the *prophetic* office, i.e. the office of Moses (cf. Deut. 18:14-22). As noted in our survey of the Old Testament, the imposition of hands was a public sign that ensured the congregation's acceptance of the leader, in obedience to God's appointment of him (e.g. Deut. 34:9).

⁶⁹⁷ Cf. E. Ferguson, 'Jewish and Christian Ordination', 1963, pp. 14-16.

⁶⁹⁸ Cf. A. Ehrhardt, 'Jewish and Christian Ordination', 1954, pp. 125, 134-136; E. Ferguson, *ibid.*, p. 16.

Thus, the imposition of hands and the 'ordination' taking place in Acts 6:1-6 was an initiative that would ensure the *prophetic* Mosaic authority of the office of the Christian leader, as a witness both to the Sanhedrin and to the many priests and scribes that were now joining the church. If the young Christian congregation in Jerusalem now had a large number of Jewish priests and scribes in their midst, the act of imposition of hands would also be the best way to achieve trust and support among them. There was no need for the imposition of hands in order to convey the power of the Holy Spirit in this context, because the ordinands were already 'full of faith and the Holy Spirit' (6:5), and both Stephen and Philip were preaching and teaching (6:10; 8:4), Philip being known as 'the evangelist' (21:8).

The challenge of the fast growing Hellenistic part of the church and the need to appoint seven leaders with apostolic authority from their ranks was dressed in a thoroughly Jewish form: the rite of prayer and imposition of hands would safeguard their prophetic authority, mark their 'extension' (or 'sending out') from the congregation and/or from the apostles, and send a clear signal to the Sanhedrin and the growing number of converts from the circles of Jewish priests that the young Christian church was led by God, for it made use of models for appointments from the *torah* and applied some form of *semikah* or imposition of hands, which was the common form of ordination among the scribes. This would safeguard the perception of the *authority* of the church as being sent by God and being his servant. However, it seems that this move was temporary and *ad hoc*, for there is no record of an institution of 'ordination' by the imposition of hands in the New Testament. While Acts 6 record an appointment of seven assistants to the apostles, Acts 13:1-3 describes the initiative of the Holy Spirit to send Barnabas and Paul to Asia Minor. The differences between these events are striking, as we will see in the following, and we will also see that these events were unique and *ad hoc*, to cope with strategic challenges for the young church. These instances did not give rise to a firm practice which is clearly defined.

3.5.3 The 'Ordination' Texts

3.5.3.1 The Seven Elders-Servants (Acts 6:1-6). The passage starts by identifying the issue: The Hellenistic converts complain against the Jewish converts because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food (Acts

6:1). This leads to a church assembly led by the twelve where they acknowledge that it would be inappropriate for them to neglect the ministry of the word of God 'in order to wait on tables' (6:2). The passage in 6:3-6 proceeds from the address of the apostles to all the disciples:

Acts 6:3-6 'Brothers, choose (*episkeptomai*) seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom, who we will appoint (*kathistemi*) for this matter. **4** We will give our attention to prayer and the ministry (*diakonia*) of the word.' **5** This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose (*eklegomai*) Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. **6** They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands (*epitithemi tas cheiras*) on them.

The elements of the process in this section are: *Proposal* by the twelve, probably through Peter (6:3-4); (a) *Approval* by the congregation (6:5a); (b) *Selection* of seven men (6:5b); (c) *Presentation* to the apostles (6:6a); (d) *Prayer* by the apostles and/or the congregation (6:6b); and (e) *Imposition* of Hands by the apostles and/or the congregation (6:6c).

Three preliminary considerations may influence the interpretation:

Firstly, the exegesis needs to be cognisant of a significant detail regarding the translation of the Greek text and the textual transmission of Acts 6:6. A literal translation of the preserved text is: '[the congregation] placed [the seven] before the apostles and praying they laid their hands on them' (*hous estesan enopion ton apostolon kai proseuxamenoι epethekan autois tas cheiras*). Thus, it is not clear if the prayer and imposition of hands were done by the congregation or the apostles. This ambiguity was apparently noticed later on in the textual transmission of the Greek text, for in Codex Bezae, also named Codex D, from the fifth or sixth centuries, a copyist has inserted *hoitines*, 'who', after 'apostles', thus making it clear that the rite of prayer and imposition of hands was performed by the apostles: '... the apostles *who* prayed and laid their hands on them' (*hoitines kai proseuxamenoι kai epethekan autois tas cheiras*). It has been appropriately noted that 'the reason for this addition reflects a historical development beginning in the third century, when only the bishop in apostolic succession could ordain, followed by the assertion that bishops are the vicars of Christ – a claim later applied to the pope'.⁶⁹⁹ We will return to the issue of who is performing the imposition of hands in our exegesis below.

⁶⁹⁹ V. Norskov Olsen, *Church, Priesthood and Ordination*, 1990, p. 142.

Secondly, in the 'ordination' of the seven, the apostles and Luke may have drawn on passages in the Old Testament Scriptures: for example, Moses delegation of tasks to judges (Ex. 18) and elders (Num. 11:16-30), or his appointment of Joshua as his successor, (Num. 27:12-23; Deut. 34:9), or the Israelite congregation's imposition of hands upon the Levites as their representatives (Num. 8:5-22).

Thus, it has been alleged that Luke in describing the event is using *midrashic* principles of Jewish exegesis which are based on the analogy between Israel's exodus from Egypt and the law-giving at Sinai on one hand, and the Christian Church, the new Israel, emerging in the power of the Lord after Pentecost.⁷⁰⁰ Space does not allow for an outline of this suggestion in detail, but the proposal is worthy of notice in the interpretation of Acts 6:1-6.

The appointment of the seventy elders (Num. 11:16-17, 24-25; cf. Ex. 18; cf. 3.2.3) brought *assistant* leaders into the Israelite ministry to alleviate Moses of his burdens of work, while he still remained in charge as the senior leader. The emphasis on God himself giving the elders of Moses' some of his prophetic spirit, which resulted in their prophesying by divine authority, fits the 'ordination' of the seven in Acts 6 – particularly in the context of the conflict with the Sanhedrin over the Christians' prophetic authority (3.5.2). In this context, we may say that the seven *assist* the apostles, and that they claim direct authority from God by the spirit of prophecy, just as the seventy elders. However, this understanding may also be connected with an allusion to Moses' 'ordination' of Joshua, in whom was the spirit, and who received some of Moses authority and honour as his successor, giving him a 'spirit of wisdom' (note the verbal similarity in Acts 6:3), 'for Moses had laid his hands on him' (Num. 27:12-23; Deut. 34:9).

The Levites were 'ordained' by the people and Aaron and his sons (Num. 8:5-22; cf. 3.2.4): the people layed their hands on them while Aaron and his sons lead out and dealt with their ritual purification. The Levites *represented* the people and *assisted* the Aaronic priests, taking care of particularly practical things but also teaching and administration. This also bears strong resemblances to the seven in Acts 6 who were appointed by the people in the church and then installed and formally authorised by the congregation as their representatives, while the apostles play a leading role.

⁷⁰⁰ This has been outlined in some detail with numerous examples in M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, pp. 120-130; see the summary in V. Norskov Olsen, *Church, Priesthood and Ordination*, 1990, pp. 81-85, 141-143.

The allusions in Acts 6:1-6 to the Septuagint version of these background passages are several:

1. In Acts 6:1 the disciples are multiplying. This fulfils God's promise to Abraham (Gen. 22:17) and alludes to the Exodus (Ex. 1:7, 10, 20). It also results in persecution and oppression in both instances.⁷⁰¹

2. The disciples are also 'murmuring' (Acts 6:1) and the Israelites did the same (Ex. 16:2, 7). In the former setting, the complaint regards the food distribution to the widows; in the latter it regards the complaint that 'our wives and our little ones will become a prey'. As Moses summoned Israel to come before God, so the apostles summon the disciples (Acts 6:2).⁷⁰²

3. When the Israelites in the desert 'murmur', Moses finds the burden of administration more than he can handle, so God tells him to select seventy of the elders of the people 'and I will take some of the spirit which is upon you and put it on them' and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone' (Num. 11:17). The twelve of Acts 6:1-2 also feel overburdened with administrative duties and so they have the seven selected who are 'respected and full of the Spirit and of wisdom' (Acts 6:3). Thus, the wisdom of Moses is seen as viable in the new community.⁷⁰³

4. As Moses had picked out (*episkeptomai*) Joshua, set him before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation and 'laid his hands on him' (Num. 27:16, 23, according to the Septuagint), so too the congregation of Acts 6 picks out (*episkeptomai*) seven men full of the Spirit and sets them before the apostles, prays for them and lays their hands upon them.⁷⁰⁴

5. As the Israelites were led out of Egypt by signs and wonders, the new Israel in Acts 6-8 is being launched in the first phase after Pentecost of its charge to be witnesses in 'Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth' (Acts 1:8).⁷⁰⁵

Luke's allusions to the Old Testament 'ordination' passages are done by Jewish *midrashic* exegesis, such as *gezerah shawah* (verbal analogy), *kayoze bo bemaqom 'akher* (exposition by means of another similar passage), and *dabar*

⁷⁰¹ M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, p. 128.

⁷⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 128-129.

⁷⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

⁷⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

halamed me'inyano (a meaning established by its context).⁷⁰⁶ By these means, 'Luke has interpreted the selection and commissioning of the seven as fulfilment of a covenant promise'.⁷⁰⁷ The 'ordination' of the seven, therefore, is an important step in the mission of God and his salvation history.

The assumption that Luke's record is 'filtered' by some Old Testament passages may significantly influence the exegesis of the text. For example, if the procedure recorded by Luke is drawing on the appointment of the Levites in Numbers 8:5-22, it is the *congregation* that extends its authority and approval of the seven for service to the congregation. If, on the other hand, it is the *apostles*, this means that they authorise the nominees for a task that had previously been handled by the twelve apostles themselves, and a responsibility that was 'apostolic' is now delegated to the seven, which means that their service is rendered to the senior leaders that *represent* the congregation. In both cases, the 'hands' symbolise the instrument that transfers authority and/or representation, as was the case with *samak yad* in the Old Testament (i.e. the imposition of hands by some pressure).

It is vital to point out, however, that whatever the exact nature of the connections between Acts 6:1-6 and the Old Testament passages considered above, the latter are not being followed in Acts 6 as a law, but have been used selectively and adapted to the new situation of the young church.

Thirdly, the process outlined in Acts 6:1-6 may be leaning on some contemporary Jewish practices. In our study of the origin of Christian 'ordination' (3.5.2), we referred to the model of the 'Seven of a City', who were elders acting as a body of judges that was distinct from but cooperated with the leaders and council of elders in each synagogue, acting in a subordinate role to the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. Their role was to judge on matters of dispute, and this may be part of the function of the seven in Acts 6. However, we see that both Stephen and Philip among the seven were spirit-filled persons who preached, taught, and evangelized in the same way as the twelve apostles. Thus, it cannot be excluded that the seven, besides functioning as elders-judges according to a Jewish practice, also represented (a) the spirit-filled congregation of believers where God's mighty hand was made visible, and (b) the leadership authority of the apostles in preaching,

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid.; for a wider exploration, Warkentin refers to R. N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 1975, pp. 34-35; L. Strack, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, 1976, p. 94.

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid.

teaching, and working miracles. Thus, there is no mechanical adoption of Jewish practices, but they are accommodated to the specific needs of the church.

Bearing these preliminary comments in mind, we will now present an exegesis of the passage that is governed by our search questions regarding 'ordination'.

1. What is the theological significance of 'ordination'? Very little is stated in the passage itself. The requirement of the seven was that they would be 'respected and full of the Spirit and wisdom' (6:3), and the description of Stephen is that he was 'a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit'. This suggests that the gift of the Spirit has already been given and the imposition of hands is a *confirmation* of God's gift while being part of an installation into an authoritative leadership function. The significant theological aspect of the passage as a whole has to do with its role in the larger context of Acts 4:1-7:59 (3.5.2). We have seen that the appointment safeguards the divine authority of the seven and that this is connected with their charismatic gifts of the Spirit and wisdom, the trust of the congregation, and their authority being an extension of the body that performs the imposition of hands – the congregation and/or the apostles.

2. For which office or function is 'ordination' practised? No explicit term is given for the office or precise function of the seven, which in itself is a remarkable circumstance. The simplest explanation is that their function was an *ad hoc* function and that the young church did not yet have an organised structure of functions besides the spirit-led apostles and servants of God. The use of the verb *diakonein*, 'serve' (6:2), and the noun *diakonia*, 'service, ministry' (6:1, 4), in this passage can include 'distributing a meal' (6:1), 'waiting on table' (6:2), and 'ministering the word' (6:4). The idea originally raised by Church Father Irenaeus (ca. 130-202)⁷⁰⁸ that they were 'deacons' in the technical sense of an office subordinated to the elders and overseers, which was widely accepted in the nineteenth century⁷⁰⁹ is now considered by scholars as being 'a very old error'.⁷¹⁰ They were classified as deacons 'because they overlooked [supervised] the distribution of alms', but they 'were not named deacons and neither did they function as deacons did in association with elders in the time of Paul'.⁷¹¹ If the reference is to the function of

⁷⁰⁸ As pointed out in H. Chadwick, *Early Church*, 1967, p. 48.

⁷⁰⁹ See, for example, A. Barnes, *Notes on the Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 110-113.

⁷¹⁰ As pointed out by A. M. Farrer in *The Apostolic Ministry* and quoted in C. S. C. Williams, *A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 1957, p. 97, and V. Norskov Olsen, *Church, Priesthood and Ordination*, 1990, p. 84.

⁷¹¹ V. Norskov Olsen, *ibid.*, p. 83.

‘deacons’ in the church, then this would be the only passage in the New Testament associating ‘deacons’ with the laying on of hands. Clearly, the work of the seven went beyond the limited duties of a deacon, for at least two of the seven are subsequently involved in teaching and preaching: Stephen in 6:10 and Philip in 8:4-8 (note ‘Philip the evangelist’ in 21:8).

Another approach is to see them as a body of elders or an ‘apostolate of the seven’ based on the model of the ‘Seven of a City’ in first-century Judaism. Each city had a council of seven elders functioning as a local Sanhedrin, i.e. a judicial body of scribes who had been ordained by imposition of hands, being related to the central Sanhedrin in Jerusalem to which uncertain cases at the local level could be referred. The fact that the issue in the church according Acts 6:1-6 is a conflict with complaints, the task of the seven would require judicial and administrative functions in the distribution of alms. We see that the church in Antioch sent alms with Barnabas and Paul to the church in Jerusalem, ‘to the elders’ (*presbyteroi*, Acts 11:30), indicating that those in charge were elders. We also note that at least two of the seven were actively involved in evangelism and missionary work, and thus also had the characteristics of an apostle-emissary.

All these circumstances point in the direction of the seven being appointed to an apostolate of the seven and that they were a body of elders. This begs the question of who actually laid their hands on the seven in Acts 6:6 – the congregation or the apostles, or both? We will come back to this issue of interpretation in point 7 below.

3. What authority does ‘ordination’ convey? The answer to this question depends on who performed the act of prayer and imposition of hands in Acts 6:6. If it was the congregation, the act functions as an extension of the authority of the church. If it was the apostles, the act extends the authority and spirit of the twelve apostles to the appointees.

4. How is the selection of an ‘ordinand’ made? Who decides it? The congregation chooses (*episkeptomai*) the seven, by name, which they place before the apostles (6:3, 6). Either the congregation, or the apostles, or both, then, formally ‘appoint’ (*kathistemi*) them for their responsibility (6:3), which is done by ‘prayer and imposition of hands’ (6:6).

5. What are the qualifications of an ‘ordinand’? What about gender? The apostles state in 6:3 that they need to be seven ‘men’ (*andres*) from among you who

are 'respected and full of the Spirit and wisdom'. Thus, they need to be male, come from the congregation of believers, be respected and in good standing, and being full of the Spirit and wisdom. It may be significant that 'full of the Spirit and wisdom' is mentioned, for three reasons: (a) this was the gift of Joshua ('filled with the Spirit of wisdom', Deut. 34:9; cf. Num. 27:16,18) and the 70 elders (Num. 11:16-29); (b) this condition, particularly the concept of '(spirit of) wisdom', was also of paramount importance for the Jewish 'ordination' of the scribes (3.4); and (c) this condition is central in the events recorded after the 'ordination' in Acts 6:6, both for Stephen (6:8; 7:55) and Philip (8:4-8, 25-40), and it is the constant theme until the stoning of Stephen and the spreading of the gospel (7:54-8:4). Further qualifications for the 'ordination' in 6:3-6 are found in the description of Stephen: 'a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit' (6:5).

If the function of the seven included that of 'judges', which is arguable both because of the nature of the issue leading to their 'ordination' and the parallel function of the Jewish practice of the Seven of the City, it is obvious that they had to be men. Whether in Jewish Palestine or in Graeco-Roman Asia Minor, the courts did not accept women as judges or witnesses, or even attendees.

6. How are the qualifications examined? No examination is recorded.

7. How is the ceremony of 'ordination' conducted: by whom, where, when, and how? We noted earlier that a literal translation of the preserved text in 6:6 is: '[the congregation] placed [the seven] before the apostles and praying they laid their hands on them' (*hous estesan enopion ton apostolon kai proseuxamenois epethekan autois tas cheiras*). We may add here that the same uncertainty is implied in the apostles' outline of the process in 6:3. Having suggested that the congregation choose seven men from among them, the apostles say literally: 'we [congregation and/or apostles] will [then] appoint (*kathistemi*) them over (*epi* followed by genitive as in Matt. 24:45; 25:21, 23) this need [matter]'. Again, it is not clear if 'we' is referring to the congregation (who are to make the choice of the candidates in 6:3) or the apostles (who are the agents in 6:4). In fact, the structure of the Greek in 6:3-4 may suggest that, while the congregation is the consistent agent in 6:3 ('choose, then, brothers, seven men from you who are respected and full of the Spirit and wisdom, whom we will appoint over this need'), the change to the agent of the apostles may be marked by the explicit 'we, then' (*hemeis de*) in 6:4 ('while we will devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word'). A solution must be sought through

an interpretation recognising the full context, both in Acts and in the historical setting of Acts. And if that does not help, we must rest the case with a *non licet*.

Three possibilities exist which have all been advocated by scholarly interpreters:

1. The first option is to take the twelve apostles as performers of the prayer and imposition of hands.⁷¹² This is possible, but not certain. Since the apostles are the initiators of the process and it is their previous responsibility that is being delegated, it may be logical to see them as the principal agents. If the passage intentionally alludes to Old Testament background texts and the 'ordination' of Joshua by Moses in particular,⁷¹³ this would also seem the best interpretation. If the appointment of the seven is influenced by the Jewish practice of the Seven of the City and they are scribally educated elders/judges, an imposition of hands by the twelve would also seem the preferable interpretation.

In some ways, this would be a unique action by the twelve apostles in the New Testament, who were not 'ordained' themselves. In view of the complete lack of 'ordination' in the Gospels, and the teaching of Jesus suggesting that he did not accept an institutionalisation or a hierarchic' order of the teaching office, it would seem less likely that the twelve would have conducted this act on their own. However, if the seven were appointed as elders, we do have support in the New Testament for itinerant 'apostles', such as Barnabas and Paul (Acts 14:23), and 'assistants of such apostles', such as Titus (Tit. 1:5), who 'appointed' elders in the various local churches, suggesting that the office of elder seems to have been with the church from the very beginning, being an inheritance from Judaism and the synagogue. Thus, in that context, the 'ordination' of elders with imposition of hands may be implied, but there is no explicit evidence in the New Testament of such a practice. An historical reconstruction of the development is insufficient for establishing a biblical, explicit teaching on 'ordination' which may guide us today.

2. The second option is to understand the congregation as performing the prayer and imposition of hands.⁷¹⁴ The seven are to serve the congregation which

⁷¹² This is the view of, for example, E. Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament*, London: SCM, 1961, p. 208; W. Neil, *Acts*, 1981, p. 104; T. B. Dozeman, *Holiness and Ministry: A Biblical Theology of Ordination*, p. 109.

⁷¹³ As strongly proposed by M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, pp. 127-130.

⁷¹⁴ This is view is taken by, for example, T. F. Torrance, 'Consecration and Ordination', 1958, pp. 235, 237; D. Daube reads the text in the same way but interprets it to say that the congregation are performing all the

has a significant role in the process of the appointment. If the passage intentionally alludes to the Old Testament appointment of the Levites, this would mean that the congregation would be laying their hands on the seven and that the seven serve as an extension and representation of the congregation. Being 'placed before the apostles' is then analogous to being placed before the high priest Aaron (Num. 8:11), indicating that the apostles 'had part in the act'.⁷¹⁵ The fact that the imposition of hands was not done by the apostles then means that the seven were not being appointed as their deputies, but only as their assistants with the endorsement of the congregation, like the Levites who served under the priests in the sanctuary.⁷¹⁶ However, if we favour the analogy with the Jewish custom of the Seven of a City and Moses' appointment of Joshua (Num. 27:12-23) and see the seven as elders/judges, these were not normally appointed by the congregation but by authorised apostles or servants of apostles (Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5).

3. The third option is that both the congregation and the apostles conducted the prayer and imposition of hands, possibly including the view that the apostles acted as representatives of the congregation.⁷¹⁷ If we decide to include all the contextual possibilities outlined in options one and two above, this third option would be the preferred solution. It would explain the ambiguity of the Greek text in Acts 6:1-6 and would fit both the allusions to the Old Testament passages in Numbers 11 (Levites) and 27 (Moses), and the influence from the contemporary Jewish practice of ordination of elders and the Seven of the City. It would also fit the little we know of the institution of the elders/judges and how they were appointed according to Jewish practice and some references in the New Testament.

While some uncertainty remains, we propose that option three is the better one, being in keeping with the Greek text and the literary context in Acts and the New Testament, accounting for the allusions to Old Testament model passages on the 'ordinations' of the Levites and Joshua, and fitting the office of 'elder' (*presbyter*) or 'servant' (*diakonos*) in the New Testament (cf. 3.1.3.6; 3.1.3.7). Thus, we will refer

elements of the process while placing the seven before the apostles who 'agree with the choice' (*The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*, 2011, pp. 237-238; K. Mattingly ('Laying on of Hands in Ordination', 1998, p. 68) is leaning in this direction, but concedes that the apostles may represent the congregation.

⁷¹⁵ Ibid.

⁷¹⁶ Ibid.

⁷¹⁷ For this view, see, for example, T. F. Torrance, 'Consecration and Ordination', 1958, p. 235, 237; K. Mattingly, 'Laying on of Hands in Ordination', 1998, p. 68. Cf. the summary of Torrance's view in V. Norskov Olsen, *Church, Priesthood and Ordination*, 1990, pp. 142-143.

to the seven as ‘elder-servants’⁷¹⁸ having the authority of the congregation (whom they serve by acting as judges and administrators), the apostles (whom they serve by delegation and by being servants like the Levites served the priests and the seven elders of the city served the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem), and God (whom they serve for his mission through the Holy Spirit).

8. What function does prayer or imposition of hands have in the ceremony? These are the key elements of the installation ceremony itself, but there are no comments that explain them. Their origin and significance are assumed to be known by the intended readers of Acts. It should be emphasised, however, that if the procedure in Acts 6:1-6 was influenced by the Jewish practice of scribal ordination (including elders and members of the Sanhedrin), then the Christians would have added prayer, because this was not included in the Jewish practice (3.4). This important adjustment of the Jewish practice suggests a different concept of ‘ordination’. It suggests a *charismatic* emphasis on God’s Holy Spirit being involved before, during and after the act of ‘ordination’ (as in God’s ‘ordination’ of the seventy elders, Num. 11:16-29), and it may also imply that the concept of ‘blessing’, as practised by Jesus, was seen as essential by the Christians.⁷¹⁹

Acts 6:1-6 is the first instance of a ceremony of imposition of hands for appointment to a responsibility in the church that we find in the New Testament. It is the only instance in the New Testament where prayer and imposition of hands are explicitly used for some kind of *office* or defined *function*. And it is the only instance where a procedure of congregational nomination is followed by prayer and imposition of hands in an appointment practice.

However, there is no explanation of the origin or significance of the imposition of hands for the appointment. It is used as a practice that was known to the intended readers, although it has not been mentioned in Acts 1-5. We have argued earlier (3.5.2) that the possibility must be seriously considered that this practice was well-known by the Jewish converts as an accepted procedure for installations in the Jewish-Hellenistic environment at the time. The sign of the imposition of hands certainly emerged from the Old Testament Scriptures, to which Luke is making several allusions. The great increase of Jewish priests who joined the church could also have stimulated the use of a pre-existing Jewish custom.

⁷¹⁸ Following T. F. Torrance, ‘Consecration and Ordination’, 1958, p. 237.

⁷¹⁹ As pointed out in E. Ferguson, ‘Jewish and Christian Ordination’, 1963, p. 15.

In many ways, Acts 6:1-6 is an important passage for a theology of 'ordination', but there are some serious issues of interpretation of the Greek text that complicates any references to it. It re-defines 'ordination' as an 'appointment', but the nature of the office for which the seven were appointed is uncertain. And the identity of those who performed the act of prayer and the imposition of hands is also uncertain.

3.5.3.2 Itinerant Apostles (Acts 13:1-3). In our review of the imposition of hands in the Bible, we have already considered aspects of Acts 13:1-3. Here we will look at the text as a whole in the light of the hypothetical concept of 'ordination'.

Luke's report concerns a special work to which Barnabas and Paul are called by the Holy Spirit. It is a 'sending away' for a special mission, but it does not involve a formal office. The prompting by the Spirit comes while the church is worshipping and fasting. The text says:

Acts 13:1-3 Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the ruler, and Saul. **2** While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart (*aforizo*) for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called (*kaleomai*) them.' **3** Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands (*epitithemi tas cheiras*) on them and sent them off. (NRSV)

We will probe into this passage by applying our search questions for 'ordination':

1. What is the theological significance of 'ordination'? The Spirit takes the initiative, which is the usual pattern in the book of Acts. The term *aforizo* means 'set apart, appoint, choose'. The act of setting apart is given to the church by divine instruction obtained during worship, prayer and fasting. A spiritual 'call' has been given to Barnabas and Saul, and the appointment is meant to confirm this and set them apart for a temporary task.

2. For which office or function is 'ordination' practised? There is no office, but the function is 'the work to which the Spirit of God has called them'. In Acts 13:4-14:28, they travel and along the way they preach and teach in the synagogues and the church is growing also among the non-Jews. Paul is almost killed by stoning. They appoint elders in each church (3.5.3.3).

3. What authority does ordination convey? The authority conveyed is threefold: (a) God's authority through the Holy Spirit; (b) the authority of the local

congregation in Antioch; and (c) doing some of the tasks of the itinerant ‘apostles’. This is very similar to Moses’ delegation of his responsibilities to the judges in Exodus 18 and God’s placing the Spirit of Moses on the elders in Numbers 11 (3.2.3). We will expand these comments in point 7 below.

4. How is the selection of an ‘ordinand’ made? Who decides it? The selection is made by the Holy Spirit and his human agents are not mentioned. There were ‘prophets’ in Antioch who may have conveyed the decision, or Barnabas and Paul themselves, who are in the group of prophets and teachers, may have indicated what the Spirit said. This is a *charismatic* calling to a missionary task, not an ‘ordination’ in the usual sense of the word.⁷²⁰

5. What are the qualifications of an ‘ordinand’? What about gender? The qualifications are not mentioned and nothing said about gender, but Barnabas and Paul are both men. According to accepted norms at the time, which still exist in the Middle East, women did not travel alone. Moreover, the tasks of Paul and Barnabas included the public proclamation of the Word of God in Jewish synagogues where women were not accepted as speakers (Acts 13:5, 13-44; 14:1), and the appointment of elders which traditionally was assigned to men (14:23). The fact, therefore, that Paul and Barnabas were men is irrelevant for the issue of women’s ordination today – not to mention the fact that Acts 13:1-3 does not describe an ‘ordination’ but a commissioning for a temporary task.

6. How are the qualifications examined? No information is given.

7. How is the ceremony of ‘ordination’ conducted: by whom, where, when, and how? It seems to happen in the church with the congregation present. Prayer and fasting is taking place. However, Acts 13:3 reflects the same ambiguity as 6:6 regarding whose hands are being laid upon the appointees. From the immediate context in 13:1-3, it may be the ‘church (*ekklesia*) in Antioch’ or the specific group in that church called ‘prophets and teachers’ (five being named). Both parties are introduced in 13:1. Following that introduction, the Greek text uses only the personal pronoun ‘they’ in referring to the agents of the rite in 13:3. Taking Acts 13:1-14:28 as a whole, however, it seems clear that the entire church in Antioch is involved both in the ‘sending off’ of the two in 13:3 and in their return: ‘sailing back to Antioch, where they had been commended (*paradidomi*) to the grace of God for the

⁷²⁰ As pointed out by many Bible scholars: see, for example, A. Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament*, 1975, p. 198 (the first edition of this commentary was issued 1834).

work they had now completed' is followed by a gathering of all the church there and a 'reporting of how God had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles' (14:26-27). Thus, we need to maintain the ambiguity found in Acts 6 also in Acts 13: the laying on of hands is done by the congregation, or a group of 'prophets and teachers' as representatives of the congregation, or both. The important points are that (a) the biblical text does not make a clear distinction here, and (b) whatever is done, it is an answer to the clear command of the Holy Spirit.

The Old Testament and Jewish expression *samak yad 'al*, 'leaning on', implied an extension of the 'ordainer's' self to the 'ordinand'.⁷²¹ By laying on of hands upon Barnabas and Paul, the church in Antioch is accordingly making an 'extension of the local church in Antioch into a world-wide church'.⁷²² It is an act of faith but also an act that invokes the power of God, as the local work of the prophets and teachers for Christ is extended through their two representatives who became 'apostles' (messengers, emissaries, agents). This idea of 'extension' suggests that the two apostles are being made into *representatives* of the church community in Antioch, and this fits the proposal that the language in 13:1-3 corresponds to the consecration of the Levites who by the imposition of hands represented the people in their service for the Lord. As Barnabas and Paul are 'taken from' the group of prophets and teachers in Antioch (13:1), the Levites 'were taken from among the sons of Israel' (Num. 8:6, 14). In Acts the instruction of the Holy Spirit was: 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work which I have called them' (Acts 13:2). The Levites were also set apart for their work (Num. 8:11, 15) to which God had called them. The laying on of hands in Acts 13:3 may not be immediately connected with the activity of prayer and fasting (in 13:2-3 they are worshipping and fasting when the Holy Spirit directs them to set the two aside), and may therefore follow the *samak yad 'al* in Numbers 8, which does not include prayer *and* imposition of hands. Thus, it has been noted that the language of Acts 13 'echoes that of the Old Testament in the chapter dealing with the consecration of the Levites'.⁷²³

It should be noted, finally, that the sending of Paul and Barnabas from Antioch probably included a form of financial sponsorship and that it parallels the annual sending of rabbis from Palestine to encourage the diaspora Jews.

⁷²¹ As carefully established by D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*, 2011, pp. 224-246.

⁷²² V. Norskov Olsen, *Church, Priesthood and Ordination*, 1990, p. 143.

⁷²³ D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*, 2011, p. 240.

8. What function does prayer or imposition of hands have in the ceremony? The key element is the imposition of hands. There is no explanation of this sign, so its significance is implied as being known. The mentioning of the ‘Spirit’ and ‘prophets’ may have some relevance, implying – in the light of passages such as Deuteronomy 34:9 and 2 Timothy 1:6 – that the imposition of hands may have had something to do with the authoritative power and wisdom of the Spirit, but this is not stated in the text. It is possible that prayer is a part of the procedure, since they were praying and fasting, but not certain. The distinction between praying in the worship and praying in connection with the imposition of hands is not clearly marked in the text.

While we have here an almost complete description of the use of the laying on of hands in a church context, at the same time there is no information about its meaning or origin. It seems, rather, that it is an obvious formality in the context. The Holy Spirit is connected with the ceremony; and it is accompanied by prayer and fasting, although we don’t see exactly how that is done. It is also clear that this is not an ‘ordination’ for an office but a commissioning for a missionary task by which the church in Antioch ‘extends’ its influence and work in new territories.

3.5.3.3 The Church Elders (Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5). As Paul and Barnabas visited the churches and preached the gospel in Asia Minor, sent out by the Holy Spirit and the church in Antioch, they appointed elders in each church – in Salamis and Paphos on Cyprus, Perga and Attalia in Pamphylia, Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe in Lycaonia. Their purpose was to ‘strengthen the disciples and encourage them to remain true to the faith’ in the face of many hardships (Acts 14:21-22). Evidently, the appointment of elders serves the purpose of strengthening the community:

Acts 14:23 And after they had appointed (*cheirotoneo*) elders for them in each church, with prayer and fasting they entrusted (*paratithemi*) them to the Lord in whom they had come to believe. (NRSV)

The Greek term for ‘appoint’ (*cheirotoneo*) means ‘raise the hand (in collective agreement)’. It is attested in classical Greek and is found in 2 Corinthians 8:19 in the sense of ‘select (by the congregation)’, but the person selected is a servant who is to accompany Paul on his journey. In Acts 14:23, the verb is used in a slightly different sense, namely ‘appoint’ or ‘select and institute (in a leadership role)’, as Barnabas

and Saul assign elders to the churches. There is no reason for associating its lexical sense in the New Testament with the rite of imposition of hands. The sense ‘stretch out the hand’ is found in the Septuagint version of Isaiah 58:9, but in the noun form of *cheirotomia*, ‘stretching out the hand’ or ‘pointing finger’, but this is found only here in the Bible and without any connection with the imposition of hands.⁷²⁴ We will see later that the verb and the noun are used in Hippolytos’ Apostolic Tradition (ca. 217) as a Greek technical term for ‘ordain’ and ‘ordination’ (4.1.7).

The fact that the appointment of elders is a systematic measure in each church suggests that it is already an accepted practice of some kind, at least conceptually. As we explored the background of the office of elder (3.1.3.6), we noted that it is rooted in the Old Testament where it is particularly associated with Moses (3.2.3), that it was an institution in the contemporary Jewish synagogues and cities in the first century A.D., and that a Jewish elder was usually ordained by imposition of hands in what was technically called *semikat zeqenim*, ‘the ordination of the elders’.⁷²⁵ In the same way as when Barnabas and Paul were commissioned with imposition of hands for their special task (Acts 13:1-3), the appointment of elders in Asia Minor is accompanied by prayer and fasting. The expression ‘set them apart (*paratithemi*) to the Lord’ comes close to the terminology of the Levites being consecrated to the Lord.

Thus, there are hints in this passage suggesting an ‘ordination’ with imposition of hands. However, the fact remains that this is not mentioned. If it included imposition of hands, either it was implied that such an imposition was part of it, and it did not need to be mentioned, or the practice of appointing church leaders had not yet taken on a firm and consistent form and what happened is precisely, literally, what the text says: no imposition of hands was used. As a matter of principle, the latter understanding seems to us to be preferable for reasons of consistent method.

3.5.3.4 The Apostolic Servant (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6). Paul is the author of the two letters we will now consider. The direct divine calling is the foundation of Paul’s apostolic office (3.1.3.3). It is based, not on being appointed as a disciple by Jesus to form the twelve, but on his appointment as an apostle by the risen Lord (in vision) to bring the gospel to the Gentiles – as described by Paul to King Agrippa in Acts

⁷²⁴ E. Lohse, Article ‘*cheir* etc.’, ThDNT, vol. 9, p. 437.

⁷²⁵ Ibid., pp. 244-245; T. F. Torrance, ‘Consecration and Ordination’, 1958, p. 238.

26:15-18. Accordingly, Paul does not refer to any ceremony or official church decision that inducted him to his office – the ceremony in Antioch according to Acts 13:1-3 is not an ‘ordination’ but a commissioning for a missionary task. Thus, Paul’s role as an apostle is founded on a *charismatic*, divine experience. He has a *prophetic-apostolic* office directly instituted by God in Christ. It is to this vision that he is obedient.

The spreading of the gospel and Paul’s growing work created the need for assistants, and both Timothy and Titus are ‘sons’ (*tekna*), doing special apostolic work delegated by Paul (1 Tim. 1:2, 18; 2 Tim. 1:2; 2:1; Tit. 1:4; 1 Cor. 4:17; Phil. 2:22). Paul calls Timothy ‘my true son in the faith’ (1 Tim. 1:2; cf. ‘my true son in our common faith’, Tit. 1:5), and the symbol of a father-son relationship reappears in 2 Timothy 1:1 and 2:1. Timothy has been urged by Paul to stay in Ephesus, while he himself went on to Macedonia, so that Timothy would deal with false teachers (1 Tim. 1:3-11). Paul has laid his hands on Timothy (2 Tim. 1:6), which authorises him as Paul’s adopted son or apostolic associate. Titus has been left in Crete to ‘straighten out what was left unfinished’ and ‘appoint elders in every town, as I directed you’ (Tit. 1:5). Paul gives him *all authority* when it comes to teaching and correcting the church (Tit. 2:15). The title of ‘son’ is also used for Onesimus in the Letter to Philemon: ‘I appeal to you for my son (*teknon*) Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains’ (v. 10).

The usage of ‘son’ in these passages is rooted in ‘ancient ideas of adoption which are partly oriental, partly Jewish, and partly Greek’, but which are re-orientated by the Christian context.⁷²⁶ Thus, the term ‘son’ (*teknon*) is referring to an ‘adopted spiritual son’ by the father-teacher-apostle.⁷²⁷ Paul uses the term about Timothy, however, to denote his role as Paul’s ‘representative’ in his apostolic ministry:

1 Corinthians 4:17 Therefore, I send to you Timothy, who is my son, loved and faithful in the Lord, who will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, according to what I teach everywhere in every church. (NIV)

Philippians 2:19-22 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon ... **20** for I have no one else who is as likeminded as he and who will genuinely care for your needs. **21** For all seek their own interests, not the interests of Jesus Christ. **22** But you know Timothy’s proven character and how like a son towards his father he has served (*edouleuo*) with me in the gospel. **23** I therefore hope to send him as soon as I know my circumstances. (NIV)

⁷²⁶ A. Oepke, Article ‘*pais/teknon*’, *ThDNT*, vol. 5, p. 638.

⁷²⁷ *Ibid.*

As Paul's 'adopted spiritual son', Timothy is not only *replacing* Paul as a teacher, but he *imitates* Paul's life and character, while *working together* with Paul as a 'servant' (*doulos*) in the gospel. Thus, in Ephesus, Timothy functioned as Paul's apostolic *representative* – like the Levites who *represented* the firstborn of the people or Joshua who *represented* Moses. He is overseeing the church order and the life of the Ephesian church and its members, the prayers and the worship, the reading of the Scriptures, the exhortation and doctrinal teaching (e.g. 1 Tim. 4:11-13). In particular, Paul has charged Timothy with the task of dealing with false teachers, which means that Timothy's *authority* as leader is a key to success. His authority is approached along two avenues – one has to do with his external authority to confront false teachings and the other with his internal sense of authority to keep up the good fight (1 Tim. 1:18).

In the context of first-century Jewish Christianity, the *adoption* of a son, the *installation* of a disciple by his teacher, or the *appointment* of a servant to his apostolic master would be formally marked by the rite of imposition of hands. There is an implied analogy with the scribe and his disciple in first-century Judaism (see 3.4 above), but it has developed further than that. Driven by the Holy Spirit, Paul and Timothy are bringing the gospel to the Gentile world in response to the direct calling of Jesus. Paul's practical tools and concepts may derive from his scribal background (Acts 22:3-5; Phil. 3:4-6), but he is using them in a completely new context, not for the teaching of the Mosaic Law, but for spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world.

According to 2 Timothy 1:6, Paul has in the past laid his hands on Timothy, which has given him a special 'gift of God'. Looking for the meaning of this act, we begin with the wider context:

2 Timothy 1:5-14 I am reminded of the sincere faith in you that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and that I am convinced lives also in you. **6** For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God (*to charisma tou theou*) that is in you through the laying on of my hands (*dia tes epitheseos ton cheiron mou*); **7** for God did not give us a spirit (*pneuma*) of fearfulness, but of power (*dynamis*) and of love and of self-control. **8** So do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, **9** who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, **10** but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to

light through the gospel. **11** For this gospel I was appointed (*tithemi*) a herald and an apostle and a teacher, **12** and for this reason I also suffer these things. But I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him. **13** Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. **14** Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us. (NRSV)

Paul first considers Timothy's sincere faith which he knows now lives in him (1:5; cf. 'faith and love' in 1:13). Based on this recognition, he reminds Timothy to 'rekindle the gift of God' (*charisma*) that is in you through the laying on of my hands'. The imposition of hands is not explained but is presumed to be known. There is no New Testament parallel of an individual imposition of hands like this. If we exclude healing, since Timothy is not sick, we are left with blessing and the scribal imposition of hands. Both would fit the purpose of formal adoption, installation, and appointment, if we accept that Christians changed the scribal practice and added prayer (blessing).⁷²⁸

Considering Paul's imposition of hands in the context of his Jewish, scribal background and the Old Testament model passages for 'ordination', the laying on of Moses' hands on Joshua provides a key to its significance. God had said to Moses that he was to give Joshua 'some of his authority (*hod*), so that the whole Israelite community will obey him' (Num. 27:20) and Joshua was afterwards described as 'filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him, so the Israelites listened to him and did what the Lord had commanded Moses' (Deut. 34:9). Reading 2 Timothy 1:6 through the filter of Moses' 'ordination' of Joshua, we see that the 'imposition of my hands' is not referring to a transmission of the Holy Spirit (both Joshua and Timothy already have the Spirit). Rather, Paul's hands transfer something of Paul himself, his leadership authority and wisdom, i.e. things that make people respect and obey him. And this is the content of the Jewish *semikah* which was practised among the scribes (3.4). Thus, in keeping with Jewish scribal ordination, the passage in 2 Timothy 1:6 does not mention prayer as connected with the imposition of hands.

Paul's imposition of hands may be understood as his formal *adoption* of Timothy to become his spiritual son and apostolic servant, or his *installation* of Timothy in the role of his disciple, or as his *appointment* of Timothy to function as his

⁷²⁸ As convincingly argued by E. Ferguson, 'Jewish and Christian Ordination', 1963, pp. 13-19.

apostolic servant. Understanding the imposition of hands as *reproducing* the authority of Paul in Timothy, fits the context well. Both 1 and 2 Timothy speak fervently about resistance and hardship and the need for facing it with *power and courage* in order to provide effective leadership to an endangered community. This reading would also explain Paul's words in 1:7-8:

2 Timothy 1:7-8 For God did not give us a spirit (*pneuma*) of fearfulness, but of power (*dynamis*) and of love and of self-control. **8** So do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power (*dynamis*) of God ...

Rekindling the gift of God received 'by the imposition of Paul's hands', Timothy will receive increased spiritual power, love and self-discipline, which will enable him to witness about Christ and suffer for the gospel. Thus, 'the gift' (*charisma*) is an added portion of God's *power* to carry out his leadership in the face of *hard resistance and persecution*. Moses had the power of the spirit of prophecy according to Numbers 11:17, 25, and some of it was given to the seventy elders. Moses also had honour and authority and a spirit of wisdom according to Numbers 27:20 and Deuteronomy 34:9. Now, God's power is in Paul, as it once was in Moses, and as Paul lays his hands on Timothy both Paul's *prophetic* power, honour and authority, which he has received from God, is transmitted to Timothy by God's gracious approval. This understanding is confirmed by 1:14, which also shows that the imposition of hands is not a magical or sacramental rite, for the Holy Spirit is already present:

2 Timothy 1:14 Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

Evidently, the Holy Spirit is not what was transmitted by the laying on of Paul's hands, because the Spirit 'lives (continuously) in us'. Like Joshua and the seven in Acts 6, Timothy already had the gift of the Spirit through his faith. What Paul is after when he speaks about the gift of God by imposition of his hands is however included in his charge to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:10-4:8. We find here an intimate personal connection between Paul and Timothy, visualised by the imposition of hands:

2 Timothy 3:10 Now you have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, **11** my persecutions, and my suffering ... **14** But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it. (NRSV)

Besides knowing Paul and learning from him, Timothy has also received from him the insight and example to carry out his leadership well:

2 Timothy 4:5 As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist (*euangelistos*), carry out your ministry (*diakonia*) fully. (NRSV)

Thus, the most straightforward and uncomplicated reading of the passage is that the imposition of hands authorises Timothy as Paul's apostolic servant and confirms the God-given spiritual powers needed to succeed.

The second passage regarding Timothy's alleged 'ordination' is 1 Timothy 4:14. The presbytery is involved in an imposition of hands which in some way is connected with Timothy. However, we don't know the purpose of this act and the passage is difficult to understand on the whole.

Elders performed various kinds of impositions of hands: blessings, healing, forgiveness of sins, reinstating a sinning elder, and, possibly, 'ordination' of elders. The Jewish practice called *semikat zeqenim* referred not to the ordination *by* elders but *of* elders (see below). The fact that imposition of hands is worded in 1 Timothy 4:14 as *epithesis ton cheiron* adds weight to a plausible connection with *semikat zeqenim*.

The laying on of hands by the presbytery in 1 Timothy 4:14 is mentioned in the context of instructions concerning false teaching which are first described (4:1-5) and then the methods of dealing with the issues are explained (4:6-16). Thus, 4:14 is stated in the context of counsels to the young Timothy on how to be 'a good servant (*diakonos*) of Jesus Christ' (4:6), here being used in a general sense. Paul's words may be literally translated as follows:

1 Timothy 4:13-15 Until I come, give attention to public reading, exhortation and teaching. **14** Do not neglect your gift (*charisma*), which was given you through a prophecy (*dia profeteias*) when the presbytery's imposition of hands took place. **15** Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.

The presbytery's imposition of hands is not the main point in Paul's address – the 'spiritual gift' given through a prophetic message is. Three issues of interpretation need to be addressed:

Firstly, the literal translation '*when (meta) the presbytery's imposition of hands [took place]*' – or '*in connection with (meta) the presbytery's imposition of hands*' – does not say that the hands were placed on Timothy, and nowhere in Paul's letters is Timothy being referred to as 'elder', but rather as an apostolic servant related to Paul. Moreover, it has been noted that the phrase 'presbytery's imposition of hands' (*epithesis ton cheiron tou presbyteriou*) looks like a rendering of the technical term

semikat zeqenim (*Bab. Sanhedrin* 13 b) which referred to the 'leaning on of hands on persons in order to make elders'.⁷²⁹ In the only two other New Testament texts where *presbyterion* occurs (Luke 22:66; Acts 22:5), it stands for the elders of the Council of the Sanhedrin as a body. Thus, the expression in 1 Timothy 4:14 may refer to the rite of 'ordination of elders' in general, or the occasion when an 'ordination of elders' took place. This would mean that (a) Timothy is not referred to here as receiving imposition of hands, that (b) it is possible that the 'presbytery's imposition of hands' merely refers to the occasion when he received his gift 'through a prophetic message', or that (c) the imposition of hands referred to another act than 'ordination' altogether, for example baptism. Timothy's alleged 'ordination' by the council of the elders is therefore very uncertain and even unlikely.

Secondly, what does the 'gift (*charisma*) that was given him' refer to? 1 Timothy 4:14 does not answer this question but gives a hint. The gift that is not to be neglected is related to 'these matters' in which Timothy is to be diligent and to which he is to give himself wholly (4:15). From the context in 4:1-16, we see that Timothy's task is to counteract false teachings in the church. Thus, 'these matters' suggest what Timothy's 'gift' is, namely the exercise of leadership by faith, godliness, commanding and teaching, being an example in speech, life, love, faith and purity, reading the scriptures, exhortation and teaching (4:6-16). The *power* (*dynamis*) to do this diligently, wholly and with perseverance is the spiritual gift he has been given through the 'prophetic message', but this is brought to him by inspired words, not imposition of hands.

Thirdly, Timothy's function as a leader in the church has a connection with 'prophecy' or 'inspired word'. In Paul's two letters to Timothy, the word 'prophecy' is occurring only in 1:18 and 4:14, and both times being connected with Timothy. Besides 4:14, we also have 1:18:

1 Timothy 1:18 Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecy (*profeteia*) once made about you, so that by following it you may fight the good fight. (NIV)

Both references are meant to encourage Timothy to remember his *prophetic authority*. Timothy's divine appointment for leadership had apparently been revealed from early on by Paul, or a prophet or charismatic teacher in the church (note that Paul and Barnabas are among the 'prophets and teachers' in Acts 13:1-3). If so,

⁷²⁹ D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*, 2011, p. 244.

Timothy's case in Ephesus may be an example of what is known in the Hellenistic-Roman culture as *Designation*. Since this is a useful concept to explain a difficult passage, we will give it some further attention here.

The technical term 'Designation' is used for 'selection to an office made or announced by a person in authority', and 'Rome had a long history of the exercise of such authoritative designations to office'.⁷³⁰ The election to office was reduced to a *confirmation* of what had been designed in advance by the person in authority, and this process was later used by the Roman Emperors. Designation occurred also in the Greek world 'within the clubs and associations for the appointment of lesser functionaries by a higher officer'.⁷³¹ Furthermore, the selection of rabbis among the Jews may appropriately be classified as a Designation:

'At first each rabbi selected one of his students for ordination and raised him to a status equal to himself. Later this prerogative was centralised in the *Nasi* (or patriarch), and then a further modification requires the joint approval of both the *Nasi* and the *Beth Din* (council) for the ordination of a rabbi.'⁷³²

Being raised and trained as a scribe, having spent years 'at the feet of Gamaliel' being 'educated strictly according to our ancestral law' (Acts 22:3), the apostle Paul would naturally be familiar with these practices from his Jewish roots, so a designation of Timothy as his representative would be understandable and it fits the general tenor of 1-2 Timothy. Everett Ferguson states with regard to Designation in the New Testament church:

'The New Testament era saw frequent manifestations of a type of Designation which is justly regarded as distinct from other expressions of this mode of selection – a choice made by a prophet as the inspired spokesman of the divine will (Acts 13:1-3; 1 Tim. 1:10; 4:14). Inspired Designations ceased with the cessation of an awareness of direct activity by the Holy Spirit in the church.'⁷³³

The concept of Designation connects the commissioning of Barnabas and Paul in Acts 13:1-3 with Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:14. It is possible to assign the same structure to both passages: the Holy Spirit speaks through a prophet and appoints the ordinands, which is then *confirmed* by the imposition of hands. However, we have seen that Timothy was installed as an apostolic servant by Paul's imposition of

⁷³⁰ E. Ferguson, 'Selection and Installation to Office in Roman, Greek, Jewish and Christian Antiquity', 1974, p. 274.

⁷³¹ *Ibid.*

⁷³² *Ibid.*

⁷³³ *Ibid.*

hands, and Timothy is nowhere described as an elder. Designation simply means that a prophet or inspired person would appoint Timothy as being filled with the spirit of prophecy and the formal installation for a specific office could take place much later.

Bearing these considerations in mind, the passage in 1 Timothy 4:14 may be interpreted as follows: From childhood, Timothy has excelled by his faith, knowledge of the Scriptures, spiritual power, and giftedness in teaching. Paul has brought him along during his travels and has designated him as his servant-representative by the imposition of his hands, making him his servant or adopted son. Paul has then delegated important leadership tasks in Ephesus to the young Timothy. Local charismatic teachers or prophets, or Paul himself, have prophesied – in the sense of inspired speech – about his leadership role, thus *designating* him for spiritual leadership responsibility. This may have happened in connection with his baptism or in connection with a ceremony of ‘ordination’ (with or without Timothy’s involvement as appointee). If the rule later on attested in the *Talmud* and *Mishnah* applied in Timothy’s case, he could not be ‘ordained’ as an elder until he was forty years old.⁷³⁴ If, nevertheless, the council of elders in Ephesus did ‘ordain’ Timothy as an elder, they would merely have *confirmed* the gift of the Spirit by laying their hands on him. However, recognising that the Jewish practice of imposition of hands did not include prayer and usually presupposed the gift of the Spirit, our passage explicitly states that the spiritual gift was given Timothy by prophetic (inspired) speech and not necessarily by the imposition of hands.

In Timothy’s leadership role and particularly his relationship with Paul, there are some points of similarity with the Jewish practice of appointing a successor. Firstly, we noted that Paul’s imposition of hands in 2 Timothy 1:6 is not accompanied by prayer. This characterises the ‘ordination’ of scribes in Judaism.⁷³⁵ It has been noted that the primary example for the Jewish practice is Moses’ ‘ordination’ of Joshua, where no prayer is mentioned and where the emphasis is not on a benediction but on creating a ‘substitute’ – Moses is being *replaced* by Joshua and taking over some of Moses’ spirit.⁷³⁶ Secondly, in Paul’s ‘ordination’ of Timothy, he alone is laying on his hands, which is what happened when a scribe appointed a

⁷³⁴ D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*, 2011, p. 245 with references.

⁷³⁵ E. Lohse, *Die Ordination im Spätjudentum und im Neuen Testament*, 1951, pp. 77-79.

⁷³⁶ See E. Ferguson, ‘Jewish and Christian Ordination’, 1963, p. 15.

successor. Thirdly, the laying on of hands in Jewish tradition symbolises rather a reliance on an authority,⁷³⁷ which is also an appropriate description of the relationship between Paul and Timothy, judging from the content of the two letters. Fourthly, the use of Designation in Jewish tradition, where the appointment by a scribe-master is confirmed by the full council of scribes fits the situation in Ephesus, where Paul has appointed Timothy as his adopted son and assistant, and his leadership role is then confirmed by the council of the elders, but not necessarily by the imposition of hands.

What, then, is the nature of Timothy's office in the church? In Ephesians 4:11 we find a set of functions that existed in the church in Ephesus (and in many other places): apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. This may not be a complete list of offices and functions for each of the early Christian churches and perhaps there were many local variations. But which of these might come closest to Timothy's office, given our interpretation above?

Paul instructs Timothy in detail about the qualifications of the 'overseer, bishop' (*episkopos*) and the 'servant, deacon' (*diakonos*) (1 Tim 3:1-13), but he never explicitly defines Timothy's office in any of these terms. Timothy is rather addressed by Paul as if he belongs to a third category, one that has a close relationship with Paul and has the authority to implement Paul's instructions concerning both the overseer and the deacon in the church. So, what was Timothy's position and formal authority?

No explicit answer is found in the texts. If we understand 1 Timothy 4:14 to say that the presbyterate laid their hands on Timothy, we may see him as an 'elder' – a term used for a church leader both in Titus 1:5-6 and James 5:14. Paul defines the elder as one who 'directs the affairs of the church' (1 Tim. 5:17), but at the same time he gives Timothy a higher rank than the elder in that he is to award faithful elders and show no favouritism in restoring erring elders (1 Tim. 5:17-21). Paul also admonishes Timothy to 'devote himself to the 'public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and to teaching' (1 Tim. 4:13), which encompasses functions cared for by prophets and teachers. It seems fair to conclude, therefore, that Timothy was both a special representative of the apostle Paul, 'ordained' by him as a 'son, disciple, servant' and carrying some of Paul's authority (2 Tim. 1:6), while serving in the local

⁷³⁷ Ibid., p. 14.

church in Ephesus as a prophet and teacher who had been publicly confirmed as a man filled with the Spirit and wisdom and who also had supervisory functions deriving from Paul's apostolate. Thus although the two offices of 'overseer, bishop' (*episkopos*) and 'servant, deacon' (*diakonos*) seem to have a firm acceptance (1 Tim. 3:1-13), Timothy carried none of those functions.

While the offices of Timothy and Titus are nowhere explicitly defined, they act as 'sons' of Paul to do his apostolic work in a local setting. Thus, around A.D. 65, the leading role of the apostle in the Christian church is being transferred to delegated 'apostolic' representatives, who interact with the locally ordained elders (*presbyteroi*) and overseers (*episkopoi*) (these terms are used interchangeably in Titus 1:6-7). It is possible that this development continued in the history of the Christian Church, for in the post-biblical literature there are signs of itinerant prophets and apostles who stand outside the more institutionalised offices of overseers and deacons (see 4.1 below).

3.5.4 Women as Servants or Ministers

No example is found in the New Testament of an imposition of hands involving a woman to confirm her role as a servant or minister of God. This circumstance is not proof that it did not happen in the early church, however, for the writings of the New Testament canon were collected and approved on other grounds than those of providing historical evidence for the 'ordination' of men or women. Moreover, women who are mentioned as servants or ministers in the New Testament (3.1.3.8) may well have been confirmed by prayer and imposition of hands, although this is not mentioned. There is no instruction or definition in the New Testament regarding 'ordination' which excludes women. In fact, there is no instruction in the New Testament to 'ordain' male servants or ministers either. The two clear instances of an imposition of hands, in Acts 6:1-6 and 13:1-3, are not 'ordinations' for any known office and both have the character of unique *ad hoc* initiatives that were not repeated.

An even more vital observation is that 'ordination' in the New Testament is completely overshadowed by a *charismatic* concept of 'ordination', which comes from God, or Christ, or the Holy Spirit, or all of these. It took many decades for the New Testament church to develop institutions and organised church offices, and

even when these occur – in Acts, 14:23; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9 – there is no mentioning of ‘ordination’ or imposition of hands. Therefore, today, *we cannot expect to find men and women ‘ordained’ in the New Testament*. Both men and women served as ‘servants’ or ‘ministers’, some as ‘apostles and prophets and teachers’, but none of them were ‘ordained’ by the church – they were ‘ordained’ spiritually, by God, and that was enough. Even the apostle Paul strongly affirms this in Acts 26:12-18; 1 Timothy 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:11. The church’s acceptance of such spiritual ‘ordination’ is not set out for us in detail, but it seems to have been based on personal knowledge and the fruit of the ministry.

Women were however included as receivers of the imposition of hands (a) in blessing (girls would have been among the little children blessed by Jesus in Matt. 19:15; Mark 10:13); (b) healing (Mark 5:22-24, 35-43; Luke 15:10-13); and (c) baptism (the converts in Samaria who received the Holy Spirit by imposition of hands included women, Acts 8:12, 17). Thus, female gender was not a hindrance for receiving prayer and imposition of hands in itself. It is the *purpose* of the act and the *function* a woman filled that matters.

We have seen in some detail that women have several important *functions* in the New Testament. For example, the Gospel writers keenly included female exemplars or ‘role model’ characters in their writings about Jesus. They present both female and male exemplars for the reader to imitate. However, in comparison, the twelve disciples are imperfect examples. We have also named and described numerous female servants and ministers that appear in the New Testament (see the relevant sections in 3.1.3).

Ministry and leadership was open to women in the New Testament, because ‘ordination’ in the sense we apply it today did not exist, and the only clear picture we have of ‘ordination’ is the charismatic calling by Christ and filling with spiritual gifts. This makes 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4 very central passages.

Paul instructs the church in Corinth that it is the Spirit that ‘allots to each one individually just as He chooses’ (1 Cor. 12:11). ‘To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.’ (12:7; 8-11). It is God who appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues’ (12:28). The gift of the Spirit and the appointment by God – nothing else is mentioned as relevant – can only be acknowledged by seeing the fruit of the work in an individual, be it man

or woman. That gender is no hindrance for ministry has been demonstrated in the Bible (3.1), in the history of the Christian Church (chapter 4) and of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in particular (Ellen White and others).

When Paul instructs the church in Ephesus that ‘each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift’ (Eph. 4:7; NRSV), this is *inclusive* language, embracing men and women in the church. He then continues, saying that ‘the gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers’ (4:11). The issue of gender is nowhere mentioned and consequently irrelevant, and instead Paul defines the *purpose* of the gifts and appointments for different functions: ‘to equip *the saints* for the work of ministry, for building up the *body of Christ*, until *all of us* come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ’ (4:12-13; emphasis supplied). Again, this is *inclusive* language: the work is by all and for all, but Christ assigns the gifts and the functions. A few verses further on in the same chapter, Christ is defined as ‘the head’ – no other head in the church is mentioned but Christ – ‘from whom *the whole body*, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love’ (4:15-16). ‘The whole body’ means men and women who are mutually submitted to each other, and are submitted to Jesus Christ as his servants and ministers.

If this ‘whole body’ is ‘tied together by every ligament with which it is equipped’, it recognises and does not shut out others from the ministry of Christ, but allows the head of the Church, Christ, to decide who is worthy of serving him. As the whole body ‘clothes itself with Christ’, ‘there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus’ (Gal. 3:27-28). Unity in the church will not be achieved unless all recognise others’ equal right to serve the Lord, also as ministers and leaders.

This is the new Israel that the prophets foretold in the Old Testament. Joel 2:28-29 was read by Peter on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the believers: ‘Upon my servants (*douloi*), both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy’ (Acts 2:18). The prophet

Isaiah foretold a new Israel where God will call men and women⁷³⁸ ‘priests (*kohanim*) of the Lord’ and ‘ministers (*meshartim*) of our God’ (Isa. 61:6), which are offices which required ‘ordination’.

And this means to return to the Garden of Eden, where men and women were equal as God’s servants as they mediated his glory to the world and served him as priests and ministers. This is why men and women are ‘priests’, servants, and ‘rulers’ in John’s end-time vision of the church (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6) as it goes through the last struggles on the way to the new heaven and the new earth.

3.5.5 Summary and Conclusions

While the New Testament is clear on God’s Mission to the world, the Church, the Ministry, and the appointment for Ministry, it has very little to say about ‘ordination’ through the imposition of hands. What it does say is either difficult to understand with certainty or it refers to ‘ordination’ for tasks and functions that do not correspond to the office of the gospel minister in modern Seventh-day Adventist terminology.

There are some ‘ordination’ texts in the Old Testament – the ‘ordination’ of Levites (Num. 8) and Moses’ ‘ordination’ of Joshua (Num. 27) – but there is no explicit reference to any of these in the New Testament. Each of them refers to inductions to offices that do not exist in the New Testament.

In a few New Testament cases, where there are some hints at a possible influence from the ‘ordinations’ of the Levites and Moses’ imposition of hands on Joshua (Acts 6:1-6; 13:3), no connection is explicitly mentioned, and it is only used selectively and with significant adaptations to the needs of the early church.

Moreover, with Christianity, God brings fundamental changes in his mission of salvation, namely: (a) the Israelite sanctuary is replaced by the ministry of Christ, based on his accomplished sacrifice, and (b) Israel, the Abrahamic-Mosaic covenant community, is replaced by the new Israel, the church, based on the new covenant in the blood of Christ. These changes make it necessary to disregard the Old Testament passages as directly authoritative for Christian ‘ordination’. And as interpreters, we have no right to make free combinations of texts that originally meant something very different from what we may want them to say in our modern situation.

⁷³⁸ Note Ellen White’s application of this passage to all men and women workers in the church who serve as God’s helping hands’ (4.6.2.4).

The possible allusions made in Acts 6:1-6; 13:3; and 2 Tim. 1:6 to the passages concerning the Levites (Num. 8), the appointment of elders (Num. 11), and Moses appointment of Joshua (Num. 27), must be seen with the eyes of the authors of Acts and 2 Timothy, thus enlightening us at the level of the New Testament text. *If we were to adduce in Seventh-day Adventist church practice biblical instructions on 'ordination' directly from the Old Testament passages, we would run the risk of contradicting the New Testament application of those texts, placing ourselves above the inspired New Testament authors.*

It should be noted, finally, that, judging from the Bible, only one of two options may apply: (a) either we judge from what is stated explicitly, and then neither Moses, nor the twelve, nor the apostle Paul were 'ordained' by imposition of hands; they all had a spiritual, charismatic office, directly appointed by God, which brings their ministry into the category of a prophetic ministry and which supersedes any office to which one is inducted by 'ordination', or (b) their 'ordination' is not mentioned in the Bible, which means that the authors deemed it as being of no significance. In either case, any modern-day Bible reader referring to biblical 'ordination' – be it male or female – should do so with great care and humility. The Bible does not make any big issue out of it, certainly not in the New Testament.

3.5.5.1 Terminology and References to 'Ordination'. The New Testament does not support the use of modern technical terms like 'ordain' or 'ordination', which are terms with a Latin root that came into the Christian church from the pagan Roman Empire and the adaptation of the Roman Catholic Church to Roman customs and practices (4.1; 4.2).

The Greek terms used in the New Testament vary greatly and are common terms for 'put' or 'place' or 'make', which may sometimes be rendered 'appoint' in view of the context. The following terminology has been noted:

poieo, 'make' (Mark 3:14) ;

eklegomai, 'choose' (Luke 6:12; John 15:16);

ginomai, 'become' (Acts 1:22);

cheirotoneo, 'raise the hand (in a congregational agreement)', 'appoint' (2 Cor. 8:19; Acts 14:23);

tithemi, 'place, set' (1 Tim. 2:7);

kathistemi, 'cause to be, appoint' (Titus 1:5);

epitithemi, 'place, set' (Acts 6:6; 13:3; cf. the noun *epithesis* in 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6; Hebr. 6:2)

None of these are technical terms for 'ordination' in the New Testament. The verb *cheirotoneo* later on became the Greek technical term for 'ordain' in the post-biblical era (4.1.7), and is still used even within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Greece for 'ordination', but it does not have a firm or dominant function in the New Testament where it occurs only twice and in slightly different contexts (Acts 14:23; 2 Cor. 8:19). The cases where the act of induction to a task is referred to with certainty and including imposition of hands are only four: Acts 6:6; 13:3; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6.

The clear impression of a careful exegesis of these passages, however, is that 'ordination' in our terms today does not occur in the New Testament, certainly not if we approach the biblical text in a literalistic way. In the Gospels, the ministry of Jesus demonstrates an absence of 'ordination' or imposition of hands for induction to a task, which continues in Acts 1, where the twelfth apostle to replace Judas is appointed without any reference whatsoever to 'ordination' or imposition of hands.

There are possibilities, of course, (a) to read more into the various passages than what is made explicit, and (b) to take different passages out of their context and connect them and thus provide each of them with a new context that they do not have in the Bible (cf. the 'proof-text method'). The former may be a method of biblical interpretation that we adopt when we seek understanding or make historical reconstructions. The latter may be used for spiritual edification. However, when we speak of the Bible as the Word of God, as our only creed, seeking doctrinal clarity or providing the biblical foundation for a church practice such as 'ordination, we need to proceed with full respect for what the Bible says and what it does not say.

The predominant impression, however, is that selection and appointment for a leading role in the church is a spiritual event, directly initiated and carried out by God, Christ, or the Holy Spirit. There would have had to be some kind of acknowledgement by the church of this calling, as Paul, for example, was called by Jesus but also accepted by the church as 'a herald and an apostle and a teacher' (2 Tim. 1:11; cf. 1 Tim. 2:7).

What we see is that Paul eventually submitted his calling and ministry to the judgement of leaders in Jerusalem (Gal. 1:13-2:10), and that he often had to argue with the churches concerning full acceptance of his ministry (e.g. 1 Cor. 3-4).

However, the submission of his ministry to the leading ‘pillars’ in Jerusalem seems to have been partly informal (Gal. 1:18-24) and partly incurred by a revelation (Gal. 2:2). At first, after his conversion, noting that ‘God had set me apart before I was born’, he makes a point out of ‘not having conferred with any human being’ and of ‘not going up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me’ (Gal. 1:15-17). Thus, the spiritual authority directly from God is the cornerstone in Paul’s understanding, rather than an institutional one. His meeting after three years with Peter and James, the brother of Jesus (Gal. 1:18-24) is informal, and when he finally, after fourteen years, goes up to Jerusalem, it is because of a ‘revelation’, not a church order. God is actively leading his ministry. In one section of his report to the Galatians, he says about the central leaders:

Galatians 2:6 And from those who were supposed to be acknowledged leaders (what they actually were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality) – those leaders contributed nothing to me. (NRSV)

From this it is possible to conclude that there was no central authorisation or ‘ordination’ of ministers in early Christianity attested by the Bible, and that even Paul did not assign authority to them, only to God who ‘shows no partiality’.

3.5.5.2 The Silence on ‘Ordination’. There is a total silence on the laying on of hands for the purpose of ‘ordination’ in the Gospels and Acts 1-5, until the appointment of the seven in Acts 6. Thus, the evidence of the Gospels is that Jesus did not use this sign in appointments and the apostles carried this heritage with them after the ascension. Jesus taught servanthood, not hierarchy, and he explicitly criticised the titles and institutions associated with the scribes.

Consequently, the early Christians did not recognise ‘ordination’ as legitimate, in keeping with Jesus’ teaching and example. The earliest leadership was based on (a) family ties with Jesus, or (b) belonging to the appointed twelve disciples who were among the eyewitnesses to Jesus resurrection, or (c) direct divine appointments based on the gift of the Spirit. In none of these cases was ‘ordination’ needed (and is therefore not attested).

As the church began to grow in Jerusalem and Antioch, and practical issues arose, some *ad hoc* improvisations were made but they did not lead to an established practice. Thus, the practice in Acts 6:1-6 is unique and occurs in a very particular situation for the young church – there is no evidence that it was made into

a formal pattern that was followed by others across the growing Christian world. Paul and his associates, and Peter, John, and James either did not use it at all, or did not make any reference to it in their letters.

Where Paul gives (limited) evidence of the imposition of hands (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6), he seems to be referring to customs in the local church with a Jewish precedence (*semikat zeqenim*) and the adoption and blessing of his apostolic representative, Timothy. Thus, there is in fact no evidence that the early Christians recognised the existence of ordination *per se*, certainly not as it is practised today in Christianity.

The 'ordination' in Acts 6:1-6 (collective action), and perhaps also the act in 2 Timothy 1:5 (individual action), come closest to the kinds of ordinations for the gospel ministry, local elders and deacons/deaconesses that we are applying today in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. But there is no example of this threefold division of offices, and no passage in the Bible gives a literal and clear record of 'ordination' in this modern sense.

There is therefore no explicit biblical text that commands or illustrates ordination as it is practised by the Seventh-day Adventist Church today. There are perhaps certain principles that can be deduced from the biblical texts, but these depend on a rather complex process of interpretation and are not easily identified – thus, consensus on those details may be very difficult to achieve.

3.5.5.3 Appointment for Ministry and Leadership. The New Testament reveals a fundamental emphasis on the *divine* appointment for ministry and leadership, directly through Jesus Christ (Mark 3:14; Luke 6:12; John 15:16; Acts 26:16; 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11), or God himself (Acts 1:21-26), or the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:1-3). It has a predominantly *charismatic* view of ministry and leadership and stands far from an institutionalised view. (This is in some ways modelled by the Old Testament passage on God's 'ordination' of the elders of Moses in Num. 11.) The examples we have in the New Testament are triggered by practical needs as the church grows and expands, showing a dependence on contemporary Jewish practices known to all Jewish converts and/or a direct drawing on the scriptural models in the Old Testament, which are rearranged and adapted to the needs of the new Israel.

Thus, the imposition of hands comes to the forefront when an issue in church life is to be addressed. The best example is Acts 6:1-6, where the conflict between

the Hebrew-speaking and Greek-speaking Jews leads to the involvement of the congregation as well as the twelve in finding seven men that can deal with the matter. The criterion for the function of leadership, however, is that the candidate is filled with the Holy Spirit. If their office has something to do with the ‘Seven Elders of the City’, it is also clear why they had to be men, since only men were elders in Israel – a view taken over by first-century Judaism – based on their role as firstborn males in the clans of ancient Israel.

There is no clear structure of ministerial leadership offices in the New Testament. Ideally, all members of the early church are ‘servants or ministers (of God or Christ)’ and are filled with the Holy Spirit. It is God, or Christ, or the Holy Spirit who call or appoint the special minister who is a leader. Paul gives lists of functions in the church: (a) appointed by God in 1 Corinthians 12:28-30: apostles, prophets, teachers, workers of miracles, workers of healing, workers of forms of assistance, workers of forms of leadership, speakers in various kinds of tongues, and interpreters of tongues; (b) gifted and appointed by Christ in Ephesians 4:11: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers; (c) gifted and activated by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12: speakers of wisdom, speakers of knowledge, healers, workers of miracles, prophets, discerners of spirits, speakers in tongues, and interpreters of tongues. In describing the church, Paul is consistently describing it as one body but with various gifts and functions to serve in providing acts of prophecy, service or ministry, teaching, exhortation, generosity, leadership, compassion (Rom. 12: 6-8). All these functions – which reveal considerable variation – are connected with gifts of God, calling by God, and appointment by God. The exceptions are few and we will review below (3.5.5.3).

3.5.5.4 The ‘Ordination’ Texts. The passages we considered were those in which explicit reference is being made to imposition of hands for an induction to a church office or a specific task. These are: Acts 6:1-6; 13:1-3; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6. The New Testament also makes reference to ‘imposition of hands’ in 1 Timothy 5:22 and Hebrews 6:2, but we found good reasons for excluding them here, since they do not seem to relate to appointments for office.

Judging purely from the extant writings in the New Testament, no male disciple, servant, or apostle was ‘ordained’, and the imposition of hands for ‘ordination’ of men was not conducted for any of the church offices applied in the

church today, such as the gospel minister, the local church elder, or the deacon/deaconesses.

The only examples we have of 'ordination' for a church office concern (a) the seven who assisted the apostles, but their exact function is uncertain (Acts 6:1-6); (b) Barnabas and Paul, who were sent to Asia Minor on a mission journey (Acts 13:1-3); and (c) young Timothy, who was blessed and adopted as Paul's 'son' (representative) and 'servant' (2 Tim. 1:6) and who may perhaps have received the imposition of hands by the presbytery in Ephesus, although it is more likely that he did not (1 Tim. 4:14) – Timothy's functions in Ephesus according to 1-2 Timothy are perfectly in keeping with his authority from Paul as Paul's representative.

Acts 6:1-6

The only somewhat 'complete' act of induction to a leadership function is Acts 6:1-6, where the people nominate seven men, and the congregation, or the twelve, or both, pray and lay their hands on them, authorising them for their task.

However, the need for the 'ordination' of the seven is practical and temporary, and the office for which this procedure is performed is not even mentioned. We have argued that the seven were probably elders-servants who assisted the twelve and served the congregation, and perhaps also had some judicial role in analogy with the Jewish practice of the 'Seven of a City', which was a group of seven elders who functioned as a local Sanhedrin (a legal instance) subject to the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem.

We found that there was strong contextual evidence for concluding that the Jewish practice was adopted *ad hoc* because it focussed on the issue of 'authority', and the issue of the authority of the Christian leaders was a point of conflict between them and the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem according to Acts 4-9.

However, the Christians in Acts 6 added prayer to the imposition of hands, which was not a standard feature in Judaism. Moreover, the Christians viewed 'ordination' as *God's* authorisation, not as an authorisation from Moses through an unbroken successive chain of laying on of hands as believed by the Jewish scribes, and, therefore, the involvement of the *Holy Spirit* and spiritual gifts (*charismata*) were essential in New Testament appointments.

The laying on of hands did not transmit the Holy Spirit but confirmed that it has already been given and, perhaps, the prayer would be that God continues to

grant the appointees the gift of the Spirit. The key element in the act of appointment and induction seems to be that the congregation of disciples *chose* them, that the apostles *agreed*, and that the disciples and/or the apostles *authorised* them as their elders and/or fellow leaders.

Acts 13:1-3

In this passage, the church in Antioch acknowledges the Spirit's call to Barnabas and Paul, and sets them apart for a missionary journey after prayer and fasting, followed by the imposition of hands and then sending them off. The need is revealed by the Holy Spirit through prophetic revelation, and the whole process is described in 13:4 as the work of the Holy Spirit: 'the two were sent on their way by the Holy Spirit'.

We have seen that this is not an 'ordination' for a church office but an induction to a missionary journey as part of a divine strategy to spread the gospel and extend the church from Antioch to Asia Minor. It is not clear if the ceremony of imposition of hands is accompanied by a blessing, but a day of prayer and fasting has preceded the act. Neither is it clear who performed the act – the congregation, or the group of prophets and elders, or both.

However, apart from the *spiritual* emphasis, there is no information on the spiritual significance of the laying on of hands. The event occurs in the context of worship; prophetic speech is involved; and the emphasis on prayer is strong, even including fasting. Apart from this, there is no explicit information that helps us understand the theological implications. Again, the imposition of hands is assumed to be known among the readers and without need to be explained.

Paul does not seem to have considered this experience as an 'ordination' for his ministry. He says in Galatians 1:15 that 'God had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace'. According to Acts 26:16, Jesus called him in vision and said: 'I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you to serve and testify to the things in which you have seen me and those in which I will appear to you' (NRSV). Through his spiritual calling, Paul had a strong sense of mission and thought of himself as being appointed 'as a herald, and an apostle and a teacher' for the gospel (2 Tim. 1:11; cf. 1 Tim. 2:6). However, the experience in Antioch according to Acts 13:1-3 is not mentioned again and was a temporary authorisation, although the mission was, again, initiated by the Spirit.

1 Timothy 4:14

In 1 Timothy 4:14, Paul encourages young Timothy in a challenging situation for the church in Ephesus, with a dangerous influence from false teachers that threatens the community, reminding him of the spiritual gift he received by prophetic speech. The connected reference to the imposition of hands by the presbytery is however difficult to understand.

The evidence points in the direction of either no elders' hands being laid on Timothy, or that they were laid on him at his baptism. Taking the passage as referring to an 'ordination' of Timothy, is unconvincing for several reasons: (a) there is no mentioning of prayer (the Jewish model of the presbytery's imposition of hands' did not include prayer but the Christians included prayer); (b) there is no information anywhere in Paul's letters that Timothy was an 'elder', although he was clearly an authorised servant representing Paul; (c) there is no information about the purpose of the act, so the passage could be referring to the imposition of hands at blessing, baptism or healing, or simply the institution of the presbytery's imposition of hands or the occasion of such a ceremony in the church).

1 Timothy 4:14 is expressed in the context of an exhortation not to neglect what God has given Timothy. Paul speaks of the 'gift' Timothy has received through a prophetic message on the occasion of the imposition of hands by the presbytery in the church in Ephesus. The nature of this gift (*charisma*) is however not explained, but must be hypothetically reconstructed by an interpretation of the wider context in 1-2 Timothy.

We have argued – cautiously and with little conclusive evidence as backing – that the 'gift' (*charisma*) is a prophetic appointment (by inspired speech) and a blessing which is then confirmed by the laying on of hands of the congregation through their presbytery – a process widely accepted in the Graeco-Roman world and termed Designation. However, it is not clear if this act was an 'ordination' in the sense of inducting Timothy to the office of 'elder', for he never is associated with that title.

Both the Greek word for 'gift' (*charisma*) and the context in 4:14 and 2 Timothy 1:6 would support the view that the power of the Holy Spirit is somehow involved in the process. However, based on what we see in 1 and 2 Timothy, Timothy already has the gift of faith and the Holy Spirit, so the act of imposition of

hands merely confirms his spiritual qualification and, possibly, an added prayer or a blessing would invoke God's continued bestowal of his power on Timothy.

2 Timothy 1:6

In 2 Timothy 1:6, again as part of an encouragement, Paul makes reference to the gift of God Timothy has received by Paul's laying on of hands upon him. However, the meaning of the imposition of hands cannot be ascertained by a plain reading.

Paul has laid his hands on Timothy and the implication is that God has granted Timothy a spiritual gift (*charisma*) which may refer to the power of the Holy Spirit and/or Paul's authority as an apostle. In any case, the imposition of hands is not explicitly accompanied by prayer, the circumstances are unknown, and there is no clear definition of the office or function for which Timothy is being assigned.

We have argued that the passage seems to be referring to a blessing or adoption of Timothy as 'son' or 'servant' of Paul, or a 'laying of hands' (*samak yad*) on Timothy by which Paul has formally appointed and installed him as his son or apostolic servant, following the practice of the Jewish scribes with which Paul would be well acquainted from his scribal education at the feet of Gamaliel.

3.5.5.5 Summary on 'Ordination' in the New Testament. The New Testament church introduced the antecedents of ordination at a crucial moment of its early history, as a response to the questioning by the Jerusalem Sanhedrin of the Christians' authority to preach the risen Christ (Acts 6:1-6). However, for some decades, pragmatic concerns influenced the practice and we see how the imposition of hands was used for various purposes, for assistant apostolic leaders (the seven), for authorised missionaries (Barnabas and Paul), and for apostolic 'servants' (Timothy).

While 'ordination' is very sparingly reflected in the New Testament, the offices in the church slowly took shape. At the beginning, the leadership of the twelve was undisputed, but already with Paul a change took place. Paul counted himself an apostle, but based on Christ's personal and direct calling in a vision. This charismatic apostolate had followers, and as the church grew they needed assistants whom they authorised for various functions in local churches. All along there were 'teachers and prophets' appearing, either locally or as itinerant ministers.

Following the Jewish model of local elders in synagogues and cities with the central Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, the church began with a council of elders and apostles in Jerusalem and local church elders in each city.

In the course of the fast growth of the church, it became necessary to institute formal and resident offices in the local churches, the ‘overseers, bishops’ (*episkopoi*) and the ‘servants, deacons’ (*diakonoi*). At first, the *episkopoi* seem to have been identical with the ‘elders, presbyters’ (*presbyteroi*), or, possibly, the *episkopos* was the leader of the presbytery and thus could have both titles of ‘elder’ and ‘overseer’.⁷³⁹ While these offices are mentioned in the New Testament and the qualifications for holding such offices are carefully laid out, there is no clear record of ordinations for these offices. The destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 removed the central function of the Jerusalem elders and apostles, and the family of Jesus, and by this time few apostles were still alive. The church moved on and developed, however, across the entire Roman Empire. Thus, at the end of the first century, there is no record of a uniform, clearly defined set of offices or an ordination procedure, but we may assume that local variations were considerable.

3.5.5.6 Women in Ministry. No example is found in the New Testament of an imposition of hands involving a woman to confirm her role as a servant or minister of God. This circumstance is however not proof that it did not happen in the early church, for the writings of the New Testament canon were collected and approved on other grounds than those of providing historical evidence for the ‘ordination’ of men or women. Moreover, women who are mentioned as servants or ministers in the New Testament (3.1.3.8) may well have been confirmed by prayer and imposition of hands, but we have no such record.

More importantly, however, ‘ordination’ in the New Testament is not the ordination we are accustomed to in our modern times. In the New Testament, especially in Luke and Paul, it is completely overshadowed by a *charismatic* concept of ‘ordination’, which comes from God, or Christ, or the Holy Spirit, or all of these. There is no instruction or definition in the New Testament regarding ‘ordination’ – neither for men, nor for women, except for a repeated emphasis on their spiritual calling. The two clear instances of an imposition of hands in congregational settings,

⁷³⁹ Cf. W. H. C. Frend, *The Early Church: From the Beginnings to 461*, 2003, p. 40.

in Acts 6:1-6 and 13:1-3, are not 'ordinations' for any known office and both have the character of unique *ad hoc* initiatives that were not repeated.

According to the New Testament practices of appointments for ministry, therefore, the crucial factor is, for both men and women, if they have received spiritual gifts for leadership in some sense and a calling and appointment by Christ. It is on this 'playing-field' that the 'ordination' of men and women needs to be evaluated in the New Testament.

Thus, we have found ample evidence of women being 'ministers' with an 'ordination' that was based on a calling from Christ, like the twelve and Paul and other 'apostles' (none of them had been 'ordained' by imposition of hands). Men and women are therefore *equals* in ministry, because they all serve God and Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. And this is, in fact, a return to the initial order of things in the Garden of Eden (3.1).

When an induction to a ministry by the imposition of hands occurs, it is *connected with known Jewish practices* at the time of the New Testament church. Those practices centred on the role of the 'elder', going back to the Old Testament patriarchal view that the elder was the firstborn male of each clan (applied in 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6). In the appointment of the seven as apostolic servants or elders (Acts 6:1-6), the model was the Jewish practice of the 'Seven of a City' which functioned as judges delegated by the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem (3.5.2; 3.5.3.1). Thus, *the fact that no women are included in these ceremonies is only something to be expected*. Women were never part of the patriarchal Jewish ceremonies of scribal 'ordination'. We may add to this the general social norms regarding the restricted sphere of women in the Graeco-Roman society at the time. Considering these historical circumstances, it is rather *remarkable how prominent women are in The New Testament as disciples, servants and apostles*.

The work of the Spirit in the New Testament church challenges and overrules the patriarchal view, however. Many women were involved in ministry, based on Jesus' inclusion of women in his ministry and the subsequent work of the Holy Spirit in the early church from Pentecost. It is this primary work of the Spirit that is the vital reason why formal 'ordination' ceremonies are hardly evidenced and applied in the New Testament canon. *They were not needed at the time*. What was needed was the work of God, through Christ and the Spirit, and the demonstration of God's power in the ministry of his servants.

We have seen in some detail that women have several important *functions* in the New Testament (relevant parts of 3.1.3). For example, the Gospel writers keenly included female exemplars or ‘role model’ characters in their writings about Jesus. They present both female and male exemplars for the reader to imitate. However, in comparison, the twelve disciples are imperfect examples. We have also named and described numerous female servants and ministers that have crucial and fundamental roles as primary eyewitnesses in the New Testament, without whom the Christian faith could not have been sustained.

Paul instructs the church in Corinth that it is the Spirit that ‘allots to each one individually just as He chooses’ (1 Cor. 12:11). ‘To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.’ (12:7; 8-11). It is God who appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues’ (12:28). The gift of the Spirit and the appointment by God – nothing else is mentioned as relevant – can only be acknowledged by seeing the fruit of the work in an individual, be it man or woman. That gender is no hindrance for ministry has been demonstrated in the Bible (3.1), in the history of the Christian Church (chapter 4) and of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in particular (Ellen White and others).

When Paul instructs the church in Ephesus that ‘each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift’ (Eph. 4:7; NRSV), this is *inclusive* language, embracing men and women in the church. He then continues, saying that ‘the gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers’ (4:11). The issue of gender is nowhere mentioned and consequently irrelevant, and instead Paul defines the *purpose* of the gifts and appointments for different functions: ‘to equip *the saints* for the work of ministry, for building up the *body of Christ*, until *all of us* come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ’ (4:12-13; emphasis supplied). Again, this is *inclusive* language: the work is by all and for all, but Christ assigns the gifts and the functions. A few verses further on in the same chapter, Christ is defined as ‘the head’ – no other head in the church is mentioned but Christ – ‘from whom *the whole body*, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love’ (4:15-16). ‘The

whole body' means men and women who are mutually submitted to each other, and are submitted to Jesus Christ as his servants and ministers.

If this 'whole body' is 'tied together by every ligament with which it is equipped', it recognises and does not shut out others from the ministry of Christ, but allows the head of the Church, Christ, to decide who is worthy of serving him. As the whole body 'clothes itself with Christ', 'there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus' (Gal. 3:27-28). Unity in the church will not be achieved unless all recognise others' equal right to serve the Lord, also as ministers and leaders.

This is the new Israel that the prophets foretold in the Old Testament. Joel 2:28-29 was read by Peter on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the believers: 'Upon my servants (*douloi*), both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy' (Acts 2:18). The prophet Isaiah foretold a new Israel where God will call men and women⁷⁴⁰ 'priests (*kohanim*) of the Lord' and 'ministers (*meshartim*) of our God' (Isa. 61:6), which are offices which required 'ordination'.

And this means to return to the Garden of Eden, where men and women were equal as God's servants as they mediated his glory to the world and served him as priests and ministers. This is why men and women are 'priests', servants, and 'rulers' in John's end-time vision of the church (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6) as it goes through the last struggles on the way to the new heaven and the new earth.

⁷⁴⁰ Note Ellen White's application of this passage to all men and women workers in the church who serve as God's helping hands' (4.6.2.4).

CHAPTER 4:

HISTORICAL REVIEW OF CHRISTIAN ORDINATION

We will review here the main trends in the history of ordination in the Christian church, noting particularly in what way Seventh-day Adventists depend on or deviate from the way ordination has been understood and practised in other churches.

It is clear that the fluid situation for 'ordination' in the New Testament continued during the second century, but, slowly and noticeably, one change after another was introduced, mainly to protect the church from heresy and disunity. The first known, complete procedure of ordination is found in *The Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytos of Rome around A.D. 217, which continued to dominate in the third and fourth centuries, being absorbed and further developed by the Roman Catholic Church until the Middle Ages.

4.1 The Post-Biblical Church until Augustine

In the period of the early apostolic fathers in the second century A.D. – following the completion of the latest writings of the New Testament – the understanding of ordination to church office began to change profoundly. This was due to (a) the pressure from Gnosticism and other false teachings, followed by that of Neo-Platonism in the third century; (b) the threat from internal divisions and factions; (c) the constant exchange with the cultural environment of Roman language, values, concepts, and customs, and the attempts by learned Christians to 'make their doctrine intelligible, accessible, and acceptable, not only to the common people and uneducated minds, but to a more enlightened class'.⁷⁴¹

Very little is stated in the sources about ordination until Hippolytos' *Apostolic Tradition* (ca. A.D. 217). However, in the second century, significant theological and terminological changes occurred that would eventually change the nature of ordination. When Jerome stated in A.D. 379 that 'there can be no Christian community without its ministers',⁷⁴² the Christian church had 'moved far from the descriptions of the early Christian community found in the New Testament' – 'it was well developed organisationally; it promoted both theological and ontological

⁷⁴¹ M. Rostovtzeff, *Rome*, 1960, p. 303.

⁷⁴² Jerome, *Dialogus contra Luciferanos* 21, in: *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 1989, vol. 6, p. 331.

distinctions between laity and clergy; and it accepted a sacramental understanding of ministry and ordination, making the presence of the ministry essential for the salvation of the believers'.⁷⁴³ For many Christian authors writing from the second century onwards, 'the church could not exist without a separate class of individuals distinguished from other believers by the rite of ordination'.⁷⁴⁴

4.1.1 Clement of Rome

In one of the oldest extant Christian documents outside the New Testament, Clement of Rome wrote to the church in Corinth about A.D. 96 in response to a dispute in which certain presbyters/overseers of the Corinthian church had been deposed from office. He asserted the authority of the presbyters as rulers of the church, on the grounds that they had been appointed by the apostles.

The letter suggests that the congregation had a decisive influence on the appointment and removal of the bishop/presbyter, and there is a vague connection with the scenario in 1 Timothy 5:17-22, where an accusation against an elder is a serious matter. In Clement's situation, a faction has arisen against the presbyters,⁷⁴⁵ and he is pleading for reconciliation and their reinstatement. There is a danger that the church will fall apart due to this schism, and Clement's task is to bring unity. Section 42 of Clement's letter says:

The apostles were given the gospel for us by the Lord Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ was sent forth from God. **2** Thus Christ came from God and the apostles from Christ. Both things happened, then, in an orderly way according to the will of God. **3** When, therefore, the apostles received his commands and were fully convinced through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and persuaded by the word of God, they went forth proclaiming the good news that the Kingdom of God was about to come, brimming with confidence through the Holy Spirit. **4** And as they preached throughout the countryside and in the cities, they appointed the first fruits of their ministries as bishops and deacons of those who were about to believe, testing them by the Spirit. For thus the Scripture says in one place: 'I will appoint their bishops in righteousness and their deacons in faith'.⁷⁴⁶

⁷⁴³ D. Jankiewicz, 'The Problem of Ordination: Lessons from Early Christian History', presented to the Theology of Ordination Study Committee, 16 January, 2013, p. 2.

⁷⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁵ *First Letter of Clement 47*, in: *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 1, LCL 24, B. D. Ehrman (ed. and transl.), 2003, pp. 120-121.

⁷⁴⁶ *First Letter of Clement 42*, in: *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 1, LCL 24, B. D. Ehrman (ed. and transl.), 2003, pp. 109-11. The final quotation draws on the Septuagint version of Isa. 60:17: 'I will give your rulers in peace and your overseers in righteousness'. Staniforth makes the comment that 'by introducing the deacons we may suppose that Clement intends to bring out what he considers to be the true meaning of the prophecy.' (*Early Christian Writings: The Apostolic Fathers*, M. Staniforth [transl.], 1968, p. 59). Andr n makes the significant

Clement distinguishes sharply between the apostles (*apostoloi*), who received the gospel from Christ, and the church officers who were ‘appointed’ (*kathistemi*) by the apostles in the local churches. Paul is also counted among the apostles, and Clement, therefore, seems to have believed that an apostle could also be appointed charismatically by Christ.⁷⁴⁷ The Greek verb used for ‘appoint’ is the same as in Titus 1:5. In Titus as well as Clement’s letter, the terms for ‘elder’ (*presbyteros*) and ‘overseer, bishop’ (*episkopos*) are used interchangeably, or at least they overlap, and therefore they seem to refer to the same office, as we have found was the case in the New Testament.⁷⁴⁸

In accordance with Philippians 1:1, Clement mentions *episkopoi* (‘overseers, bishops’) and *diakonoï* (‘deacons’) as two separate and yet related offices in the local Christian church. He does not define the responsibilities of these offices, assuming this to be known by his readers. Possibly, the list of qualities and responsibilities in Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; and Titus 1:5-9 were known in Corinth at the time and relied on by Clement.

Clement also refers to a ‘testing of the Spirit’ and holds the conviction that the offices of ‘overseer, bishop’ (*episkopos*) and ‘deacon’ (*diakonos*) were not only known but even revealed by prophetic insight in the Old Testament. This suggests a rather firm order for the *episkopos* and *diakonos*.

The term ‘test’ (*dokimazo*) was well-established in Greek as a technical term for the testing of officials. For example, Plato spoke of the appointment of state officials and envisaged that those nominated to office would be ‘tested’, so with this sense is linked that of ‘to accept as tested or proved’.⁷⁴⁹

Clement comes to the issue of his letter in section 44:

So too our apostles knew through our Lord Jesus Christ that strife would arise over the office of the bishop (*episkopos*). **2** For this reason, since they understood perfectly well in advance what would happen, they appointed (*kathistemi*) those we have already mentioned; and afterwards they added a codicil, to the effect that if these should die, other approved (*dokimazo*) men

point concerning the ‘overseers, bishops’ that ‘since these men, whose title is usually referred to as “ruler” in Jewish orders for the synagogue, had a role that included the functions of a deacon, it would be close at hand for Clement to see the prophetic word as a promise regarding both offices’ (*De apostoliska fäderna i svensk översättning*, 1967, p. 58 (English translation submitted here).

⁷⁴⁷ *First Letter of Clement*, 5:5; 47:1.

⁷⁴⁸ Titus 1:5, 7; Clement uses *presbyteros* in 21:6; 44:5; 47:6; and *episkopos* in 42:4; 44:1, 5; 44:7.

⁷⁴⁹ W. Grundmann, Article ‘*dokimazo*’, *ThDNT*, vol. 2, p. 256.

should succeed them in their ministry. **3** Thus we do not think it right to remove from the ministry those who were appointed by them or, afterwards, by other reputable men, with the entire church giving its approval (*syneudokeo*). For they have ministered over the flock of Christ blamelessly and with humility, gently and unselfishly, receiving a good witness by all, many times over. **4** Indeed we commit no little sin if we remove from the bishop's office those who offer the gifts in a blameless and holy way. **5** How fortunate are the presbyters (*presbyteroi*) who passed on before, who enjoyed a fruitful and perfect departure from this life. For they have no fear that someone will remove them from the place established for them. **6** But we see that you have deposed some from the ministry held blamelessly in honour among them, even though they had been conducting themselves well.⁷⁵⁰

The letter is close in time to the life of the apostles. If Clement is indeed the author,⁷⁵¹ he may have met both Peter and Paul, and some apostles may still have been alive when the letter was written. Thus, in the view of the church in Rome when Clement was its bishop, the apostles appointed (*kathistemi*) the *episkopos* – this may be supported by Titus 1:5, where Titus on Paul's directions appointed elders (*presbyteroi*) who seem to be overlapping with the *episkopoi*.

In a 'codicile' (Ehrman) or 'instruction' (Staniforth), however, the apostles are said to have stipulated that if these should fall asleep, other 'approved persons' (*dedokmasmenoi andres*) should *succeed* them in their office (*leitourgia*). So, the appointment of an *episkopos* was at first made by the apostles, later on by other reputable men (*ellogimon andron*), and with the approval (*syneudoke*) of the whole church. The passage also repeats the interchangeable terms *episkopos* and *presbyteros*. The 'overseer/elder' (or 'bishop/presbyter') is to be 'tested' and 'approved', showing exemplary Christian conduct, but he is also to be highly respected and esteemed, which is an emphasis made in 1 Timothy 5.

Clement's emphasis on the bishop/presbyter suggests that he viewed the episcopate/presbyterate as 'a permanent institution established by the apostles'.⁷⁵² The authority of the bishops/presbyters was based on a *continuation of apostolic authority* and their office was to serve as a *protection of the apostolic tradition*. Thus, in the interest of church unity, the idea of an apostolic succession bestowed on the presbyter/bishop is already promoted.

⁷⁵⁰ *First Letter of Clement* 44, in: *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 1, pp. 112-115.

⁷⁵¹ Note B. D. Ehrman's discussion in: *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 1, pp. 21-23.

⁷⁵² D. Jankiewicz ('The Problem of Ordination', p. 10) quoting E. Schillebeeckx, *Ministry: Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ*, 1981, p. 19.

Clement argues in support of the apostolic succession from the command of God in Isaiah 60:17, although he is not using the original Hebrew text and therefore misquotes Isaiah. What is more significant, however, is that Clement reveals that church office has become elevated and fixed after the pattern of the Old Testament priesthood.⁷⁵³ In order to bring unity and settle the conflict, Clement seeks to strengthen the presbyter's office by resorting to Old Testament cultic terminology. The language of sacrifice is used to describe episcopal duties.⁷⁵⁴ 'Clement establishes clerical order on the basis of Israel as a type.'⁷⁵⁵ Elaine Pagels makes the observation:

Clement sets forth a striking theory of church office. He theorizes that the structure of authority in Israel, and specifically the priestly orders – high priests, priests, Levites and people – furnish the types that find their fulfillment in the authority structure of the Christian community.⁷⁵⁶

Finally, it must be underlined that nowhere does Clement refer to the imposition of hands when he speaks about 'appointment' to church office, and no concept of ordination is found.

4.1.2 The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (*Didache*)

The date for *Didache* is disputed. In its final form, it was probably written before A.D. 150. The second part, the so-called church manual in sections 7-15, is an old collection of church regulations probably dating from the end of the first century, which makes it contemporary with 1 Clement.⁷⁵⁷

Didache agrees with 1 Clement that there are two leading offices in the church (in keeping with the New Testament), namely, the presbyter/bishop and the deacon. Presbyter and bishop refer to the same office.

However, *Didache* makes a clear distinction between two groups of ministers: on one hand, the apostles (*apostoloi*) and prophets (*profetai*), who were itinerant ministers (sections 11-13), and, on the other hand, the overseers/bishops (*episkopoi*) and servants/deacons (*diakonoi*), who served as resident officers in the local

⁷⁵³ 1 Clement, 44:1; 47:6-7; 40:5-6; 41:1.

⁷⁵⁴ M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, p. 39 with reference to 1 Clement 44:4.

⁷⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁶ E. H. Pagels, 'The Demiurge and His Archons', 1976, p. 304; cf. 1 Clement 40:5-6.

⁷⁵⁷ M. Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings: The Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 225-226; *Die apostolischen Väter*, K. Bihlmeyer (ed.), p. XIV.

churches (section 15). A closer look, however, suggests the presence of the first three offices 'appointed by God in the church' according to 1 Corinthians 12:28:

And God has appointed in the church first apostles (*apostoloi*), second prophets (*profetai*), third teachers (*didaskaloi*). (NRSV)

These three offices were appointed 'charismatically', i.e. not by the church but by God, or Christ, or the Holy Spirit, and their ministry was not confined to any local church. Staniforth summarises their functions as follows:

The 'apostles' were travelling missionaries or evangelists, who went about founding new churches and visiting and edifying others; the 'prophets' were men with the gift of revealing spiritual truths while in trances or ecstasies; the 'teachers' were endowed with special powers of instruction and exposition. To supplement this itinerant ministry, there were resident officers in each local church.⁷⁵⁸

It is clear that *Didache* evidences the importance of the 'prophets and teachers', who are prominent also in the New Testament (e.g. Acts 13:1; 1 Cor. 12:28-29; Eph. 4:11). *Didache* provides detailed advice on how the local church should receive and deal with the itinerant ministers, the 'apostles and prophets' (sections 11-13).

The issue of correct teaching and the doctrinal unity of the church is a key element here. The Christian behaviour of these visiting ministers is the key criterion for their genuineness: 'Everyone who comes in the name of the Lord is to be made welcome, though later on you must test (*dokimazo*) him and find out about him.'⁷⁵⁹ Warnings are given against visitors who stay for too long (not more than two or three days), or who ask for money, thus revealing a concern for personal gain.

In section 13:1-2, *Didache* provides counsel on how to treat an itinerant minister who 'wishes to make his home with' the local congregation. Here, there is no reference to visiting 'apostles', but only to 'prophets' (*profetai*) and 'teachers' (*didaskaloi*). In the same context, the statement is made that the 'prophets' deserve the 'firstfruits' of the crops, 'for nowadays it is they who are your high priests'.⁷⁶⁰ Rules for the support of the high priestly office in ancient Israel⁷⁶¹ are here being transferred to the church, and, possibly, 'the prophets' are here representing all the itinerant ministers regardless of whether they were apostles, prophets or teachers – as in the common figure of speech called a *synekdoche* where one part represents

⁷⁵⁸ M. Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings: The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 236.

⁷⁵⁹ *Didache* 12:1 (M. Staniford's translation in *Early Christian Writings*).

⁷⁶⁰ *Didache* 13:3.

⁷⁶¹ Num. 18:13; Deut. 18:4.

the whole. Thus, *Didache* reveals similarities with Clement's resort to the Old Testament priesthood as a model.

The second class of church officers in *Didache* is the resident 'overseers and deacons' that are appointed by the local congregations:

You must appoint (*cheirotoneo*) for yourselves overseers (*episkopoi*) and servants (*diakonoï*) who are worthy of the Lord: men who are humble and not eager for money, but sincere and tested (*dokimazo*); for they are carrying out the ministry of the prophets (*profetai*) and teachers (*didaskaloi*) for you. Do not esteem them lightly, for they take an honourable rank among you along with the prophets (*profetai*) and teachers (*didaskaloi*).⁷⁶²

We note here that the local church has only two offices – overseers and deacons. The local church 'appoints' (*cheirotoneo*) them – possibly here referring to raising of hands which is one of the senses of the Greek verb (cf. Acts 14:23 and the comments in 3.5.6 above). The term 'overseer, bishop' (*episkopos*) is still a technical term for a local church leader, and the personal qualifications of both officers are important in making them trustworthy – they must be 'tested' (*dokimazo*), and they are to hold a rank of honour in the church.

The passage reveals a transition from dependence on the itinerant officers to the resident officers in the local church, who are said to 'carry out the ministry of the prophets and teachers for you'. The esteem and honour due itinerant ministers is also due local officials. The resident officers in the local church are being given the same status as the itinerant ministers, but this is based on their election and office rather than the spiritual gift of prophecy. It is therefore a possible assumption that the later emphasis on the granting of the power of the Spirit in ordination of bishops has some connection with the transition from the itinerant spirit-driven ministers to the resident ministers inducted via election and perhaps even the ceremony of imposition of hands. However, it must be underlined that an imposition of hands is not mentioned in *Didache*. This rite may have become part of the various efforts later on in the history of the church when a need arose to signify the rank of the bishop and convey to him the power of the Spirit.

There is also in *Didache* an emphasis on the appropriate performance of the rites during the worship services. Thus, in order to perform all the ordinances properly, the church needed a special type of leader, one that was tested and honourable.

⁷⁶² *Didache* 15:1-2 (following M. Staniforth's translation with a few adaptations).

Finally, there is evidence in *Didache* of a growing separation between clergy and laity, which is foreign to the New Testament. 'Side by side with the mutual ministry of one believer to another (15:3) was the need for leadership to control false and greedy teachers (15:1; 11:1, 3-4). A cleavage was occurring between those who were "able to bear the yoke of the Lord" (6:2) and those who were not so able. The prophets were to be looked upon as chief priests (13:3).'⁷⁶³ We have here the beginnings of a rift between the bearers of the Spirit and the ordinary church members: 'This is something quite new and foreign to the New Testament: it is the distinction between priests and laity'.⁷⁶⁴

4.1.3 Ignatius

The letters of Ignatius of Antioch were written on his way to Rome where he died as a martyr ca. A.D. 110. Ignatius was the bishop of Antioch but seems to have had a wide influence, not only in Syria, where Antioch was a centre for the church, but also in Asia Minor. These general observations may be made on his seven letters:

1. The role of the apostles in the life of the church has subsided, although their influence by example and written instruction is still fundamental. The resident ministers of the church are now fully in charge.

2. Ignatius firmly identifies the local church leaders as *three distinctly different offices* with different functions: the 'overseer, bishop' (*episkopos*), the 'elders, presbyters' (*presbyteroi*), and the 'servants, deacons' (*diakonoi*). This is not the case in the New Testament, Clement's first letter and *Didache*, where such a distinction between *episkopos* and *presbyteros* has not yet been made.

3. He puts the three offices in a *hierarchic* relationship where the presbyters and deacons are subject to the bishop and assist him.

4. The three offices determine the nature of the church: 'Apart from these a gathering cannot be called a church' (Trallians 3:1), and 'the one who does anything apart from the bishop, the presbytery, and the deacons is not pure in conscience' (Trallians 7:2); 'all of you should follow the bishop as Jesus Christ follows the Father; and follow the presbytery as you would the apostles. Respect the deacons as the commandment of God' (Smyrneans 9).

⁷⁶³ M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, p. 38.

⁷⁶⁴ E. Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament*, 1961, p. 145.

5. The ways in which the church offices are described suggest an emerging structure where the bishop has superior powers, and the 'elders, presbyters' form a council (*presbyterion*) comparable to the council of the apostles but also resembling the political council (*symbolion*) in the Roman-Hellenistic world.

6. While both presbyters and deacons are subordinated to the bishop, the presbyters' particular duty is to assist the bishop 'for the honour of the Father and of Jesus Christ and of the apostles' (Trallians 12:2).

7. The bishop is a representative of God and of Christ: 'your bishop is worthy of God' (Magnesians 2); 'the deacon Zotion is subject to the bishop as to the grace of God, and to the presbytery as to the law of Jesus Christ' (Magnesians 2); 'the bishop presides in the place of God' (Magnesians 6:1); 'the bishop is the image of the Father' (Trallians 3:1); 'we are clearly obliged to look upon the bishop as the Lord himself' (Ephesians 6:1); 'you should do nothing apart from the bishop and the presbyters' (Magnesians 7:1); 'It is good to know both God and the bishop. The one who honours the bishop is honoured by God; the one who does anything behind the *bishop's* back serves the devil' (Smyrneans 9:1).

8. The bishop is the one that is in charge of baptism, the eucharist, the agape-meals, and marriage (Polykarp 5:2): 'Let that eucharist be considered valid that occurs under the bishop or the one to whom he entrusts it. Let the congregation be wherever the bishop is; just as wherever Jesus Christ is, there also is the universal church. It is not permitted either to baptize or to hold a love feast without the bishop. But whatever he approves is acceptable to God, so that everything you do should be secure and valid.' (Smyrneans 8)

We will return below to the question of why this radical development took place.

Thus, the itinerant ministry of prophets and teachers is slowly vanishing and its functions are taken over by the order of resident ministers. Three authors provide the essential documentation for this development – besides Ignatius, also Irenaeus (see 4.4.4 below) and Tertullian (see 4.1.6 below). It has been pointed out that the works of these three writers represent the earliest evidence of the evolution of the presbyterate and had significant impact on the theology of the ritual of imposition of

hands, which, based on models in pagan Rome, during the latter half of the second century, eventually became known as *ordinatio*.⁷⁶⁵

The relevant quotations that follow are from Ehrman's translation (2003), with italics being supplied for the church offices:⁷⁶⁶

Since, then, I have been found worthy to see you through Damas, your *bishop* who is worthy of God, through your worthy *presbyters* Bassus and Apollonius, and through my fellow slave, the *deacon* Zotion — whom I hope to enjoy, for he is subject to the *bishop* as to the grace of God, and to the *presbytery* (*presbyterion*) as to the law of Jesus Christ. (*To the Magnesians* 2)

I urge you to hasten to do all things in the harmony of God, with the *bishop* presiding in the place of God and the *presbyters* in the place of the council of the apostles, and the *deacons*, who are especially dear to me, entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ, who was with the Father before the ages and has been manifest at the end. (*To the Magnesians* 6:1)

So too let everyone respect the *deacons* like Jesus Christ, and also the *bishop*, who is the image of the Father; and let them respect the *presbyters* like the council of God and the band of the *apostles*. Apart from these a gathering cannot be called a church. (*To the Trallians* 3:1)

Guard against such people. You will be able to do this when you are not haughty and are inseparable from God — that is, Jesus Christ — and from the *bishop* and from the injunctions of the *apostles*. **2** The one who is inside the sanctuary is pure but the one outside the sanctuary is not pure. This means that the one who does anything apart from the *bishop*, the *presbytery* (*presbyterion*), and the *deacons* is not pure in conscience.' (*To the Trallians* 7:2)

All of you should follow the *bishop* as Jesus Christ follows the Father; and follow the *presbytery* (*presbyterion*) as you would the *apostles*. Respect the *deacons* as the commandment of God. Let no one do anything involving the church without the *bishop*. Let that Eucharist be considered valid that occurs under the *bishop* or the one to whom he entrusts it. **2** Let the congregation be wherever the *bishop* is; just as wherever Jesus Christ is, there also is the universal church. It is not permitted either to baptize or to hold a love feast without the *bishop*. But whatever he approves is acceptable to God, so that everything you do should be secure and valid. (*To the Smyrneans* 8)

All of you should pay attention to the *bishop*, that God may pay attention to you. I am giving my life in exchange for those who are subject to the *bishop*, the *presbyters*, and the *deacons*. And I hope to have my lot together with them in God. (*To Polycarp* 6:1)

⁷⁶⁵ D. Jankiweicz, 'The Problem of Ordination', 2013, p. 11.

⁷⁶⁶ *Letters of Ignatius*, in: *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 1, B. D. Ehrman (ed. and transl.), pp. 201-353.

For we must receive everyone that the master of the house sends to take care of his affairs as if he were the sender himself. And so we are clearly obliged to look upon the *bishop* as the Lord himself. (*To the Ephesians*, 6:1)

And so, just as the Lord did nothing apart from the Father — being united with him — neither on his own nor through the *apostles*, so too you should do nothing apart from the *bishop* and the *presbyters*. Do not try to maintain that it is reasonable for you to do something among yourselves in private; instead, for the common purpose, let there be one prayer, one petition, one mind, one hope in love and in blameless joy, which is Jesus Christ. Nothing is superior to him. (*To the Magnesians* 7:1)

Finally, it is reasonable for us to return to sobriety, while we still have time to repent to God. It is good to know both God and the *bishop*. The one who honours the *bishop* is honoured by God; the one who does anything behind the *bishop's* back serves the devil. (*To the Smyrneans* 9:1)

But it is right for men and women who marry to make their union with the consent of the *bishop*, that their marriage may be for the Lord and not for passion. (*To Polycarp* 5:2)

Thus, in Syria and Asia Minor around A.D. 110, in response to the absence of the original apostles appointed by Christ, and under the threat from divisions and heresies, the office of the *episkopos*, ‘overseer, bishop’, has become singled out as representing God and Christ. Only he can appropriately administer the ordinances of baptism, eucharist, agape-meals, and marriage. At his side is the ‘council of the elders’, the *presbyterion*, and the deacons. The exclusive right of the *episkopos* to administer the ordinances of the church is not stated in the New Testament – it is a later innovation, as we see in Ignatius. And yet, as we shall see in our review of the Christian Connection and the Sabbatarian Adventists, their view of ordination was very much influenced by this Christian tradition – despite their strong affirmation of the Bible as their only creed (see 4.4.5 and 4.6 below).

Another interesting detail is that, in his letter to Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, Ignatius describes how an *itinerant leader* could be appointed and sent. Ignatius has left his responsibility as bishop of Antioch in Syria for good, looking with longing to die as a martyr in Rome. He now asks Polycarp, bishop in Smyrna, to assist him in looking after Syria by appointing and sending a courier there with authority from Polycarp:

It is fitting, O Polycarp, most blessed of God, for you to call a council (*symbolion*) that is pleasing to God and to appoint (*cheirotoneo*) someone whom you hold most dear and resolved, who can be called the runner of God. Deem this one worthy of going to Syria and glorify your resolute love for the glory of God. (7:2)

I greet the one who is about to be deemed worthy to go to Syria. God's grace will be with him constantly, and with Polycarp who sends him. (8:2)

This is evidence that a bishop in Antioch could ask another bishop in Smyrna for assistance in looking after his church. Ignatius' own role that is reflected in all his letters suggest that, as bishop in Antioch, he is responsible for building up the church not only in Syria with Antioch as its centre, but also in Asia Minor, as is shown by the letters to the Ephesians, Magnesians, Trallians, Philadelphians and Smyrneans. (Only in his letter to the Romans, there is no reference to an *episkopos*.) Along his way through Asia Minor, Ignatius is apparently dealing with issues in the individual churches that he communicates with, which he had learnt about during his visits (Smyrna and Philadelphia) or from the representatives sent to meet him (Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles).⁷⁶⁷ Obviously, the bishop of a local, major church is extending his influence to a group of churches in a certain geographical-political area.

The process of appointing and sending the messenger to Syria is also significant. The bishop takes the initiative and calls a 'council' together (*symbolion* is the same technical term as in Acts 25:12, where the Roman governor Festus confers with his 'council'). In view of section 6:1 in Magnesians (quoted above), this council would have included the presbyters and the deacons. The overseer and the council then 'appoint' the messenger (*cheirotoneo* – same term technical term as in Acts 14:23 where Paul and Barnabas 'appointed' elders in each church during their first missionary journey ca. A.D. 46-48), and 'sends' him (*pempo*). The term *cheirotoneo* will later on become the Greek technical term for Latin *ordinatio*.

It is generally acknowledged that by the middle of the second century all leading Christian centres had bishops.⁷⁶⁸ The growing number of local congregations was now ruled by elders and deacons under the leadership of the bishop.

⁷⁶⁷ *Letters of Ignatius*, in: *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 1, B. D. Ehrman (ed. & transl.), p. 206.

⁷⁶⁸ *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, s.v. 'bishop'.

Thus, Ignatius puts the focus on the office of the bishop. His solution would have serious and lasting implications for the Christian church. The development has been summarised as follows by William Frend:

One difficulty is that the term *episkopos* (bishop) had two different meanings. First, there was the literal meaning of 'overseer' which included in synagogue parlance overseers of charity, or guardians of the scrolls, but, secondly, the term could mean 'priest' as it is used regarding Eleazar in Numbers 4:16. Both meanings survived in Christianity. In *The Shepherd of Hermas* (Rome, A.D. 100-130), we hear of 'bishops' looking after hospitality on behalf of the community and therefore acceptable to the lord (*Similitudes* 9:27), but there was also the more usual meaning, denoting the head of the community. Just as each synagogue had its ruler, or board of rulers, so each church had its bishop or perhaps board of presbyter-bishops, among whom there must always have been a president (in Rome, circa 160 Justin calls him *prohestos* or *episkopos*). This development took place not only on administrative grounds but also for more important reasons arising out of the needs of the Eucharist. A bishop must be not only a virtuous man, husband of one wife, etc., but a person fitted to represent Jesus himself both priest and victim, at the solemn moment of the Eucharist before the sacramental meal eaten by each community before dawn on the Day of the Lord. Also, he must represent the people should the Lord return as expected on that day. These factors applied only to Christianity, and made for the singling out of one individual resident in the Christian community as its leader, or bishop.

All this did not come about in a day, but looked at closely, our authorities, namely, the Pastorals and Johannine letters in the New Testament, 1 Clement, the letters of Ignatius and the *Didache*, give some idea of how this was taking place in the churches of the Dispersion at the turn of the century. The Pastorals and Johannine letters show that there were still men of high-priestly and apostolic authority responsible for churches within a defined region (such as Titus had been in Crete) and able to call to order resident officials such as Diotrephes 'Who loveth to have pre-eminence' must have been (3 John). There were also 'prophets and teachers' as *Didache* shows, and in certain circumstances these could take precedence over the bishop in administration of the Eucharist (*Didache* 10:7). But the regional leaders with apostolic authority were dying out and the power of the prophets was already on the wane. They had been itinerant officials whose message or prophecy would be directly connected with the Coming. It would generally be apocalyptic in content, intelligible only in the context of the Last Days when 'the Spirit' would be poured out. The future lay with the resident clergy, and, by A.D. 100 in Antioch and among many of the communities in Asia Minor and on the Greek mainland, the bishop with his priests and deacons was in control. Ignatius, travelling through the cities of western Asia Minor on his way to martyrdom, shows that Polycarp had already begun his long reign in Smyrna, and that bishops were in authority in the other towns which he visited. His own clamant emphasis on episcopacy could not have been wholly unrepresentative of the Christian scene. With the recession of the Second Coming into the distant future (see 2 Peter 3:3-4) the way was open for the

bishop, assisted by his presbyters and deacons, to become the norm of Christian government throughout the Greco-Roman world.⁷⁶⁹

Ignatius' emphasis on the importance of the episcopal office gave rise to what has become known in Christian ecclesiology as *monepiscopate* or *monarchical episcopate*. 'While according to the New Testament, there appear to be many bishops/presbyters in a particular city or region, apparently all having equal authority, the monespiscopal system changes that and introduces the rule of a single bishop per city. Only such a system, in which the believers are required to submit to the leading officer of the church in all matters, had a chance to protect the unity of the church and ensure peace and stability in a Christian community.'⁷⁷⁰ Ignatius' insistence on the divine authority of the *episkopos* and his responsibility and ability to protect unity, created a foundation which ultimately resulted in the establishment of the papal office.

Inherent in Ignatius' emphasis on the local church authority as being parallel to the divine order, is the sharp distinction between clergy and laity. This was found in both Clement and *Didache*, and Ignatius carries it further. 'The clergy were fast becoming the guardians of orthodoxy, and were teachers, rulers, and celebrants, possessing graces and gifts not available to the mass of believers.'⁷⁷¹

4.1.4 Hegesippus and Irenaeus

Hegesippus (ca. 110-180) is mentioned as the first who articulated the idea of an apostolic succession.⁷⁷² Unfortunately, all his works are lost and the little we know of them is second-hand information. However, Eusebius says in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* that Hegesippus wrote *Hypomnemata* (Memoirs or Memoranda) in five books, in the simplest style concerning the tradition of the apostolic preaching.

According to Eusebius' quotations, Hegesippus says that 'control of the church passed to the apostles' (II 23:4).⁷⁷³ Eusebius expands on this by quoting Clement of Alexandria: 'James the righteous, John, and Peter were entrusted by the Lord after his resurrection with the higher knowledge. They imparted it to the other

⁷⁶⁹ W. H. C. Frend, *The Early Church*, 2003, pp. 40-41.

⁷⁷⁰ D. Jankiewicz, 'The Problem of Ordination', 2013, pp. 13-14, quoting J. P. Lotz, *Ignatius and Concord: The Background and Use of the Language of Concord in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, 2007, pp. 170-174.

⁷⁷¹ M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, p. 39.

⁷⁷² A. Ehrhardt, *The Apostolic Succession*, pp. 65, 82; E. Ferguson, 'Jewish and Christian Ordination', 1963, pp. 18-19.

⁷⁷³ Eusebius, *The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine*, p. 99.

apostles, and the other apostles to the Seventy, one of whom was Barnabas' (II 1:4).⁷⁷⁴ This concern about passing on true teaching from Christ is what concerns Hegesippus. This point is reinforced by the next quotation in Eusebius: 'In describing the situation at that time Hegesippus goes on to say that until then the Church had remained a virgin, pure and uncorrupted ... But when the sacred band of the apostles had in various ways reached the end of their life, and the generation of those privileged to listen with their own ears to the divine wisdom had passed on, then godless error began to take shape, through the deceit of false teachers ...' (III 32:8).⁷⁷⁵

The emphasis of protecting the true doctrine from the apostles is also found in Eusebius' description of Hegesippus' work as a whole: 'In five short books, written in the simplest style, he gave an authentic account of the apostolic preaching' (IV 8:2).⁷⁷⁶ In a subsequent note relating to events around A.D. 170, Eusebius says that Hegesippus' writings, among others, showed 'their orthodoxy and unshakable devotion to the apostolic tradition' (IV 21).⁷⁷⁷ Immediately following that comment, he quotes Hegesippus again: 'In [the five short works by Hegesippus] he describes how when travelling as far as Rome he mixed with a number of bishops and found the same doctrine among them all.' Eusebius then makes a direct quote of Hegesippus' own words: 'On arrival at Rome I pieced together the *succession* down to Anicetus, whose deacon was Eleutherus, Anicetus being succeeded by Soter and he by Eleutherus. In every line of bishops and in every city things accord with the preaching of the Law, the Prophets, and the Lord' (IV 22).⁷⁷⁸

Thus, Hegesippus' great concern was to protect the true doctrine from the Old Testament Scriptures and from the Lord. Passing on this true teaching from generation to generation through the bishops is his real interest. This concern created the concept of 'succession' which he sustained by lists of the appropriate line or 'order' of bishops.

Hegesippus' approach to the problem of false teachings can be related to the practice of the Jewish scribes, who believed in an unbroken succession of teaching being passed on from Moses via Joshua, beginning at his ordination according to

⁷⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 72.

⁷⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 143.

⁷⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 161.

⁷⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 181.

⁷⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 181 (italics supplied).

Numbers 27:15-23 (see 3.4 above).⁷⁷⁹ In fact, Hegesippus was a converted Jew, according to Eusebius' observations in IV 22:8.⁷⁸⁰ Like a scribe, Hegesippus appealed principally to tradition as embodied in the teaching which had been handed down through the succession of bishops. Eusebius says that Hegesippus was a convert from Judaism, learned in the Semitic languages and conversant with the oral tradition and customs of the Jews, for he quoted from the Hebrew, was acquainted with the Gospel of the Hebrews and with a Syriac Gospel, and he also cited unwritten traditions of the Jews. He seems to have lived in some part of the East, for, in the time of bishop Anicetus (A.D. 155-166) he travelled through Corinth to reach Rome, collecting on the spot the teachings of the various churches which he visited, and ascertaining their uniformity with Rome.

Thus, after the fashion of the Jewish scribes, it seems, Hegesippus introduced explicitly the idea of the bishop's succession in office as a guarantee of the truth of what he preached in that it could be traced back to the apostle,⁷⁸¹ and he produced succession lists to back this up.⁷⁸²

A similar approach was taken by Irenaeus, although in his case we have better sources preserved. The importance of Irenaeus in the development of ordination has been convincingly presented by Darius Jankiewicz.⁷⁸³ In the following summary, we will benefit from many of his findings.

In the second half of the second century, Gnosticism threatened to completely ruin and destroy the church.⁷⁸⁴ In facing the danger, the believers grew closer to their leaders,⁷⁸⁵ and we have seen this being developed in Ignatius (see 4.1.3 above). Bishops became in the congregations those who alone taught pure doctrine and defended the community against heretical teachings.⁷⁸⁶ Irenaeus greatly contributed to this development by fighting the Gnostics with their own ideas; he borrowed the concept of successive teachers from Gnosticism and developed a

⁷⁷⁹ This connection is made by Norskov Olsen in general terms: 'In fact, a close parallel exists between Catholic argument for apostolic succession of the monarchical bishop and the pope as the successor of Peter, and the Talmudic "proof" for rabbinical succession from the time of Moses. This parallel also includes the subject of ordination.' (V. Norskov Olsen, 'Called to Be a Minister', 1995, p. 13).

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 182.

⁷⁸¹ K. J. Woollcombe, 'The Ministry and the Order of the Church in the Works of the Fathers', 1954, pp. 31-32.

⁷⁸² Cf. B. B. Prusak, *The Church Unfinished*, 2004, p. 125.

⁷⁸³ D. Jankiewicz, 'The Problem of Ordination' 2013.

⁷⁸⁴ H. v. Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries*, 1969, pp. 167-170.

⁷⁸⁵ J. Lebreton, *The History of the Primitive Church*, vol. 2, 1949, pp. 183-184.

⁷⁸⁶ H. v. Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority*, 1969, p. 171.

theory of apostolic succession: a line of enlightened teachers are charged by Christ with transmitting the true apostolic tradition.⁷⁸⁷ Similar ideas had been promoted among the Jewish scribes, who believed in an unbroken chain of succession from Moses which conveyed Moses' spirit by laying on of hands (cf. the case of Hegesippus above). This innovation strengthened the episcopal organisation of the church against heresy, but at the same time it elevated the position and authority of the bishop to a higher level than ever before.⁷⁸⁸ Only bishops who stood in the apostolic succession possessed the true interpretation of the Christian Scriptures and could teach the truth.

Irenaeus' concept of the apostolic succession was not from ordainer to ordained, but from one holder of the teaching *chair* to the next.⁷⁸⁹ The role of the chair had also been prominent in the ordination of Jewish scribes (3.4). Occupying the *kathedra* (chair) takes a prominent place in the Pseudo-Clementines, and precedes the laying on of hands.⁷⁹⁰ It has been noted, therefore, that 'more and more the vocabulary of the "ministry" reflected the trend to Old Testament terminology'.⁷⁹¹ As Christian leadership became associated with the concept of 'priesthood', closer and closer connections were established with the priesthood of Old Testament Scripture. This is non-existent in the New Testament, but the canon of the New Testament had not yet been established in Irenaeus' time. We shall see below how Tertullian carried this trend further by calling the Christian leadership *sacerdotium*, although still asserting the priesthood of all believers, and how Cyprian moved things further on by applying 'all the privileges, duties, and responsibilities of the Aaronic priesthood to the officers of the Christian church', and constantly calling them *sacerdotes* and *sacerdotium* – Cyprian has therefore been called 'the proper father of the sacerdotal conception of the Christian ministry as a mediating agency between God and the people'.⁷⁹²

⁷⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 167.

⁷⁸⁸ R. L. Williams, *Bishop Lists: Formation of Apostolic Succession of Bishops in Ecclesiastical Crises*, 2005, pp. 132-133.

⁷⁸⁹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4:12:1 (emphasis supplied) – as pointed out in M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, p. 39.

⁷⁹⁰ E. Ferguson, 'Eusebius and Ordination', 1962, p. 140.

⁷⁹¹ M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, p. 39.

⁷⁹² P. Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 2, 1935, p. 126.

Another interesting feature in Irenaeus' writings concerns the special spiritual endowment that Christian bishops receive as they enter the chain of apostolic succession. Irenaeus writes:

Wherefore it is incumbent to obey the presbyters who are in the church – those who, as I have shown, possess the succession from the apostles, those who, together with the succession of the episcopate, have received the certain gift of truth (*charisma veritatis certum*) according to the good pleasure of the Father.⁷⁹³

Standing in the apostolic succession, the bishop is understood to receive the 'certain gift of truth' and it can be exercised only if the bishop is in communion with other bishops; it can be shared with the priesthood but only if the priest is in communion with the local bishop.⁷⁹⁴

This idea eventually resulted in the papal and episcopal infallibility doctrine in the Roman Catholic Church. It also means that Roman Catholic theology – and any theology influenced by Rome – has a particular interest in demonstrating in the Bible imposition of hands in ordination conveys the power of the Holy Spirit. Finally, it also lays the foundation for the doctrine of ordination to Holy Orders as conveying a *character indelibilis* and the doctrine of absolute ordination, which connects the special spiritual power of the bishop with a person and not with a function in a Christian community.

4.1.5 *Ordo, Ordinare, and Ordinatio* in the Roman Empire

The English terms 'ordain' and 'ordination' derive etymologically from Latin *ordinare* (arrange, regulate), *ordinatio* (a setting in order, arrangement), and *ordo* (order; plural: *ordines*).⁷⁹⁵ The root meaning seems to be *ordo*, 'row', and from there words were developed for anything that could be 'ordered or arranged in rows'.

Ordo was a very common concept, since the entire Roman society was organised into various *ordines*, while the growing class of magistrates and office-holders were striving to move into higher orders by *ordinatio*.⁷⁹⁶ Thus, the concept of *ordo* is applied to 'any body of men who form a distinct class in the community, either by possessing distinct privileges, pursuing certain trades or professions, or in any

⁷⁹³ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.26.2.

⁷⁹⁴ J. D. Quinn, '*Charisma Veritatis Certum: Irenaeus, Adversus Haereses* 4, 26, 2', 1978, pp. 520-525. Note also other relevant literature in D. Jankiewicz, 'The Problem of Ordination', 2013, pp. 15-16.

⁷⁹⁵ *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, p. 325.

⁷⁹⁶ See the survey of how this generally worked in M. Rostovtzeff, *Rome*, 1960, pp. 226-233.

other way'.⁷⁹⁷ Thus, Cicero speaks of the *ordo aratorum, sive pecuariorum, sive mercatorum* ('order of farmers, or cattle breeders, or merchants').⁷⁹⁸ The *libertini* ('freed slaves') and *scribae* ('clerks, secretaries') also formed separate *ordines*.⁷⁹⁹ The Senate and the Equites are also spoken of as respectively the *ordo senatorius* ('senatorial order') and *ordo equestris* ('knightly order'). But the name *ordo* was never applied to the *plebs* ('people'). Accordingly, we find the expression *uterque ordo* ('both orders') being used without any further explanation to designate the senatorial and equestrian *ordines*.⁸⁰⁰ The term *ordo* is also applied to a company or troop of soldiers, and is used as equivalent to *centuria* ('tribe, company, order of one hundred');⁸⁰¹ thus, centurions are sometimes called *qui ordines duxerunt* ('those who lead the ranks').⁸⁰²

In the same way, 'the whole body of *sacerdotes* (priests) in Rome is spoken of as an *ordo sacerdotum* and separate ecclesiastical corporations are called by the same title'.⁸⁰³ For centuries during the Roman Republic, the *ordo sacerdotum* functioned as a religious hierarchy implied by the seating arrangements of priests (*sacerdotes*) at sacrificial banquets. It was also called the *collegium pontificum* (the board of pontiffs), and it was in charge of the state cult. The *ordo sacerdotum* observed and preserved ritual distinctions between divine and human power. In the human world, the *Pontifex Maximus* was the most influential and powerful of all *sacerdotes*. The *rex sacrorum* (originally the most prominent priest) was positioned next to the gods, followed by the Flamen Dialis (Jupiter's priest), then the Flamen Martialis (Mars' priest), then the Flamen Quirinalis (Quirinus' priest) and lastly, the Pontifex Maximus, the Head of the State Clergy.⁸⁰⁴ The Pontifex Maximus is considered 'the judge and arbiter of things both divine and human'.⁸⁰⁵

In the time of the emperors, Augustus reformed old Roman religion and became a member of the sacred colleges and orders of pontiffs, augurs, fratres Arvales, fetiales, and others; at the death of Lepidus in 12 B.C. he became Pontifex

⁷⁹⁷ *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, s.v. *ordo* (accessible at www.ancientlibrary.com/smith-dgra/).

⁷⁹⁸ Marcus Tullius Cicero, *In Verrem*, 51:6.

⁷⁹⁹ Gaius Suetonius Tranquillius, *De Illustribus Grammaticis*, 18; Cicero, *In Verrem*, 1:47; 3:79.

⁸⁰⁰ Gaius Suetonius Tranquillius, *De Vita XII Caesarum, II Augustus*, no. 15.

⁸⁰¹ *A Latin Dictionary*, s.v. *centuria*.

⁸⁰² *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, s.v. *ordo*.

⁸⁰³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰⁴ H. J. Rose, *Religion in Greece and Rome*, 1959, p. 231.

⁸⁰⁵ C.O. Mueller, *Sexti Pompei Festi De verborum significatione quae supersunt cum Pauli Epitome*, s.v. *ordo*.

Maximus himself.⁸⁰⁶ Each emperor served as head or *pontifex maximus* of the *ordo sacerdotum* until the title was denounced by Emperor Gratian (ruled ca. 375-383) and his co-ruler and successor Emperor Theodosius I (ruled ca. 379–395).

As Pontifex Maximus, the Emperor was the head of the state religion, and worship was paid to him personally throughout the Empire. The worship he received as chief of the state was managed entirely by the self-governing towns and by voluntary societies called *Sodales Augustales* or *Sacerdotes Augustales*, or simply *Augustales*.⁸⁰⁷ They were an order (*sodalitas*) of Roman priests instituted by Tiberius to attend to the maintenance of the cult of Augustus and the imperial family in A.D. 14.⁸⁰⁸ The *sodales* were chosen by lot among the principal persons of Rome, and were twenty-one in number, to which were added Tiberius, Drusus, Claudius and Germanicus, as members of the imperial family. Women might be appointed priestesses of Augustus, a practice probably originating in the appointment of Livia by a decree of the Senate as priestess to her deceased husband. A flamen (priest) could also be a member of the Augustales. Among the ruins at Herculaneum is a collegial shrine with elaborate wall paintings identified as that maintained by the local Augustales.⁸⁰⁹

The *Pontifex Maximus* and the priestly colleges linked to the *ordo sacerdotum* were originally in charge of the appointment and *ordination* of Roman priests. The Emperor's powers ended the independence of the priestly colleges, but the old forms of co-option to the priesthood remained. Thus, whether chosen by the members of a priestly college, elected first by an assembly of the people, or designated by the *Pontifex Maximus*, the new priest had to be *ordained* in his sacred function. The formal completion of co-option came when the president of the college or sodality 'called to sacred things' (*ad sacra vocabat*) the newly designated member, a constitutive naming. Certain religious functionaries underwent an *inauguratio* (an Inauguration in the limited sense). The ceremony of Inauguration meant the declaration of the assent of the deity to the accomplished Election or Designation. It was performed for him by an *augur*, a priest with a prophetic function.⁸¹⁰ The

⁸⁰⁶ H. H. Scullard, *From the Gracchi to Nero: A History of Rome from 133 B.C. to A.D. 68*, 1966, p. 241.

⁸⁰⁷ M. Rostovtzeff, *Rome*, 1960, p. 230; cf. Tacitus, *Annals* 1:53, 1:84.

⁸⁰⁸ R. Duthoy, 'Les Augustales', in: *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römische Welt. Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung*, vol. 2, 16:2, 1978, p. 1271.

⁸⁰⁹ See image at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sodales_Augustales.

⁸¹⁰ E. Ferguson, 'Ordination in the Ancient Church, Part 1', 1960, pp. 117-118.

dominating role of the Emperor as *Pontifex Maximus*, who would always have to approve the nomination of a new priest, has similarities with the role of the Pope who must approve all ordinations of bishops in the Roman Catholic Church.

Both the title 'Pontifex Maximus' and the order of priests of which the Emperor was the head became heavily politicized during the Roman Empire, but educated Romans were vividly aware both of the old traditions and the symbolic value of the Roman high priest, or head, and his order of priests, as we can see from the Roman grammarian Sextus Pompeius Festus who in the later second century A.D. in his twenty-volume encyclopedic treatise of Roman terms and concepts, *De Verbarum Significatu*, rationalises the *ordo sacerdotum* and explains the priestly functions in terms of beliefs that were not only historical but currently held in his days:

The hierarchy of the priests of the gods was established according to the hierarchy of the gods themselves, each according to which god was the greatest. The greatest seems to have been the *rex* [*sacrorum*]; then came the priest (*flamen*) of Jupiter; after him the priest of Mars, in the fourth place the priest of Quirinus, at the fifth rank the great *pontifex maximus*. Thus, at the great celebrations, the *rex* placed himself alone on his bed above all. In the same way, the priest of Jupiter takes his place above those of Mars and Quirinus, and the priest of Mars above the priest of Quirinus. In the same way, all take their place above the pontiff. The *rex* does so because he is the most powerful; the Flamen Dialis, because he is the priest of the entire universe, being called *diurnus* (daily); the priest of Mars, because Mars was the father of the founder of Rome; the priest of Quirinus, because Quirinus was called Spears for being associated with Roman sovereignty; the *pontifex maximus*, because he is considered the judge and arbiter of things both divine and human.⁸¹¹

What is significant in this quotation is not so much whether or not people in Rome around A.D. 200 worshipped the gods referred to, but the concepts of (a) an order of priests (*ordo*), (b) with a strictly hierarchic internal organisation based on their degree of spiritual power, and (c) a head of priests named Pontifex Maximus who was seen as the 'judge and arbiter of things both divine and human'. The additional fact that (d) the *ordo sacerdotum* was divided into *major and minor orders of priests*, exactly as we see later becoming the practice in the Roman Catholic Church, has added meaning. The historical significance of this and similar concepts related to ordination cannot be underestimated, because, eventually, the term 'pontifex' became a term

⁸¹¹ W.M. Lindsay, *Sexti Pompei Festi: De verborum significatu quae supersunt cum Pauli Epitome*, 1913, pp. 198-200. The text provided here is our English translation of a French version providing books 1 and 2 of Festus' work in a translation from Latin by M. A. Savagner published in 1846. The French text was retrieved at <http://remacle.org/bloodwolf/erudits/Festus/index.htm>.

for Christian bishops, including the Bishop of Rome, and the title Pontifex Maximus was applied within the Roman Catholic Church to the Pope as its chief bishop. With this title came the concept of the priests being a distinct order, separated from the laity, with an internal hierarchic grading into ranks, and the practice of *ordinatio* as the consecration of priests to the higher order.

Thus, any appointment or induction to an *ordo* in ancient Rome was termed *ordinatio* and the action was *ordinare*. These terms were used in various contexts:

1. The everyday usage: *Ordo* could simply refer to one's state of life or 'arrangement, appointment' and *ordinare* to 'provide order, arrange, appoint, command'. It has been argued that this everyday terminology was the source for the early Christians as they appropriated the language of 'ordination' for use in their communities and that in this context *ordinatio* referred to the appointment of a person to a particular function.⁸¹² This may be true for the many different varieties of *ordinatio* that gradually came to be adopted in the Roman church, which also included women's ordination until about 1200.⁸¹³ As far as the ordination of bishops is concerned, however, a concept of 'order' would have included the notion of high rank, which was borrowed and introduced into the church by Tertullian (see 4.1.6 below).

2. The division of the population into classes: Based on the row of seats in the Roman *curia*, there was an *ordo equester* (the equestrian order) and the *ordo senatorius* (the senatorial order), a classification based on the financial income of a family. Only people belonging to an *ordo* could hold authority to serve the Roman State. When a member of these orders was appointed for a civil or military office, this act was termed *ordinare*, 'ordain'. It inducted a person into the class of people that exercised authority and separated him from the body of the 'people', being referred to as *plebs*. Thus, the concept of *ordo* classified people according to rank, and this was first brought into the Christian church by Tertullian who applied it to the order of the priesthood as distinct from the laity (see 4.1.6 below).

For example, in *Historia Augusta* it is stated that Emperor Marcus Aurelius (ruled ca. 161-180) would not 'ordain' anyone to senatorial rank whom he did not

⁸¹² P. van Beneden, *Aux origines d'une terminologie sacramentelle: Ordo, ordinare, ordinatio dans la littérature chrétienne avant 313*, 1974. Cf. G. Macy, *The Hidden History of Women's Ordination*, 2007, p. 29.

⁸¹³ For a review of this matter, see G. Macy, *ibid.*, pp. 23-48.

'know' personally: *nec quemquam in ordinem legit, nisi quem ipse ben scisset*.⁸¹⁴ This may be connected with the common practice of *designatio* in appointments during the Roman Empire, where a person in authority, like the Emperor, could name somebody for an office which was then *pro forma* voted by the senatorial council.⁸¹⁵ It is interesting to compare this concept with the similar, albeit many centuries older, biblical notion of God's 'knowledge' of Jeremiah as he was called to be a prophet (see 3.2.9 above).

Emperor Augustus made membership of the Senatorial Order dependent on more than birth. Other necessary qualifications were the performance of a period of military service as a *tribunus militum* or *praefectus alae*, possession of at least one million sesterces, and above all personal integrity.⁸¹⁶ Having fulfilled these requirements, an individual would be 'ordained' to the *ordo senatorius*. Augustus needed more than senators in the administration of the vast Empire. He therefore turned to the Equestrian Order and by employing its members in the public service, from which they had been excluded during the Republic, he secured their loyalty. However, he reformed and re-organised the Order to make them 'worthy' of being public servants. The necessary qualification to become a member of the Order was free birth, possession of 400,000 sesterces, military service, and good character.⁸¹⁷ Membership gave the right to receive a public horse and a gold ring, and to wear a narrow purple stripe on the tunic. Thus, after the qualifying military service, there was the prospect of a good career in administrative posts. Augustus used them as financial agents or governors (*procurators*) in his provinces (for examples of 'ordination' as *procurator*, see below). Thus, employing the services of the two orders, Augustus laid the foundations of a civil service with higher or lower orders, all of them being accessed by the ritual procedure of 'ordination'.

3. The legal, civil, military, and religious administration: 'Ordination' was used for any induction, installation, appointment, or accession to status or rank in the civil, military and religious life in Rome (rows, orders, ranks, classes).⁸¹⁸ Consequently, it

⁸¹⁴ *Historia Augusta*, vol. 1, 2000, p. 159.

⁸¹⁵ It is well-known that Augustus built up 'an efficient body of salaried professional administrators: all of them depended on his favour, and a large proportion were directly appointed by him and responsible to him alone' (H. H. Scullard, *From the Gracchi to Nero*, 1966, p. 269). This included the right of the Emperor to nominate or commend candidates which the Senate elected automatically (*ibid.*, p 283).

⁸¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 231-232.

⁸¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 233-234.

⁸¹⁸ *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, s.v. *ordo, ordinare, ordinatio*.

had a central function in Roman law.⁸¹⁹ In the language of the Roman imperial chancery, *ordinare* became a technical term for appointing a *tutor* (protector), a *curator* (official), and a *procurator* (chief financial officers of a province).⁸²⁰

For example, the Roman historian Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus (ca. 69-122) mentions that Julius Caesar ‘showed equal scorn of constitutional precedent by ordaining magistrates several years ahead’ (*eadem licentia spreto patrio more magistratus in pluris annos ordinavit*).⁸²¹

The same author states that Emperor Domitian (ca. 51-96) once was heard to have asked of a child: ‘Can you guess why I have just ordained Mettius Rufus Prefect of Egypt?’ The Latin text is: *cur sibi virum esset ordinatione proxima Aegypto praeficere Maecium Rufum*.⁸²²

Aelius Lampridius used the term in the same way and wrote about Emperor Alexander Severus (ruled ca. 222-235): ‘Whenever [Alexander] desired to ordain any man governor of a province or ordain him procurator’ (*ubi aliquos voluisset vel rectores provinciis dare vel praepositos facere vel procuratores ... ordinare*).⁸²³

It is also reported in Roman sources that prior to becoming Emperor, Publius Helvius Pertinax (ca. 126-193) sought to be ‘ordained’ to a command ‘in the ranks’ (*ducendi ordinis dignitarem petiit*).⁸²⁴ The idea of ‘ordination’ as being assigned to a certain rank or order was also used in the cultic context of various priests (*sacerdotes*) who were in charge of the sacrifices, augurs who interpreted the omens, and many different functionaries associated with the numerous temples across the Empire.

This background of the concept of ‘ordination’ in ancient Rome is significant for various reasons. As we shall see in 4.1.6 below, Tertullian brought the concept of *ordinatio* into the Christian church. It carried with it several associated Roman concepts that gradually changed the Christian view of appointment for leadership, for example, (a) the emphasis on rank and status, which divided the church into clergy and priesthood; (b) the hierarchic thinking regarding church offices, which we have seen was introduced already by Ignatius (see 4.1.3 above); (c) the emphasis on the

⁸¹⁹ A. Berger, *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Roman Law*, vol. 43, part 2, 1953, s.v. *ordinatio*.

⁸²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 612.

⁸²¹ Suetonius, *De Vita XII Caesarum*, I Julius Caesar, no. 76.

⁸²² Suetonius, *De Vita XII Caesarum*, XII Domitian, no. 4.

⁸²³ Aelius Lampridius, *Alexandri Severi Vita*, in: *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, 1947, p. 270.

⁸²⁴ *Historia Augusta*, vol. 1, 2000, p. 315.

‘power’ and authority of the ordained; (d) the association with a separate order of sacerdotal priests who had a leading function in religious matters and was led by the Pontifex Maximus.

The Ancient Roman usage of the Latin words for ‘ordain’ and ‘ordination’ was thus taken over by the church and was adapted to the rite of appointing and consecrating someone for the church offices of bishop, priest, and deacon. Thus, *ordo* was used, among other things, for the ‘ordination’ by which a person obtained a rank or position within the church hierarchy, where a distinction was made between higher degrees (*ordines maiores*) and lower degrees (*ordines minores*).⁸²⁵

It is appropriate to mention at this point, finally, that the influence from Roman terms and concepts connected with administration, offices, orders, and *ordinatio* received new impetus from the twelfth century, when the massive Roman Law in *Corpus Iuris Civilis* was rediscovered and became a model for the creation of Roman Catholic Canon Law. We will come back to that in 4.2.1 below.

4.1.6 Tertullian

Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus (ca. 160 – 220) was a prolific early Christian author from Carthage in the Roman province of Africa. He is the first Christian author to produce an extensive corpus of Latin Christian literature. He was a notable early Christian apologist and a polemicist against heresy. Tertullian has been called ‘the father of Latin Christianity’⁸²⁶ and ‘the founder of Western theology’.⁸²⁷

As an apologist, he sought to defend the Christian faith against heretical and pagan threats. In so doing, he incorporated common words found in daily usage among the people of his time – some estimate that he was responsible for coining and introducing 509 new nouns, 284 new adjective, 161 new verbs into Latin vocabulary.⁸²⁸ Being a highly skilful *retor* and lawyer, and having taught law prior to becoming a Christian, Tertullian had deep insights in Roman thought and how the Roman society functioned. As an apologist, he saw parallels between pagan Rome and Christianity that he wanted to use to his advantage.

⁸²⁵ S. Nesselmark, Article ‘Ordination’, in: *SU*, vol. 21, cols.. 1161-1162 (our English translation).

⁸²⁶ A. J. Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes*, 2007, p. 22.

⁸²⁷ J. L. Gonzáles, *The Story of Christianity*, vol. 1, 2010, pp. 91-93.

⁸²⁸ A. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 2007, pp. 9, 249.

From the area of Roman administration and law, Tertullian introduced *ordo* and *ordinatio* into Christian vocabulary, knowing that it had a certain baggage.⁸²⁹ 'With the emergence of Christian Latin in Tertullian, we see that the analogy of the *ordo* and the people of the city of Rome was taken up to describe the relationship of the clergy to the people of God'.⁸³⁰ Thus, he mentions for the first time in the known history of the early church 'ordination' and the various 'holy orders' in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, but unfortunately does not give much detailed information. In *De Corona* we read the following:

For state reasons, the various orders of the citizens also are crowned with laurel crowns; but the magistrates besides with golden ones, as at Athens, and at Rome ... But your orders, and your magistracies, and your very place of meeting, the church, are Christ's. You belong to Him, for you have been enrolled in the books of life.⁸³¹

Tertullian makes a comparison between the 'orders and magistrates' in Rome and, symbolically, in the Church. This is almost colloquial and, while it illustrates what we have said in 4.1.5 above regarding the importance of *ordo* in Rome, it adds little to Christian theology. In *On Chastity* (7), he says:

... they who are chosen into the sacerdotal order must be men of one marriage; ... But you will say, then all others may (marry more than once), whom he excepts. Vain shall we be if we think that what is not lawful for priests is lawful for laics. Are not even we laics priests? It is written: A kingdom also, and priests to His God and Father, has He made us. It is the authority of the Church, and the honour which has acquired sanctity through the joint session of the order, which has established the difference between the order and the laity (*ordinem et plebem*). Accordingly, where there is no joint session of the ecclesiastical order, you offer, and baptize, and are priest, alone for yourself. But where three are, a church is, albeit they be laics ... Therefore, if you have the right of a priest in your own person, in cases of necessity, it behoves you to have likewise the discipline of a priest whenever it may be necessary to have the right of a priest.⁸³²

Tertullian is here clearly describing the 'sacerdotal order' as distinct from the laity. It is the first example in Christian history of thought that an ontological separation of clergy and laity is implied.⁸³³ While he confirms the priesthood of all believers, he also says that the difference between the ecclesiastical/sacerdotal order of priests and the laity is based on the authority of the church and the sanctity 'through the joint

⁸²⁹ D. Jankiewicz, 'The Problem of Ordination', 2013, p. 7.

⁸³⁰ P. M. Gy, 'Notes on the Early Terminology of Christian Priesthood', 1957, p. 99.

⁸³¹ Tertullian, *De Corona* 13, ANF, vol. 3, p. 101.

⁸³² Tertullian, *On Exhortation to Chastity* 7, ANF, vol. 2, p. 54.

⁸³³ D. Jankiewicz, 'The Problem of Ordination', 2013, p. 16.

session of the order', which may refer to an 'ordination' session. The conclusion we may draw is that the sanctifying act of 'ordination' of the priests separates them from the laity and inducts them into the sacerdotal order by the church's authority.

Another passage from Tertullian in *Against Heretics* gives us the information that Peter ordained Clement, the third bishop of Rome:

But if there be any (heresies which are bold enough to ant themselves in the midst of the apostolic age, that they may thereby seem to have been handed down by the apostles, because they existed in the time of the apostles, we can say: Let them produce the original records of their churches; let them unfold the roll of their bishops, running down in due succession from the beginning in such a manner that the bishop shall be able to show for his ordainer and predecessor someone of the apostles or of apostolic men, a man, moreover, who continued steadfast with the apostles. For this is the manner in which the apostolic churches transmit their registers: as the Church of Smyrna, which records that Polycarp was placed therein by John; as also the Church of Rome, which makes Clement to have been ordained in like manner by Peter.⁸³⁴

Clearly, the apostolic succession in 'ordination' is central here. Tertullian also indicates that the successions of ordainers were recorded in writing in the various churches.

It has been appropriately pointed out that, in using *ordo* and *ordinare* in his Christian vocabulary and teaching, 'Tertullian ... knew exactly what he was doing. As in the Roman Empire, "ordination" for him implied a movement from a lower to a higher position and from having no sacral responsibilities within the religious community to acquiring responsibilities for their performance. It represented status and ranking that did not appear to exist among New Testament Christians. This is also why the rite of laying-on-of hands was eventually limited strictly to ministerial ordination. In order to elevate the status of the church officials, its usage had to be limited to a certain class of people.'⁸³⁵

Tertullian is the first author where we find a statement that ontologically separates clergy from laity. He is also the first to apply priestly language to the Christian ministry and to endow the bishop with the title of *summus sacerdos* or the chief priest.⁸³⁶ This is language that derives from pagan Rome with its *ordo sacerdotum* and its head of the priests, the *pontifex maximus*, which was an honorary title later on bestowed on the Pope.

⁸³⁴ Tertullian, *On Prescriptions against Heretics* 41, ANF, vol. 3, p. 263.

⁸³⁵ D. Jankiewicz, 'The Problem of Ordination', 2013, pp. 7-8.

⁸³⁶ Tertullian, *On Baptism* 17, ANF, vol. 3, p. 677. Cf. D. Jankiewicz, *ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

4.1.7 Hippolytus' Apostolic Tradition

The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus of Rome (ca. 170-235) may represent the earliest known record of post-biblical ordination practices (dated ca. 217). However, it needs to be recognised that the manuscript evidence and various aspects relating to Hippolytus' authorship are uncertain.⁸³⁷

In the *Apostolic Tradition*, the three church offices of bishop, presbyter, and deacon are firmly established, and clear distinctions are made between their functions and interrelationships. The bishop has the highest role in the hierarchy. The ordination act can only be performed by him: he ordains both the bishop and the presbyter. In addition, the bishop also ordains the deacon, but the term used here is 'appoint' (*kathistemi*, as in Titus 1:5), and it is explicitly stated that the bishop 'does not ordain him for the priesthood'.

The central term used for 'ordain' is Greek *cheirotoneo*, 'raise the hand, stretch out the hand, appoint' (as in Acts 14:23). In classical Greek, it meant 'raising the hand to express agreement in a vote', and it is used in this sense in 2 Corinthians 8:19. However, by its use in connection with appointments, where raising of hands was often an element, it acquired the sense of 'appoint', which is the sense found in Acts 14:23.⁸³⁸

Concerning the 'ordination' of bishops (*episkopoi*), Hippolytus provides for their election by all the people, a formal ratification of the election, and consecration to office by prayer and the laying on of hands performed by one of the bishops present:

Let the bishop be ordained (*cheirotoneo*), being in all things without fault chosen by all the people. And when he has been proposed (*nominatus*) and found acceptable to all, the people being assembled on the Lord's Day together with the presbytery and such bishops as may attend, let the choice be generally approved.

Let the bishops lay hands on him and the presbytery stand by in silence, and all shall keep silence in praying in their heart for the descent of the Spirit.

⁸³⁷ Only fragments exist of the original Greek text of *Diataxis (Ordinances) of the Holy Apostles*. The available manuscripts available are in translations into Latin (fourth century), Coptic, Ge'ez and Arabic, and it is therefore not possible to be certain about the exact wording of the original version. In the Coptic versions, however, transliterated Greek key words occur, which allows for making comparisons with the Greek New Testament and later post-biblical terminology. Nevertheless, the *Apostolic Tradition* is significant in that it may reflect the predominant view of ministry and ordination in Rome in the third and fourth centuries.

⁸³⁸ E. Lohse, Article '*cheir*' etc., in: *ThDNT* vol. 9, p. 437.

After this, one of the bishops present at the request of all, laying his hand on him who is ordained bishop, shall pray thus, saying:

‘O God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
 Father of mercies and God of all comfort;
 Who dwells on high yet has respect unto the lowly;
 Who knows all things before they come to pass;
 Who gave ordinances unto your church ‘by the Word of your grace’;
 Who foreordained from the beginning the race of the righteous from Abraham,
 instituting princes and priests
 and leaving not your sanctuary without ministers;
 Who from the foundation of the world has been pleased to be glorified in them
 whom you have chosen;
 And now pour forth that power which is from you,
 of the princely Spirit which You delivered to Your Beloved Child Jesus Christ,
 which he bestowed on your holy Apostles who established the Church
 which hallows you in every place
 to the endless glory and praise of Your name.
 Father who knows the hearts of all,
 grant upon this your servant whom you have chosen for the episcopate
 to feed your holy flock and serve as your high priest,
 that he may minister blamelessly by night and day,
 that he may unceasingly behold and propitiate your countenance
 and offer to you the gifts of your holy Church,
 and that by the high priestly Spirit he may have authority
 to forgive sins according to your commandment,
 to assign lots according to your bidding,
 to loose every bond according to the authority you gave to the Apostles,
 and that he may please you in meekness and a pure heart,
 offering to you a sweet-smelling savour,
 through whom to you be glory, might and praise,
 to the Father and to the Son with the Holy Spirit
 now and ever and world without end. Amen.’⁸³⁹

Laying on of hands is here mentioned for the first time in the history of the post-biblical church. Only bishops ‘ordain’ bishops. Imposition of hands is seen as a transmission of something that the bishop has to the ordinand. This interpretation of the gesture of imposition of hands is connected with the apostolic succession, which is referred to at the beginning of the prayer.

The bishop is chosen by all the people and is to be found acceptable to all. This early feature diminishes over the centuries, as the distance between the ordained clergy and the laity grows.

⁸³⁹G. Dix, *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus of Rome*, 1937, pp. 4-6. Cf. the comments in E. Ferguson, ‘Ordination in the Ancient Church, Part 3’, 1961, pp. 67-82.

Priestly language from the Old Testament is prominent. In the invocation, God is addressed as one who has made 'ordinances' unto his church by the word of his grace, in other words, the ordination act is commanded and empowered by God. He has instituted princes and priests and has not left his sanctuary without ministers, referring to the Old Testament priesthood. The priests are servants whom God has chosen.

The prayer asks for divine power or Spirit, the same that was given to Jesus Christ, the same which he bestowed on the apostles who established the church. The bishop is repeatedly referred to as 'high priest', and the prayer is for 'the high priestly Spirit', for the bishop to 'feed your flock and serve as your high priest', 'that he may minister blamelessly by night and day', and 'that he may unceasingly behold and propitiate your countenance'. The prayer for the Spirit is to equip the bishop with 'authority to forgive sins according to your commandment' and to 'loose every bond according to the authority you gave to the apostles'. *The core idea is that 'ordination' conveys apostolic and priestly authority to the bishop to forgive sins.*

In his comments on this passage, Ferguson notes that 'the descent of the Holy Spirit, which occupies a prominent place, is in response to prayer and not by the imposition of hands'. This is in keeping with the New Testament, which avoids a magical view of the imposition of hands and underlines that it is God who sends the Spirit, and that the Spirit is found in the ordinand before his 'ordination' (cf. Acts 6:1-6; 13:1-3).

The bishop 'ordains' the presbyter in the presence of the presbyters who also touch the ordinand. The prayer is a prayer for the Holy Spirit to be sent from God:

And when a presbyter is ordained (*cheirotoneo*) the bishop shall lay his hand upon his head, the presbyters also touching him. And he shall pray over him according to the aforementioned form which we gave before over the bishop, praying and saying:

'O God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
 Look upon this your servant and impart to him the spirit of grace and counsel,
 that he may share in the presbyterate and govern your people in a pure heart.
 As you looked upon the people of your choice
 and commanded Moses to choose presbyters whom you filled with the Spirit,
 which you had granted to your minister,
 So now, O Lord, grant that there may be preserved among us
 unceasingly the Spirit of your grace,
 and make us worthy that in faith we may minister to you
 praising you in singleness of heart,
 through your child Christ Jesus
 through whom to you be glory, might, and praise,

to the Father and to the Son with the Holy Spirit in the holy Church
now and forever and world without end. Amen.⁸⁴⁰

Most scholars have followed Turner's suggestion in assuming that the first part of the bishop's prayer was to be repeated through the phrase 'praise of your name' and then followed by the special prayer applicable to the presbyter.⁸⁴¹

It is significant that the prayer makes reference to the election of Israel and God's command to Moses 'to choose presbyters whom you filled with the Spirit, which you had granted to your minister'. The model of the Old Testament priesthood and Moses's bestowal of hands on Joshua rings in the wording 'look upon this your servant and impart to him the spirit of grace and counsel' (cf. Deut. 34:9). *The church has left the New Testament ideal of leadership and, despite the content of the letter to the Hebrews, priestly models from the Old Testament form the foundation.*

As we turn to the deacons, Hippolytos provides the fullest discussion of ordination and ministry:

And a deacon when he is appointed (*kathistemi*) shall be chosen according to what has been said before, the bishop alone laying hands on him in the same manner. Nevertheless we order that the bishop alone shall lay on hands at the ordaining of a deacon for this reason:

He is not ordained (*cheirotoneo*) for a priesthood, but for the service of the bishop that he may do only the things commanded by him, for he is not appointed to be the fellow-counsellor of the whole clergy but to take charge of property and to report to the bishop whatever is necessary. He does not receive the Spirit which is common to all the presbyterate, in which the presbyters share, but that which is entrusted to him under the bishop's authority.

Wherefore the bishop alone shall make (*cheirotoneo*) the deacon. But upon the presbyter the other presbyters also lay their hands, because of the similar Spirit which is common to all the clergy. For the presbyter has authority only for this one thing, to receive. But he has no authority to give.⁸⁴²

Wherefore he does not appoint (*kathistemi*) a man⁸⁴³ but by laying on hands at the ordination of a presbyter he only seals (*sphragizo*) while the bishop ordains (*cheirotoneo*).

Over a deacon, then, let him say thus:

O God, who has created all things and has ordered them by the Word;
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
whom you sent to minister your will and reveal unto us your desire;
grant the Holy Spirit of grace

⁸⁴⁰ G. Dix, *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus of Rome*, 1937 pp. 18-19.

⁸⁴¹ C. H. Turner, 'The Ordination Prayer for a Presbyter in the Church Order of Hippolytus', 1966, pp. 542-47.

⁸⁴² Dix's translation includes '(give) holy orders', but this is not found in the original manuscripts. Cf. *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, B. S. Easton (transl.), 1934.

⁸⁴³ Dix's translation includes '(a man) to orders', but this is not found in the original manuscripts.

and earnestness and diligence upon this thy servant
 whom you have chosen to minister to your church
 and to bring up in holiness to your holiness that which is offered to you
 by your ordained high priests to the glory of your name;
 so that ministering blamelessly and in purity of heart
 he may by your good will be found worthy of this high and exalted office,
 praising you through you Child Jesus Christ our Lord
 through whom to you with him be glory, might and praise with the Holy Spirit
 in the holy Church now and ever and world without end. Amen.⁸⁴⁴

While this passage is instructive, it has been pointed out that one receives the impression that Hippolytus protests too much, which raises the question if these are relatively new ideas concerning a ministry of three grades.⁸⁴⁵ We noted that there were only two offices in the New Testament local church, the *episkopos* – overlapping with the presbyter – and the deacon. This was maintained also in 1 Clement and *Didache* – although both of these sources also talk about itinerating apostles, prophets and teachers. The trend from Ignatius, who divided the local church offices into three distinct functions – bishop, elder and deacon – and who gave unique powers to the bishop, has apparently become dominant, although Hippolytus in Rome around A.D. 200 still has to argue and persuade his readers of the threefold division.

The laying on of hands by presbyters in the ordination of another presbyter is understood as a benediction, or an act of ‘sealing’ what the bishop does. It is clear that it is the bishop’s imposition of hands that ‘ordains’. Thus, the dominant role of the ‘overseer, bishop’ noted in Ignatius’ letters has become a foundation in Hippolytus’ church order.

In both the deacon’s and bishop’s prayers, there is a statement that God has *chosen* the person to be his ‘servant’. The instrument of this choice was an election by the people. God is here seen as revealing his will through the congregation, which is in keeping with the ‘ordination’ of the seven in Acts 6:1-6.

The laying on of hands is denied all but bishops, presbyters, and deacons. Thus, the earliest use of *cheirotonein* in a restricted technical sense, referring to the bishop’s action in the installation of church functionaries, is found in Hippolytus’ *Apostolic Tradition*.

⁸⁴⁴ G. Dix, *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus of Rome*, 1937, pp. 15-17.

⁸⁴⁵ E. Ferguson, ‘Ordination in the Ancient Church, Part 3’, 1961, p.70.

The procedure of ordination was divided into three steps: Nomination, Acclamation, and Enthronement. This combination resembles the process used in certain selections of Roman Emperors.⁸⁴⁶ It is also similar, however, with the 'ordination' of the seven (Acts 6:1-6), where we find the nomination by the congregation, the approval by the apostles, and the setting apart by prayer and laying on of hands.

We may summarise Hippolytus' view of ordination in Rome at the beginning of the third century as follows:

1. The three higher offices of leadership in the church are: bishop (*episkopos*), elder (*presbyteros*), and deacon (*diakonos*), and together they form a hierarchy of offices led by the bishop.

2. Greek *cheirotoneo*, 'appoint', is the preferred term for 'ordain', but in the Latin translation, *ordinare* now takes its place. *Ordinare* implies an hierarchic 'order' of offices, firstly, the higher and lower 'orders', and, secondly, within the higher order, the three distinct orders of bishops, elders and deacons, which singles out the clergy from the rest of the church and is created by the rite of laying on of hands.

3. The office of the bishop is the primary or higher office.

4. The people elect bishops.

5. Only bishops perform the ceremony of ordination, in the presence of the elders, who observe the act without participating.

6. One bishop ordains elders, in conjunction with other elders, who also participate by the laying on of hands.

7. Only one bishop ordains a deacon, since the office of deacon is not an ordination to the priesthood, but a service to the bishop.

8. Prayer and the laying on of hands constitute the ceremony of ordination.

9. Ordination separates the clergy from the lower orders and the lay people.

4.1.8 Cyprian

Cyprian (ca. 205-268) was originally a leading member of a legal fraternity in Carthage, an orator, 'pleader in the courts', and a teacher of rhetoric.⁸⁴⁷ He was well

⁸⁴⁶ E. Stommel, 'Bischofsthuhl und hoher Thron', 1958, pp. 66-72.

⁸⁴⁷ M. Walsh (ed.), *Butler's Lives of the Saints*, 1991, p. 289.

into middle age when he was converted to Christianity and baptized. He adheres closely to the concepts and ideas of Tertullian, who influenced his style and thinking. It has been noted that ‘Cyprian treads consciously in the footsteps of his “master” Tertullian; he copies him and plagiarizes him in his writings’.⁸⁴⁸

Cyprian mentions ‘ordination’ and the various ‘holy orders’ in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, but unfortunately does not give much detailed information. The following is a summary:

1. He distinguishes the different orders, mentioning bishops, priests, deacons, which he considers as the ‘higher orders’ (*Epistle* 31) and then the sub-deacons, acolytes, exorcists, and lectors as the minor orders. Almost all the orders are enumerated. All of them are ordained and counted as ‘clergy’, and their status is defined by their function.

2. The members of the presbyterate are now called *sacerdotes* (priests) but ‘clergy’ includes all orders, also the minor ones.

3. There is a consistent emphasis on the ‘honour’ of the ordained, based both on God’s favour and a high regard among the people of the church (*Epistles* 32:1; 33:1, 3-5; 34). Cyprian says that ordination confirms ‘ecclesiastical honour’ (*Epistle* 33:1). The highest honour is due the bishop. ‘A bishop was the ultimate and virtually irremovable authority of the church, the centre of the congregation, final arbiter, and decision maker.’⁸⁴⁹ It has been noted that in Cyprian’s writings the bishop was not only the chief teacher ‘on the teaching chair of the church’ (cf. Hegesippus’ emphasis on the office of bishop as a safeguard for true teaching; see 4.1.4 above) but he was also ‘the magistrate making governmental and juridical decisions’.⁸⁵⁰

4. He has a clear view of ‘successive’ ordination, i.e. that a leader in the church begins with the lower orders and then ‘climbs upwards’ (*Epistle* 32:2). For example, in describing the election of Pope Cornelius at Rome, he declares that Cornelius was promoted from one order to another until finally he was elected by the votes of all to the supreme pontificate, bishop of Rome.

5. In connection with the election of Pope Cornelius in A.D. 251, Cyprian describes some elements of the process: ‘Cornelius was elected ... by the judgment of God and of Christ, by the testimony of almost all the clergy, by the vote of the

⁸⁴⁸ H. v. Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority*, 1969, p. 266.

⁸⁴⁹ D. Jankiewicz, ‘The Problem of Ordination’, 2013, p. 19.

⁸⁵⁰ E. Ferguson, Article ‘Bishop’, in: *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, vol. 1, 1997, p. 184.

people then present, by the consent of aged priests and of good men, at a time when ... the step of the sacerdotal chair were vacant' (*Epistle* 55:24).

6. In referring to the seating of a presbyter with the other presbyters, he may be implying that seating played a role in ordination (*Epistle* 34). A few decades later, Eusebius is using 'enthroned as bishop' as a technical term for a bishop's ordination (*Historia Ecclesiastica* IV 23:1).

7. The process of 'ordination' includes recognition of qualifications, God's approval, designation by the bishop, and consultation with the presbytery and the whole church. In a letter to the elders and deacons and the congregation in the church of Carthage, Cyprian as bishop says concerning the ordination of Aurelius as a reader (*lector*):

In ordinations of the clergy, beloved brethren, we usually consult you beforehand, and weigh the character and deserts of individuals, with the general advice. But human testimonies must not be waited for when the divine approval precedes. Aurelius, our brother, an illustrious youth, already approved by the Lord, and dear to God ... (*Epistel* 32)

Cyprian is however noteworthy for his view of the church, the theology of priesthood, and the role of 'ordination'. As a consequence of his protection of the unity of the church in very difficult times, Cyprian expanded Tertullian's concept of the Christian 'priest' as the Roman *sacerdos*. He 'developed the theology of priesthood by a large-scale application of the Old Testament priestly language to the ministry of a Christian pastor'.⁸⁵¹ For Cyprian 'the Bishop is the sacrificing priest. Christ was himself the Ordainer of the Jewish Priesthood. The Priests of that line were "our predecessors". The Jewish Priesthood at last became "a name and a shade", on the day when it crucified Christ. Its reality passed on to the Christian bishop.'⁸⁵² Jankiewicz has summarised for us this development:

The new terminology applied especially to the Eucharist, of which, according to Cyprian, the bishop is the only celebrant.⁸⁵³ From that time on, the bishop became an indispensable channel of God's grace and blessings. This innovation raised the episcopate to an even higher level and put new force into the old titles of respect, because it caused the spiritual life of the faithful to be entirely dependent on the bishop. Cyprian clearly saw this and believed that unless one was in unity with the bishop and belonged to the true church,

⁸⁵¹ D. Jankiewicz, 'The Problem of Ordination', 2013, p. 20.

⁸⁵² E. White Benson, *Cyprian, His Life, His Times, His Work*, 1897, p. 33.

⁸⁵³ According to Schillebeekx, *Ministry*, pp. 48-49, the title 'priest' was originally applied only to the bishop, but in the course of time, as the presbyters began to replace the bishop at the celebration of the Eucharist, they too were also called 'priests'. Thus, 'sacerdotalising' enveloped all the ministers of the church.

his salvation was doomed.⁸⁵⁴ The Church, consisting of the ministry and those in unity with them, was, for Cyprian, the divine ‘ark of Noah’, outside of which there was no possibility of forgiveness of sins, no true sacraments, thus, in short, no possibility of salvation.⁸⁵⁵ Thus, he famously stated that *quia salus extra ecclesiam non est* (outside of the church there is no salvation).⁸⁵⁶ All this depended on the rite of ordination that the bishop received from the hands of other ordained bishops. In this fashion, Cyprian combined the Ignatian prerogatives of ecclesiastical authority with the sacerdotal claim of the ordained ministry and made obedience to the ordained clergy necessary for the unity of the Church and the salvation of the believers.⁸⁵⁷

Only those who are ordained may baptize and grant pardon of sins. Even today, this understanding of ‘ordination’ dominates the Roman Catholic Church. Seventh-day Adventists, therefore, should be very much aware of these associations in the term and concept of ‘ordination’.

4.1.9 Ministry and Ordination in the Fourth Century

From the time of the rule of Emperor Constantine (ca. 306-337), particularly the Edict of Milan (313), which proclaimed tolerance of all religions throughout the Empire, a process of unification began to take place in the church, resulting in ‘a fairly uniform practice in ordination throughout the church in the fourth century’.⁸⁵⁸ The typical ordination practice that predominated at this time can be traced to an earlier period, particularly as evidenced in Hippolytos’ Apostolic Tradition (see 4.1.7 above), but the second and third centuries had shown more variety in practices than the fourth century.⁸⁵⁹

Emperor Constantine heavily influenced the Christian church in many ways. He saw in the church an ethical power that would emulate and defend the values of harmony, concord and unanimity that were essential for maintaining peace in his vast empire and overcome the past crises. Emperor Diocletian (ruled ca. 284-305) had sought to overcome the same internal and external crises in the Empire by a new and unified organisation of the state administration under central and firm control, but had failed to see Christianity as a unifying factor.⁸⁶⁰ Given Constantine’s

⁸⁵⁴ *Epistle 27:21, ANF, vol. 5, p. 383.*

⁸⁵⁵ Cyprian, *On the Unity of the Church 6, ANF, vol. 5, p. 423.*

⁸⁵⁶ *Epistle 72:21, ANF, vol. 5, p. 384.*

⁸⁵⁷ D. Jankiewicz, ‘The Problem of Ordination’, 2013, pp. 20-21.

⁸⁵⁸ E. Ferguson, ‘Ordination in the Ancient Church, Part 3’, 1961, p. 67.

⁸⁵⁹ For a detailed survey, see *ibid.*, pp. 73-82.

⁸⁶⁰ For an instructive survey, see H. P. L’Orange, *Fra principat til dominat*, 1958, pp. 45-76.

political aim, however, the Christian church could only unify the Empire under its Emperor if the church itself was unified.⁸⁶¹

The Emperor was also eager to maintain the official rituals for the divine cult services. Constantine applied to the Christian religion the fundamental ancient Roman view of the state cult, according to which the cult is mainly *sacrifice* which is offered to the deity in order to gain divine favour. By performing the same cultic worship across the Empire, unity and fellowship would be achieved among its citizens. The principle is known as *do ut des* ('I give so that you will give').⁸⁶² This required from the priestly officers of the church that they managed their ritual tasks with undivided attention and faithfulness to the rules, in the same way that it had been done by the priests (Latin *sacerdotes*, 'the ones who do the sacred act') of the Roman State cult.⁸⁶³ This expectation on the part of the Emperor and the way in which he interfered in the various inner conflicts that occurred in the church in his time (Donatism, Arianism) influenced also the rules for ordination of the clergy and the status and function of the clergy, streamlining them and making them firm in order to maintain order and unity. Constantine began to call together 'ecumenical councils' where he took active part himself, driven by his concern for unity.⁸⁶⁴

Constantine made the church an integrated part of the state of the Roman Empire. From now on, the bishops held a place in public life and received the same rank as the high state officials.⁸⁶⁵ The Emperor bestowed gifts on the clerics of the church and relieved them from taxation (*munera civilia*) which enabled the church to perform an extensive work of social care for the poor and the sick.⁸⁶⁶

The Emperor also elevated the Ecclesiastical Court of the Bishops within the Christian church to a public function and issued the bishops with state authority in judicial matters.⁸⁶⁷ The bishops of the church became state officials in the Roman Empire and received authority to handle a variety of civil court cases.⁸⁶⁸ In the area of Latin administrative terminology, practices, and legal stipulations, an interaction took place between Rome and the Christian Church. The old Roman high-priestly

⁸⁶¹ H. Holmquist, *Kyrkohistoria*, Part 1, *Gamla tiden och medeltiden*, 1928, p. 132.

⁸⁶² H. Berkhof, *Kyrka och kejsare*, 1962, pp. 17-27, 51-52.

⁸⁶³ H. Dörries, *Konstantin der Grosse*, 1958, p. 99; concerning the general development for the church under Constantine, see pp. 97-131.

⁸⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

⁸⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁸⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 67-69.

⁸⁶⁸ T. Christensen, *Kyrkohistoria, Part 1: Fra evangelium til den pavelige gudsstat*, 1978, p. 116.

title *pontifex maximus* was still reserved for the Emperor, but *pontifex* was gradually transferred to the bishops of the Roman Church.⁸⁶⁹ From the time of Emperors Gratian (ruled ca. 375-383) and Theodosius I (ruled ca. 379–395 – 379-383 as co-ruler with Gratian), the emperors no longer appear in the dignity of pontiff, but the title was later applied to the Christian bishop of Rome.⁸⁷⁰

‘The church took shape from the civil organisation of the Empire. As Christianity spread, there had come to be generally a bishop for each city, together with the territory attached to it. Bishoprics were grouped into provinces, as the districts already were for civil purposes, and its president was the metropolitan or archbishop.’⁸⁷¹ The role of ordination into the orders of the church took over ordination from the civil sphere of life:

The power and prestige of the clergy – the Christian *ordo* – increased as those of the civil *ordo* – the municipal magistracy – declined, until the bishop became the most important figure in the life of the city and the representative of the whole community ... He wielded almost unlimited power in his diocese, he was surrounded by an aura of supernatural prestige ... Moreover, in addition to his religious authority and his prestige as a representative of the people, he possessed recognised powers of jurisdiction not only over his clergy and the property of the Church, but as a judge and arbitrator in all cases in which his decision was involved, even though the case had already been brought before a secular court.⁸⁷²

Besides this political development, the Roman-Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church came under growing influence from Roman law and legal terminology. This is significant, because, as noted in 4.1.6 above, the concept and terminology of ‘ordination’ used in Roman administration and law was introduced into Christian theology by the former Roman lawyer Tertullian (ca. 160 – ca. 225), and we see some reflections of this already in Hippolytos’ Roman Apostolic Tradition (ca. 217), which had become the predominating rule for the practice of ordination in the Christian church:

1. The Latin term *ordinatio* becomes the technical term for ‘ordination’, besides the Greek term *cheirotomia*;

⁸⁶⁹ Note: ‘In the matter of hierarchical nomenclature, one of the most striking instances is the adoption of the term *pontifex* for a bishop’ (P. Pascal: ‘Medieval Uses of Antiquity’, 1966, pp. 193–197).

⁸⁷⁰ Article ‘Pontifex Maximus’, in: *The Columbia Encyclopedia*.

⁸⁷¹ V. Norskov Olsen, *Church, Priesthood and Ordination*, 1990, p. 103.

⁸⁷² C. Dawson, *The Making of Europe: An Introduction to the History of European Unity*, 1953, pp. 27-28.

2. The practice of prayer and imposition of hands from the New Testament church is perpetuated but is used to *separate* the clergy or the major orders from the minor orders and the laity;

3. A *hierarchy* is introduced within the three offices of bishop, elder, and deacon, with the bishop alone having the power to ordain;

4. A *succession* of powers from Christ through an alleged unbroken chain of apostles and bishops is what provides the foundation of the bishops' authority;

5. Ordination is understood as a transmission of the power of the Holy Spirit and of ecclesiastical authority emanating from Christ.

The election of the bishop by all the people was still the rule in Hippolytos' time (ca. 217). It was followed by a formal ratification of the election, and then the consecration to office by prayer and the imposition of hands performed by one of the bishops. In the course of time, however, the Roman practice of *designatio* (or *nominatio*) became predominant, i.e. the Roman Emperor or somebody else with authority would designate a person for the office of bishop, and this was then *pro forma* ratified and acknowledged by the congregation or a council of bishops.⁸⁷³

When Constantine proclaimed Christianity as the religion of the State, church leadership patterns were supported by political sanction. Thus, the parallels between political and ecclesiastical authority patterns are striking in the centuries after the New Testament. In Rome, the most common mode of appointment of office in the early Empire was that of popular election (a heritage from the Roman Republic). Candidates were required to meet certain standards for eligibility, and were examined by a presiding officer, on whose authority the candidate was finally admitted to office. Gradually, free elections by the people were superseded by election by the Senate, subject to formal approval by the people. In course of time, the part that the Senate played in the selection of candidates was not more decisive than that of the ordinary people. Similarly, selection of a church officer by the people did not guarantee his appointment; his acceptance was subject to approval by the hierarchy of the church.⁸⁷⁴ Eventually, appointment by election was replaced by *nominatio* (for *pro forma* approval) which functioned like a *designatio* (direct

⁸⁷³ E. Ferguson, 'Selection and Installation to Office in Roman, Jewish, and Christian Antiquity', 1974, p. 274.

⁸⁷⁴ M. Warkentin, *Ordination*. 1982, pp. 44-45.

designation for office) by either a bishop or the civil power.⁸⁷⁵ Not only titles and terminology was taken from Rome into the church, but also the procedures and structures.

The threat of Gnosticism had seriously aggravated the growing authoritarianism of the clergy. 'With a dozen or more Gnostic sects breaking away from Christianity between A.D. 80 and A.D. 150, a succession theory was essential to the very existence of the church. In answer to the Gnostics' claim that their "mysteries", the Fathers' appeal to an ongoing apostolic tradition, represented especially in an orderly ministry and the rule of faith, provided an historical-geographical basis for the authenticity of orthodox teaching, and a useful hermeneutical principle in meeting the Gnostic interpretation of Scripture.'⁸⁷⁶ But this development had consequences for the relationship between clergy and laity, and it meant a strong deviation from New Testament teachings.

In the fourth century, Basil of Caesarea says of the schismatics:

Those who apostatised from the Church no longer had upon them the grace of the Holy Spirit, since the gift ceased to be imparted when the continuity was interrupted. The original separatists had received ordination from the Fathers, and possessed the spiritual gift through the laying on of their hands. But those who break away become laymen, lacking authority to either baptize or ordain, because they cannot confer on others a gift of the Holy Spirit.⁸⁷⁷

In Basil's time (ca. 330-379), the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is conferred in ordination through the imposition of hands, was perceived as being lost if you apostatised or broke away from the church. This point in ordination became a matter of dispute during the fourth-century Donatist controversy. Seventy bishops of the church who met in Carthage in A.D. 312, declared the ordination of a certain Caecilian invalid because he had been ordained by a bishop whom they considered schismatic, and hence 'unworthy'.⁸⁷⁸ However, a decision of the Council of Arles (A.D. 316) declared that 'the validity of an ordinance (whether baptism or ordination) is not dependent on the worthiness of the administrator. But, according to the church, the layman needed a mediator, an ordained bishop or priest, an *archiereus* or *hiereus*, one of the *kleros* (the clergy), one who belongs to the *ordo*

⁸⁷⁵ E. Hatch, Article 'Ordination', in: *A Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*. See also E. Ferguson, 'Ordination in the Ancient Church, Part 1', 1960, p. 117.

⁸⁷⁶ M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, p. 39, with reference to G. W. Bromley, 'Authority and Scripture', 1978, p. 15.

⁸⁷⁷ Basil of Caesarea, *Epistolae* 188, in: *The Later Christian Fathers*, H. Bettenson (ed. and transl.), p. 86.

⁸⁷⁸ M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, p. 40.

sacerdotalis.⁸⁷⁹ This priestly terminology, even the use of Roman *ordo sacerdotalis* (see 4.1.5 above), was in common use at the time of Tertullian (ca. 160-225) – cf. 4.1.6 above. In the *Apostolic Constitutions* (375-380), which is a collection of eight treatises belonging to the genre of the Church Orders,⁸⁸⁰ the priestly language from the Old Testament is fundamental.

The separation of clergy and laity applied not only to the cult but it penetrated all spheres of life. ‘The sacred was the sphere of the clergy, the secular that of the laity. Christianity became identified with an institution and its cultic observances; “church” had become an organisation.’⁸⁸¹ As the entry to the sacerdotal realm, ordination became the key of the hierarchical structure. Thus, by the early fifth century, Chrysostom could say of the priest who performs the mass:

The priest as he stands there brings down not fire, but the Holy Spirit ... it is by the priests that these things are accomplished, and others of no less importance, that concern our redemption and salvation ... What is given to them is nothing less than heavenly authority. ‘If you forgive man’s sins, they are forgiven ...’ [John 20:23]. What greater authority could there be? ‘The Father has entrusted all judgment to the Son’: and here I see the Son giving it all into the hands of his priests.⁸⁸²

The concept of priestly ministry expressed here was implemented through ordination by imposition of hands. The earliest record of an ordination is found in Hippolytos’ *Apostolic Traditions* (ca. 217), but by the fourth century, there are many references to such a ceremony, particularly in the *Apostolic Constitutions*. There is frequent mentioning of ordination in Eusebius’ *Historia Ecclesiastica*, and, as a rite with imposition of hands, ordination is also known in Egypt from the fourth century.⁸⁸³ While there is no extant literature that gives information on Roman church ordinations until the sixth century, there are good grounds for believing that a common form of church order existed in the third century.⁸⁸⁴

⁸⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁸⁰ Latin *Constitutiones Apostolorum*, also named ‘Constitutions of the Holy Apostles’. It purports to be the work of the Twelve Apostles and contains eight treatises on early Christian discipline, worship, and doctrine, intended to serve as a manual of guidance for the clergy, and to some extent for the laity. It contains, among other things, material based on *Didache* (4.1.2) and other material based on Hippolytos’ *Apostolic Tradition* (4.1.7). Cf. Gregory W. Woolfenden, *Daily Liturgical Prayer: Origins and Theology*, 2004, p. 27.

⁸⁸¹ M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, p. 40.

⁸⁸² Chrysostom, *De Sacerdotio*, in: *Later Christian Fathers*, H. Bettenson (ed. and transl.), pp. 175-176.

⁸⁸³ Serapion, *Sacramentary*.

⁸⁸⁴ A. J. Maclean, Article ‘Ordination: Christian’, in: *Hastings’ Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 19, pp. 540-552.

The prayer of consecration for a bishop in Hippolytos' *Apostolic Tradition* (see 4.1.7 above) shows that as early as in 200-220, in Rome, authority was centralised in the bishop. As noted above, prayer is made that he receive gifts for shepherding the flock, for high priesthood and propitiation, and for him to function as official representative of the church; that he remit sins in the high priestly Spirit; for his distributions of offices; and that he may 'lose all bonds after the authority of the apostles'. The only possible conclusion is that these gifts were believed to be conferred by the imposition of hands in the ordination rite. From the very beginning, therefore, these were the essential elements of ordination.

From the beginning there was an intimate connection between the imposition of hands and the *charisma* (gift) for office. This was developed by Augustine (ca. 354-430) in the direction of ordination being seen as conveying an indelible mark, a *character indelibilis*. Augustine's reasoning was that since the gifts received in ordination were from God, the character or even the spiritual condition of the ordainer could not detract from the value of the gifts conveyed.⁸⁸⁵ After ordination there remains in the ordained priest something sacred, a *sanctum*. 'The Spirit is preserved in him, not in a moral sense, but in the sense of official equipment.'⁸⁸⁶ 'All that is required of the priest is awareness that in the sacramental action which he is administering it is the whole church which is acting.'⁸⁸⁷ Thus, the sacramental acts of even a 'heretical' bishop are effective, though he himself may have the wrong understanding of the word of God.

The power and status of the bishop almost had no limits. When the *Apostolic Constitutions* described the status of the bishop, the Roman terminology for the Emperor as *pontifex maximus* is not far away (cf. 4.1.5 above):

The bishop, he is the minister of the word, the keeper of knowledge, the mediator between God and you in several parts of your divine worship ... He is your ruler and governor, your king and potentate; he is next after God your earthly god, who has a right to be honoured by you. For concerning him and such as he, it is that God pronounces 'I have said "Ye are gods, and ye are all children of the most High", and "Ye shall not speak evil of the gods".'⁸⁸⁸

At the Council of Arles in A.D. 314 the bishop of Rome was addressed as 'most glorious' (*gloriosissime papa*), a secular title reserved for persons second only to the

⁸⁸⁵ M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, p. 42.

⁸⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸⁷ H. Chadwick, *The Early Church*, 1967, p. 222.

⁸⁸⁸ *Constitutiones Apostolorum* II:4:26.

imperial family. It has been noted that ‘if ordination conferred a *character indelibilis*, and the Holy Spirit was then received, there was, in theory, little to limit the power of a bishop – except the power of other bishops. The “historic episcopate” thus gave rise to the papal system.’⁸⁸⁹

4.2 Ordination as a Sacrament in the Roman Catholic Church

The Roman Catholic idea of ordination is essential in the present study for the following main reasons:

1. The Roman Catholic Church preserves the tradition from Hippolytos’ Apostolic Tradition, which is the earliest known ritual for ordination in the Christian church (4.1.7). According to Hippolytos, already around 200 A.D., the church tradition in Rome had significantly deviated from the New Testament view, and we will see below that this position developed even further away from the biblical teaching beginning with the Gregorian reforms from around 1100.

2. The Protestant Reformation reacted in the sixteenth century against the Roman Catholic view of the sacrament of ‘holy orders’. In order to understand the Reformers’ reaction, we need to understand the Roman Catholic view around 1500.

3. Protestant churches coming out of the Reformation era preserved some Roman Catholic concepts on ordination which survive until this day, and for our purposes it is vital that these elements are exposed, so that they can be compared to and evaluated by the biblical teaching.

4. Many Seventh-day Adventists across the world today are converts to Adventism from the Roman Catholic Church where they learned the Roman view of ordination (which is taught even in very abbreviated catechisms),⁸⁹⁰ and, living and working in Roman Catholic countries, consciously or subconsciously, these Adventists (including leaders and pastors) may associate the word ‘ordination’ and the concept of ‘ordination’ in the Seventh-day Adventist Church with related and yet different concepts from the Roman Catholic background. Some terms are the same, and Seventh-day Adventists rarely teach members the biblical view of ‘ordination’,

⁸⁸⁹ M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, p. 44.

⁸⁹⁰ See, for example, *A Catechism of Christian Doctrine*, Revised edition, London: Catholic Truth Society, 1985, p. 53: ‘Holy Order is the Sacrament by which bishops, priests, and other ministers of the Church are ordained, and receive power and grace to perform their sacred duties.’

partly because it is not seen as a doctrine and is not included in the Fundamental Beliefs, and partly due to the lack of a stated biblical theology of ordination.

In the following, we shall review the *sources* of the Roman Catholic view of 'holy orders' (4.2.1), the characteristic elements of Roman Catholic *ordinatio* (4.2.2), the theological significance of Roman Catholic *ordinatio* (4.2.3), and the Roman Catholic view of the ordination of women (4.2.4).

4.2.1 The Code of Canon Law

The Roman Catholic Church sets out its understanding of ordination in its Canon Law. This codification of canonical legislation for the Latin rite of the Catholic Church has gone through several major epochs of development.⁸⁹¹ The essential theology and structure has remained the same from the modified Roman rite of ordination in the so-called pontificals from the tenth century, and at least until 1972.⁸⁹²

We have seen above that the terminology of *ordinatio* and various pagan Roman concepts associated with it were brought into the church by Tertullian, a converted Roman lawyer who in the second century cast Christian theology into the mold of Roman law and administrative terminology (4.1.5; 4.1.6). We have also seen that the influence of Roman law upon the Roman Catholic theology and order of *ordinatio* was significant from the time of Constantine (4.1.9). As the church was elevated to being the state religion under Constantine, and the bishops became state officials with responsibility for civil courts, the church organisation, terminology and theology became affected by Roman ideas, and this impacted ordination, the act by which somebody was inducted into 'holy orders'. However, *the revival of Roman law in the Middle Ages also significantly influenced the Canon Law of the Church*. It was said that *ecclesia vivit lege romana* ('the church lives by Roman law').⁸⁹³

From the beginning, the basis for the Canon Law was the *Corpus Juris Civilis* ('Body of Civil Law') of Justinianus I, Emperor of East Rome (ca. 527-565), which is

⁸⁹¹ F. della Rocca (translated by Anselm Thatcher), *Manual of Canon Law*, 1959, p. 13 #8. The Pope has amended the law a couple of times since 1983. In one of the five canons amended by Pope Benedict XVI on December 15, 2009, he clarified that, among those in Holy Orders, 'only bishops and priests received the power and mission to act in the person of Christ the Head', while 'deacons obtained the faculty to exercise the *diakonias* of service, Word, and charity'.

⁸⁹² R. E. Reynolds, 'The Ordination of Clerics in the Middle Ages', 1999, p. 3.

⁸⁹³ *Lex Ripuarica* (a 7th century collection of Germanic law) says: 'Episcopus archidiaconum jubeat, ut ei tabulas secundum legem romanam, qua ecclesia vivit, scribere faciat' – 'The bishop shall ordain the archdeacon to write the acts according to Roman law, by which the church lives' (tit. 58, cap. 1).

considered the source of the legal tradition of civil law.⁸⁹⁴ Rome had a long tradition of law going back for centuries before the Empire. At first, the Emperor had no direct connection with the administration of justice or with the codification of civil and criminal law.⁸⁹⁵ By degrees, however, the emperors began to exert a strong influence on law and justice, and one of the main sources of law became the Emperor's decisions, either judicial or administrative.⁸⁹⁶ The manner in which this occurred has been described as follows:

All the threads of administration met in the hands of the Emperor and the Central Office attached to his person, where the different heads of departments assumed more and more the character of ministers for the whole empire. Here were worked out, in adaptation to particular cases, all the principles of administration, justice, and finance; and from here all the emperor's missives – either direct edicts (*edicta*), or instructions to high officials (*mandata*), or letters (*epsitulæ*), or replies (*rescripta*) to letters and petitions – streamed out into every part of the empire, where they were either published or preserved in the archives for the recipients. Copies were kept in the imperial archives at Rome and afforded the precedents by which later emperors were guided. Great importance attached to the decisions of the law courts, over which the emperor presided in person, generally sitting as a judge of appeal. Such appeals were put in order by a special department of the imperial offices.⁸⁹⁷

With the third century the great constructive period of the Roman jurists came to an end, and with Emperor Diocletian the era of codification began. Thus, around 295 A.D., a collection of the constitutions issued by emperors from Hadrian (reigned 117-138) to Diocletian (reigned 284-305) were made.⁸⁹⁸ After Emperor Constantine's Milan Edict of Toleration (A.D. 313), the first systematic collections of *Corpus Iuris Canonici* arose in the East. In the course of time, the material expanded which prompted Justinianus to put things in order. The text was composed and distributed almost entirely in Latin, which was still the official language of the government of the Empire in 529–534.

The *Corpus Iuris Civilis* was divided into four parts. The *Codex* was the first part to be completed, in 529. It contained in Latin most of the existing imperial pronouncements having force of law from the time of Hadrian. Numerous provisions

⁸⁹⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecclesiastical_court: Accessed on 23 September, 2012. For a review of the historical background and Justinianus' enterprise, see N. H. Baynes, *The Byzantine Empire*, 1952, pp. 191-206.

⁸⁹⁵ M. Rostovtzeff, *Rome*, 1960, p. 230.

⁸⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

⁸⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

⁸⁹⁸ N. H. Baynes, *The Byzantine Empire*, 1952, p. 192.

served to secure the status of Christianity as the state religion of the Empire, uniting Church and State, and making anyone who was not connected to the Christian church a non-citizen. It also included laws against heresy and paganism. The second part was called *Digesta* or *Pandectae*, and was completed in 533. It was a collection of legal writings, mostly dating to the second and third centuries, i.e. from before Constantine. The two remaining parts were *Institutiones* and *Novellae*.

The Byzantine Empire (East Rome) was the successor of the Roman Empire and continued to practice Roman law as collected in the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*. It was later modified to fit the needs of the Middle Ages and beyond.

In the West, however, Justinian's *Corpus* was distributed but at first lost sight of. It re-surfaced in connection with the Gregorian reforms ca. 1050-1080, which dealt with the moral integrity and independence of the clergy. Gregorian's reforms were also significant in that they put an abrupt end to the ordination of women, which until then had been widely practised in the Roman Catholic Church. This development coincided with the rediscovery of the *Corpus Iuris Civilis* (the *Digests* 50.17.2), which systematically imposed the old rules of pagan Rome that excluded women from holding public office as senators, equestrians, decurions, or judges, as well as subordinate positions (4.2.4).⁸⁹⁹

Thus, in the thirteenth century, Roman Catholic Canon Law was organised in close affinity with the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*. In the first millennium of the history of the Roman Catholic Church, the canons (rules) of various ecumenical and local councils had been supplemented with decretals of the popes. These were gathered together into collections. However, there was considerable variation between various parts of Europe, for example, in the area of ordination,⁹⁰⁰ but the Gregorian reforms in 1050–1080 had started a process towards centralisation of rules and orders to protect the political and ecclesiastical powers of the church (1050-1080). The *Decretum Gratiani* (ca. 1150) had not been officially accepted by the Church when issued, but in the thirteenth century, under the influence of *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, the Roman Church began to intentionally collect and organize its Canon Law. This meant not only that the Canon Law became more centralised and streamlined, but also that it became more explicitly formalised according to pagan Roman jurisprudence.

⁸⁹⁹ See W. Schuller, *Frauen in der römischen Geschichte*, 1992.

⁹⁰⁰ See the articles in R. E. Reynolds, *Clerical Orders in the Early Middle Ages: Duties and Ordination*, 1999.

Recent research on ordination has noted that the Roman Church applied a rather general and open concept of 'ordination' until around 1200. Thus, in the early Middle Ages, 'the words *ordinare*, *ordinari*, *ordinatio* signified the fact of being designated and consecrated to take up a certain place, or better a certain function, *ordo*, in the community and at its service'.⁹⁰¹ 'Ordination' within the Roman Church encompassed 'the entire process of selection and appointment of candidates to a particular position and was almost exclusively an appointment to a particular community; often selection was made by that particular community'.⁹⁰² Many different functions were deemed in need of 'ordination', not only those connected with service at the altar. 'The words *ordinatio* and *ordinare* were used to describe the ceremony and installation not only of bishops, priests, deacons, and sub-deacons, but also of porters, lectors, exorcists, acolytes, canons, abbots, abbesses, kings, queens, and empresses.'⁹⁰³ The terms could also apply to the consecration or establishment of a religious order or a monastery, or to admission to the religious life.⁹⁰⁴

This meant, among other things, that *women were 'ordained' for several offices and that a woman was just as 'ordained' as a man.*⁹⁰⁵ Thus, 'women's ordination' was not an issue, and there were even examples in some places of women functioning as priests and bishops (4.2.4). The mission of the church was placed at the centre together with the call of men and women to hold a function in that mission.

However, a new understanding of ordination came around 1200 – to be precise through the Third and Fourth Lateran Councils in 1179 and 1215. The important change was that, from now on, 'ordination took place when priests were understood to receive a spiritual power in ordination rather than an appointment to a particular function within a particular congregation'.⁹⁰⁶ 'The priesthood was seen more as "a personal state of life", a "*status*", than as a service to the community; it was personalised and privatised.'⁹⁰⁷ Ordination was now seen as something apart from any particular congregation and was instead 'tied to the power to celebrate the

⁹⁰¹ Y. Congar, 'My Path-Findings in the Theology of Laity and Ministries', 1972, p. 180.

⁹⁰² G. Macy, *The Hidden History of Women's Ordination*, 2007, p. 33.

⁹⁰³ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁴ See the references in *ibid.*, p. 33, note 62.

⁹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 35.

⁹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 31, building on E. Schillebeekx, *Ministry: Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ*, 1981, p. 52.

⁹⁰⁷ E. Schillebeekx, *ibid.*, p. 56.

Eucharist, that is, to make present the risen Christ'.⁹⁰⁸ Schillebeekx summarises this radical change in this way:

In comparison with the ancient church, circumstances here have taken a fundamentally different direction: a priest is ordained in order to be able to celebrate the eucharist; in the ancient church it is said that he is 'appointed' as minister in order to be able to appear as leader to build up the community, and for this reason he was also the obvious person to preside at the eucharist. This shift is of the utmost importance: at all events, it is *a narrower legalistic version of what the early church believed*.⁹⁰⁹

Why did this change occur? Schillebeekx's explanation is significant for the present study. The change may have been somewhat rooted in the feudal system, but *above all 'in the concepts of law borrowed from the newly discovered texts on Roman law'*. These new conceptions of law (*ius*) and, thus, of *jurisdiction*, brought about 'a division between the power of ordination and the power of jurisdiction'.⁹¹⁰ What had happened was the rediscovery of the pagan Roman system of law called *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, and it had begun to influence the Roman Catholic Code of Canon Law. Roman jurisprudential concepts and style influenced the Roman Catholic Church in a new and powerful way and more than ever before it became clear that 'the church lives by Roman law',⁹¹¹ or that 'the canon law of the Church was Roman law in its essence'.⁹¹²

The development from around 1200, under the influence of pagan Roman law through the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, greatly enhanced the 'Roman' concept of *ordinatio* in the church. The status, authority, and rank of the ordinand became central, as it had been in ancient Rome (4.1.5), and this led to a concentration on the *magical* function of the rite of imposition of hands which was seen as a sacral act conveying not only *spiritual power* but also a *character indelibilis* in what was becoming 'absolute ordination': the *status* provided was associated with the person, not the function or service in the church. The priest who was 'ordained' for the higher orders was seen as a Roman *sacerdos*, i.e. one who was performing the sacrifice of Christ's real body in the Eucharist.

⁹⁰⁸ G. Macy, *The Hidden History of Women's Ordination*, 2007, pp. 31-32.

⁹⁰⁹ E. Schillebeekx, *Ministry: Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ*, 1981, pp. 52-54 (italics supplied).

⁹¹⁰ Ibid. p. 56.

⁹¹¹ *Lex Ripuaria* (a 7th century collection of Germanic law) says: 'Episcopus archidiaconum jubeat, ut ei tabulas secundum legem romanam, qua ecclesia vivit, scribere faciat' – 'The bishop shall ordain the archdeacon to write the acts according to Roman law, by which the church lives' (tit. 58, cap. 1).

⁹¹² J. C. Stobart, *The Grandeur that Was Rome*, 1961, p. 271.

The change in the concept of 'ordination' was connected also with the *transubstantiation* doctrine, i.e. the belief that, in the Eucharist, the substance of the bread and the wine used in the sacrament is changed into the substance of the body and the blood of Jesus, while all that is accessible to the senses (the appearances – *species* in Latin) remains as before. The earliest known use of the term 'transubstantiation' in this sense was by Hildebert de Lavardin, Archbishop of Tours (died 1133). In the eleventh century and by the end of the twelfth century the term was in widespread use. The Fourth Council of the Lateran, which convened beginning November 11, 1215, spoke of the bread and wine as 'transubstantiated' into the body and blood of Christ: 'His body and blood are truly contained in the sacrament of the altar under the forms of bread and wine, the bread and wine having been *transubstantiated*, by God's power, into his body and blood'. In the very same statement, it was added and made part of Roman Canon Law that '*no one can effect this sacrament except the priest who has been duly ordained in accordance with the keys of the Church, which Jesus Christ Himself gave to the Apostles and their successors*'.⁹¹³

Thus, any Roman Catholic reference to 'ordination' today implies a flagrant deviation from the Bible, and it is based, among other things, on a profound influence from concepts created by pagan Rome. This leads a Seventh-day Adventist to question if such a term, and its associated concepts, has any place in our church at all, particularly in view of the fact that the Bible does not have a technical term for 'ordination'.

Today, in Book Four of the *Codex Iuris Canonici*, as it was called by 1918 (updated 1983), the function of the church and its religious acts are explained. The section is composed of three parts:

- The sacraments
- The other acts of divine worship
- Sacred places and times.

The definition of the sacraments in the Mediaeval Roman Catholic Church is essentially the same today. Ordination ('Orders') is one of the seven sacraments in the Roman (and Orthodox) Church: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the sick, Orders (Ordination), and Marriage. Each is described with conditions, ceremony and participants.

⁹¹³ As quoted by G. Macy in *The Hidden History of Women's Ordination*, 2007, p. 46 (emphasis supplied).

Two important conclusions may be highlighted at the end of this section:

1. While the Roman Catholic view of ordination was essentially ready in the era of Constantine, it was practised for centuries with significant variations in the church. These variations came to an end through the Gregorian reforms in 1050-1080, which impacted particularly women's ordination (4.2.4).

2. The terminology, concepts and practices in pagan Rome, which had begun to enter the theology of the church through Tertullian around before ca. 200 A.D., were further strengthened by the Code of Canon Law becoming founded on the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*. By the Roman Church's agenda of centralisation and control, the language became influenced by the Roman terminology in the Canon Law. Thus, for example, the first known instance of the word 'ordain' in English is from the late thirteenth century, and, from then on, the term 'ordain' began to appear also in Bible translations, a usage which survived into the King James Version in 1611 (4.5). This meant that every time reference was made to 'ordination' in the Bible, the Roman term occurred, which carried with it the full impact of the unbiblical Roman sacrament of 'orders'.

4.2.2 Roman Catholic *ordinatio* in the Early Middle Ages

The post-biblical development of ordination from Clement of Rome (ca. 95 A.D.) to Augustine of Hippo (ca. 354-430 A.D.) produced a rite embedded in a theology of ordination that contained what would become key elements in Roman Catholic faith. We will try to summarise this theology in the following.

1. *The priesthood of Christ and apostolic succession* is a vital and necessary concept for ordination. It is the belief that all ordained clergy are ordained by bishops who were ordained by other bishops, and so on, all the way back to bishops ordained by the apostles, who were ordained by Christ, the great High Priest (reference is made to Heb. 7:26; 8:2), who conferred his priesthood upon his apostles (reference is made to John 20:21-23; Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-18; Acts 2:33). A similar concept existed in first-century Judaism relating to the succession of the teachers of the law starting with Moses' imposition of his hand on Joshua and, it was alleged, through successive generations of scribes (see 3.4 above). In the Christian church, the succession idea is found in the writings of Hegesippus (ca. 110-180) and Tertullian (ca. 160-225), but it was more systematically developed by

Irenaeus (ca. 130-202) in his struggle with the Gnostics. In order to protect the pure teaching and doctrinal unity of the church, Irenaeus borrowed from the Gnostics the concept of a line of enlightened teachers who were charged by Christ with transmitting the true apostolic tradition.⁹¹⁴

2. *Three higher orders led by the bishop:* There are three orders (Latin *ordines*) of ordination (or 'holy orders'), namely, bishop, presbyter, and deacon. (It may be relevant to compare with the current Seventh-day Adventist order of [Gospel] Minister, [Local] Elder, and Deacon/Deaconess.) Both bishops and presbyters are 'priests' and, in common speech, 'priest' is the term used, while 'presbyter' is used only in rites of ordination and other places where a technical and precise term is required. This threefold division of the highest offices goes back to Ignatius, who in order to protect the unity and doctrinal purity of the church separated the *episkopos* from the *presbyter* (which were interchangeable terms in the New Testament and in 1 Clement and *Didache*) and gave the *episkopos* or 'bishop' sovereign authority.

3. *Only the bishop ordains:* Ordination of a bishop is performed by several bishops; ordination of a priest or deacon is performed by a single bishop. The ordination of a new bishop is also called 'consecration'. Many ancient sources specify that at least three bishops are necessary to consecrate another, e.g., the 13th Canon of the Council of Carthage (A.D. 394) states: 'A bishop should not be ordained except by many bishops, but if there should be necessity he may be ordained by three.'⁹¹⁵ The first of 'The Canons of the Holy and Altogether August Apostles' states: 'Let a bishop be ordained by two or three bishops', while the second canon thereof states: 'Let a presbyter, deacon, and the rest of the clergy, be ordained by one bishop'.⁹¹⁶ The latter canons, whatever their origin, were imposed on the Roman Catholic Church by the Seventh Ecumenical Council, the Second Council of Nicaea, in its first canon.⁹¹⁷

4. *Only a bishop or priest may celebrate the Eucharist:* Only a person ordained to the priesthood may administer most sacraments, e.g., hearing confessions, or validly celebrating the Eucharist. This step was taken most decisively

⁹¹⁴ H. v. Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power*, 1969, p. 167; C. A. Steger, *Apostolic Succession*, 1995, p. 17.

⁹¹⁵ *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, in: *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 14, p. 641.

⁹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 839.

⁹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 790.

by Cyprian, who, without support of the New Testament, was drawing on Old Testament priestly language and made the bishop the provider of salvation.⁹¹⁸

5. *Separation clergy – laity*: There is a clear separation of clergy from laity which goes back to Tertullian.⁹¹⁹ This idea has clear connections with the orders into which the pagan Roman society was divided, including its administrative and religious orders or professions (4.1.5). Such separation of classes was known as *ordo et plebs* ('order and the people') and is an expression found in Tertullian.⁹²⁰

6. *Character indelibilis*: Through ordination the ordinand receives a special, permanent seal upon his soul, variably referred to as *character indelibilis, dominicus character, or sacramental character*.⁹²¹ This indelible mark 'assures that the actions of the priest, such as baptism and administration of the Lord's supper, are valid in a sacramental sense, i.e. they convey God's salvific grace'.⁹²² It has been noted that 'according to this view, ordination becomes one of the most important Roman Catholic rites since it allows the priest to function as a channel of God's grace' and 'salvation, in some way, thus depends on ordination'.⁹²³ The current official catechism explains this as a sign that a bishop and a priest function as *vicarius Christi*, that is, in the place of Christ.⁹²⁴ This development can be traced from the time of Augustine of Hippo (ca. 354-430). It is connected with a view of the originally pagan Roman concept of *sacramentum*.

7. *Ordination as a sacrament*: The understanding of ordination as a 'sacrament' began long before the Council of Trent declared it to be part of the seven sacraments of the Roman Church. The concept was taken from the pagan Roman understanding of *sacramentum*, namely, the *sacramentum militare* which was the oath of loyalty and commitment taken by soldiers in pledging their loyalty to the consul in the Republican era or later to the Emperor. The *sacramentum* made the soldier *sacer*, that is, 'sacred'. Through Tertullian, Cyprian and Jerome, this term was incorporated into Christian theology in the third and fourth centuries, at first only

⁹¹⁸ D. Jankiewicz, 'The Problem of Ordination', 2013, p. 20.

⁹¹⁹ *Exhortation to Chastity* 7.3.

⁹²⁰ Ibid. The Latin phrase is: *Differentiam inter ordinem et plebem constituit ecclesias auctoritas per ordinis consensum sanctificatus* (It is the authority of the church, and the honour which has acquired sanctity through the joint session of the Order, which has established the difference between the Order and the laity – translation by S. Thelwall in ANF 4, p. 54)

⁹²¹ E. J. Cutrone, 'Sacraments', 1999, pp. 741-747.

⁹²² D. Jankiewicz, *The Problem of Ordination*, 2013, p. 21.

⁹²³ Ibid., pp. 21 f.

⁹²⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par. 1558, 389.

relating to baptism and the Holy Communion,⁹²⁵ and then to various other ordinances.⁹²⁶ Augustine refers to both baptism and ordination as sacraments.⁹²⁷

8. *Absolute ordinatio*: In the Early Middle Ages, the practice of absolute *ordinatio* was also introduced into the church. This means ‘an ordination in which hands are laid upon a minister without his being asked to fulfil a particular task or minister to a particular community’.⁹²⁸ Until the fifth century, only those who had been called by a particular church community to be its pastor and leader, or to a particular missionary task, were actually ordained, and the rite was consequently attached to the task at hand, which seems to be closer to the view of the New Testament. At the time of the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451), however, it became widely accepted to practice absolute *ordinatio*, which makes ordination ‘attached to a person rather than a task’.⁹²⁹ This was possible because the church had incorporated a key tenet from pagan Roman religion, namely, that sacramental rites appropriately performed had an efficacy in increasing the power (*numen*) of prominent human beings and in directing it to leaders individually and in groups.⁹³⁰ ‘Men themselves could on occasion confer *numen*, or at least persuade it to come where it was wanted, by performing the proper rite’.⁹³¹ Thus, the Roman Catholic doctrine of ordination as working *ex opere operato*, ‘from the work done’, refers to ‘the efficacy of the Sacraments deriving from the action of the Sacrament as opposed to the merits or holiness of the priest or minister’.⁹³²

Having reviewed the development of the content of ordination, some observations may be included here on the ritual itself. Hippolytos’ simple ritual for ordination from around A.D. 200 was gradually developed into carefully organised ritual events which acquired high status. Among the rites of initiation in the Middle Ages, both baptism and clerical ordination were held pre-eminent. Baptism was generally held as the more important, because it was seen as the entry into redemption and church membership. However, ordination was seen as ‘admission to a special status within the church, a status that gave one the power to perform and

⁹²⁵ For a general orientation, see D. G. van Slyke, ‘The Changing Meanings of *sacramentum*’, 2007, pp. 245-279

⁹²⁶ Ibid..

⁹²⁷ *Contra Epistolam Parmeniani.*, ii, 28-30.

⁹²⁸ D. Jankiewicz, *The Problem of Ordination*, 2013, p. 22.

⁹²⁹ Ibid. with relevant literature.

⁹³⁰ H. J. Rose, *Religion in Greece and Rome*, 1959, pp. 157-236; note especially pp. 162 f.

⁹³¹ Ibid., p. 163.

⁹³² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ex_opere_operato.

effectuate certain of the duties and sacraments of the church which persons who had not been ordained were not permitted to perform', and 'as such ordination could be seen as the basis for many other liturgical actions, including the Eucharist'.⁹³³

When one was 'ordained' or 'consecrated' – there was little difference between these two terms – one entered into both 'orders' and 'an order'. What 'orders' and 'an order' was became a subject of constant debate among medieval theologians and canonists. But, 'it was generally the case that orders was the special status conferred upon one entering any of the grades of the clerical state, and an order was the individual step, grade, or status within the clerical state'.⁹³⁴ Thus, when the term 'ordination' was used, it became more and more often used for clerical ordination.

The key elements in the Roman rite of ordination that was used from the Early Middle Ages until 1972 are as follows:⁹³⁵

1. Time of Ordination. From very early on, it was recognised that some days were more appropriate than others for ordination. The most fitting days were during Pentecost, when the examination and pre-consecratory rites were performed on Saturday and the ordination rites proper were performed on Sunday, thought of as the day on which the Holy Spirit had descended on the apostles. We should note, however, that this practice of linking rites to particular days has precedence in pagan Rome and the strong interest in omens, auspices and astrology.⁹³⁶ Ordination was usually connected with the celebration of the mass, in which the newly ordained cleric could subsequently exercise his newly given powers. This, too, had roots in the pagan Roman society – note the sacrificial banquets associated with ordination for the *ordo sacerdotum* in pagan Rome.

2. Place of Ordination. Because the bishop was the chief consecrator, the actual ceremony was performed in one of the chief basilicas of a city, preferably where the bishop had his *cathedra* (seat, throne). The ordination itself took place near the altar. The ordinands could be arranged in rows or circles,⁹³⁷ and if several grades were to be ordained they might take up different places in the presbytery.

⁹³³ R. E. Reynolds, 'Ordination of Clerics in the Middle Ages', 1999, p. 1.

⁹³⁴ Ibid.

⁹³⁵ We follow *ibid.*, pp. 3-9.

⁹³⁶ H. J. Rose, *Religion in Greece and Rome*, 1959, pp. 207 ff.

⁹³⁷ This was a practice in the Jewish ordination of rabbis (E. Ferguson, 'Jewish and Christian Ordination', 1963).

3. Presentation and Nomination of Ordinands. The candidate was presented to the bishop and the people and was named. He was called forth and participated in a reception ceremony.

4. Examination and Oath of Ordinands. All ordinands should have been examined and approved before ordination. In the ordination rite, the examination continued, sometimes in a very cursory way, sometimes at length. The peoples' role was more obvious in the examination for the higher grades. The people could be asked if they had objections to the candidates for subdeacon, deacon and presbyter. For the higher or sacred orders there was an oral examination. The bishop was examined at length regarding his prior ordinations, his election, morals, his knowledge, and so on. In the examination or at its end an oath of obedience and reverence was taken by a presbyter to his bishop or by a bishop to his metropolitan. We noted above that these examinations were common practice in the Roman-Hellenistic society.⁹³⁸

5. Prayers and Benedictions. The heart of the ordination was the prayers and benedictions. The prayers are said not only over the ordinands, but also over the instruments to be given them. They call down a blessing on a person or thing, referring often to the Old Testament, and occasionally to the New.

6. Musical Portions of Ordinations. A variety of responsory music or singing could be included, sometimes as time fillers while ceremonies took place, and sometimes with texts that contributed to the ordination ceremony.

7. Allocutions and Admonitions. From the fifth century it seems to have become common to give allocutions and admonitions during the ordination rites. These were directed both to the ordinand himself and to the people. They were compilations of texts that dealt with the origins of the order, the duties of the cleric, and his morality and life.

8. Tradition of Instruments. Next to the prayers, the 'porrection' of instruments or symbols to the ordinand was the most important part of the ordination rites. These were the books, utensils, and vestments used in the liturgical performance of the cleric's duties. The deacon and presbyter were given appropriate vestments, and the presbyter also a chalice with wine and a paten with *oblata*. The bishop was vested before Mass with sandals, dalmatic, and chasuble; during the

⁹³⁸ See our comments on the use of *dokimazo*, 'test', in Greek-Hellenistic culture (4.1.1).

ordination rite itself, Gospels were laid over his neck and shoulders. After his unction he was given a staff, ring, and Gospel book. And after the communion he was presented with a mitre and gloves.

9. Actions and Gestures during Ordination. Each gesture was assigned some symbolic significance. When one entered the clerical state the ordinand might be tonsured and his beard was shaved. Before each prayer and benediction, the candidates were asked to kneel. Other ordinands prostrated themselves on a carpet. Several types of kisses might be given. There was multiple laying on of hands for the higher orders. This might be done by the bishop himself, or by bishops and presbyters. There could also be a second laying on of hands over presbyters to signify a reception of the power of the keys. The hands of deacons, presbyters and the bishop were anointed, the thumb of presbyters and bishops, and the head of bishops. There could be several washings and drying. Finally, there was the crowning conclusion of an episcopal consecration, the enthronement.

10. Presentation of Offerings. This was a minor but highly significant part of the Roman ordination rite for the higher orders in which the subdeacon, deacon, and presbyter presented their offerings to the bishop.

11. Final Credo. After communion the creed was said by the presbyter, perhaps as a way of showing his competence to exercise the keys given him in the second laying on of hands.

In 4.4 below, we will see how the Protestant Reformers changed some elements of this procedure, especially those concerning ordination as a sacrament, the priest being given an indelible character, the Mass being perceived as a sacrifice and the priest functioning as a sacerdotal minister, and all the concepts associated with the transsubstantiation doctrine. However, many elements of the Roman Catholic ordination ceremony were kept by the Reformers, although there is no biblical basis for such practices.

4.2.3 The Theology of Roman Catholic *ordinatio*

The following is a summary of central thoughts in the Roman Catholic theology of ordination. It is based on Hubert Ahaus' article 'Holy Orders' from *The Catholic Encyclopedia*⁹³⁹ and Scott P. Richert's article 'The Sacrament of Holy Orders'.⁹⁴⁰

⁹³⁹ H. Ahaus, Article 'Holy Orders', 1911 (accessible at: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11279a.htm>).

The purpose of this summary is *to find points of reference for defining how Roman Catholic practices of ordination have continued in the Protestant churches.*

Definitions: The sacrament of holy orders is understood as the continuation of Christ's priesthood, which he bestowed upon his apostles. Thus, the Catechism of the Catholic Church refers to the sacrament of holy orders as 'the sacrament of apostolic ministry'.

The term 'order' is defined primarily as 'relation'. It designates the element upon which the relation is founded and generally means 'rank',⁹⁴¹ distinguishing clergy from laity. From early on, 'order' referred to the hierarchy as a whole or to the various ranks of the clergy. Tertullian, among others, used the word in this restricted sense, but generally with a qualifying adjective, e.g. *ordo sacerdotalis* (priestly rank) or *ordo ecclesiasticus* (ecclesiastical rank).⁹⁴² 'Order' signifies not only the general status or particular rank of the clergy, but also the outward action by which they are raised to that status, and thus it also stands for 'ordination'.

The English term 'ordination' (and its etymologically related terms in other languages) is derived from Latin *ordinatio*, which is defined as *incorporation of someone into an order*. 'Ordination' differentiates laity from clergy and refers to 'spiritual power': The sacrament of order is therefore defined as 'the sacrament by which grace and spiritual power for the discharge of ecclesiastical offices are conferred' (Ahaus).

The Priesthood of Christ: 'The power of order' is understood as 'the power of conferring grace' to members of the church, so that they may attain to 'their supernatural end'. This power of order, it is alleged, was committed by Christ to his apostles by virtue of 'his priesthood'. The grace Christ merited freed man from the bondage of sin, 'which grace is applied to man "mediately" by the sacrifice of the Eucharist and "immediately" by the sacraments. Christ gave his apostles the power to offer the sacrifice (quotation of Luke 22:19), and dispense the sacraments (quotation of Matt. 28:18; John 20: 22, 23), thus 'making them priests'.

Another Roman Catholic claim is that the priesthood of Christ is based on the Old Testament priesthood which he 'fulfilled' once and for all by his sacrificial death

⁹⁴⁰ S. P. Richert, 'The Sacrament of Holy Orders', http://catholicism.about.com/od/beliefsteachings/p/Sac_Holy_Orders.htm (accessed 2013-02-28).

⁹⁴¹ From Thomas ab Aquino, *Summa Theologiae*, Supplement 34.2 a 4um. Thomas wrote his *magnum opus* in 1265-1274.

⁹⁴² Tertullian, *Exhortation to Chastity* 7.

‘which is made present by the Eucharist’. Thus, the priest in the church sacrifices Christ in the Eucharist and ‘the New Testament is a sharing in the eternal priesthood of Christ’. While all believers are, in some sense, priests, some are set aside to serve the Church as Christ Himself did.

The Sacrament of Order: In seeking to prove that ‘holy orders’ is a sacrament, Ahaus is particularly eager to show that the Roman Catholic view of ordination is Scripture-based. Since it is of interest to the present study how he uses the biblical material, we will review his statements here and refer to what our close reading of the texts actually say:

Statement 1:

‘From Scripture we learn that the Apostles appointed others by an external rite (imposition of hands), conferring inward grace. The fact that grace is ascribed immediately to the external rite shows that Christ must have thus ordained.’

We have found in the only passage relevant for this argument, namely Acts 6:1-6, (a) that the apostles did not appoint but merely *confirmed* others that were selected by the congregation, (b) that it is not clear who offered prayer and imposition of hands – the congregation, or the apostles, or both, and (c) that there is no reference to ‘grace’ being associated with the imposition of hands (see 3.5.4 above). In Acts 13:3 (which does not apply because the setting aside is not for an office but for a missionary journey), it is neither clear that it is the apostles that lay on hands, and neither is there any mentioning of a conferring of grace (see 3.5.5). Thus, the conclusion that Christ has ordained the rite is not based on Scriptural evidence.

Statement 2:

‘The fact that *cheirotonein*, *cheirotonia*, which meant electing by show of hands, had acquired the technical meaning of ordination by imposition of hands before the middle of the third century, shows that appointment to the various orders was made by that external rite’.

This may be true, considering Tertullian’s introduction of the concept of ‘ordination’ into church terminology and Hippolytos’ Roman order for ordination (4.1.6; 4.1.7). However, these are not arguments from the Bible but church tradition.

Statement 3:

‘We read of the deacons, how the Apostles "praying, imposed hands upon them" (Acts 6:6). In 2 Timothy 1:6, St. Paul reminds Timothy that he was made a bishop by the imposition of St. Paul's hands (cf. 1 Tim. 4:14), and Timothy is exhorted to appoint presbyters by the same rite (1 Tim. 5:22; cf. Acts 13:3; Acts 14:23).

We find these statements utterly discordant with the statements of the Bible. Acts 6:1-6 does not say that the seven were ordained as 'deacons', and the Greek text does not allow us to determine if the imposition of hands was made by the congregation, or the apostles, or both (3.5.4.1). 2 Timothy 1:6 does not state that Paul ordained Timothy 'as a bishop', and the connection between this passage and 1 Timothy 4:14 is uncertain (3.5.4.4). Moreover, Timothy is not exhorted to appoint presbyters by imposition of hands in 1 Timothy 5:22, but he is warned not to lay on hands too quickly on an elder who has sinned and expects to be reinstated in his office (3.3.7.7).

Statement 4:

'Grace was attached to this external sign [i.e. the imposition of hands] and conferred by it. "I admonish thee that thou *stir up* the grace of God which is in thee, through (*dia*) the imposition of my hands" (2 Tim. 1:6). The context clearly shows that there is question here of a grace which enables Timothy to rightly discharge the office imposed upon him, for St. Paul continues "God hath not given us the spirit of fear: but of power, and of love, and of sobriety." This grace is something permanent, as appears from the words "that thou stir up the grace which is in thee"; we reach the same conclusion from 1 Timothy 4:14, where St. Paul says, "Neglect not the grace that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with (*meta*) imposition of hands of the priesthood." This text shows that when St. Paul ordained Timothy, the presbyters also laid their hands upon him, even as now the presbyters who assist at ordination lay their hands on the candidate. St. Paul here exhorts Timothy to teach and command, to be an example to all. To neglect this would be to neglect the grace which is in him. This grace therefore enables him to teach and command, to discharge his office rightly. The grace then is not a charismatic gift, but a gift of the Holy Spirit for the rightful discharge of official duties.'

The exposition of Scripture in this statement intends to prove that imposition of hands in the New Testament conferred 'grace' or the 'gift of the Holy Spirit'. This is however not stated explicitly in the biblical passages quoted (cf. 3.5). What the context does indicate, however, is that the gift of the Holy Spirit is already given to Timothy and that the imposition of hands by Paul in 2 Timothy 1:6 may be an authorisation of Timothy as an 'apostolic servant', conveying some of Paul's authority (as Moses did with Joshua). The imposition of hands in 1 Timothy 4:14 may not be the elders' ordination of Timothy as an elder, for he is nowhere referred to as 'elder'. Instead, it would make good sense to assume that the imposition of the elders' hands occurred at Timothy's baptism, but the technical expression 'imposition of the elders' hands' (cf. *semikat zeqenim*) may also refer to a ceremony of 'ordination' (with or without Timothy's involvement as appointee) (3.5.4.4).

The Number of Orders: Although nothing has been defined with regard to the number of orders the Roman Catholic Church usually gives it as seven: priests, deacons, subdeacons, acolytes, exorcists, readers, and doorkeepers. The priesthood is thus treated as including bishops; if the latter be numbered separately we have eight; and if we add first tonsure, which was at one time regarded as an order, we have nine.

The Council of Trent defined that, besides the priesthood, there are in the church other orders, both major and minor.⁹⁴³ The priesthood, the diaconate, and subdiaconate are the major, or sacred, orders, so-called because 'they have immediate reference to what is consecrated'.⁹⁴⁴ The strictly hierarchical orders are considered to be of divine origin,⁹⁴⁵ although there is no clear biblical evidence to support this view.

In the Roman Church there have long existed orders of clergy below that of deacon. The following are positions that are *not acquired by ordination*:

(a) Becoming a monk or nun or, generally, a member of a religious order, which is open to men and women; men in religious orders may or may not be ordained.

(b) Offices and titles such as pope, patriarch, archbishop, archpriest, archimandrite, archdeacon, etc., which are given to ordained persons for sundry reason, e.g., to rank them or honor them.

(c) Cardinals are simply electors of the pope and are not an order of the priesthood. Presently, nearly all cardinals are bishops although several are priests.

Comparing these elements with the Seventh-day Adventist view of ordination, ministry and leadership, there are of course many vital differences. However, the following points are worthy of further attention:

(a) The separation on the basis of rank between the major orders (requiring ordination) and other ministerial functions in the church including the concept of laity.

(b) The special status of the priesthood as distinct from other offices may be compared with the Seventh-day Adventist permission to ordain women for the diaconate (as deaconesses) and local church presbyterate (as local church elders), while prohibiting women's ordination for the gospel ministry.

⁹⁴³ *Concilium Tridentinum*, Session XXIII, canon 3.

⁹⁴⁴ Thomas ab Aquino, *Summa Theologiae*, Supplement 37.3.

⁹⁴⁵ *Concilium Tridentinum*, Session XXIII, canon 6.

(c) The idea, that some leadership positions in the church (such as pope, archbishop and cardinal) are not acquired by ordination but that their holders can only be considered if they have previously been ordained for the priesthood, may be compared with the Seventh-day Adventist policy that only ordained gospel ministers can be elected as conference, union and general conference presidents.

(d) The Roman Catholic view that the strictly hierarchical orders (bishop, priest, deacon and subdeacon) are considered to be of divine origin, although there is no clear biblical evidence to support this view, is similar to the assumptions of some participants in the current Seventh-day Adventist discussion of ordination, namely those who argue that the Word of God commands ordination of the gospel minister by imposition of hands and declares that this is an hierarchic office of rank that elevates the holder above both clergy and other church office holders.

Returning to the number of orders in the Roman Catholic Church, there is only *one sacrament* of holy orders but *three levels*. Ahaus and Richert argue that these levels started in the New Testament church, maintaining that, besides deacons, others were appointed to ministry who were called *presbyteroi* and *episkopoi*. However, they acknowledge that there is no record in the New Testament of the institution of these offices and that the titles occur casually. They therefore conclude that ‘the New Testament does not clearly show the distinction between presbyters and bishops, and we must examine its evidence *in the light of later times*’. They point out that toward the end of the second century there is a universal and unquestioned *tradition* that bishops and their superior authority date from apostolic times. Although this is not a biblical argument, they maintain that later developments throw much light on the older New Testament evidence. Thus, it is alleged that what appears distinctly at the time of Ignatius (died ca. 110 A.D.) can be traced through the pastoral epistles of Paul to the very beginning of the history of the mother church at Jerusalem, where James, the brother of the Lord, ‘appears to occupy the position of bishop’. It is also claimed that both Timothy and Titus possessed ‘full episcopal authority’, and ‘were always thus recognized in tradition’.

While it is thus conceded that there is ‘much obscurity’ in the New Testament, this is accounted for by reasons that are based on a particular method of biblical interpretation:

Firstly, it is alleged that the monuments of tradition never provide the life of the church in all its fullness, and one cannot expect this fullness, with regard to the

internal organisation of the church in apostolic times, from the cursory references in the occasional writings of the New Testament.

Secondly, it is alleged that the position of bishops would necessarily be much less prominent in the New Testament than in later times, because the supreme authority of the apostles, the great number of charismatically gifted persons, the fact that various churches were ruled by apostolic delegates who exercised episcopal authority under apostolic direction, would prevent such special prominence.

Thirdly, it is alleged that the unity between bishops and presbyters was close, and the names remained interchangeable long after the distinction between presbyters and bishops was commonly recognized.⁹⁴⁶ Hence, it is concluded, 'it would seem that already, in the New Testament, we find, obscurely no doubt, the same ministry which appeared so distinctly afterwards'.

We note that this type of argumentation from tradition being projected backwards onto Scripture is not acceptable according to the Seventh-day Adventist view of the principles of biblical interpretation (cf. chapter 2). However, for this reason the Seventh-day Adventist Church needs to take care that it does not make the same mistake of projecting later church developments onto the New Testament texts, but that we accept the sufficiency of Scripture.

Which of the Orders is Sacramental? Based on Thomas of Aquino (1225-1274), it is maintained in the Roman Catholic Church that 'all agree that there is but one sacrament of order, i.e., the totality of the power conferred by the sacrament is contained in the supreme order, whilst the others contain only part thereof'.⁹⁴⁷ Thus, the fullness of power rests only with the bishop.

The sacramental character of the priesthood is argued on the basis of the Council of Trent: 'If anyone says that besides the priesthood there are not in the Catholic Church other orders, both major and minor, by which as by certain steps, advance is made to the priesthood, let him be anathema'.⁹⁴⁸ In the fourth chapter of the same session, after declaring that the sacrament of order imprints a character 'which can neither be effaced nor taken away', the Council 'with reason' condemns the opinion of those who assert that priests of the New Testament have only a temporary power. The conclusion is that 'the priesthood is therefore a sacrament'.

⁹⁴⁶ See, for example, Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* IV:26:2.

⁹⁴⁷ Thomas ab Aquino, *Summa*, Supplement 37.1 ad 2um.

⁹⁴⁸ *Concilium, Tridentinum*, Session XXIII, canon 2.

With regard to the episcopate, the Council of Trent defined that bishops belong to the divinely instituted hierarchy, that they are superior to priests, and that they have the power of confirming and ordaining which is proper to them.⁹⁴⁹ It is alleged that ‘the superiority of bishops is abundantly attested in Tradition, and we have seen above that the distinction between priests and bishops is of Apostolic origin’.

For Seventh-day Adventists, it may be vital to note here the possibility that our current view of ordination implies that only the gospel minister has ‘the full power of ordination’, while ordinations of local church elders and deacons/deaconesses contain only parts of that power. In addition, the Seventh-day Adventist usage of allowing only ordained gospel ministers to ordain other gospel ministers may imply both a hierarchic superiority and the idea of a succession of power that is handed over from the office-holders and not by the congregation.

The Effects of the Sacrament: Like the sacrament of baptism and the sacrament of confirmation, the sacrament of holy orders can only be received once for each level of ordination. Once a man has been ordained, he is spiritually changed, which is the origin of the saying, ‘Once a priest, always a priest’. He can be dispensed of his obligations as a priest (or even forbidden to act as a priest); but he remains a priest forever.

Each level of ordination confers special graces, from the ability to preach (granted to deacons) to the ability to act in the person of Christ to offer the mass, (granted to priests), to a special grace of strength (granted to bishops), which allows them to teach and lead their flock, even to the point of dying as Christ did.

It is claimed that ‘the first effect of the sacrament is an increase of sanctifying grace’. With this, there is the sacramental grace which makes the recipient a fit and holy minister in the discharge of his office. ‘The dispensation of sacraments requires grace, and the rightful discharge of sacred offices presupposes a special degree of spiritual excellence.’ The external sacramental sign or the power of the order can be received and may exist without this grace. Grace is required for the worthy, not the valid exercise of the power, which is immediately and inseparably connected with the priestly character.

⁹⁴⁹ Ibid., Session XXIII, canon iv, canon 6, 7.

The principal effect of the sacrament is the character, 'a spiritual and indelible mark impressed upon the soul', by which the recipient is distinguished from others, designated as a minister of Christ, and deputed and empowered to perform certain offices of divine worship.⁹⁵⁰

The sacramental character of order distinguishes the ordained from the laity. It gives the recipient in the diaconate, e.g., the power to minister officially, in the priesthood, the power to offer the sacrifice and dispense the sacraments, in the episcopate the power to ordain new priests and to confirm the faithful.

We note here that according to a Seventh-day Adventist understanding of ordination, the idea of conveying to the ordinand an indelible and spiritual character is strongly refuted as being unbiblical. However, at the same time, the Seventh-day Adventist view, that only an ordained gospel minister (across the world) and an ordained church elder (in the local church) can handle the ordinances of baptism and holy communion, implies a sacramental view of the church office. The question is what biblical support can be found to support such a view.

The Minister of the Sacrament of Ordination: Because of his role as a successor to the apostles, who were themselves successors to Christ, the bishop is the proper minister of the sacrament of ordination. The grace of sanctifying others that he receives at his own ordination allows him to ordain others.

In support of this view, it is alleged that 'Holy Scripture attributed the power to the apostles and their successors (the following texts being quoted in support: Acts 6:6; 16:22; 1 Tim. 5:22; 2 Tim. 1:6; Titus 1:5), and the Fathers and councils ascribe the power to the bishop exclusively'. Reference is made here to the First Council of Nicaea, Canon 4, where it is stated that 'a bishop lays on hands, ordains ...', and to the *Apostolic Constitutions*, VIII.28, where it is stated that 'a presbyter lays on hands, but does not ordain'.

Today, no one but a bishop can give any orders without a delegation from the pope, but a simple priest may be thus authorized to confer minor orders and the subdiaconate. Neither can a priest confer priests' orders, not can the diaconate be conferred by a priest. For lawful ordination the bishop must be a Catholic, in communion with the Holy See, free from censures, and must observe the laws

⁹⁵⁰ Thomas ab Aquino, *Summa Theologiae* III.63.2.

prescribed for ordination. He cannot lawfully ordain any except his own subjects without authorisation.

Eligibility for the Sacrament: The sacrament of holy orders can be validly conferred only on baptized men, 'following the example set by Christ and His apostles, who chose only men as their successors and collaborators'. Thus, the Roman Catholic reservation of ordination for the priesthood only to men is allegedly supported by a 'biblical' argument, not by quoting a passage of Scripture, but referring to a deduction from selected Gospel stories. This is not, however, placed in the wider biblical perspective of the Bible as a whole. This type of argument, thus originally Roman Catholic, is also used, unfortunately, in the internal debate on women's ordination within the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

In the Roman Catholic Church, a man cannot demand ordination; the Church has the authority to determine eligibility for the sacrament. This, too, is a practice followed by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, since ordination is perceived as a sacred act and a trust conveyed by the church to the ordinand.

The Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Church tradition differ regarding priestly *celibacy*. While the episcopate is reserved to unmarried men, the discipline regarding the priesthood varies. The Eastern Churches allow married men to be ordained priests, while the Western Church insists on celibacy. Once a man has received the sacrament of holy orders in the Orthodox Church, however, he cannot marry.

The Ordinand: The first requirement for lawful ordination is a divine vocation. This is understood as the action of God, whereby he selects some to be his special ministers, endowing them with the spiritual, mental, moral, and physical qualities required for the fitting discharge of their order and inspiring them with a sincere desire to enter the ecclesiastical state for God's honour and their own sanctification. The reality of this divine call is manifested in general by sanctity of life, right faith, knowledge corresponding to the proper exercise of the order to which one is raised, absence of physical defects, and the age required by church law. Theologians in the Roman Church acknowledge that, sometimes, this call may be manifested in an extraordinary manner (reference is made to Acts 1:15; 13:2), but, in general, the 'calling' is made 'according to the laws of the church founded on the example of the apostles'.

In the early history of the Roman Catholic Church, clergy and laity had a voice in the election of the candidates, but the ultimate and definite determination rested with the bishops. The election of the candidates by clergy and laity was in the nature of a testimony of fitness, while the bishop had to personally ascertain the candidates' qualifications. A public inquiry was also held regarding their faith and moral character and the electors were consulted. Only such as were personally known to the electing congregation, i.e., members of the same church, were chosen. Today, the bishops, who are the ministers of the sacrament *ex officio*, inquire about the birth, person, age, title, faith, and moral character of the candidate. The bishops examine whether he is born of Catholic parents, and is spiritually, intellectually, morally, and physically fit for the exercise of the ministry.

Originally, a specified *age* was required, and, though there was some diversity in different places, in general, for *deacons* the age was twenty-five or thirty, for *priests* thirty or thirty-five, for *bishops* thirty-five or forty or even fifty.⁹⁵¹ Today, the age required is for subdeacons twenty-one, for deacons twenty-two, and for priests twenty-four years completed. The pope may dispense from any irregularity and the bishops generally receive some power of dispensation also with regard to age, not usually for subdeacons and deacons, but for priests.

Physical age is however not deemed sufficient, but specified *periods of time* are prescribed during which the ordained should remain in a particular degree. The different degrees were considered not merely as steps preparatory to the priesthood, but as real church offices. In the beginning of the history of the Roman Catholic Church, no such periods (called *interstices*) were appointed, though the tendency to orderly promotion is claimed to be attested already in the pastoral epistles (reference is made to 1 Timothy 3:3, 16). The first rules for time periods in one degree or rank were apparently made in the fourth century.

The way it works today is that the ordinand begins with being admitted to minor orders. This requires a testimony from the parish priest or from the master of the school where the candidate was educated. For major orders further inquiries are made. The name of the candidate must be published in the place of his birth and of his domicile and the result of such inquiries is to be forwarded to the bishop. No bishop may ordain those not belonging to his diocese by reason of birth, domicile,

⁹⁵¹ *Constitutiones Apostolorum* II.1

benefice, or *familiaritas*, without dimissorial letters from the candidate's bishop. Testimonial letters are also required from all the bishops in whose dioceses the candidate has resided for over six months, after the age of seven. Transgression of this rule is punished by suspension against the ordaining bishop. In recent years several decisions insist on the strict interpretation of these rules.

Subdeacons and deacons should pass one full year in the minor orders and may then proceed to receive the priesthood. This is laid down by the Council of Trent (Session XXIII, cxi), which did not prescribe the time for minor orders. The bishop generally has the power to dispense from these periods.

For the subdiaconate and the higher orders there is, moreover, required a 'title', i.e., the right to receive maintenance from a determined source. Again, the candidate must observe the times required to elapse between receiving various orders; he must also have received confirmation and the lower orders preceding the one to which he is raised. This last requirement does not affect the validity of the order conferred, as every order gives a distinct and independent power. One exception is made by the majority of theologians and canonists, who are of the opinion that an episcopal consecration requires the previous reception of priest's orders for its validity. Others, however, maintain that episcopal power includes full priestly power, which is thus conferred by episcopal consecration.

We note here that, while 'age' is not specified as a criterion for ordination in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the criterion of 'experience' is. However, the Seventh-day Adventist Church applies at least five different categories of 'ministers', one for the male ministers (Intern, Licensed Minister, Ordained Minister), and one for the female ministers (Commissioned Minister's License and Commissioned Minister's Credential), and in both cases a minister is 'raised' to a higher level of authority after a certain period of time in the 'lower' rank. This raises the question if the Seventh-day Adventist system of ordination is under some influence from the Roman Catholic practices.

The Ordination of Bishops: The first level of the higher orders is that which Christ Himself bestowed upon his apostles: *the episcopate*. A bishop is a man who is ordained to the episcopate by another bishop (in practice, by several bishops). He is perceived in the Roman Catholic Church as standing in a direct, unbroken line from the apostles, a condition known as 'apostolic succession'. Ordination as a bishop confers the grace to sanctify others, as well as the authority to teach the faithful and

to bind their consciences. Because of the grave nature of this responsibility, all episcopal ordinations must be approved by the Pope.

The Ordination of Priests: The second level of the sacrament of holy orders is *the priesthood*. No bishop can minister to all of the faithful in his diocese, so priests act, in the words of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, as ‘co-workers of the bishops’. They exercise their powers lawfully only in communion with their bishop, and so they promise obedience to their bishop at the time of their ordination. The chief duties of the priesthood are the preaching of the gospel and the offering of the Eucharist.

The Ordination of Deacons: The third level of the sacrament of holy orders is *the diaconate*. Deacons assist priests and bishops, but beyond the preaching of the gospel, they are granted no special charism or spiritual gift. In the Eastern Churches, both Catholic and Orthodox, the permanent diaconate has been a constant feature. In the West, the office of deacon was reserved to men who intended to be ordained to the priesthood, but the permanent diaconate was restored in the West by the Second Vatican Council, and married men are now allowed to become permanent deacons.

Obligations: The obligations attached to holy orders include the daily recitation of the breviary (i.e. the Catholic liturgical book containing the public or canonical prayers, hymns, the Psalms, readings, and notations for everyday use) and respecting the priestly celibacy.

Ceremonies of Ordination Including Time and Place: From the beginning the diaconate, priesthood, and episcopate were conferred with special rites and ceremonies (4.2.2). Though in the course of time there was considerable development and diversity in different parts of the Roman Church, the imposition of hands and prayer were always and universally employed; they are seen as dating from apostolic times, and Scripture references made by Roman Catholic theologians to support this claim are: Acts 6:6; 13:3; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6. These passages are the only ones in the New Testament that, at least on the surface, speak of imposition of hands as a rite linked to the induction to an office or a function in the church (3.5). None of these connect the imposition of hands with a known church office and there is no command to ordain in those passages, but rather a recurring affinity with contemporary Jewish practices.

We have seen from this survey that the Roman Catholic view of ordination is a very complex and intricate matter with numerous rules and distinctions. While it is possible to be directly ordained (i.e. without previous experience of 'ordination') to a minor or lower order, *successive ordination* is very common (i.e. the practice of being 'ordained' for successive offices and gradually rising in the hierarchy).

4.2.4 Women's Ordination in the Roman Catholic Church

In *The Hidden History of Women's Ordination* (2007), Gary Macy argues convincingly, based on research by several scholars, that in the first twelve hundred years of Christianity, women were ordained for various roles in the church. He uncovers references to the ordination of women in papal, episcopal and theological documents of the time, and to the rites for these ordinations which have, against all odds, survived.

The insistence among scholars that women were not ordained, Macy shows, is based on a later definition of ordination, one that would have been unknown in the early Middle Ages. In the early centuries of Christianity, ordination was, according to Macy, understood as the process and the ceremony by which one moved to any new ministry in the community. In the early Middle Ages, women served in at least four central ministries: *episcopa* (bishop), *presbytera* (priest), deaconess and abbess.⁹⁵²

The ordinations of women continued until the Gregorian reforms of the eleventh and twelfth centuries radically altered the definition of ordination.⁹⁵³ These reforms not only removed women from the ordained ministry, but also attempted to eradicate any memory of women's ordination in the past. Thus, if the concrete examples now known through the historical sources are few, in reality they were many more.

As noted in various contexts above, the political conflicts in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the rediscovery of Roman law through the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, and the vigorous development of a corresponding Code of Canon Law for the church contributed to a big change. In order to protect the power of the Roman church, unifying it and making it strong, God's gift of grace came to be expressed in two types of official power: (a) the power of the orders (administration of the

⁹⁵² G. Macy, *The Hidden History of Women's Ordination*, 2007, pp. 49-88.

⁹⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-48.

sacraments), and (b) the power of jurisdiction (teaching of Catholic doctrines).⁹⁵⁴ The power of priesthood was now transmitted in a physical manner in the ceremony of ordination by the bishop who stands in the unbroken succession from Christ to the apostles, to the Roman Catholic bishops, to the priests.

In the early Roman Catholic Church, Macy argues, 'the power to perform the rituals of the church was not the essential purpose of ordination'. The question of who had the power to perform rituals was less important than whom the community had chosen as their ministers. However, the change in the twelfth century meant that 'the central role of the priest as administrator of the sacraments became essential to ordination only with its redefinition'. Thus, it is not surprising that 'just at the time when this redefinition was taking place, and for the same reasons, the power of the priesthood was expanding to take over almost all ritual roles in the church'. While female clergy had been ordained and received the gift of God's grace and therefore preached, heard confessions, and baptised, the important function reserved for the priest now became the power to celebrate the mass. The theological teaching that changed the definition of ordination was the view that 'only a properly ordained priest could make the risen Christ present in the Eucharist'.⁹⁵⁵ Together with the doctrine of the transubstantiation (the change of the bread and wine into Christ's real body and blood), and the duly ordained priest alone being able to perform this rite, the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 summed up a long development and elevated ideas from Cyprian, Augustine and others to absolute truth, which eliminated women from serving as clergy in the church.⁹⁵⁶

Under influence from Roman law, the concept of 'the power of jurisdiction' also became central. The right to teach Catholic doctrine had to be controlled and was therefore centralised in the ordained priesthood.

Macy offers several examples of women who before this change had served as bishops, presbyters, deaconesses and abbesses.⁹⁵⁷ The question this generates in the current Seventh-day Adventist discussion is whether or not a biblical re-definition of ordination would open the way for ministry without regard to gender.

⁹⁵⁴ K. Wilson Underwood, *Protestant and Catholic: Religious and Social Interaction in an Industrial Community*, 1957, pp. 100-101.

⁹⁵⁵ G. Macy, *The Hidden History of Women's Ordination*, 2007, pp. 41-42.

⁹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁹⁵⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 49-88.

4.3 The Orthodox View of Ordination

Some brief observations will be included here on ordination in the Orthodox Churches. There are countries within the Trans-European Division where this church is predominant, such as Cyprus, Greece, Macedonia, and Serbia, and there are scattered Orthodox churches particularly in Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, resulting from Russian Orthodox influence. The Seventh-day Adventist view of ordination may easily be tainted by such a predominant view, as evidenced by the former union president in the Yugoslavian (now South-East European) Union in his recent book on ordination.⁹⁵⁸

Ordination in the Roman Catholic Church has many points of similarities with the practice in the Orthodox and in some ways also the Anglican churches (4.4.2). Thus, for example, some Eastern Orthodox churches recognise Roman Catholic ordinations while others re-ordain Roman Catholic clergy who convert. However, both the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches recognise Orthodox ordinations. On the other hand, the Roman Catholic Church has never recognized Anglican orders as valid, while Anglicanism recognises Roman Catholic and Orthodox ordinations; hence, clergy converting to Anglicanism are not re-ordained. This latter point is important to bear in mind when we deal with Anglicanism and the *King James Version* of the Bible.

The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches had a common history until the split in 1054, when they went separate ways.⁹⁵⁹ Practices used before that time would overlap, although terminology would be Latin in the Roman-Catholic and Greek in the Orthodox Church tradition. It should be noted that the Orthodox tradition includes an emphasis to preserve the boundaries marked out by the fathers and to keep the tradition received.⁹⁶⁰ The Orthodox Church is divided into various national churches, such as the Greek, Russian, and Serbian Orthodox Churches, but in the area of sacraments there is a common view.

⁹⁵⁸ J. Lorencin, *Priestly Ministry in the Old and New Testament: Should Women Be Ordained?*, 2012, p. 7.

⁹⁵⁹ See the outline in N. H. Baines, *The Byzantine Empire*, 1952, pp. 74-98. Note the strong eastern influences on Rome in A. D. 590-732, according to A. J. Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes*, 2007.

⁹⁶⁰ Cf. N. H. Baines, *The Byzantine Empire*, 1952, p. 75.

The following summary of the characteristic elements of Orthodox ordination is based on Sebastian Dabovich's classical work on the Ritual, Services and Sacraments of the Orthodox Church.⁹⁶¹

1. Terminology: The distinction between ordination to major and minor orders is apparent in the name of 'ordination': the term *cheirothesia* ('imposition of hands') is used for ordinations to the minor orders (subdeacon, reader, and in some traditions, cantor) in contrast to *cheirotomia* ('laying on of hands') for ordinations of deacons, presbyters (priests), and bishops. The bishops are referred to as being 'consecrated' rather than 'ordained'.

2. The apostolic succession: This is a fundamental concept for ordination ('the sacrament of priesthood' or 'orders'). The term 'orders' is explained partly by the belief that all ordained clergy are ordained by bishops who were ordained by other bishops, and so on, going back to bishops ordained by the apostles who were ordained by Christ. Thus the *traditional* assumption of an initial ordination by Christ of the apostles is essential, together with the view of 'their successors in an uninterrupted line'. However, the Gospels do not evidence a ritual 'ordination' of the apostles by Christ.

3. Degrees of the priesthood: The sacrament (or 'holy mystery') called 'orders' is also explained by *various degrees of the priesthood*. There are three orders of ordination, namely bishop, presbyter, and deacon (cf. the current Seventh-day Adventist order of gospel minister, local elder, and deacon/deaconess). Bishops and presbyters are 'priests' and, in common speech, the 'priest' is the term used, while 'presbyter' is used only in rites of ordination and other places where a technical and precise term is required. The following are 'simply titular names attached to one or the other of the three ministers first mentioned, in accordance with their lesser or greater commission and the influence of their position in the Church': subdeacon, archdeacon, archpriest, archimandrite, archbishop, and patriarch.

4. The office of a deacon is to assist a bishop and a priest in church work, at the services, and at the sacraments.

5. The office of a priest is to conduct all church work and services, and to hallow six of the seven sacraments, *but in dependence on the bishop*.

⁹⁶¹ S. Dabovich, *The Holy Orthodox Church: The Ritual, Services and Sacraments of the Orthodox Church*, 2009, pp. 83-90.

6. The office of a bishop is to oversee and preside in a whole district or diocese of the church, and he has the power to impart to others, by the imposition of his hands, the gift and grace to hallow sacraments. A bishop in his official administration depends on no man, being responsible before a General Council of the Church only. The supreme authority of the whole church is expressed in her general councils. It is believed that 'the Holy Spirit abides in the body of Christ, which is the Orthodox Apostolic Church, and governs her; therefore, no man can be head of the Church – but Jesus Christ'. In this statement, one notices a clear stand against the authority of the Pope in the Roman Catholic Church.

7. Authority to administer the sacraments: Only a person ordained to the priesthood may administer most sacraments, e.g., hearing confessions or validly celebrating the eucharist.

8. Qualifications and obligations: Married men are ordained to the priesthood as well as celibates. The ministers of the church are forbidden to occupy themselves with worldly business and they may not use their office as a means to obtain wealth. Actions that are expressly forbidden are: usury, illicit buying and selling, worldly traffic (i.e. trade, traffic or other pursuits of gain), and the exaction of money for spiritual ministrations. On the other hand, the people are obliged to support the priests and minister to their physical necessities and comfort.

9. Ceremony: Bishops, priests, and deacons are ordained during the divine liturgy by the bishop, who is usually assisted by several priests. According to Orthodox teaching, the process of ordination begins with the local congregation; but the bishop alone, who acts in the name of the universal church, can complete the action (this was also the practice in the early history of the Roman Catholic Church). The ordination of those entering the major orders takes place within the altar, while those entering the minor orders are ordained within the nave of the church.

For the major orders, the ordinands are presented before the holy table: by deacons if he is to become a deacon, by priests if he is to become a priest, and by bishops if he is to become a bishop.

A deacon exclaims: 'Give the command!' which means 'Give the blessing!' Another deacon exclaims the same but puts the words in the plural. Then the first deacon exclaims: 'Command, Most Reverend Master!' The first command is addressed to the faithful orthodox and pious Christians, who also make up the church, asking for their consent, which proves that the candidate is worthy. The

command, 'Most Reverend Master', is addressed to the officiating bishop, 'petitioning his apostolic blessing in transmitting the priestly gifts of the Holy Spirit, once and forever deposited in the Church, and preserved by the uninterrupted Apostolic Succession'.

A detailed system of vestments is used in the consecration, each part having symbolic functions. For example, the *epitrachillion* (double stole) tells the bishops and the priests of 'the double outpouring upon them of the gifts of grace which correspondingly requires of them particular labours in their sacred office'.⁹⁶²

The priestly ordination is understood as an induction to an office of great dignity: 'The priest, when he ministers, stands with the Angels, glorifies God with the Archangels, lifts up sacrifice to the heavenly altar on high, is joined as a Priest with Christ, renews our corrupt dust, restores the image of God' (St. Gregory the Divine). A priest is 'the Angel of the Lord' and despising him when he speaks according to his office, is to despise God (St. John Chrysostom).⁹⁶³

4.4 Ordination in the Reformation and Some Protestant Churches

The Protestant Reformation was a reaction against the Roman concept of ministry, in which ordination played a central part. In the fifteenth century the sacraments of the Roman Church had received surpassing importance: 'they were the doorway to salvation; and the bishops, the stewards of the Spirit of God, held the keys. Ordination was one of the seven sacraments of the church and was one of the three that were believed to imprint an indelible character on the soul, and hence being non-repeatable. The imposition of hands played a crucial role in the rite.'⁹⁶⁴

Since ordination conveyed the spiritual authority to administer all the sacraments and gave the power of binding and loosing, it formed the basis for the whole sacramental system of the Roman Catholic Church. It separated clergy from laity and divided the church into hierarchic orders based on the patterns of pagan Rome. Thus, together with the decree of Pope Gregory the Great that the church *is* the kingdom, and that there is no salvation outside the church, Roman *ordinatio*

⁹⁶² Ibid., p. 89; cf. the symbolism of the various other vestments involved (ibid., pp. 88-89).

⁹⁶³ Ibid., p. 90.

⁹⁶⁴ M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, p. 52.

ensured the supreme spiritual power of the Roman clergy. The abuse of this power, coupled with social and historical factors, paved the way for the Reformation.⁹⁶⁵

4.4.1 The Magisterial Reformers

While the Reformation was a powerful objection to the Roman Catholic ordination, it came through many different voices and with various perspectives. The teachings of the so-called ‘magisterial reformers’ developed over time and was implemented in the church in view of practical considerations and at times even by the external authority of civil government. Ordination was then practised in different ways by the denominations that grew out of the reformers’ theological teachings, due to political, social, and cultural circumstances.

The ‘Magisterial Reformation’ is a phrase that ‘draws attention to the manner in which the Lutheran and Calvinist reformers related to secular authorities, such as princes, magistrates, or city councils’, i.e. ‘the magistracy’.⁹⁶⁶ While the Radical Reformation rejected any secular authority over the church, the Magisterial Reformation argued for the interdependence of the church and secular authorities, i.e. ‘the magistrate had a right to authority within the church, just as the church could rely on the authority of the magistrate to enforce discipline, suppress heresy, or maintain order’.⁹⁶⁷

In the presentations that follow, we are building on the structure and content of the prominent Seventh-day Adventist church historian Norskov Olsen’s survey.⁹⁶⁸

4.4.1.1 Martin Luther. Martin Luther addresses ministry and ordination on various occasions during his entire life.⁹⁶⁹ Not being a systematic theologian and most of his writings arising out of special situations complicates the study of his views and a degree of selection and interpretation is needed.

Luther provided a non-sacramental view of ordination based on the priesthood of all believers and the importance of the divine call and the commission for ministry (service) by the church. Practical considerations influenced his implementation of

⁹⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 53.

⁹⁶⁶ A. McGrath, *Historical Theology*, 1998, p. 159.

⁹⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁶⁸ V. Norskov Olsen, *Church, Priesthood and Ordination*, 1990, pp. 153-164.

⁹⁶⁹ R. Müller, ‘The Concept of Setting apart for the Ministry during the Time of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century’, 2013, p. 18.

ordination, however, and several ‘sacramental’ or ‘semi-sacramental’ aspects of the ceremony continued.

Ordination Is Not a Sacrament. Early in his protest (1520), Luther attacked the Roman sacramental view of ordination and said that, concerning ordination, ‘the church of Christ knows nothing; it is an invention of the church of the pope. Not only is there nowhere any promise of grace attached to it, but there is not a single word said about it in the whole New Testament. Now it is ridiculous to put forth as a sacrament of God something that cannot be proved to have been instituted by God’.⁹⁷⁰ Accordingly, for Luther, ordination, if it is anything at all, is nothing else than ‘a certain rite whereby one is called to the ministry of the church’.⁹⁷¹ Luther also points out that the ‘indelible character’ which the Roman sacrament is supposed to convey is a ‘fiction’, and ministers can either be ‘suspended temporarily, or permanently deprived of their office’.⁹⁷²

Ordination and the Priesthood of Believers. Luther noted that ‘the Catholic view of ordination was founded upon an unbiblical distinction between clergy and laity’.⁹⁷³ He stated that the act of ordination was designed ‘to set up a seed bed of implacable discord, by which clergy and laymen should be separated from each other farther than heaven from earth ... Here, indeed, are the roots of that detestable tyranny of the clergy over the laity ... Here Christian brotherhood has perished, here shepherds have been turned into wolves, servants into tyrants, churchmen into worse than worldlings’.⁹⁷⁴

The call to the ministry is for Luther connected with the doctrine of the priesthood of the believers. Through baptism and faith ‘every Christian possesses the word of God and is taught and anointed by God to be priest’.⁹⁷⁵ Writing in 1523 to the senate and people of Prague concerning the ministry, Luther says:

First, regard as an unmovable rock that the New Testament knows of no priest who is or can be anointed externally. If there are such, they are imitators and idols. *There is neither example nor command nor a simple word in Gospels or Epistles of the apostles in support of this vanity.* They are established and brought in only by the kind of human invention of which Jeroboam once was guilty in Israel’s history [1 Kings 12:32-33]. For a priest,

⁹⁷⁰ Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works* (henceforth abbreviated *LW*), vol. 36, 1959, p. 107.

⁹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

⁹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁹⁷³ G. Damsteegt, ‘The Magisterial Reformers and Ordination’, 2013, p. 5.

⁹⁷⁴ *LW* 36, p. 112.

⁹⁷⁵ *LW* 39, p. 309.

especially in the New Testament, was not made but was born. He was created, not ordained. He was born not indeed of flesh, but through a birth of the Spirit, by water and Spirit in the washing of regeneration [John 3:6-7; Titus 3:5-6]. Indeed, all Christians are priests, and all priests are Christians. Worthy of anathema is any assertion that a priest is anything else than a Christian. For such an assertion has no support in the Word of God and is based only on human opinions, on ancient usage, or on opinions of the majority, any one of which is ineffectual to establish an article of faith without sacrilege and offense, as I have sufficiently shown elsewhere.⁹⁷⁶

Luther then points out that those who are so-called priests are 'ministers chosen among us' and the ministry is 'committed to them, yet with our common consent, they would then know that they have no right to rule over us except insofar as we freely concede it ... All that they do is done in our name; the priesthood is nothing but a ministry'.⁹⁷⁷

While all Christians are priests of equal standing, having the same power in respect to the Word and the sacraments (baptism and holy communion), yet that power no one should use on his own initiative for 'what is common property of all, no individual may arrogate to himself, unless he is called'.⁹⁷⁸ Luther says in 1520:

Because we are all priests of equal standing, no one must push himself forward and take it upon himself, without our consent and election, to do that for which we all have equal authority. For no one dare take upon himself what is common to all without the authority and consent of the community.⁹⁷⁹

Luther pointed to the *equality* of all believers. Quoting Romans 12:10; 1 Peter 5:5; and Luke 14:10, he stated: 'Among Christians there shall be no authority; rather all are alike subject to one another ... Among Christians there is no superior but Christ himself and him alone.'⁹⁸⁰ Luther explained the role of elected church leaders as follows: 'The government is not a matter of authority or power, but a service and an office, for they are neither higher nor better than other Christians. Therefore, they should impose no law or decree on others without their will and consent.'⁹⁸¹ The function of church leaders is defined in the following terms: 'Their ruling is rather nothing more than the inculcating of God's word, by which they guide Christians and

⁹⁷⁶ LW 40, pp. 18-19 (emphasis supplied).

⁹⁷⁷ LW 36, pp. 112-113.

⁹⁷⁸ LW 36, p. 116.

⁹⁷⁹ LW 44, p. 129.

⁹⁸⁰ LW 45, pp. 116-17.

⁹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

overcome heresy. As we have said, Christians can be ruled by nothing except God's Word, for Christians must be ruled by faith, not with outward works.⁹⁸²

Luther's concept of the priesthood of believers grew out of his Christology and soteriology: 'Because we all have one baptism, one gospel, one faith, and are all Christians alike; for baptism, gospel and faith alone make us spiritual and a Christian people'.⁹⁸³ In turn, because of the *ekklesia* being the priesthood of believers, the official ministry is a *representative* ministry, also referred to as the *delegated* or *transferral* ministry.⁹⁸⁴

Importance of the Call and the Commission. Luther referred to ordination as a ritual and not as a sacrament, because 'the call, rather than the ceremony of laying on of hands, is decisive and confers the role of ministry'.⁹⁸⁵ His view has been summarised as follows:

Luther denied the idea that ritual ordination at the hands of a bishop is a necessary prerequisite for holding and exercising the office of the ministry. *A call, not ritual ordination, is the only theological prerequisite for holding the office of the ministry.* A ceremony using prayer and the imposition of hands may be used to install ministers in their congregations (as a public affirmation of their call), but it is optional and repeatable each time the ministers change congregations.⁹⁸⁶

Luther was however not strict in the sense that he abolished ordination altogether. This opened the way for his successors to keep some kind of ceremony of ordination, which opened up for the danger of, again, losing the biblical understanding of ordination. For Luther, neither having ceremonial ordination nor lacking it made any difference. The real issue was instead *the nature of the office* rather than the presence or absence of ordination. His emphasis was entirely on *the call and commission to the office of the ministry*. Thus, 'it is *not ordination* which creates or validates the office, but *the appointment*'.⁹⁸⁷

According to Luther, 'the main task of the church's leadership is to teach God's Word'.⁹⁸⁸ He says: 'Inasmuch as the office of preaching the gospel is the greatest of all and certainly is apostolic, it becomes the foundation for all other

⁹⁸² Ibid.

⁹⁸³ LW 44, p. 127.

⁹⁸⁴ V. Norskov Olsen, *Church, Priesthood, and Ordination*, 1990, p. 155.

⁹⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁸⁶ Richard W. Schoenleber, *The Sovereign Word: The Office of the Ministry and Ordination in the Theology of Martin Luther*, 1983, pp. 169-170 (emphasis supplied).

⁹⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 156; italics supplied.

⁹⁸⁸ G. Damsteegt, 'The Magisterial Reformers and Ordination', 2013, p. 7.

functions which are built upon it, such as the offices of teachers, prophets, governing, speaking with tongues, the gifts of healing and helping, as Paul directs in 1 Corinthians 12.⁹⁸⁹ In this sense, 'the public ministry of the Word, by which the mysteries of God are made known' ought to be established (by holy ordination) 'as the highest and greatest of the functions of the church, on which the whole power of the church depends, since the church is nothing without the Word and everything in it exists by virtue of the Word alone'.⁹⁹⁰

Ritual Ordination Not Necessary. In Luther's endeavours to establish an evangelical church prior to 1535, 'ritual ordination was not required for holding the office of ministry, and no regular method of ordination for the new church was introduced until 1535'.⁹⁹¹ Concerning the rite of imposition of hands, it is clear that Luther believed that during ordination nothing is imparted by the laying on of hands, except the symbol of acceptance and recognition.⁹⁹²

Formal Ordination Required. Due to Luther's dependence on civil authorities, he felt compelled to adapt his view of the practicality of the ordination rite, although he did not change his fundamental theological view. This led to ordination continuing in some form in the Protestant churches emanating from Luther.

In the spring of 1535, the Elector of Saxony, Johann Friedrich I (1503-1554) mandated that formal ordination was to be a prerequisite for holding ministerial office in his territory. Candidates for the ministry were in the future to be examined and ordained by the theological faculty in Wittenberg. This initiative has been interpreted to mean that the Elector 'doubted that unordained people were truly able to hold and exercise the office of the ministry' and that 'he evidently saw a theological necessity for ritual ordination and so finally mandated ritual ordination as a legal precondition for holding the office of the ministry'.⁹⁹³

⁹⁸⁹ LW 40, p. 36.

⁹⁹⁰ LW 40, p. 11.

⁹⁹¹ R. W. Schoenleber, *The Sovereign Word: The Office of the Ministry and Ordination in the Theology of Martin Luther*, 1983, pp. 194-195.

⁹⁹² LW 40, p. 40.

⁹⁹³ R. W. Schoenleber, *The Sovereign Word*, 1983, pp. 240-241.

The pastor of the city church in Wittenberg, Johann Bugenhagen, at first opposed the new practice, because he felt that, at least, the lay elders of a calling congregation should consecrate their new pastor.⁹⁹⁴

Luther, however, accepted Johann Friedrich's mandate without changing his theological concept of ritual ordination as long as the preaching of the Word could be enhanced. Norskov Olsen points out that 'he seems to have been motivated pragmatically' and that he 'saw the mandate as an opportunity by which a needed ministry could be developed with higher morality, better education, and reasonable salary, and a recognised and respected professional and social status in society', which was 'a worthy goal but to be achieved with the assistance of the secular powers'.⁹⁹⁵ Luther had noted that 'Saxony was facing a major threat from false teaching in its parishes and that the ordination mandate was a proper step towards rooting out false teaching since it gave Wittenberg control over the quality of new pastors'.⁹⁹⁶

Thus for pragmatic reasons and to deal with false teachings, Luther accepted the advantages in a governmentally enforced necessity of ordination for holding the office of the ministry in Saxony. Yet, his theology of ordination was not modified.

Qualifications for Ordination. In Luther's view, a person chosen to be an elder/bishop needs to have the qualifications of being 'blameless, upright, and holy'. These qualifications are viewed from a practical perspective and are not sacramental. Every Christian is 'holy', and for a leader to be 'holy', it means to be 'zealous in holy things, so that he teaches, lives, and prays in a holy way, and does other works which pertain to holiness, in his teaching and meditating'.⁹⁹⁷

Based on 1 Timothy 5:22, Luther warns the church not to ordain anyone too quickly. Although this may not reflect the best interpretation of this passage (see 3.3.7.7 above), Luther's point is that it is the 'integrity' and 'internal holiness of a person and a gift of God' that would urge the church to 'confirm', 'entrust', and 'recognise' a person for a leadership function.⁹⁹⁸

⁹⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 241.

⁹⁹⁵ V. Norskov Olsen, *Church, Priesthood, and Ordination*, 1990, p. 158.

⁹⁹⁶ R. W. Schoenleber, *The Sovereign Word*, 1983, pp. 246-247.

⁹⁹⁷ LW 29, p. 30.

⁹⁹⁸ LW 28, pp. 354-355; cf. G. Damsteegt, 'The Magisterial Reformers and Ordination', 2013, p. 11.

Process of Biblical Ordination. Luther underlines that it is the church that appoints church leaders.⁹⁹⁹ The earliest ordination among Luther's followers took place in Wittenberg in 1525. It has been noted that 'in the earlier stages of the Reformation there was not a great need for an order of ordination service, because the leaders were former priests'.¹⁰⁰⁰ To this we should add, however, that, as noted above, Luther did not see the ritual of ordination as necessary before 1535, because the divine calling and the appointment by the church were the key elements in selecting leaders. As ordination became needed for practical reasons, however, by the injunction of the Elector of Saxony in 1535, Luther produced in 1539 a two-page guideline for the ordination of gospel ministers. Ordination is seen here as 'an official *congregational* action, resembling somewhat the traditional Induction, but bearing no resemblance whatever to the Roman Order for Ordination. The sense of "good order" only required the designation of proper persons to conduct the Examination and the "Ordination".¹⁰⁰¹ Luther's guidelines had the following main content,¹⁰⁰² and in our presentation we include in parenthesis our comments on its relationship with the Roman Catholic tradition (cf. 4.2 above):

1. Examination: The candidates are examined either on the same day or on the preceding day. (This was the practice in the Roman Catholic ordination, too.). If found worthy, after being admonished through preaching, prayer shall be made by the church for them and for the whole ministry, namely, that God would deign to send labourers into his harvest, and preserve them faithful and constant in sound doctrine against the gates of hell, etc.

2. Kneeling before the altar and invocation of the Holy Spirit: The ordinator and the ministers or presbyters of the church, with the ordinands in the midst beside the ordinator, shall kneel before the altar. (The role of the altar was also a feature in the Roman ordination and may be seen as a lingering example of a sacramental view.) The choir shall sing: *Veni sancte spiritus*. (Responsory singing was also part of the Roman ordination ritual.)

⁹⁹⁹ LW 22, p. 480.

¹⁰⁰⁰ G. Damsteegt, *ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁰⁰¹ *Works of Martin Luther with Introduction and Notes*, transl. Paul Z. Strodach, Philadelphia: Muhlenburg Press, vol. 6, p. 237.

¹⁰⁰² The outline follows the translation of P. Z. Strodach in: *Works of Martin Luther*, vol. 6, pp. 237-239. It was accessed on 2013-03-01: <http://beggarsallreformation.blogspot.co.uk/2011/11/works-of-martin-luther-with.html>.

3. Recital of Bible passages: The ordinator ascends the step and turns facing the ordinands, reciting 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Acts 20:28-31. (Admonitions including compilations of biblical texts outlining the duties of the cleric were also a firm feature in the Roman rituals.)

4. Address and vow: The ordinator addresses the ordinands in these or similar words: 'Herein you hear, that we are called to be and are to be bishops, that is, preachers and pastors; that we do not have committed to us the watching over geese and cows, but the church, which God purchased with his own blood; that we should feed it with the pure word of God, also be on guard and see to it that wolves and sects do not burst in among the poor sheep. For this reason he calls it a precious work. Also personally we should live decently and honourably, and manage and oversee our home, wife, children, and servants in a Christian way. Are you now ready to do this?' The ordinand answers: 'Yes'. (A vow of obedience was also part of the Roman ritual of ordination.)

5. Imposition of hands and prayer: With the hands of the whole presbytery imposed on their heads, the ordinator says the Lord's Prayer. (The imposition of hands was central also in the Roman ritual and charged with symbolic meaning. Prayers were equally central in the Roman version.)

Then if he desires, or time permits, he may add this prayer, which explains more fully the three parts of the Lord's Prayer:

'Merciful God, heavenly Father, thou hast said to us through the mouth of thy dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the harvest is great, but few are the labourers; pray the Lord of the harvest that he will send labourers into his harvest. Upon this thy divine command, we pray from our hearts, that thou wilt give thy Holy Spirit richly to these thy servants, together with us and all those who are called to serve thy word, so that with great crowds we may be thy evangelists, remain true and firm against the devil, the world, and the flesh, to the end that thy name may be hallowed, thy kingdom increased, thy will be done. Do thou also at length restrain and bring to an end the detestable abomination of the pope, Mohammed, and other sects which blaspheme thy name, hinder thy kingdom, and oppose thy will. This is our prayer — (because thou hast commanded, taught, and assured) — O thou graciously hear, even as we believe and trust, through thy dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost in eternity. Amen.' (Imposition of hands and prayer were essential in the Roman ritual of ordination.)

6. Address: The ordinator addresses the ordinands with the words of 1 Peter 5:2-4 concerning feeding and caring for the flock of Christ.

7. Benediction: The ordinator blesses them with the sign of the cross, and uses these or other words: 'The Lord bless you that ye may bring forth much fruit'. After this each one shall return to his own place. And if it is desired, the church may sing: 'Now we pray the Holy Spirit'. (The sign of the cross is a sacramental remnant from the Roman form of ordination. A benediction was included also in the Roman ritual.)

This ended, the presbyter sings: 'Our Father'. And the ordinands shall commune first with the church, then presently, the ordinator if he desires, or he may commune with them or after them.

It is clear that this ritual for ordination is a great change from the Roman sacrament. It has been remarked that 'Roman ordination was a sacrament, Lutheran ordination a rite. Roman ordination admitted a man to a special order or rank within Christendom. Lutheran ordination gave him certain functions. Roman ordination conferred on the candidate the power to conduct the sacrifice of the mass. Lutheran ordination set him aside for the work of preaching and administering the sacraments.'¹⁰⁰³ The key areas of change concern what the ordination rite confers and the function of the ordained minister. It is essentially *the view of the church* that explains the differences between Luther's view and the Roman Catholic view of ordination, based on the Bible as sole authority.

However, in Luther's ritual there are still several formal elements that were the same as or similar to the Roman version: the examination on the previous day, the performance of ordination near the altar, the arrangement of the candidates within the circle, the participants being, besides the ordinator, the ministers or presbyters of the church (not lay people), the oath of obedience, the prayers being central, the responsory singing, the admonitions containing compilations of texts from the Bible that describe the duties of the cleric, and the actions or gestures, such as kneeling, the sign of the cross, and imposition of hands. Moreover, despite Luther's theology of the priesthood of all believers, what is missing in his ritual is (a) the participation of the congregation in publicly approving the candidate (which was included in the early versions of the Roman rite), and (b) the clergy (i.e. ministers or presbyters of the church) are the only participants who lay their hands on the ordinands.

¹⁰⁰³ As stated by Ulrich Leopold, editor of the 53rd volume of *Luther's Works (LW)*, in LW 53, pp. 124-126.

In conclusion, therefore, while the theology has changed significantly, (a) the formal performance of the ritual still resembles many parts of the Roman ritual, and there is therefore danger that *church formalism* may live a life of its own and either preserve or give rise to deficient understandings that still contribute to separate clergy and laity; (b) this may easily preserve a certain *sacramentalism*. (c) The fact that the laity did not play any significant role in the ceremony – they neither openly approved nor disapproved of the candidate and were excluded from participating in the ceremony, which was performed by ministers or elders in the church, could lead in the direction of continued separation of clergy and laity.

A few observations will be included here on Luther's view of the gender issue in pastoral ministry.¹⁰⁰⁴ From what we have said up to now about Luther's view of ministry, office and ordination, we would expect him to be open for women in pastoral ministry. Given the priesthood of all believers embracing also women and the duty of every Christian believer being that of proclaiming the first and highest article of faith – the word of salvation by grace alone through faith – and the fact that women are as endowed with natural talents and spiritual gifts as men are to serve as evangelists, prophets or teachers (cf. Eph. 4:11), the logical conclusion would be that women would be included among those who are ordained. Luther's response is however more complicated than that.

A short answer by Luther would be 'No' to women's ordination. However, we need to understand why he would say so, and to recognise various exceptions to this position.

Luther's view seems in some ways contradictory: 'on one hand [he] wanted already very early women and children to preach, as he already writes in a tract to one of his staunchest opponent, Jerome Emser, and on the other hand he forbids women to preach publicly'.¹⁰⁰⁵ He says: 'Thus Paul forbids women to preach in the congregation where men are present who are skilled in preaching, so that respect and discipline may be maintained.'¹⁰⁰⁶ Thus, Luther draws a distinction between women preaching the Word in private settings or the home, on one hand, and in a public setting on the other. He said: 'Every father of a family is a bishop in his house

¹⁰⁰⁴ We are indebted to Richard Müller for our description of Luther's views here: R. Müller, 'The Concept of Setting apart for the Ministry', 2013, pp. 18-21.

¹⁰⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 18 (with references to Luther's works).

¹⁰⁰⁶ *Ibid.*; 'The Misuse of the Mass (1521)', LW 36, pp. 151-152.

and the wife is a bishopness. Therefore, remember that you in your homes are to help us carry on the ministry.¹⁰⁰⁷

Other statements show that in Luther's understanding he acknowledged that women can function as pastors under certain circumstances. He said:

Therefore, order, discipline, and respect demand that women keep silent when men speak; but if no man were to preach, then it would be necessary for the women to preach. For this reason we are firmly convinced on the basis of the Holy Scriptures that there is not more than one office of preaching God's word, and that this office is common to all Christians; so that each person may speak, preach, and judge, and all the rest are obliged to listen.¹⁰⁰⁸

A year after he made this statement he repeats the same point: 'If it happened, however, that no man could be secured for the office, then a woman might step up and preach to others as best she could; but in no other instance.'¹⁰⁰⁹

On another occasion, as Luther argued with 'the papists', he says that even they recognise that women can baptise in cases of emergency:

To baptize is incomparably greater than to consecrate bread or wine, for it is the greatest office in the church – the proclamation of the word of God. So, when women baptize, they exercise the function of priesthood legitimately, and they are not doing it as a private act, but as a part of the public ministry of the church which belongs only to the priesthood.¹⁰¹⁰

Müller appropriately underlines in his study that it is vital to note that in this case, 'a woman functions officially as one who holds the office of the minister'. He adds that 'Luther also refers to a case where only women are present, and he says that also here a woman is authorised to preach'.¹⁰¹¹

Luther's comments on 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 help us understand his thinking. The reason he gives for Paul's instruction that women should be quiet in church is the need for peace and harmony: 'There would be disturbance if some woman wished to argue against the doctrine that is being taught by a man.'¹⁰¹² On the basis of this explanation and the content of the passage, it appears that the headship of

¹⁰⁰⁷ 'Ten Sermons on the Catechism (1528)', LW 51, p. 138 (cf. R. Müller, 'The Concept of Setting apart for Ministry', 2013, p. 19).

¹⁰⁰⁸ 'The Misuse of the Mass (1521)', LW 36, pp. 151-152 (cf. R. Müller, 'The Concept of Setting apart for Ministry', 2013, p. 19).

¹⁰⁰⁹ 'Sermon for Pentecost Tuesday (1522)', LW 2.1, p. 375 (cf. R. Müller, 'The Concept of Setting apart for Ministry', 2013, p. 19).

¹⁰¹⁰ 'Concerning the Ministry (1523)', LW 40, p. 23 (cf. R. Müller, 'The Concept of Setting apart for Ministry', 2013, p. 23).

¹⁰¹¹ R. Müller, 'The Concept of Setting apart for Ministry', 2013, p. 19.

¹⁰¹² 'Lectures on 1 Timothy (1528)', LW 28, pp. 267-268.

the husband in the family and the submission of his wife, 'as the Law says' (14:34), had implications for how married men and women behaved in public, according to Paul. This would be an issue where the Mosaic Law was strictly applied in a community, but one may ask whether or not this issue remains in a modern, egalitarian society where to prohibit a woman to speak publicly in the church would be the cause of 'disturbance' and loss of peace and harmony.

Luther would also speak highly of women and their capabilities. He often praises his wife Katharina von Bora and how she is managing the extended household at the Black Cloister in Wittenberg. He also often mentions great biblical personalities, among them women who had the gift of prophecy, such as Miriam, Hulda, Philip's daughters and the daughters of the prophecy of Joel 3:28-32.¹⁰¹³ Thus, Luther seems to make a distinction between women ministering the word of God under the direct influence of the Holy Spirit and the gift of prophecy (which is God's work and cannot therefore be opposed) and the formal holding of an office of authority in the church (which seems to reflect the principle of male headship and female submission and is connected with a culturally based understanding of order and harmony).

Luther even acknowledged the good administrative qualities and management of some women. And here he is not only thinking of his wife, but of some great biblical personalities like Queen Candace, Huldah, Deborah, and Jael. Having referred to these outstanding women, he asks why Paul would deprive women of the administration of the Word. His attempt at an answer contains reference to 1 Timothy 2:11-15. When Paul talks of 'woman' in this passage, he actually means 'wife', the counterpart of 'man' referring to 'husband'. He then concludes that where men and women are joined together, there the men, not the women should have authority. It is necessary, therefore, to evaluate to what extent Paul's views of women's role in public life, in a context where their husbands are present and integrated, has to do rather with husband/wife relationships in marriage rather than ordination (we have addressed this issue at some length in 3.1.3 above).

4.4.1.2 John Calvin. It is in many ways easier to summarise Calvin's view of ministry and ordination, since he was a systematic theologian and organised his

¹⁰¹³ 'The Misuse of the Mass (1521)', LW 36, pp. 151-152 (cf. R. Müller, 'The Concept of Setting apart for the Ministry', 2013, p. 20).

thoughts on Christian faith in his famous *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (final French edition in 1560).¹⁰¹⁴

Calvin dealt in his *Institutes* with ordination in the context of the *government* of the church, and, overall, he subsumes his view of ordination in his view of the *church*. His fundamental positions are included in the following statement: 'The diversity of ministries is founded upon the corresponding diversity of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and upon the priesthood of all Christians'.¹⁰¹⁵

Calvin made serious efforts to deduce, from the fragmentary data in the Pauline epistles, a logical classification of the different ecclesiastical functions.¹⁰¹⁶ But he soon had to make a breach in his principle of the permanent value of the biblical data. He concluded that among the ministries referred to in Ephesians 4:11 – apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers – only the last two, i.e. pastors and teachers, have 'an ordinary office in the church', and the first three 'have no longer any reason to exist'. Based on this subjective and not compelling interpretation of the passage, he introduced the distinction between 'permanent and transitory ministries'.¹⁰¹⁷ However, as pointed out by Wendel, 'Calvin never arrived at an absolutely rigid and definitive classification. Generally, as in the Ecclesiastical Ordinances of 1541, he distinguished four ministries; those of the pastors, the doctors (teachers), the elders, and the deacons. But a passage in his *Institutes* of 1543, which was maintained up to and in the last edition, make no mention of more than three ministries. The most important ministries are those of the pastors and doctors, to whom are entrusted the teaching of the doctrine and the explanation of the holy books. Moreover, Calvin sometimes confuses these two ministries in one person, as they were in fact fused together in his own case, in Strasbourg and in Geneva. Everything depends, after all, upon each person's capabilities'.¹⁰¹⁸

Besides the pastors and the doctors, Calvin ranges two purely 'lay' ministries, namely, the elders and the deacons. The principal occupation of the elders was the exercise and discipline in the name of the Church, and they had to be elected by the people. Sometimes the elders are at the same time pastors and elders in a technical

¹⁰¹⁴ R. Müller, 'The Concept of Setting apart for the Ministry', 2013, p. 22.

¹⁰¹⁵ F. Wendel, *Calvin*, 1969, p. 303.

¹⁰¹⁶ *John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion* (henceforth abbreviated as *Institutes*), H. Beveridge (transl.), 1957, IV.3, pp. 2-9.

¹⁰¹⁷ Wendel, *Calvin*, 1969, p. 303 with references.

¹⁰¹⁸ *Ibid.*

sense. Concerning the deacons, they are named by election and their task is 'the care of the poor'.¹⁰¹⁹

Through four specialised ministries, the church is equipped to discharge its essential functions: preaching and the administration of the sacraments, the teaching of the doctrine, the maintenance of good order by discipline, and the exercise of charity. The question is by what principle the church is imposing its prescriptions upon the members? Calvin answered by the concept of 'spiritual power' which belongs to the church. It consists of three parts: 'the doctrine, the jurisdiction, and the faculty of ordaining laws and statutes.'¹⁰²⁰ This, of course, could lead many to think that he was reverting to the Roman doctrine of the ecclesiastical power, but Calvin sought to explain why this was not the case.

Ordination is Not a Sacrament. Like Luther, Calvin attacks the Roman Catholic sacramental idea of ordination, which is supposed to confer upon the recipient the power of 'offering sacrifice to appease God'.

Ordination and the Priesthood of Believers. The Protestant Reformers' common view of the priesthood of believers was in a special way brought into practice by Calvin in his Presbyterian reform of church organisation. Calvin emphasised that as believers in Christ 'we are all priests'.¹⁰²¹

Importance of the Call and the Commission. For Calvin, too, the call is the primary factor, not the rite of ordination.¹⁰²² He distinguishes between, on one hand, the formal and external call that relates to the public order of the church, and, on the other, 'that secret call of which every minister is conscious before God', that is, 'the good testimony of our heart, that we undertake the offered office neither from ambition nor avarice, nor any other selfish feeling, but a sincere fear of God and desire to edify the church.'¹⁰²³

Thus, the choice of a church leader was to be made on dual grounds: heavenly and earthly at the same time. By his Spirit, Christ confers the gifts appropriate to each, but ordinands have no right to set themselves to work of their own volition, so it is an indispensable condition that they have been regularly elected by the community. However, due to Calvin's 'aristocratic tendency', the election by

¹⁰¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 304-305.

¹⁰²⁰ Ibid., pp. 305-310.

¹⁰²¹ *Institutes*, VI.xix.28.

¹⁰²² Ibid.

¹⁰²³ *Institutes*, IV.iii.10-11. Cf. V. Norskov Olsen, *Church, Priesthood, and Ordination*, 1990, p. 156.

the congregation meant in reality a simple approval of a choice that had already been made by the pastors and the Magistracy.¹⁰²⁴

Calvin was not as clear as Luther on the point that the minister receives his mandate from the whole church. He was concerned about order but was also driven by an institutional concept of 'church', to which we will return later. He said: 'We see, then, that ministers are legitimately called according to the word of God, when those who may have seemed fit are elected on the consent and approbation of the people. Other pastors, however, ought to preside over the election, lest any error should be committed by the general body either through levity, or bad passion, or tumult.'¹⁰²⁵ Norskov Olsen points out that 'the call of the church and a service of commission were the essential elements in the instalment to a church office', and adds that 'the laying on of hands was not always practiced in Geneva'.¹⁰²⁶

Ritual Ordination Not Necessary. 'Calvin found biblical support for the laying on of hands in connection with the installation ceremony of a minister. Luther did the same. However, Calvin, like Luther, looked at it as a mere rite or ceremony, "agreeing unto order and comeliness", but having "of itself no force or power".'¹⁰²⁷

While Calvin agreed with Luther that it is the divine call that is of primary importance, he nevertheless accepted the ceremony of ordination as an act exemplified in the New Testament (Acts 13:1-3). He said:

In sum, this is the end why they laid their hands on Barnabas and Paul, that the Church might offer them to God, and that they might with their consent declare that this office was enjoined them by God; for the calling was properly God's alone, but the external ordaining did belong to the Church, and that according to the heavenly oracle.¹⁰²⁸

Calvin uses the terms 'office' and 'ordaining' here, although the 'ordination' recorded in Acts 13:1-3 was not for a church office but for a special missionary task (see 3.5.5 above). Calvin's acknowledgement of the existence of an 'ordination' ceremony in the New Testament did not prevent him, however, from recommending that imposition of hands should not be used. The reasons are: the danger of 'superstition', 'scandal', and the 'infirmity of the times'. Thus, speaking of a candidate for the ministry, Calvin writes:

¹⁰²⁴ V. Norskov Olsen, *ibid.*, p. 304.

¹⁰²⁵ *Institutes*, IV.iii.15. Cf. V. Norskov Olsen, *ibid.*, pp. 156-157.

¹⁰²⁶ V. Norskov Olsen, *ibid.*, p. 157.

¹⁰²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰²⁸ J. Calvin, *Commentary upon The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 1, 1957, p. 238.

As to the manner of introducing him, it is good to use the imposition of hands, which ceremony was observed by the apostles and then in the ancient Church, providing that it take place without superstition and without offence. But because there has been much superstition in the past, and scandal might result, it is better to abstain from it because of the infirmity of the times.¹⁰²⁹

Formal Ordination Required. Calvin had at first found that there was biblical support for formal ordination ceremonies by the church, but he had no problem with abstaining from imposition of hands due to considerations of order (as noted above). In Geneva, the civil authorities decided that ordination would only be done by prayer and a sermon on the pastoral functions. Since these were details of minor importance, Calvin gave way.¹⁰³⁰ Calvin seems to have thought that the ceremony of imposition of hands might be misunderstood and be taken as a rejection of the priesthood of all believers, as an artificial elevation of the minister, and display too much of the notion of the absolutism and indelibility of the Roman ordination. He seems to have laid aside the imposition of hands, thinking that the practice could be resumed when the church had a clearer understanding of its purpose.¹⁰³¹

It is significant to note that, while Luther gave way to pressure from the civil authorities and *accepted* ordination with imposition of hands, Calvin gave way to such pressure and did *not include* imposition of hands. The civil authority in Geneva had a stronger *anti-sacramental and biblical view* than the Elector of Saxony.

Later on, however, Calvin was influenced by another Reformer, Martin Bucer, who had a favourable view of the ritual. Partly through his connections with Anglicanism, Bucer had an interest in reconciliation with Rome and sought to restore lawful ordination (see 4.4.1.3 below). Bucer said about ordination in his *De Regno Christi* (1550):

We have spoken above about the laying on of hands for those who are consecrated to the sacred ministry of the Church; although we have no express command of the Lord, we have nevertheless the examples of the apostles (Acts 6:6; 13:3) and also a precept to Timothy (1 Tim. 4:14; 5:22), so that it is entirely likely that the apostles used that sign for the ordination of ministers of the Church at the command of the Lord. On this account, this ceremony was observed in the early churches quite religiously, and in the Reformed churches it has now been devoutly recalled into use.¹⁰³²

¹⁰²⁹ J. Calvin, *Theological Treatises*, in: Calvin, *Theological Treatises*, vol. 22, 1954, p. 59.

¹⁰³⁰ V. Norskov Olsen, *Church, Priesthood, and Ordination*, 1990, p. 159.

¹⁰³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

¹⁰³² W. Pauck (ed.), *Melanchton and Bucer*, 1969, p. 239.

Calvin agreed with Bucer and in his *Institutes* he endorsed the ritual of imposition of hands by referring to the common texts in the New Testament. 'He takes it for granted that pastors, teachers, and deacons were consecrated in this way'. He admits that 'there is no fixed precept concerning the laying on of hands', but he considered it a *useful symbol* by which 'the dignity of the ministry should be commended to the people, and he who is ordained, reminded that he is no longer his own, but is bound in service to God and the Church'.¹⁰³³ We note that Calvin's view was taken under the influence of *practical and political needs* – Bucer's attempt at reconciliation with Rome and involvement with Anglicanism and imposition as a useful symbol to commend the dignity of the ministry to the people – while recognising that there is *no fixed biblical precept* concerning imposition of hands.

Process of Ordination. Calvin discusses the process of ordination in four steps: Who is to be ordained? How is the appointment made? By whom are ministers chosen? What is the form of the ordination ceremony?¹⁰³⁴

1. Who is to be ordained? Calvin builds on Titus 1:7 and 1 Timothy 3:1 and concludes that 'none are to be chosen save those who are of sound doctrine and holy lives, and not notorious for any defect which might destroy their authority and bring disgrace on the ministry'.¹⁰³⁵ The ordinand must be called, and Calvin distinguishes between the 'secret call' and the 'external call'. The former is between the individual and God. The latter is by the church, based on examination of the candidate.

Mixed with his biblical emphasis, Calvin at times expressed himself about the ordained clergy in ways that are reminiscent of the Roman tradition. For example, he says (*Institutes*, IV, iii, 2): 'By the ministers to whom [Christ] has committed this office, and given grace to discharge it, he disperses and distributes his grace to the Church ... Whosoever therefore studies to abolish this *order* and kind of government ... or disparages it as a minor importance, plots the devastation, or rather the ruin and destruction of the churches.' The essence of his view of the church is the church as an *institution* and the clergy as its *governors*.

¹⁰³³ *Institutes*, IV.iii.16. Cf. V. Norskov Olsen, *Church, Priesthood, and Ordination*, 1990, p. 160.

¹⁰³⁴ G. Damsteegt, 'The Magisterial Reformers and Ordination', 2013, pp. 24-27.

¹⁰³⁵ *Institutes*, p. 323.

Concerning women, Calvin prohibits women's ordination for pastoral ministry on the basis of the biblical passages in 1 Corinthians 14:34-37 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15.¹⁰³⁶ We have analysed these passages in 3.1.3.2 above.

2. How is the appointment made? It is done with great reverence and solicitude, being earnest in fasting and prayers (Acts 13:1-3), imploring from God the spirit of wisdom and discernment.¹⁰³⁷

3. By whom are ministers chosen? Calvin builds on Acts 13:1-3 and 14:23 in setting out the dual election, by God and by the congregation, and summarises his view by saying: 'We see, then, that ministers are legitimately called according to the Word of God, when those who may have seemed fit are elected on the consent and approbation of the people.' He adds that 'other pastors, however, ought to preside over the election, lest any error should be committed by the general body either through levity, or bad passion, or tumult'.¹⁰³⁸ Concerning the person laying hands on the minister, Calvin says: 'It was not the whole people, but only pastors, who laid hands on ministers, though it is uncertain whether or not several always laid their hands.'¹⁰³⁹ We have seen, however, that beyond doubt the Greek text in Acts 6:6 and 13:3 does not indicate if the prayer and imposition of hands were offered by the congregation, or the apostles/teachers and prophets, or both (see 3.5.4 and 3.5.5 above).

4. What is the form of the ordination ceremony? Calvin says that 'it is certain, that when the apostles appointed any one to the ministry, they used no other ceremony than the laying on of hands. He thinks that this form was derived 'from the custom of the Jews, who, by laying on of hands, in a manner presented to God whatever they wished to be blessed and consecrated'. Therefore, the apostles, by laying on of hands, 'intimated that they made an offering to God of him whom they admitted to the ministry'.¹⁰⁴⁰ The purpose of the rite is to show the people 'the dignity of the ministry' and to remind the one who is ordained that 'he is no longer his own, but is bound in service to God and the church'.¹⁰⁴¹

¹⁰³⁶ J. Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, vol. 39, pp. 467-469; vol. 43, pp. 49-53.

¹⁰³⁷ *Institutes*, p. 323.

¹⁰³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 325-326.

¹⁰³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 326.

¹⁰⁴¹ *Ibid.*

5. What authority is given the ordained pastor? Calvin made a clear distinction between the office of the teacher and that of the pastor. The former is a teacher of theology, while the latter governs the church. He understands the pastoral minister as continuing the office of the apostles and assigns to this office the primary function of safeguarding the unity of the church. He says that there is an 'order' in which the Lord 'has been pleased that his church should be governed'. This government should be exercised and administered 'solely by his word'. Since he is not visible in the church, he 'uses the ministers of men, by making them, as it were, his substitutes, not by transferring his right and honour to them, but only doing his own work by their lips'.¹⁰⁴² The function of the pastor is summarised as follows:

When our Lord sent forth the apostles, he gave them a commission (as has been already said) to preach the Gospel, and baptize those who believed for the remission of sins. He had previously commanded that they should distribute the sacred symbols of his body and blood after his example (Matt. 28:19; Luke 22:19). Such is the sacred, inviolable, and perpetual law, enjoined on those who succeed to the place of the apostles – they receive a commission to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments ... In short what the apostles did to the whole world, every pastor should do to the flock over which he is appointed.¹⁰⁴³

Evaluating Calvin's view, we note that: (a) while turning to the biblical basis for ordination, he compromised his findings for practical reasons and provided interpretations that were not only subjective but also governed by current needs; (b) the church has spiritual power and authority, and its ministers are therefore both governors and preachers, and the ordination must be dignified and solemn; (c) in the interest of order and discipline, the selection and nominating of ordinands is made by the ministers and the Magistracy, leaving less influence to the congregation; (d) the Roman separation of clergy and laity remains; (e) by emphasising the pastor's role to govern and keep unity, modelling the pastoral office after the apostles, and distinguishing the apostles from the rest of the disciples, Calvin maintains in the church both class-distinction and the hierarchy that is prominent in the Roman Church, albeit on different theological grounds.

It has also been pointed out that Calvin's ecclesiology 'perpetuated the sacramental vision of the church'.¹⁰⁴⁴ Echoing Cyprian, he stated:

¹⁰⁴² *Institutes* IV, iii, 1.

¹⁰⁴³ *Institutes* IV, iii, 6.

¹⁰⁴⁴ D. Jankiewicz, 'The Problem of Ordination', 2013, pp. 24-25.

For there is no other way to enter into life unless this mother [the church] conceive us in her womb, give us birth, nourish us at her breast, and lastly, unless she keep us under her care and guidance until ... we become like angels ... Furthermore, away from her bosom one cannot hope for forgiveness of sins or any salvation ... It is always disastrous to leave the church.¹⁰⁴⁵

For Calvin, therefore, there is no salvation outside the church, since ‘the blessings of salvation can be obtained only through the Church, since God in dispensing His grace binds Himself absolutely to the ordained means, the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments.’¹⁰⁴⁶ Jankiewicz summarises Calvin’s position here as follows:

At the core of Calvin’s ecclesiology, as in Cyprian, lies deep concern for the unity of the Church ... While it is incontestable that Calvin subscribed to the Protestant principle of the priesthood of all believers, he continued to believe in the elevated status of the Christian ministry, although not entirely in a Catholic sense. ‘The Church’, he wrote, ‘can be kept intact only if it be upheld by the safeguards in which it pleased the Lord to place its salvation’. These ‘safeguards’ were the Christian ministers who governed the church and who were, for Calvin, ‘the chief sinew by which believers are held together in one body.’ The vestiges of Catholic sacramentalism thus hampered the Magisterial Reformers’ emphasis on the priesthood of all believers and their attempts to establish alternate governmental structures. As a result, the Reformers continued, albeit inadvertently, the Catholic tradition of separating clergy from laity through the act of ordination. Consequently, the elevated status and prestige of the Christian ministry was never fully repudiated, and ordination continued to separate clergy and laity into two separate classes of believers.¹⁰⁴⁷

Possibly, Calvin’s emphasis on doctrinal purity and strict doctrinal discipline, which led him to favour the pastors and teachers (ministers) as the core of the church, prevented him from implementing more fully the biblical concept of the priesthood of all believers. External and internal threats against the unity of the church would have had its contribution, too.

In view of the effort by James White to introduce ordination and church organisation to the Sabbatarian Adventists, it is noteworthy that there is a connection between White’s strong emphasis on ‘gospel order’ and Calvin’s view that (a) there is an ‘order’ in which the Lord ‘has been pleased that his church should be

¹⁰⁴⁵ *Institutes*, IV.i.4.

¹⁰⁴⁶ L. Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines*, 1937, p. 238.

¹⁰⁴⁷ D. Jankiewicz, ‘The Problem of Ordination’, 2013, p.25.

governed', and that (b) this government should be exercised and administered 'solely by his word' (see 4.6.1 below).

Calvin's view of women's ordination as pastors is similar to Luther's – on one hand he makes very clear prohibitive statements, on the other hand he notes exceptions. Thus, based on passages like 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15, he argues that Paul is 'excluding [women] from the office of teaching, which God has committed exclusively to men'. He then adds:

If anyone challenges this ruling by citing the case of Deborah and other women of whom we are told that God at one time appointed them to govern the people, the obvious answer is that God's extraordinary acts do not annul the ordinary rules by which he wishes us to be bound. Thus, if at some time women held the office of prophets and teachers and were led so by God's Spirit, he who is above all law might do this, but being an extraordinary case, it does not conflict with the constant and accustomed rule.¹⁰⁴⁸

In view of this statement, one may of course ask if *God's actual and recorded actions* do not have a higher dignity than a Bible interpreter (like Calvin) or a Paul who gives what may be temporary advice to churches for the sake of order in a particular situation. One may also ask if Calvin's claim regarding ordination in general, namely that it is part of 'the ordinary rules by which [God] wishes us to be bound' is consistent with the actual content of Scripture (see our biblical study in chapter 3 above). However, Calvin also knows of exceptions to what he considers to be the rule. In his commentary on 1 Corinthians 14:34, Calvin says:

Let the women keep silence in the churches ... But we should understand this as referring to the situation where things can be done in the regular way, or where the church is well established. For a situation can arise where there is a need of such a kind as calls for a woman to speak. But Paul is confining himself to what is fitting in a properly organised congregation.¹⁰⁴⁹

Another point is that many reformers, including both Luther and Calvin, used the concept of *adiaphora* in their attempts to reform the church. It refers to the fact that there are things which have to be changed in the church, while there are other things of less importance which do not have to be changed here and now. The latter are *adiaphora*. (As Seventh-day Adventists, we are used to hear from other Christians that the matter of the Sabbath is an *adiaphoron*.)

¹⁰⁴⁸ J. Calvin, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*, vol. 10, p. 217.

¹⁰⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 300.

Thus, according to one recent theologian,¹⁰⁵⁰ Calvin is putting the question of women being silent in the church in the context of women having to cover their heads. The issue then becomes a matter of decorum, an *adiaphoron*, a thing outside of the moral law and mandate which is not absolutely forbidden for all times.

A wider context for this concept is Calvin's understanding of order. On this point, he does not proceed from a *theology of the call to ministry* but rather from a *theology of creation*. He speaks of the cosmic order which God decreed and commanded. This is God's 'ordination'. The second order is operating at the human level in the civil and political life and in the life of the church. According to Calvin, neither the cosmic order nor the human order is static. Even though he finished the creation of the world after six literal days, he is still active by sustaining the world and intervening in the affairs of mankind. Calvin views the church not so much as a huge institution, but more as God's history with his people leading them back, restoring them to his original purpose, which they lost through the fall, and therefore he is always active and faces new situations. Calvin distinguishes in other words between what is spiritual and fundamental and what is civil and political. The latter is fluctuating and modifiable, an *adiaphoron*. While women can spiritually and fundamentally receive the gifts of the Spirit and be ministers of the Word, Calvin in his day still upheld the subordination of women to men in the civil and political sphere, but he conceded that there where women inherit the throne they may rule nations.¹⁰⁵¹

Calvin also conceded that the church may decide to change what it does and how. In his first edition of *Institutes* (1536), in the last chapter on Christian freedom, he speaks about decorum and order, including the issue of the silence of women in the church:

Establishing here no perpetual law for ourselves, we should refer the entire use and purpose of observance to the up-building of the church. If the church requires it, we may not only without any offense allow something to be changed but permit any observance previously in use among us to be abandoned.¹⁰⁵²

This line of thought is in keeping with Ephesians 4:11-13, where all the offices in the church are given by Christ for the purpose of 'preparing God's people for works of

¹⁰⁵⁰ J. Dempsey Douglas, *Women, Freedom, and Calvin*, 1985, pp. 21-25.

¹⁰⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44. The summary given here is to a large extent based on R. Müller, 'The Concept of Setting apart for the Ministry', 2013, pp. 28-29.

¹⁰⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 46.

service, so that the body of Christ may be built up'. We add here the reflection that, if women's ordination in some parts of the world builds up the church, then a change of rule may be the right thing to do.

4.4.1.3 Martin Bucer. Calvin was greatly influenced regarding ordination by another of the Magisterial Reformers, Martin Bucer. This reformer was later invited to England (1549) and became professor of divinity at Cambridge. In his major work *De Regno Christi* (1550), dedicated to King Edward VI, Bucer makes reference to the laying on of hands, and the reformers in general would no doubt agree with his statement:

We have spoken above about the laying on of hands for those who are consecrated to the sacred ministry of the Church; although we have *no express command of the Lord*, we have nevertheless *the examples of the apostles* (Acts 6:6; 13:3) and also *a precept to Timothy* (1 Tim. 4:14; 5:22), so that it is *entirely likely* that the apostles used that sign for the ordination of ministers of the Church at the command of the Lord. On this account, this ceremony was observed in the early churches quite religiously, and in the Reformed churches it has now been devoutly recalled into use.¹⁰⁵³

It is noteworthy that Bucer summarises what all the Bible-based reformers knew, namely that, for imposition of hands, we have 'no express command of the Lord', we have 'examples of the apostles and a precept to Timothy, and that 'it is entirely likely that the apostles used that sign for the ordination of ministers'. It is significant that the bottom line in his argumentation is the reference to the tradition of the early church, which is an entirely Roman view of authority.

On the whole, however, Bucer was not primarily concerned with how ministers were chosen, whether by prince, bishop, or congregational choice, so long as they exhibited the qualifications set out in Timothy and Titus.¹⁰⁵⁴

Partly through his connections with Anglicanism, Bucer was 'interested in reconciliation with Rome'¹⁰⁵⁵ and was concerned with 'the restoration of lawful ordination'.¹⁰⁵⁶ Consequently, as pointed out by David Wright, he gave due weight to the candidate's *call* and the *choice* of the church; at the same time his model for an ordination prayer included the assertion 'by laying on of hands with the word of the

¹⁰⁵³ F. Wendel, *Calvin*, 1969, p. 71 (emphasis supplied).

¹⁰⁵⁴ W. Pauck, *Melanchton and Bucer*, 1969, p. 239.

¹⁰⁵⁵ M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, p. 59.

¹⁰⁵⁶ D. Wright, *Martin Bucer*, 1972, p. 254.

Lord and prayer, the gift of the Holy Spirit is by these means conferred'.¹⁰⁵⁷ This view is directly related to the traditional Roman understanding of imposition of hands.

Thus, we see here that the break by the Reformation with Rome was certainly not consistent. This should come as no surprise to Seventh-day Adventists. Not only regarding the Sabbath, but other biblical doctrines as well, the Reformation was incomplete and needs to continue.

4.4.1.4 Imposition of Hands in the Early Reformed Churches. The last sentence in Bucer's statement quoted in 4.4.1.3 above suggests that the rite of imposition of hands was not in consistent use at the time. In fact, even after Bucer made his statement, it is clear that opinions were very much divided on this rite in the Reformation. Looking at the Reformed Churches in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for example, J. L. Ainslie makes this observation on imposition of hands:

It may be said at the outset that opinions have differed in most of the Churches, both Reformed and others, as to the rite of being essential in ordination or otherwise. Some have held it to be an absolute essential, while others have considered it better omitted, or, at the most, not essential, but only to be used as a helpful outward indication of ordination.¹⁰⁵⁸

Among the different views, we may note here that, for example, the Scottish First Book of Discipline speaks against the imposition of hands:

The rite continued to be regarded as unnecessary from thirty to forty years after the Church had been instituted, even though it might come to be practised more and more, and though there were those latterly who laid more stress on it as the years ran on towards the seventeenth century.¹⁰⁵⁹

In 1581 the Second Book of Discipline 'definitely authorised the rite, though this is to be noted, the wording does not indicate any enforcement of it in ordinations. And it was not enforced. Ministers were admitted freely, in what proportions one cannot say, without the use of the rite, and without their ordination being thought irregular'.¹⁰⁶⁰

¹⁰⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 263; cf. M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, p. 59.

¹⁰⁵⁸ J. L. Ainslie, *The Doctrines of Ministerial Order in the Reformed Churches of the 16th and 17th Centuries*, 1940, p. 159.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 177.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 176.

The Reformed Church in Holland also found the rite unnecessary. In its Canons of 1577 'the omission of laying on of hands in ordinations' was decreed, but at the Synod of Dort, in 1619, the imposition of hands was stipulated.¹⁰⁶¹

Where the imposition of hands was practiced there were variations regarding who should lay hands. 'The chief differences in the agents of ordination will be that sometimes the act of ordination will be performed by one minister, in other cases by several ministers, and in other cases by ministers and laymen.'¹⁰⁶² Norskov Olsen makes the observation at this point that 'the different arrangements reflect the different interpretations of the meaning of the laying on of hands (and by whom) in the Old and New Testaments'.¹⁰⁶³ Thus, the conclusion can be made that the Bible needs to be the basis for a decision and not the church traditions, even if it follows the Protestant Reformation.

The history of the church, therefore, suggests that the biblical teaching on 'ordination' is not clear and causes the churches challenges. Norskov Olsen points out several instances where no ordination was carried out at all: In the Lutheran Reformation, Philip Melancton was not ordained. In the case of Calvin, no formal ceremonial ordination took place. The same was the case with Guillaume Farel (1485-1565), a close colleague of Calvin. In Scotland, Andrew Melville (1545-1622), 'although occupying some of the highest positions in the Church, yet apparently had never been ordained with the imposition of hands'. We are also informed that Robert Bruce, 'the leading minister in Edinburgh had been admitted to the Ministry without the rite, and without any question ... not requiring any ceremonial of imposition of hands' (ca. 1587).¹⁰⁶⁴

Norskov Olsen's conclusions, with which we agree, are twofold: (a) 'The call and the appointment are of basic significance, and not any formal ceremonial rite.' (b) 'God, under specific circumstances, calls people to unique tasks; the call – through the Holy Spirit – being obvious to the persons themselves and all concerned.'¹⁰⁶⁵ He further notes that, through the writings of Bucer and Zwingli, Peter Martyr (1500-1562), an Italian member of the Augustinian order, who sympathised with the Protestant Reformation, who became a teacher in Protestant

¹⁰⁶¹ Ibid., p. 177.

¹⁰⁶² Ibid., p. 185.

¹⁰⁶³ V. Norskov Olsen, *Church, Priesthood, and Ordination*, 1990, p. 161.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 161-162.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 162.

England and Switzerland, and who achieved a very respected position in the Reformation, made the following statement:

Since the Ministry, alike under the ancient Law as according to the Gospel, has been fulfilled without imposition of hands, this imposition is not absolutely necessary ... One does not need to be astonished, if, amidst the vices and corruptions of the Church, God, in order to restore it, has caused to arise vocations out of the ordinary ... The Holy Spirit is not bound to external ceremonies.¹⁰⁶⁶

4.4.1.5 Conclusions. In the Reformation, ordination lost its sacramental status and was liberated from Roman ecclesiology. However, it continued to function as a means to regulate authority in the state-church coalition; it continued to be used by the state to govern the people and preserved the gap between clergy and laity. Fears for the doctrinal and organisational unity of the church were also influential in preserving an authoritative body of leaders inducted by ordination.

What happened through the Reformation was that 'the locus of succession of authority shifted from the person of the ordinand to the preaching of the Word, but only an ordained man was permitted to preach. The sacraments, two in number now instead of seven, had, at least in part, lost their sacramental character, but authority to administer them was still reserved for the ordained minister'.¹⁰⁶⁷ Theologically, the magisterial reformers recognised that there was no difference of essence in the priesthood of the ministers and other believers. Thus, 'the structure had changed but little; only because the number of the sacraments had been reduced and their significance been redefined were the clergy any less powerful than their Roman counterparts'.¹⁰⁶⁸

Since ordination no longer conferred a *character indelibilis* on the ordinand, the power of the clergy centred less on him personally, and more on his function as an authority on the Word. The theological education of the minister became a central concern, as a means of equipping him for ministry.

The historical material reviewed above allows us only one conclusion, namely that *the breach with Rome was not consistent in the Reformation*. This has been very appropriately worded by Warkentin:

¹⁰⁶⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 163.

¹⁰⁶⁷ M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, pp. 61-62.

¹⁰⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

Nevertheless, an aura of special divine favour continued to rest on the 'minister', for he claimed a distinct and subsequent 'call' from the Holy Spirit over and above the general call to ministry issued to all the elect of God at salvation. A sacramental standing might be denied to ordination, but there is no doubt that the idea of 'character' had been retained. Many ministers believed 'once ordained always ordained', and clergy and laity alike saw ordination as the *sine qua non* for the administration of the ordinances. In the new freedom and flowering of Renaissance culture, the ordained ministry, whether Catholic or Protestant, lost its monopolistic control of 'church order'. The pluriformity of the visible church could no longer be contained within the great hierarchical structures of the past.¹⁰⁶⁹

This conclusion should not come as a surprise to Seventh-day Adventists. We see ourselves as part of the continuing reformation of the Christian Church, and we have many examples of how the Protestant Reformation was incomplete.¹⁰⁷⁰

Luther recognised that it is *not ordination* which creates or validates the office, but *the appointment*. If this recognition had been further explored in the Bible, an abundant material for guidance to the church would have become apparent, as we have seen in chapter 3 above.

While the theology of ordination changed in the Reformation, elements of the practice of ordination did not. For example, in Luther's guidelines for ordination, (a) the formal performance of the ritual still resembles many parts of the Roman ritual, and there is therefore danger that *church formalism* may live a life of its own and either preserve or give rise to deficient understandings that still contribute to separate clergy and laity; (b) this may easily preserve a certain *sacramentalism*. (c) The fact that the laity did not play any significant role in the ceremony – they neither openly approved nor disapproved of the candidate and were excluded from participating in the ceremony, which was performed by ministers or elders in the church, could lead in the direction of continued separation of clergy and laity.

It was noted in Martin Bucer's position which influenced Calvin and the Anglican and Reformed traditions, that while there is meagre biblical support for ordination with imposition of hands, the bottom line is, again, the reference to the tradition of the early church, which is an entirely Roman view of authority.

Ordination was relegated to the area of *adiaphora*, and the biblical support for the continued practice was not stringently heeded. While it was acknowledged that the Bible did not include any commands from the Lord regarding ordination, and

¹⁰⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 62.

¹⁰⁷⁰ See, for example, on the Sabbath, R. Müller, *Adventisten – Sabbat – Reformation*, 1979.

merely some examples of the apostles could be adduced with the conclusion that it is 'likely' that they used imposition of hands for ordination, the needs for (a) order, government, unity, and true teaching, and (b) safeguarding the people's respect for the dignity of ministry, resulted in a continued church tradition in which ordination with imposition of hands prevailed.

For a theology and practice of ordination in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, therefore, the conclusion must be made that the Bible needs to be the basis for a decision and not the church traditions, even if a certain practice follows the Protestant Reformation.

4.4.2 Anglicanism and Methodism

We noted in passing previously, that ordination in the Roman Catholic Church had points of similarities with the practice in the Anglican churches. Both the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches recognise Orthodox ordinations. On the other hand, the Roman Catholic Church has never recognized Anglican orders as valid, while Anglicanism recognises Roman Catholic and Orthodox ordinations; hence, clergy converting to Anglicanism are not re-ordained. While the Roman Catholic Church, through a papal bull issued in 1896, declared that all Anglican ordinations are 'utterly null and utterly void', many Anglican church leaders have argued that the required references to the sacrificial priesthood never existed in many ancient Latin Rite ordination liturgies, or in certain Eastern Rite ordination liturgies that the Roman Catholic Church considered to be valid. After *Vaticanum II*, 1962-1965, the two traditions of ordination were however brought closer, but the Anglican ordination of women for the priesthood has put a stop to this development.

This is of some significance for the present study, because the terminology and concept of ordination in the Anglican Church has (a) impacted the King James Version (1611), which was held in high regard among the Seventh-day Adventist pioneers and is still generally a favoured Bible translation; (b) it has impacted ordination in Methodism, which came out of the Anglican Church, and many of the Seventh-day Adventist pioneers were former Methodists and carried their Methodist ordination and concept of ordination with them into Adventism (see 4.6.1 below).

The Anglican Church has gone through a complex history when it comes to ordination, especially in the time of the Dissenters.¹⁰⁷¹ At first, aspects of the Reformation in England was more politically than religiously motivated and did not achieve a fixed form until the *via media* between the Geneva reformers and Rome became the doctrinal system of Anglicanism during the reign of Elizabeth I. Anglican ordination rites were a synthesis from various sources. The forms were based on pre-reformation pontificals, and the interrogations and exhortations were largely derived from Martin Bucer. Most pre-reformation rites of ordination varied considerably, but ‘much pomp and formality were deemed to be fitting to such an auspicious occasion’.¹⁰⁷² From the beginning, the three orders of bishop, priest and deacon were believed to be the biblical offices of church government, and all were ordained to office with the imposition of hands. Minor orders did not receive this rite. Successive ordination was practised in that a deacon might after a year’s service qualify as a priest. And a priest might later become a bishop.

The Book of Common Prayer went through various revisions after 1549 when it was first issued. The edition from 1662 has remained the official prayer book of the Church of England, although in the 21st century, an alternative book called *Common Worship* has largely displaced the *Book of Common Prayer* at the main Sunday worship service of most English parish churches.

Drawing on the section on ‘ordination’ in *The Book of Common Prayer* and the Berkeley Statement (2002), the following is noteworthy:¹⁰⁷³

1. The bishops are held to be in *apostolic succession*.
2. The Anglican Articles of Religion hold that only baptism and the Lord’s supper are to be counted as *sacraments* of the gospel, and assert that other rites considered to be sacraments by such as the Roman Catholic and Eastern churches were not ordained by Christ and do not have the nature of a sacrament in the absence of any physical matter such as the water in baptism and the bread and wine in the eucharist.

¹⁰⁷¹ For a survey, see M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, pp. 67-75.

¹⁰⁷² *Ibid.* p. 69, note 63.

¹⁰⁷³ The presentation here follows *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church according to the Episcopal Church*, Certified by the Custodian of the Standard Book of Common Prayer, 1979 (accessed electronically through justus.anglican.org); P. Gibson (ed.), *Anglican Ordination Rites* (The Berkeley Statement: ‘To Equip the Saints’), 2002.

3. A 'baptismal ecclesiology' is promoted which means that *baptism is the fundamental sacrament* making all believers into a holy priesthood, called by God to serve in the world. However, there are also those who are called to specific ministries of leadership; these continue to be integral members of the body of Christ but with a calling to 'be signs of Christ's self-giving life and ministry to which all people are called by God and for which we are empowered by the Spirit'.¹⁰⁷⁴

4. While acknowledging that there is considerable variety of offices and functions in the New Testament, there is an acceptance of the tradition from the second century of the three offices of bishop, presbyter/priest, and deacon. Accordingly, the Anglicans talk of the ministry of the *episcopate*, the ministry of the *presbyterate*, and the ministry of the *diaconate*. *The Book of Common Prayer* states that 'since the time of the New Testament, three distinct orders of ordained ministers have been characteristic of Christ's Holy Catholic Church:

First, there is the *order of bishops* who carry on the apostolic work of leading, supervising, and uniting the Church.

Secondly, associated with them are the *presbyters*, or *ordained elders*, in subsequent times generally known as *priests*. Together with the bishops, they take part in the governance of the Church, in the carrying out of its missionary and pastoral work, and in the preaching of the Word of God and administering his holy sacraments.

Thirdly, there are *deacons* who assist bishops and priests in all of this work. It is also a special responsibility of deacons to minister in Christ's name to the poor, the sick, the suffering, and the helpless.¹⁰⁷⁵

5. *The Book of Common Prayer* provides rites for ordinations of bishops, priests and deacons. Only bishops may ordain, a heritage from Roman Catholicism. Within Anglicanism, three bishops are normally required for ordination to the episcopate, while one bishop is sufficient for performing ordinations to the priesthood and diaconate. The key elements of the rite for ordination of a bishop are:

(a) Entry accompanied by congregational hymns concluded by a prayer by the officiating bishop.

¹⁰⁷⁴ P. Gibson (ed.), *Anglican Ordination Rites*, p. 4.

¹⁰⁷⁵ *The Book of Common Prayer*, 1979, p. 510.

(b) The Presentation of the Candidate includes a request to the bishop made by priests and lay people from the diocese who ask for the candidate to be ordained, followed by a vow of the ordinand, and the approval of the congregation;

(c) The Ministry of the Word includes readings of Scripture by lay people and a sermon;

(d) Examination of the candidate by the bishop involving questions and answers, and a commitment being accepted by the officiating bishop;

(e) Consecration of the new Bishop involving prayer and laying on of hands;

(f) A Bible is presented to the Bishop-elect with words to feed the flock and be a faithful steward of God's Word and the sacraments;

(g) Peace bestowed on all by the officiating bishop.

The other ordination rites are somewhat simplified but include the same main features.

It is noteworthy that the Anglican Church, being an International Church, has begun to include in its considerations of ordination the idea of *cultural varieties in ministry*. Under the heading 'Cultural Shaping of Ministry', the Berkeley Statement from 2001 says:

The ways in which the church develops its theology, orders its life for mission, and takes up the threefold ordering of ministry interact with various aspects of our cultures. Cultures involve social styles, conceptual and material symbols, the technologies that sustain life, and languages, the arts, and media of communication. They include the way people are present to themselves, and each other in community, as well as the ways in which leaders emerge, are acknowledged, and exercise their relationships and roles within communities.

The gospel both affirms and challenges these cultural challenges of relationships and leadership. The historic threefold ordering of ministry will be embodied in different manners in various parts of the Anglican Communion, but ordained ministry must always be in service of the ministry of the whole people of God. The task of discerning which aspects of the culture offer patterns of leadership and ritual celebration that enable ordained ministers to serve the people of God belongs to the people of that culture. This work of inculturation is always carried out in faithfulness to the baptismal call to participate in Christ's ministry.¹⁰⁷⁶

The thoughts emulated here are only valid if mission and ministry are primary, and the formal regulation and induction to such ministry is secondary.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Ibid.

Moving on to Methodism,¹⁰⁷⁷ it is clear that John Wesley never stopped thinking of himself as an Anglican. He never consciously admitted to separating himself from his mother Church.¹⁰⁷⁸ Wesley's fidelity to the Church of England was boldly proclaimed for all to hear and read, but it would seem rather clear that his actions -- and especially his ordinations -- do, indeed, signal a radical change in Wesley's functional relationship with the Anglican Church.

John Wesley was only an ordained presbyter of the Church of England, so for him to ordain others to anything, let alone to an episcopal office, represents a clear and unmistakable break with the Anglican conception of episcopacy. As had been usually (but not always) asserted in the Anglican Church, only a bishop may ordain people into holy orders – this goes for the ordination of deacons and presbyters, as well as of bishops. And yet, on September 1, 1784, John Wesley did exactly that: he ordained Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey as deacons. The following day, he ordained them as 'elders' and he also ordained Thomas Coke to the office of the episcopacy. In the very least, through his ordinations for America, it can be said that Wesley was giving birth to a new creation for a new nation.

From as early as January 20, 1746, John Wesley's understanding of episcopacy can be said to be fundamentally different from the conventional Anglican position. His understanding stemmed from his reading of two extremely important books: Lord Peter King's *Account of the Primitive Church*¹⁰⁷⁹ and Edward Stillingfleet's *Irenicum*.¹⁰⁸⁰

It was from King's work that Wesley gained his understanding of the episcopacy as equal in order with the presbyter. Stillingfleet's address on the subject of episcopacy was more complete than King's, but from Stillingfleet it appears that Wesley learned that the episcopacy, while attested to in the Scriptures, is not *required* by the Scriptures. As Wesley wrote to James Clark in his letter of July 3, 1756:

I still believe 'the Episcopal form of Church government to be both scriptural and apostolical. ... But that it is prescribed in Scripture I do not believe. This opinion (which I once heartily espoused) I have been heartily ashamed of ever since I read Dr. Stillingfleet's *Irenicon*.'¹⁰⁸¹

¹⁰⁷⁷ Our summary has benefitted from G. S. Neal, 'Methodist Episcopacy: In Search of Holy Orders'.

¹⁰⁷⁸ J. K. Matthews, *Set Apart To Serve: The Role of Episcopacy In the Wesleyan Tradition*, 1985, p. 86.

¹⁰⁷⁹ N. Curnock (ed.), *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, vol. 3, 1938, p. 232.

¹⁰⁸⁰ J. Telford, *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, vol. 3, 1931, p. 182.

¹⁰⁸¹ *Ibid.*.

Additionally, Stillingfleet agrees with King that bishops are of the same order as presbyters, but of a different and higher office.¹⁰⁸² These two Anglican authors provided John Wesley with a firm theological grounding for his understanding of ministry and ordination. Combined with the fact of his extra-ordinary ministry, these concepts lead to the conclusion that he, himself, was a presbyter exercising the office of the 'scriptural *episkopos*'.

Wesley's motivation for ordaining was sacramental, namely, the fact of 'thousands of Christians who lacked the sacraments of baptism and holy communion'.¹⁰⁸³ His whole spirit was opposed to lay ministration of the ordinances, but to ordain them himself, when bishops refused to, was tantamount to separation from the established church.¹⁰⁸⁴

The Methodist Episcopal Church in America soon experienced splits due to inconsistencies in the functions of lay and ordained preachers.¹⁰⁸⁵ The New Connection seceded in 1797, over clergy-laity distinctions, as did the Free Methodists in 1836.¹⁰⁸⁶ The Wesleyan Methodists replied by tightening the structures, and, for example, imposition of hands in connection with ordination was given official sanction in 1836.¹⁰⁸⁷ However, it was largely unordained men who implemented Methodism in America, and Wesley himself had no illusions about the role of ordination in the spread of the Gospel:

Was Mr Calvin ordained? Was he either Priest or Deacon? And were not most of those whom it pleased God to employ in promoting the Reformation abroad, laymen also? Could that great work have been promoted at all in many places, if laymen had not preached?¹⁰⁸⁸

What interests us here is the way ordination was managed in North America before ca. 1860 when the Seventh-day Adventist Church was organised. This is a complex undertaking due to many splits in Methodist Church history.

In the United States of America, the Methodist Episcopal Church was organised in 1784. It grew rapidly and by 1844, it was the largest Protestant denomination in the country. In 1830, the Methodist Protestant Church split from the

¹⁰⁸² D. M. Campbell, *The Yoke of Obedience*, 1988, p. 60.

¹⁰⁸³ J. Telford (ed.), *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, vol. 7, p. 238.

¹⁰⁸⁴ J. K. Matthews, *Set Apart to Serve*, 1985, p. 83.

¹⁰⁸⁵ M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, p. 76.

¹⁰⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸⁷ James H. Rigg, *A Comparative View of Church Organizations: Primitive and Protestant*, 1893, p. 309.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Quoted in M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, p. 77.

Methodist Episcopal Church over the issue of laity having a voice and vote in the administration of the church, insisting that clergy should not be the only ones to have any determination in how the church was to be operated. In 1844, the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church split into two conferences because of tensions over slavery and the power of bishops in the denomination. The two general conferences, Methodist Episcopal Church (the northern section) and Methodist Episcopal Church (south), remained separate until 1939.¹⁰⁸⁹

The American Methodist model is an *episcopal* system loosely based on the Anglican model, as the Methodist Church arose from the Anglican Church. Methodists thus admit that they are ‘incorporated into an Anglican, Catholic tradition, where the special office as priest and the ordination has a more prominent place, without giving up the concept of all services or offices being functions of the whole’.¹⁰⁹⁰

In the Methodist tradition, an ‘elder’ (or ‘presbyter’ or ‘pastor’) is ordained to *word* (preaching and teaching), *sacrament* (administering baptism and the Lord's supper), *order* (administering the life of the church and, in the case of bishops, ordaining others for mission and ministry), and *service*. A ‘deacon’ is a person ordained only to word and service. Thus, ordination is performed for distinctly different offices with different tasks, which resembles the Seventh-day Adventist practice.

There is a strong commitment to the priesthood of all believers given to all at baptism. The universal ministry by all believers and the special offices that require ordination are seen as complementary to each other.

A summary of various sources on Methodist ordination gives the following data:¹⁰⁹¹

1. The bishop is elected by the majority of the Annual Conference and ordained by imposition of hands by a bishop.
2. The act of ordination for pastors and deacons is imposition of hands by those in authority to convey *authority* to the newly ordained person. Imposition of hands is about *giving* the Holy Spirit. The bishop ordains the pastor.

¹⁰⁸⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Methodist_Church.

¹⁰⁹⁰ L. Svanberg, ‘Metodistkyrkan’, 1995, p. 21 (translated from Swedish).

¹⁰⁹¹ D. Nichols, ‘Ordination in the United Methodist Church’; L. Svanberg, ‘Metodistkyrkan’, 1995, pp. 20-23.

3. There is an awareness of, or a belief in, the apostolic succession. Nichols says:

We do stand in line with all those who have been ordained before us all the way back to the apostles and Jesus. We believe that every baptized Christian is a minister, an ambassador of Jesus Christ in the world, doing the priestly work of reaching out in Christ's name. In baptism and confirmation, in the tradition of the church, we lay hands on someone and set them aside to be disciples of Jesus Christ. Think of it, all the way back to Jesus, who laid hands on the disciples, and the apostles who laid hands on others, and John Wesley who laid hands on his preachers, to this day, we stand in the line of those who came before.¹⁰⁹²

4. In ordination, a pastor is told to 'take authority'.

5. Elders (presbyters, pastors) are ordained to preach the word, administer the sacraments, order the life of the congregation and serve anyone anywhere.

6. A deacon is ordained to service and may serve in specific areas like youth or music ministry, for example. They, too, serve anyone anywhere.

7. Ordinands have been educated and trained. After extensive testing and investigation, education and training, persons go before a body of their peers (the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry) to answer any questions about doctrine, belief, or practice. After they pass the Board and the Clergy Session, they are ordained at Annual Conference and sent out to serve the church in the world.

8. At ordination the stole is placed around the neck to symbolize the 'yoke of Christ'.

10. In the United Methodist Church, after serving the probationary period of a minimum of two years, the probationer is then examined again and either continued on probation, discontinued altogether, or approved for ordination. Upon final approval by the Clergy Session of the Conference, the probationer becomes a full member of the Conference and is then ordained as an elder or deacon by the resident bishop. Those ordained as elders are members of the Order of Elders, and those ordained deacons are members of the Order of Deacons.

We may add here that the British Methodist Conference has two distinct orders of presbyter and deacon. It does not have bishops as a separate order of ministry. John Wesley appointed Thomas Coke (above mentioned as bishop) as 'Superintendent'. This was his translation of the Greek *episkopos* which is normally translated 'bishop' in English. The British Methodist Church has more than 500

¹⁰⁹² D. Nichols, 'Ordination in the United Methodist Church'.

Superintendents who are not a separate order of ministry but a role within the order of Presbyters. In British Methodism the roles normally undertaken by bishops are expressed in ordaining presbyters and deacons by the annual Conference through its President (or a past president); in confirmation by all presbyters; in local oversight by Superintendents and in regional oversight by Chairs of District.

In conclusion, the Methodist tradition of ordination includes an *episcopal* nature; it has clear affinities with the Anglican Church which practices ordination as receiving holy orders; there is a belief in the apostolic succession although it is not rigidly maintained; the bishop is ordained by a bishop and ordains the elders; there is a sacramental understanding of ordination in that it confers the Holy Spirit and authority to teach, administer the sacraments, and to govern; ordinands need good education and two years of probation; the congregation through its Annual Conference approves of ordinands after examination, but they have been tested by the Conference Board of Ordination and the Clergy Session before that, and ordination makes each ordinand a member of an order (of elders or of deacons).

Thus, quite a few features from the Roman rite remains and the cautions against formalism, sacramentalism and a separation of clergy and laity made earlier (4.4.1.5) are appropriate here. We will see later on (4.6.3.3) how some of these ideas affected the discussion of ordination in the early part of Seventh-day Adventist history of ordination, as Joseph Frisbie, a former Methodist, took an influential part in the development.

4.4.3 The Anabaptist Movement

Among the radical reformers in the sixteenth century there was a mixed reaction towards ordination. Thus, for example, the followers of Socinus and Schweckenfeld rejected ordination to church office, seeing it as an attempt to restrict the working of the Spirit of God.¹⁰⁹³

Although the Anabaptist movement was a lay movement, ordination was very quickly implemented as necessary to bring control and order into the ranks. The Schleithem Confession (1527) is almost silent on the rite, but one of the tasks of the Martyrs' Synod in Augsburg (1527) was the ordination of apostles to replenish the

¹⁰⁹³ G. H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 1962, p. 159.

depleted leadership of the early Anabaptist movement.¹⁰⁹⁴ ‘The tenacity of a tradition once incorporated into church structure is evidenced by the fact that in spite of the Anabaptist attitude to the established churches and their contempt for the pastors of these churches, they continued to use the laying on of hands in ordination for their own church officers.’¹⁰⁹⁵ Despite persecution by both Roman Catholics and the Magisterial Reformers, ‘they nevertheless retained the rite of ordination – the power of which was due largely to the sacramentalism associated with the theory of apostolic succession from Peter.’¹⁰⁹⁶

Several factors may have contributed to this anomaly. For the Anabaptists, the ‘fall’ of the church had occurred with Constantinianism and the subsequent Augustinian justification of the doctrine of the ‘two swords’. It was from this time that they dated the evils that permeated the church. The Anabaptists were biblical restorationists (4.4.5); thus, the imposition of hands would seem appropriate as a symbol accompanying the induction of church officers.¹⁰⁹⁷ The Anabaptists seem to have held on to ordination also as a safeguard against enthusiasts.¹⁰⁹⁸

The Augsburg Confession (1530) condemned the belief held by Anabaptists and others that the efficacy of the pastoral functions depended on the holiness and piety of the pastor, so this belief was obviously part of the understanding of ordination in the Radical Reformation. The condemnation, however, also suggests that the Magisterial Reformation still held on to a sacramental view of ordination to church office.¹⁰⁹⁹ And this is an issue, as we shall see later, which the Seventh-day Adventist Church needs to address.

Throughout the various areas where Anabaptism developed, different ordination practices were found, and various offices of church leadership existed. Some abolished imposition of hands altogether, while others retained it. The movement was a lay movement focusing on the congregation of believers.

What counted for the Anabaptists was to follow Jesus and his teaching. Thus, only those who were truly converted and had made a personal covenant with the Lord by believer’s baptism could belong to the true church.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 176.

¹⁰⁹⁵ M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, p. 63.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 64.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Ibid.

In 1527, some Anabaptist leaders met in Schleitheim in Switzerland led by Michael Sattler and agreed on seven articles of faith. Article five deals with the pastor and his function in the church:

We are agreed as follows on pastors in the church of God: The pastor in the church of God shall, as Paul has prescribed, be one who out-and-out has a good report of those who are outside the faith. This office shall be to read, to admonish and teach, to warn, to discipline, to ban in the church, to lead out in prayer for the advancement of all the brethren and sisters, to lift up the bread when it is to be broken, and in all things to see to the care of the body of Christ, in order that it may be built up and developed, and the mouth of the slanderer be stopped.

This one moreover shall be supported of the church which has chosen him, wherein he may be in need, so that he who serves the Gospel may live of the Gospel as the Lord has ordained. But if a pastor should do something requiring discipline, he shall not be dealt with except (on the testimony of) two or three witnesses. And when they sin they shall be disciplined before all in order that the others may fear.

But should it happen that through the cross this pastor should be banished or led to the Lord (through martyrdom) another shall be ordained in his place in the same hour so that God's little flock and people may not be destroyed.¹¹⁰⁰

The article mentions ordination without going into detail. The pastor is elected and financially supported by the congregation, based on his qualifications and good report with outsiders. His function is in general to 'build up and develop the body'. Specifically, he is to be (a) a minister of the Word (read, admonish, teach, and warn), (b) a governor in charge of discipline (discipline, ban in the church), (c) a worship leader (lead out in prayer), and (d) one that administers the ordinances (lift up the bread when it is broken). We may assume that a simple order of service was used for ordination, including the imposition of hands and a special prayer.

One of the Anabaptist leaders, Menno Simons, considered two types of calls, as we noted was also Calvin's view, namely an inner call from the Spirit of God, and an external call from persons and the church. As these two calls merge, the individual is ready for ordination. He based this understanding on Scripture:

According to the Scriptures, the calling and sending of true preachers were performed in two ways: some were called by God alone, without any human instrumentality, as was the case with the prophets and apostles. Others were called through the medium of the pious, as may be seen from Acts 1:23-26; 1 Tim. 3:7 ...¹¹⁰¹

¹¹⁰⁰ Schleitheim Confession, Online: www.anabaptists.org/history/the-schleitheim-confession.html

¹¹⁰¹ Menno Simons, *Complete Works*, Online: www.mennosimons.net/completewritings.htm

We note here that the call seems to be more important than the act of ordination, which would simply confirm the dual call and function through the blessing of the pastor.

4.4.4 The Baptist Movement

The Baptist view of ordination is particularly important for the present study. We will see later on that James White and, possibly, Joseph Bates were ordained in the restorationist movement of the Christian Connexion, which had deep roots in the theology and practices of the Baptist movement.

Although the early history of the Baptists is marked by some tensions with the Anabaptists, these movements have several ideas in common, such as: believer's baptism, religious liberty, separation of church and state, and Arminian views of salvation, predestination and original sin. Nevertheless, it is the contention of Baptist church historians that Baptist beliefs are drawn from the Bible alone:

Even the briefest glance at early Baptist writings confirms that they sought to draw their teachings directly from Scripture. Other movements may have provided a framework for their understanding, but Baptists never consciously sought to pattern their teaching from these sources. Instead, they consciously and conscientiously sought to draw every teaching and practice from Scripture.¹¹⁰²

Thus a strong biblical stance is the foundation, also for the Baptist view of ordination.

Since there is no hierarchical authority and each Baptist church is autonomous, there is no official set of Baptist theological beliefs. Some common views are central, however. For an understanding of the links with the North-American Christian Connexion and the Sabbatarian Adventists, some Baptist ideas are vital:

1. The idea of 'successionism', i.e. the understanding that Baptists had existed since the time of Christ and had always been historically separated from Catholicism and existed before the Protestant Reformation.¹¹⁰³

2. Historically, the Baptist movement developed some essential characteristics: they turned towards a Believers' Church (1609), towards a Free

¹¹⁰² Quoted from H. L. McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 1987, p. 63.

¹¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

Conscience (1612), towards Believers' Baptism by Immersion (1641), towards Cooperative Christianity (1701), and towards Missionary Responsibility (1792).¹¹⁰⁴

3. Besides doctrines that Baptists share with most other Christians, they believe:

(a) that no church or ecclesiastical organization has inherent authority over a Baptist church and churches can properly relate to each other under this polity only through voluntary cooperation, never by any sort of coercion (exceptions to this local form of local governance include a few churches that submit to the leadership of a body of elders, as well as the Episcopal Baptists that have an Episcopal system);

(b) that the canonical Scriptures are the supreme norm of faith and practice (for something to become a matter of faith and practice, it is not sufficient for it to be merely *consistent with* and not contrary to scriptural principles, but it must be something *explicitly* ordained through command or example in the Bible);

(c) that faith is a matter between God and the individual (religious freedom) and this means the advocacy of absolute liberty of conscience;

(d) that immersion is the only mode of baptism (baptism is not necessary for salvation and is not considered a sacrament, since it imparts no saving grace);

(e) that the Second Coming of Christ is a literal event.

4. A particular branch of Baptists, the Seventh-day Baptists, held the seventh-day Sabbath as the day of rest from the 1650's in England. A Seventh-day Baptist by the name of Rachel Oates Preston (1809-1868) brought the biblical understanding of the Sabbath to what was to become the Sabbatarian Adventists. She brought it to the Millerites via Frederick Wheeler (1811-1910) in early 1844, and to the Christian Connexion church in Washington, New Hampshire, where William Farnsworth (1807-1888) preached the Sabbath to 'the Christians' in 1844, and it seems that, through this Connexionist Church, the Sabbath doctrine reached Thomas Motherwell Preble (1816-1907), a Free-Will Baptist Minister and a Millerite preacher, who became the first Millerite to advocate the Sabbath in print. His tract on the Sabbath in the spring of 1845 led to the conversion of Sabbatarian Adventist pioneers like J. N. Andrews

¹¹⁰⁴ W. B. Shurden, *Turning Points in Baptist History*, 2001.

and Joseph Bates, and other Adventist families in Paris, Maine.¹¹⁰⁵ Thus the historical links between the Baptists/Seventh-day Baptist, the Christian Connexion and the Sabbatarian Adventists are clear.

The first English Baptist, John Smyth, was a graduate of Cambridge and an ordained Anglican priest who had adopted Puritan ideas during his student days.¹¹⁰⁶ In 1606 he separated from the Church of England and was again ordained, this time as pastor of a Separatist congregation at Gainsborough. In 1609 Smyth was the pastor of the first Baptist church in Amsterdam, and in 1612 congregants from Smyth's church established themselves as the first Baptist church in England led by Thomas Helwys.¹¹⁰⁷ Smyth taught that church officers (elders and deacons) should be elected by the congregation by majority vote, and upon approval of their stand be ordained with fasting, prayer, and the imposition of hands. (We note here the influence of New Testament passages like Acts 6:1-6 and 13:1-3.) The laying on of hands served to point out the man for whom prayer had been made, and to assure the ordinand that 'the Lord by the Church giveth him power to administer'.¹¹⁰⁸ Thus three central areas of concern emerge:

1. Election by the local congregation, which had the supreme ecclesiastical authority among the Baptists.

2. Fasting, prayer and imposition of hands was seen as the biblical form of ordination (based on Acts 6:1-6; 13:1-3).

3. The imposition of hands was understood as a way to point out the ordinand before the congregation and it conferred an authority of God to administer.

However, while in Amsterdam where Smyth and his congregation had fled due to persecution in England, conflicts emerged on the administration of the ordinances.¹¹⁰⁹ Smyth wanted to unite with the Waterlander Mennonites (Anabaptists), 'so that baptism could be performed by ordained elders'.¹¹¹⁰ Thomas Helwys and others took exception to this, believing – based on the doctrine of the

¹¹⁰⁵ See, for example, R. Schwartz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant*, pp. 58-59; G. Land, *Historical Dictionary of the Seventh-day Adventists*, 1995, pp. 255-257; G. R. Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists*, 2000, pp. 39-42.

¹¹⁰⁶ A. C. Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists*, 1947, p. 33.

¹¹⁰⁷ See the relevant articles on Baptist beginnings in: M. E. Williams Sr & W. B. Shurden (eds), *Turning Points in Baptist History*, 2008 – note particularly the articles by M. E. Williams Sr (pp. 3-12) and C. W. Dewessee (pp. 13-21).

¹¹⁰⁸ A. C. Underwood, *A History of English Baptists*, 1947, p. 36.

¹¹⁰⁹ See the summary with references in M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, p. 79.

¹¹¹⁰ John Christian, *A History of the Baptists*, 1922, pp. 227, 232.

priesthood of all believers – that ‘God had not reserved the ministry of the Word and the administration of the ordinances for a particular class of men’.¹¹¹¹ Furthermore, if only elders could baptise, ‘it was tantamount to going back to the idea of apostolic succession’.¹¹¹² Smyth denied belief in an apostolic succession but motivated his position by a concern for *unity* in the church and the *order* of the primitive New Testament church.¹¹¹³ We will see this situation reoccurring in the 1850’s when James White argued for gospel order among the Sabbatarian Adventists.

Warkentin points out that ‘until this time “ministry” had been conceived of as a local church function, but the urge for evangelism was producing the need for associational ties between local churches. The connection was made by the ordination of itinerant evangelists, upon whom hands were laid by ministers representing the churches.’¹¹¹⁴

In the creedal statements in 1644 and 1677, ordination became the norm for church office, based on Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Timothy 4:14. In addition to the preaching ministry, the offices of bishop, elder, and deacon were set apart ‘for the peculiar administration of ordinances, and execution of power, or duty’.¹¹¹⁵ There was also a provision for lay preachers.¹¹¹⁶ Thus, at this time, Baptists had three types of leaders: (a) the itinerant preachers who maintained the link between congregations, (b) the local church offices defined according to the Bible as bishops, elders and deacons/deaconesses; and (c) lay preachers. With the exception of ‘bishops’, these functions and offices were also applied by the Christian Connexion at the time of James White’s ordination in 1843.

John Gill (1697-1771) is known for his outspoken views on ordination. He saw that imposition of hands ‘could not be divorced from sacramental modes of thought’.¹¹¹⁷ Concerning the appointment of church officers in Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5, he notes:

[Paul] gave no orders and instructions to lay hands on them; which he would not have omitted had it been material and so essential to ordination as some would make it to be ... The hands of ministers now being empty and

¹¹¹¹ M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, p. 79.

¹¹¹² A. C. Underwood, *History of the English Baptists*, 1947, p. 39.

¹¹¹³ See the quotation from Smyth in M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, p. 79.

¹¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*; R. G. Torbet, *A History of the Baptists*, 1969, p. 56.

¹¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.

¹¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

¹¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

they having no gifts to convey through the use of this rite, of course it ought to cease.¹¹¹⁸

Gill argued from the Bible, but the voices of tradition were strong. Removing the rite of imposition of hands from ordination would remove the solemnity of the rite. Thus, practical and ritual considerations took precedence over theological arguments.

Another area of concern in the Baptist movement has been the term 'ordination', which we have found originally being derived from pagan Rome. In Fact, 'the very term ordination was avoided for several decades in the two original Baptist groups, Generals and Particulars, in favour of biblical terms such as 'set apart,' 'called,' and 'appointed.'¹¹¹⁹ For Seventh-day Adventists, in view of our belief in the Bible as only rule of faith and practice and our deep concern about Roman distortions of biblical faith, this is an issue worth considering.

In summarising the Baptist view of ordination today, W. Loyd Allen says:¹¹²⁰

1. Ordination is an act of worship by which the congregation, representative of the people of God, acclaims the one being ordained as chosen and empowered by the Holy Spirit to exercise gifts for ministry within the church.

2. Ordination is not to a holier ministry than those given to other baptized believers.

3. The laying on of hands with prayer invokes God's blessing upon the ordinand and signifies that he or she is set apart as a servant to the servants of God.

4. Ordination is a gift to the church as well as a recognition by the church of the minister's inward call.

5. In the ordination service, the church receives the ministry of Christ in its midst through the grace of the Holy Spirit in the calling of the ordinand.

6. Ordination is a service of thanksgiving for God's love revealed in the minister's calling, a service of petition for God's continued blessing upon the one called, and a service of submission to God's authority revealed in the gifted one set aside for ministry.

According to our traditional understandings of ordination, these principles could apply also to a Seventh-day Adventist view of ordination.

¹¹¹⁸ J. Gill, *Body of Divinity*, 1965, p. 868.

¹¹¹⁹ C. Penrose St. Amant, 'Sources of Baptist Views on Ordination', 1988, p. 12.

¹¹²⁰ W. Loyd Allen, 'The Meaning of Ordination'.

For historical reasons, we include here a summary of the practice of ordination in the Freewill Baptist Denomination. The reason is that the ordination of James White and, possibly, Joseph Bates took place in the Christian Connexion, a branch of the 'Christian Church' or 'Christians' that was founded by two Baptists, one of them having been ordained by the Freewill Baptists. The limited information we have about ordination in the Christian Connexion points rather consistently to the conclusion that the practice of ordination among the Freewill Baptists was central in the Christian Connexion, and, since not only the leaders of the Sabbatarian Adventists, but also a large percentage of the members were former Connexionists, it is instructive to review these policies. The Freewill Baptist ordination policy reflects the tradition back to the founding of the movement and is followed by a variety of local congregations and associations. It contains, in summary, the following elements:¹¹²¹

A. The local church has the **Authority** to ordain. However, in practice, some local Freewill Baptist churches work together in the matter of ordination by delegating the authority for ordination to the association of churches in which the local church holds membership.

B. The **Procedure** practised by most congregations is as follows:

(a) The individual, acknowledging his call from God, makes known his calling and desire for ordination to the local church of which he is a member.

(b) The local church, led by the Holy Spirit to recognize that the individual does possess the gift, proceeds to have the candidate licensed (this may include cooperation with the association). Generally, there is no formal examination of a candidate for licensing. The request or action of the local church is all that is necessary at this stage.

(c) The license is in force for a period of one year, and may be renewed annually if the licentiate is not ready for ordination. This renewal must be made by action or request of the local church.

(d) Near the end of the licensing year, if the candidate feels he is ready for ordination, he again approaches his local church and signifies this. The local church, if it, too, feels the candidate is ready, files a petition with the association that the candidate be examined for ordination.

(e) Having received petition from the local church, the association's ordaining body proceeds to examine the candidate. The details of the examination differ considerably from one place to another, but each association has some level

¹¹²¹ See 'Ordination to the Ministry in the Freewill Baptist Denomination' (posted at FWBPastor.com, February 17, 2010).

of organisation (a presbytery, ordination council, or committee) that conducts the examination.

(f) The ordaining body reports the results of its examination to the association as a whole, and makes recommendations to be acted upon by the association as a body. If a recommendation is made and approved that the candidate be ordained, the actual service of ordination soon follows.

(g) The procedure for setting up the ordination service varies considerably. In many associations, the same committee that made the examination arranges and conducts the ordination services. In other areas, the associational recommendation is directed back to the local church and the local church arranges and conducts the ordination service. In some areas, the candidate is permitted to choose some or all of a committee of ministers to arrange and conduct the ordination service.

(h) In all areas, the ordination service is conducted by ministers as the ordained representatives of the churches, and includes the 'laying on of hands' as signifying the candidate's ordination to the gospel ministry.

C. The understanding of ***the Meaning of Ordination*** is summarised as follows:

(a) The ministry is divinely called. It should not be inferred from this that the church gives a man authority to preach. The authority for preaching lies solely with God.

(b) The visible church always finds itself called on to pass judgment on the exercise of all spiritual gifts, the ministry included. It is not sufficient that a man gain hearing simply because he says he is called by God and is bringing God's message.

(c) Ordination is the church's official recognition that a believer does indeed possess the gift and calling of God to the ministry and, therefore, is entitled to be heard as such.

(d) There are two levels of direct responsibility in ordination: the local church, primary; the associational ordination apparatus, secondary.

(e) No group responsible for ordination would presume to imply that it is infallible.

D. There are two ***Responsibilities of Ordination***:

(a) The candidate who has been ordained continues to have certain responsibilities relating to those who have ordained him. He should report regularly to the body with which he holds ordination and should submit to any call issued by the body for disciplinary purposes.

(b) The ordained has obvious responsibilities to the Lord who has called him.

E. The policy includes regulations for the ***Transfer of Ordination***:

(a) A minister in good standing in one association is usually granted confirmation of his ordained status in another association with a minimum of procedural requirements.

(b) Caution should be followed so that two definite responsibilities are observed: the sending association has the responsibility to inform the new association if there were any questions at all about the minister's standing, conduct, or doctrine, and the receiving association must ensure that the minister has left his former association in good standing, and is worthy, by conduct and doctrine, of ordination.

F. Under ***Standards of Ordination***, the policy goes into significant detail regarding the following: general questions of character and conduct; the candidate's business relationships, ministerial activities, marital status, gender, education, biblical knowledge, doctrinal position.

G. The document ends with a ***Sample Ordination Examination***.

Assuming that the core of these regulations were applied in the Christian Connexion by Abner Jones and Elias Smith (4.4.5), where James White and, possibly Joseph Bates were ordained, Seventh-day Adventism may have absorbed essentially a Baptist view of ordination, but, as we shall see later on, slightly mingled with some Methodist concepts to strengthen the authority of the ordained pastor. Some of the striking elements from the Freewill Baptists are:

1. Local churches may cooperate as members of an association (or conference) to decide on ordination. This is mandatory in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, where congregational influence is balanced against that of the conference.

2. A minister is first licensed and then, after examination, ordained. As we will see in some detail in 4.5 below, this, too, was applied by the Sabbatarian Adventists and later by Seventh-day Adventists after 1863.

3. An ordaining body performs the examination on behalf of the local churches (presbytery, ordination council, or committee) and the association as a body take the final decision based on the report. This is also what happens in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

4. The format of the ordination service may vary. In the Seventh-day Adventist Church it follows a recommended format which can be altered and adapted.

5. The service is conducted by ministers as the ordained representatives of the churches and includes the laying on of hands which signifies the ordination to the

gospel ministry. This role of the ministers has continued in the Seventh-day Adventist church, perhaps based on a certain reading of 1 Timothy 4:14.

6. The authority to preach is given by God, and does not require ordination by the church. This is clearly applied in James White's personal experience according to his autobiography. It is also present in Ellen White's strong emphasis on 'ministry' being led by the Spirit as well as her own 'ordination' by the Holy Spirit: preaching and teaching and other evangelistic work does not require ordination as a condition.

7. The role of the visible church is to bring order and decide if a candidate has the spiritual gifts required. This concept of order was fundamental to James White when ordination was officially introduced among the Sabbatarian Adventists in December, 1853.

8. The ordained minister is responsible to the local church and the association. The Seventh-day Adventist Church would keep both responsibilities in balance, but not, as the Freewill Baptists, making the local church primary. We see here the difference between a congregational understanding of organisation and 'hierarchic' conference system connected with Methodism.

9. The transfer of an ordained pastor from one association to another is done automatically and with a minimum of procedural requirements. The decision of one entity is valid in the others. This is in keeping with a 'Connexionist' understanding of organisation (4.4.5), which implies that 'all leaders and congregations are connected in a network of loyalties and commitments that support, yet supersede, local concerns'. *Here we may have the root idea of the world-wide validity of ministerial ordination in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.*

10. Proportionately, the standards of ordination receive the largest attention, and this aspect is clearly of fundamental importance. It was also emphasised by the Sabbatarian Adventists and Ellen White, as we shall see in the course of the following.

4.4.5 The Restorationist Movement and the Christian Connexion

The restorationist church called 'the Christian Connexion' or 'the Christians' is of particular interest to our study of ordination, for the following reasons:

1. Two key pioneers in the Seventh-day Adventist Church belonged to the Christian Connexion when they enrolled in the Millerite movement, namely, Joseph

Bates (1792-1872) and James White (1821-1881). Bates joined the Christians in 1827 and became a follower of William Miller in 1839.¹¹²² He was an ‘influential layman’,¹¹²³ and some assume he was ordained in the Christian Connexion.¹¹²⁴ White accepted Miller’s teachings in 1842 and worked for the next two years as a Millerite preacher, during which time (in April, 1843)¹¹²⁵ he was ordained as a minister in the Christian Connexion.¹¹²⁶ Since ‘they would bring into the new movement the lessons on organization that they had learned in the Christian Connexion’,¹¹²⁷ it is reasonable to ask what understanding of ordination they brought with them into the Sabbatarian Advent movement (4.4.5.5).¹¹²⁸

2. It is helpful to our inquiry to understand the model of ordination that existed in the Christian Connexion, since, like the Seventh-day Adventists, ‘the Christians’ held as central belief ‘the Bible as only creed’. In other words: What would ordination look like if screened by rigorous biblical criteria?

3. The understanding of ordination in the Christian Connexion illustrates how values regarding freedom, equality, brotherhood, and democracy – *en vogue* at the time in the United States after the American and French revolutions – would impact Christian beliefs and practices at the time.

4. There is a particular need in the present study to recognise that many congregations in the Christian Connexion had a unique openness to women as preachers and spiritual leaders in the first four decades of the 19th century.¹¹²⁹

4.4.5.1 Restorationism. Christian ‘restorationism’, also known as ‘primitivism’, is the name for Christian movements and churches that hold the belief that Christianity should be *restored* or *reformed* according to what is known about the apostolic early church, which restorationists see as the search for a purer and more original – and

¹¹²² G. Land, *Historical Dictionary of Seventh-day Adventists*, 2005, pp. 33-34.

¹¹²³ G. R. Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil: The Development of Adventist Church Structure*, 2001, p. 18.

¹¹²⁴ Bates does not mention his ordination in his autobiography, and in 1850 Joshua Himes refers to him as ‘Ca.ptain’ and ‘Preacher’, not ‘Elder’ (see *Advent Herald*, May 4, 1850, pp. 110-11, as quoted in Knight, *ibid.*, p. 36). Jim Nix, current Director of the Ellen G. White Estate, has stated in a conversation on April 14, 2013, that there is no evidence that Bates was ordained but it is assumed based on his leading role and participation in the early ordinations among the Sabbatarians.

¹¹²⁵ J. White, *Life Incidents*, 2003 (1st edition 1868).

¹¹²⁶ G. Land, *Historical Dictionary of Seventh-day Adventists*, 2005, p. 323.

¹¹²⁷ G. R. Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil*, 2001, p. 18.

¹¹²⁸ For a review of many different influences from the Christian Connexion on Seventh-day Adventism, see B. Haloviak, ‘Some Great Connexions: Our Seventh-day Adventist Heritage from the Christian Church’, 1994.

¹¹²⁹ For an orientation, see Louis Billington, *Female Laborers in the Church: Women Preachers in the Northeastern United States, 1790-1840*, 1985, pp. 369-394.

therefore ‘true’ – form of the religion of the New Testament church.¹¹³⁰ This belief ‘seeks to correct faults or deficiencies [in the church] by appealing to the primitive church as a normative model’.¹¹³¹ Examples of early restorationist movements in church history are the Hussites, Anabaptists, and Puritans, i.e. representatives of radical movements within the Protestant Reformation. The term ‘restorationist’ is however also used, more specifically, for the American Restoration Movement around 1800,¹¹³² which is of particular interest for an understanding of the historical roots of Sabbatarian Adventism and some basic tenets in Seventh-day Adventism, including the ministry and ordination.

4.4.5.2 Formation of the Christian Connexion. Different movements in several places in the United States during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries led to the formation of the Christian Connexion, which has been called ‘the first indigenous American religious movement’.¹¹³³ All those different ‘beginnings’ were secessions from the three largest Christian denominations in the country at the time, all with roots in England, namely: Baptism, Episcopalian Methodism, and Presbyterianism.¹¹³⁴ The ‘Christian’ movement in all its different facets partially followed the view of ordination in these churches and partially condemned it.

A radical turn to the Bible as the only common authority for faith and church order requires a degree of freedom from traditional church structures and the right to practice and promote such beliefs. Thus, the general social and religious conditions in the United States in 1790-1860 included such revival and searching for new structures and ideas. Jennings notes the influence from ideas of independence from the authority of colonial mother churches in Europe (American Independence), the ideas of liberty, equality and brotherhood (French Revolution), the great social changes resulting from the growing American migration westwards and the accompanying lack in the west of the authority and influence of the established denominations in the eastern states, the profound interest in the Bible, the central

¹¹³⁰ Richard T. Hughes, ‘Restoration, Historical Models of’, 2004, p. 635.

¹¹³¹ Ibid.

¹¹³² J. L. Clark, *1844: Religious Movements*, vol. 1, 1968, pp. 182-202.

¹¹³³ B. Haloviak, ‘Some Great Connections: Our Seventh-day Adventist Heritage from the Christian Church’, 1994, p. 1.

¹¹³⁴ See the statistics for 1835 in. W. W. Jennings, *Origin and Early History of the Disciples of Christ*, 1919, p. 46.

values of the Protestant Reformation, and the vision of a purer form of Christianity which could lead to unity and brotherhood.¹¹³⁵

The 'Christian' restorationist movement began in the early part of the nineteenth century through the union of three distinct movements:

(1) **James O'Kelly** (1735-1826), a prominent Methodist minister in Virginia was the leader of one of them.¹¹³⁶ O'Kelly opposed the government of the Methodist Episcopal church and sought to replace it with democratic ideas on civil liberty in harmony with the revolutionary times.¹¹³⁷ A separate organisation was formed, sometimes known as 'the southern phase of the Christian Connexion',¹¹³⁸ and thousands of Methodists seceded and joined the new movement. In 1794, the new church emphasised in particular the following points:¹¹³⁹

1. The Lord Jesus Christ as the head of the church.
2. The name 'Christian' as the only name of the church.
3. The Holy Bible as the only creed, and a sufficient rule of faith and practice.
4. The right of private judgment and the liberty of conscience, including the individual interpretation of the Scriptures as the right and duty of all.
5. Christian character, or vital piety, as the only test of church fellowship and membership.
6. The union of all the followers of Christ, to the end that the world may believe.

By 1792, O'Kelly was known for maintaining that preachers of the word of God even without ordination should be 'allowed to administer the communion, baptize candidates, marry people, and bury the dead', which was contrary to the rule of the Methodist Church.¹¹⁴⁰ Based on the Bible and ideas of religious liberty and freedom of conscience, O'Kelly advocated an *egalitarian* view of ministry, stating that 'all men are equal before God', that 'in the land of liberty and freedom, though yet wrapped in the swaddling clothes of its infancy, there was no place for an

¹¹³⁵ Ibid., pp. 13-54.

¹¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 55.

¹¹³⁷ Ibid., pp. 56-57.

¹¹³⁸ J. B. North, 'O'Kelly, James (1735-1826)', 2004, p. 574.

¹¹³⁹ J. F. Burnett, *Reverend James O'Kelly: A Champion of Religious Liberty*, 1921, p. 3; see also W. W. Jennings, *Origin and Early History of the Disciples of Christ*, 1919, p. 63.

¹¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 10.

ecclesiastical head', and that 'a Christian Democracy would profoundly impress not only the people of America, but the people of the whole world'.¹¹⁴¹

O'Kelly's movement reflected his Methodist background. He was motivated more by the issues of ecclesiastical authority and his resistance to the bishop's controlling powers in Methodism, as well as by his concern for Christian unity. He was less driven by 'a strict restoration of the faith and practice of the New Testament church'.¹¹⁴²

(2) **Abner Jones** led the movement that contributed to the rise of the 'Northern Christians' (1772-1841). Jones was an influential Baptist preacher from Vermont,¹¹⁴³ who had entered the ministry in 1801. Independently of the O'Kelly movement, he became greatly disturbed 'in regard to sectarian names and human creeds'.¹¹⁴⁴ In 1802, he organised a church in Vermont and the work spread to other cities and New Hampshire, where Jones joined with Elias Smith, also a Baptist. By persistent promotion, in a few years, the new party had succeeded in forming organisations in most or all the New England States, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.¹¹⁴⁵

This north-eastern form of the Christian Connexion was more strongly influenced by Baptist beliefs and practices. However, as Jones was converted at the age of nineteen and began to preach, he sought ordination by the Freewill Baptists because he rejected the Calvinistic doctrines of his Reformed Baptist church.¹¹⁴⁶ Elias Smith had the same experience.

Due to the efforts of Elias Smith, the Christian Connexion opposed the belief in the Trinity.¹¹⁴⁷ This would cause tensions both with the Southern Christian Connexion under James O'Kelly and with the Stone-Campbell movement that became more dominant in the west after 1832.

The Freewill Baptists emphasised the Bible as only authority and an Arminian theology of free grace, free salvation, and free will. They observed at least three ordinances: baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the Washing of the Saints' Feet. They advocated (voluntary) tithing, totally abstaining from alcoholic beverages, and not

¹¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 25.

¹¹⁴² Ibid.

¹¹⁴³ W. W. Jennings, *Origin and Early History of the Disciples of Christ*, 1919,, p. 55.

¹¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 64.

¹¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 65.

¹¹⁴⁶ T. H. Olbricht, 'Jones, Abner (1772-1841)', 2004, pp. 432-433.

¹¹⁴⁷ L. Waller, 'Smith, Elias (1769-1846)', 2004, p. 689.

working on Sunday, the 'Christian Sabbath'.¹¹⁴⁸ This offers some interesting links with the Sabbatarian Adventists.

Thus, Abner Jones and Elias Smith became the founders of 'the Christian Connexion' in New England. In Jones' branch, the Baptist concept of ordination prevailed, especially that of the Freewill Baptists (4.4.4), which means that the congregation had the authority to approve of the candidate who by ordination received the permission to perform the ordinances. Preaching and teaching was not seen as conditioned by ordination, but by the anointing of the Holy Spirit. These principles are still central to the Freewill Baptist ordination policy (4.4.4), and they were important in James White's environment in the Christian Connexion, as we will see later.

4. Excursus: The Term 'Connexion'

The term 'connexion' (an earlier spelling than 'connection') came from Methodism where 'connexionalism' originated with reference to a circuit of prayer groups who would employ travelling ministers alongside the regular ministers attached to each congregation. This method of church organisation emerged in eighteenth century English non-conformist religious circles and became in Methodism a term for a flexible system of governance. Its principle is that 'all leaders and congregations are connected in a network of loyalties and commitments that support, yet supersede, local concerns'.¹¹⁴⁹ It typically gives lay members representation at regional and national meetings (conferences) at which the business of the church is conducted, making it different from most episcopal government. It allows the conference meeting to place and ordain ministers.¹¹⁵⁰

(3) A third movement, also independent of the other two, grew out of the Great Revival in Kentucky and had **Barton W. Stone** (1772-1844) and other Presbyterian clergy taking a leading role.¹¹⁵¹ Stone was ordained in 1798 according to the Presbyterian order, despite serious doubts about doctrines such as the Trinity.¹¹⁵² Due to differences in soteriology, Stone and some ministers who sided with him were suspended from the Presbyterians and formed the Springfield Presbytery. While their movement spread by intense preaching and new churches were formed in many places, within a year they changed the name to 'Christian', the

¹¹⁴⁸ See, for example, S. Bryant, *The Awakening of the Freewill Baptists*, 2011.

¹¹⁴⁹ The United Methodist Church Glossary Online, accessed 19 April 2013.

¹¹⁵⁰ See, for example, R. E. Richey, *Methodist Connectionalism: Historical Perspectives*, 2009.

¹¹⁵¹ W. W. Jennings, *Origin and Early History of the Disciples of Christ*, 1919, pp. 55, 65-75.

¹¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 66; D. N. Williams, 'Stone, Barton Warren (1772-1844)', 2004, pp. 703-707. Stone's learned his views of the Trinity by reading Isaac Watts as a theological student in North Carolina (*ibid.*, p. 711).

name given to the disciples by divine appointment in Antioch, and they 'divested themselves of all party creeds, and party names, and trusted alone in God, and the word of his grace'.¹¹⁵³

The leaders of Stone's movement defined their thinking under the title 'The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery', in June 1804. They attacked 'the Reverend title', the power of making laws for churches, and emphasised Bible study in the preparation for the ministry. They stated their belief in 'the native right of internal self-government', insisting that 'each congregation should choose its own ministers and support them by free will offerings, without a written call or subscription'; the Bible was declared as the 'only sure guide to heaven'.¹¹⁵⁴

However, Stone's 'Christian' followers merged with Alexander Campbell's 'Disciples of Christ' in 1832. While his leadership was eclipsed by that of Campbell, his influence was strong in areas such as the view of open holy communions because it is Christ and not the church that invites to the table, a premillennialist view of the Second Advent, and a particular passion for the unity of all true Christians.¹¹⁵⁵

These three movements, in widely separate parts of the country, each independent of the others until 1806, 'were alike in taking the Bible as the only rule of faith and in rejecting Calvinism [including Presbyterianism and Reformed Baptism]'.¹¹⁵⁶ The three groups merged by 1810.¹¹⁵⁷ At that time the combined movement had a membership of approximately 20,000. This loose fellowship of churches formed *the Christian Connexion*.¹¹⁵⁸ It had particular success among the Baptists, and 'sometimes whole associations of Baptist congregations united with the Christians'.¹¹⁵⁹ It was founded on four essential convictions:

1. An opposition to human creeds.
2. The Bible as the only guide.
3. The right of private judgment.
4. The ideal pattern of the simplicity of primitive Christianity.¹¹⁶⁰

¹¹⁵³ W. W. Jennings, *Origin and Early History of the Disciples of Christ*, 1919, p. 66.

¹¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

¹¹⁵⁵ D. N., Williams, 'Stone, Barton Warren', 2004, pp. 719-720.

¹¹⁵⁶ W. W. Jennings, *Origin and Early History of the Disciples of Christ*, 1919, p. 70.

¹¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 75; cf. C. L. Allen & R. T. Hughes, *Discovering Our Roots: The Ancestry of the Churches of Christ*, 1988.

¹¹⁵⁸ W. W. Jennings, *Origins and Early History of the Disciples of Christ*, p. 75; T. H. Olbricht, 'Christian Connection', 2004, p. 190.

¹¹⁵⁹ D. N. Williams, 'Stone, Barton Warren', 2004, p. 713.

¹¹⁶⁰ W. W. Jennings, *Origins and Early History of the Disciples of Christ*, 2004, p. 75.

These tenets were also central to the Disciples of Christ (also known as ‘Disciples’ or ‘Christian Baptists’) which later emerged when Stone joined Thomas Campbell (1763-1854), his son Alexander Campbell (1788-1866), and Walter Scott (1796-1861). Many of the Christian Churches in Kentucky and Tennessee merged with the Disciples in 1832.¹¹⁶¹ Of the majority of churches that aligned with the Stone-Campbell movement, many continued to use the name ‘Christian Connexion’ or ‘Christian Church’, even though they no longer considered themselves part of the Christian Connexion, and the confusion over names which this created still continues.

The merging of the Christians (i.e. the Christian Connexion) and the Disciples of Christ in 1832 was not successful in the long run insofar as unity was concerned. Differences of opinion on matters of church organisation occurred, and gradually two separate groups emerged – the ‘progressives’ and the ‘conservatives’.¹¹⁶² This had an impact, among other things, on the view of ordination, which was not exactly the same in the movement as a whole.

Through the 1830’s and 1840’s, practical difficulties associated with the movement’s attempt at radical reform led to an erosion of the anti-organizational principles developed by the early leaders and the Christian Connexion moved towards a more stable form of inter-congregational relationship. ‘By the 1830’s the Connexionists had even formed state conferences that met once a year. Those state conferences, however, had no permanent officers. In addition, they had “no authority or control over the independence of the [local] churches”. For a time they had even experimented with a “United States General Christian Conference” but by 1833 the idea had “been given up” even though it had had no authority over either the state conferences or local congregations’.¹¹⁶³

One of the leading ministers of the Christian Connexion summarised in the early 1830’s the key factor behind the simultaneous rise of the movement in several parts of the United States in the early 1800’s: It was ‘not so much to establish any peculiar and distinctive doctrines, as to assert, for individuals and churches, more liberty and independence in relation to matters of faith and practice, to shake off the authority of human creeds and the shackles of prescribed modes and forms, to make

¹¹⁶¹ J. L. Clark, *1844*, vol. 1, 1968, pp. 190 ff.

¹¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 199.

¹¹⁶³ G. R. Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil*, 2001, p. 16.

the Bible their only guide, claiming for every man the right to be his own expositor of it, to judge, for himself, what are its doctrines and requirements, and in practice, to follow more strictly the simplicity of the apostles and primitive Christians'.¹¹⁶⁴ *This connexionist view would provide serious challenges in the early history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and may be seen as the cause for the 'gospel order' urged by James and Ellen White in 1853.*

The theological and organisational roots of Sabbatarian Adventism through Joseph Bates and James White were in other words in the loosely organised and Bible-centered Christian movement which united in 1810. Although there were some regional particulars for the Northern and Southern Christian Connexions and the Western Stone Christians (many of whom merged with the Campbellites after twenty-two years), the theological ideas of the leaders spread across the congregations in New England.

4.4.5.3 Theology of Ordination. The understanding of ordination in the Christian Connexion is difficult to grasp. While it is a neglected area of research, the Christians' general suspicion towards organisation, theologies, and creeds (except for the pure word of the Bible) has resulted in few surviving church documents. The confusion that exists regarding the name of the 'Christians' (and related names for various facets of this restorationist movement), and to what groups these names referred to, is another complicating factor. However, from the practice, as it surfaces in autobiographies, correspondences, and general histories, some conclusions can be made.

'Ministry' among the Christians tended to be understood as '*leadership* in teaching, service, and oversight and care of the church'.¹¹⁶⁵ However, there were some significant differences in the views of ministry and ordination depending on which ecclesiastical tradition one relied on: Freewill Baptism, or Methodism, or Presbyterianism. With the lack of a centralised governance and much local freedom, certain variances were inevitable.

Among all 'Christians', however, a deliberate effort was made to ensure that ministry and ordination was performed *as taught by the Bible*, usually being read with a view to the 'plain reading' of the text, according to John Locke's epistemology and

¹¹⁶⁴ J. N. Brown, *Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, 1836, p. 362.

¹¹⁶⁵ D. N. Williams *et alii*, 'Ministry', 2004, p. 521.

Francis Bacon's common sense philosophy, which were intentionally and openly acknowledged in the movement as providing the foundations of any biblical interpretation.¹¹⁶⁶

We have already described this view of the Bible (2.7). The Bible text was seen as a book of empirical facts, following Bacon's definition of 'fact' as 'something said' or 'something done', and drawing on John Locke, the Bible was seen as a 'constitution for the church to follow'.¹¹⁶⁷ A Baconian methodology of inductively studying the verses of the Bible was widely applied, as if the features in the Bible text were 'discrete [and objective] facts waiting to be reassembled into a clear, logical pattern'.¹¹⁶⁸ The reader/interpreter could keep his mind clear from any prejudice, if so decided, and thus the 'truth' of the text in its plain sense would impress the mind.¹¹⁶⁹ 'The doctrine of the Bible, on any particular subject of inquiry, can be clearly and satisfactorily ascertained only by a full induction of all that is found in it upon that subject.'¹¹⁷⁰ Thus, the Christians believed that 'the meaning of the Bible was always clear', and 'their hopes for Christian unity rested on this assumption', for 'when reasonable people read the Bible ... they would reach conclusions with which other reasonable people would find agreement'.¹¹⁷¹

On the one side, particularly in opposition to the Presbyterian church order, some 'Christians' believed that (a) each church was an independent organisation with its own internal government by elders and deacons, that (b) lay preaching was authorised without ordination (while the Presbyterians required ordination for preaching),¹¹⁷² and (c) that Scripture made no distinction between clergy and laity.¹¹⁷³

On the other side, the wing of the Christian Connexion that followed Barton W. Stone and the followers of James O' Kelly and Abner Jones, (a) granted some connection between local churches through a 'conference' organisation, and (b) took the view that, while the preaching of the Word of God was open to those who were

¹¹⁶⁶ See M. W. Casey, 'Authority and Inspiration of the Bible', 2004, pp. 75-79; M. E. Boring, 'Interpretation of the Bible', in: *ibid.*, pp. 81-83; T. H. Olbricht, 'Hermeneutics', in: *ibid.*, pp. 387-390; James O. Duke, 'Theology', in: *ibid.*, pp. 731-736.

¹¹⁶⁷ M. W. Casey, *Authority and Inspiration of the Bible*, 2004, p. 76.

¹¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷¹ Mark G. Toulouse, 'Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)', 2004, pp. 177-184.

¹¹⁷² W. W. Jennings, *Origin and Early History of the Disciples of Christ*, 1919, pp. 125-128.

¹¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 110-138; note particularly pp. 128, 154.

led by the Holy Spirit, the care for the ordinances of baptism and holy communion required ordination. This also was an important point for James White and the introduction of ordination among the Sabbatarian Adventists (4.6.1).

Around 1830, as Alexander Campbell pushed his pleas for ‘the restoration of primitive Christianity’ among the Christians, a group of churches, one of them being the Christian Connexion church in Palmyra, Maine, where James White was ordained in 1843, criticised Campbell’s ideas strongly and many other churches followed this view.¹¹⁷⁴ One point of criticism was against Campbell’s view that ‘all baptized persons have the right to administer the ordinance of baptism’.¹¹⁷⁵ Thus, the authority to administer the ordinances seems to have been a crucial point for the part of the Christian Connexion where James White grew up.

Considering that Walter Scott had a vital influence on the theology of the Christians and may have been involved in the founding of the Christian Connexion church in Palmyra, Maine, in 1829, where James White was baptized in 1837 and ordained in 1843, it is of interest to briefly consider Scott’s view of ordination in the context of his theology. Our interest in Scott is enhanced by the fact that from the late 1830’s and through the mid-1840’s, he became a follower of William Miller and believed in the coming of the Lord in 1843-1844.¹¹⁷⁶ Walter Scott, James White and Joseph Bates, therefore, shared the same positive view of Miller’s teachings on the Second Advent, and, since Scott was the most prominent theologian and a prolific writer, especially in the last thirty years of his ministry, we may assume on good grounds that his ideas were known by Bates and White and other Sabbatarian Adventist leaders and members rooted in the Christian movement.

In the beginning, Walter Scott worked closely with Alexander Campbell, but when Scott accepted William Miller’s teachings towards the end of the 1830’s they drifted apart.¹¹⁷⁷ As a result of their faithfulness to the Bible, both Scott and Campbell accepted biblical baptism by immersion,¹¹⁷⁸ foot washing,¹¹⁷⁹ and the purpose ‘to enjoy the benefit of Christian fellowship on a Scriptural basis, observe the ordinances, and avoid the narrow spirit which would exclude from the pulpit or

¹¹⁷⁴ Jennings lists the points of likeness and difference between the Christians and the Disciples (ibid., pp. 197-200).

¹¹⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 182-183.

¹¹⁷⁶ M. G. Toulouse, ‘Scott, Walter (1796-1861)’, 2004, pp. 677-678.

¹¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 678.

¹¹⁷⁸ W. W. Jennings, *Origin and Early History of the Disciples of Christ*, 1919, pp. 94-95.

¹¹⁷⁹ M. G. Toulouse, ‘Scott, Walter’, 2004, p. 674.

occasional communion any faithful preacher or sincere lover of Christ'.¹¹⁸⁰ The practice of the local church was to ordain ministers based on (a) the Christian character and (b) the calling by the Holy Spirit of the candidate. These gifts were demonstrated by preaching the Word and individual testimonies. The ordination then gave the ordinand the right to perform the ordinances of the church.

This is in keeping with James White's public ministry and ordination, as described in his *Life Incidents*. This view of ordination also implied that an initial time of ministry as a preacher of the Word was necessary before ordination, which is the basis for the later Seventh-day Adventist practice of first issuing a ministerial license as a preparation for ordination. The minister was called by God and 'ordained' by the Holy Spirit, and as this became evident in his ministry, ordination followed as a *confirmation* of his spiritual gifts.

Scott had been elected an evangelist in 1827 by a unanimous vote of the Mahoning Baptist Association in Ohio, in which ministers of the Christian Connexion also took part.¹¹⁸¹ This Association put an emphasis on preaching the Word, even without ordination,¹¹⁸² and this absence of any doctrinal restrictions for the preaching is the obvious setting in which James White travelled as a Millerite preacher in New England, first as an unordained preacher in churches belonging to the Christian Connexion, Freewill Baptism, and Methodism, and then, from April, 1843, as an itinerant ordained minister (or 'elder') with right to administer the ordinances.

Scott baptized about 3,000 people in 1827-1830 and reported in 1829 that he and others had preached the gospel successfully 'in Palmyra, Deerfield, Randolph, Shalersville, Nelson, Hiram, etc.', and that several new churches had been formed and the congregations were in a flourishing condition.¹¹⁸³

Thus, Scott and the Christians founded a church of the Christian Connexion in Palmyra, Maine, where James White was born and lived until he married Ellen White in 1846. He says in his autobiography *Life Incidents* that 'he received ordination to the work of the ministry from the hands of ministers of the Christian denomination, of which I was a member'.¹¹⁸⁴ The reference to 'hands of ministers' indicates that imposition of hands was practised and that the act was performed by a group of

¹¹⁸⁰ W. W. Jennings, *Origin and Early History of the Disciples of Christ*, 1919, p. 95.

¹¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 103-104.

¹¹⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 104-105.

¹¹⁸³ W. W. Jennings, *Origin and Early History of the Disciples of Christ*, 1919, p. 107.

¹¹⁸⁴ J. White, *Life Incidents*, 2003, p. 104.

ministers of the conference. James continued to preach as before, but was now authorised to care for the ordinances as a minister to the local churches and was addressed as 'elder'.

Although we have not found evidence of how the Bible texts on ordination were understood by the founders and leaders in the Christian Connexion, we may assume that New Testament passages had particular authority. We find no references to Old Testament ordination passages among the Christians, and this is also the case with James White's introduction of ordination as part of gospel order in 1853.

It was his itinerant preaching and spirit-filled teaching of Miller's Advent message that qualified James White for ordination in the Christian Connexion. Together with his Christian character, these were sufficient criteria for ordination. In addition, his father served as a deacon in the local church and at least one of his brothers was already an ordained minister, so a good testimony could be given about him.¹¹⁸⁵

James White's influence on the Christian denomination in his conference was considerable. For example, as a member of the Christian Connexion, he attended the Maine Eastern Christian Conference in the town of Knox, in the autumn of 1843. Since 'the Christian denomination in Maine, as well as in other states, had been deeply imbued with the spirit of the Advent hope and faith', the majority at the conference asked him to speak.¹¹⁸⁶ The meeting concluded with the Lord's supper, during which 'the Spirit of God came upon the brethren'.¹¹⁸⁷

A large number of Christian Connexion preachers in New England were in fact involved in the Advent movement led by William Miller. For example, Joshua Himes was a well-known ordained minister in the Christian Connexion, and no fewer than seven of the sixteen signatories to his call in 1840 for an Adventist general conference were Connexion preachers.¹¹⁸⁸ Many members left the Connexion in the mid-1840's and joined emerging movements such as the Sabbatarian Adventists and the Advent Christians.

¹¹⁸⁵ M. D. Burt, *Adventist Pioneer Places: New York & New England*, 2011, p. 14.

¹¹⁸⁶ J. White, *Life Incidents*, 2003, pp. 104-105.

¹¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

¹¹⁸⁸ *Signs of the Times*, September 15, 1840. Cf. D. T. Arthur, 'Joshua V. Himes and the Cause of Adventism', 1993, pp. 40-41; J. L. Clark, *1844: Religious Movements*, vol. 1, 1968, p. 36; G. Land, *Adventism in America: A History*, 1986, pp. 9-10.

However, in the general mixture of ideas characterising the Christian Connexion, it is possible that James White was also influenced by ideas of ordination that were promoted by Barton W. Stone. A large group of Stone Christians remained with the Christian Connexion even after Stone merged with Campbell in 1832, and Stone's teaching had influenced the New England Connexion from 1810, when the Christian Connexion was formed. We also know that Walter Scott, who was involved in the foundation of James White's Connexionist church in Palmyra, Maine, had a close working relationship with Stone. Probably, therefore, Stone's ideas on ordination had influenced the Christian Connexion in Joseph Bates' and James White's original church settings.

Stone's background was Presbyterian, and in keeping with Presbyterian tradition, he taught that the 'pastoral' office *included* persons identified as 'bishops, elders, pastors, and evangelists'. The work of this central pastoral office was to (a) preach and teach the gospel, (b) administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and (c) exercise church discipline (moral oversight over the congregation). For Stone and the Presbyterians, the terms 'bishop', 'elder', and 'pastor' referred to located ministers who served established congregations, while the term 'evangelist' referred to travelling ministers whose special work was the organisation of new congregations. In keeping with Presbyterian practice, Stone taught that congregations were normally to have one leader, who could be called elder or pastor.¹¹⁸⁹

However, Stone began to have different ideas from the Presbyterians in regard to what was called 'the ruling elder' in the local congregation. According to Presbyterian polity, the 'ruling elder' is a 'representative of the people' who shares with the ministers in exercising government and discipline in the church, but not in preaching and teaching the gospel or administering baptism and the Lord's Supper.¹¹⁹⁰ On biblical grounds, however, Stone did not accept an elder that did not teach and preach, so he eclipsed the 'ruling elder', although voted by the people, and advocated a more clerical stance, namely, that only the pastor would rule the local church. Towards the end of his life, he yielded somewhat on this view.¹¹⁹¹

¹¹⁸⁹ D. N. Williams *et alii*, 'Ministry', 2004, p. 522.

¹¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

Stone's followers also had deacons as well as ruling elders and pastors (the Presbyterian view of the deacon was that this office was to care for the poor and manage the 'temporal' affairs of the church).¹¹⁹² This is the same trio of offices that emerged in the Seventh-day Adventist church, and in the 1850's the deacon's office was defined in the same terms, namely as concerning 'temporal' affairs.

Another important point is that Stone 'taught that the power of ordination to the offices of the church rested in the pastoral office'. Like the Presbyterians, he 'believed that congregations were to elect their own officers but that *ordination was the work of the elders or pastors*'.¹¹⁹³ Stone's emphasis on the pastoral authority, which is clearly Calvinistic in origin and impacted both Presbyterianism and Methodism in England, which served as mother-churches of their extensions in the American colony, was further visible in his view of the appropriate procedures for the discipline of pastors: 'Although a pastor could be tried for disorderly conduct by the congregation, a pastor could be tried for "teaching false doctrine" only by a conference of pastors.'¹¹⁹⁴ Thus, although Stone strongly rejected Presbyterianism, he and his followers continued in essence the Presbyterian view of ministry and ordination.¹¹⁹⁵

Stone's views of (a) the three offices of pastor, elder and deacon, (b) the authority of the pastor as a ruler, for example in ordination and discipline of pastors, and (c) the exclusive right of ordained pastors to perform the imposition of hands in ordination, were eventually applied also in the Seventh-day Adventist Church (4.6).

Among the Sabbatarian Adventists, both James White and Joseph Bates (former Connexionists) began to ordain local church officers and clergy in the early 1850's.¹¹⁹⁶ There was no fight over ordination in Sabbatarian Adventism (4.6.1), which is significant in a movement that fought over everything related to church organisation. Part of the reason for this seems to be that they believed that ordination was clearly set forth in Scripture.

Significant along that line is the position of William Kinkade (the foremost Connectionist theologian of the period) in his influential *The Bible Doctrine* (1829). In the opening sentence of the chapter entitled 'Restoration of the Ancient Order of

¹¹⁹² Ibid.

¹¹⁹³ Ibid. (emphasis supplied).

¹¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁹⁶ G. R. Knight, 'Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination, 1844-1863', 1998, pp. 105-106.

Things' he wrote that 'When I speak of the ancient order, I mean the order of the New Testament; one inch short of that will not satisfy me'.¹¹⁹⁷

This position seems to have led both the Christian Connexion and the early Sabbatarians to follow what they considered to be the biblical patterns of ordination.¹¹⁹⁸ However, the Bible generally used was the King James Version, where the terminology of 'ordination' and 'ordain' had been imposed on the text by the Anglican translators in 1611 (4.5). If that term disappears, there is rather scant New Testament evidence for an ordination ritual that sets 'ministers' apart in the church (3.5).

4.4.5.4 Ordination of Women Preachers and Leaders. The Christian Connexion Church cherished egalitarian ideas, partly absorbed from the spirit of the time, partly stimulated by the desire to unite all Christians, and partly based on key passages in the Bible, their only creed and authority. The Christian movement as a whole had two camps. In one group, no distinction was made between clergy and laity, since the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers was understood to exclude such a distinction. In another group, ordination was based on an interpretation of New Testament texts that described the practice of imposition of hands for an office or a special task, and the Christian Connexion belonged to the latter.

We have noted in passing above that in the Christian Connexion, the ministerial function of preaching and teaching was seen as spirit-driven and that lay persons, such as the young James White, were perfectly in order when they preached the Word of God without ordination as itinerant preachers. The permission to speak in a church was in the hands of the local church and the elder in charge. However, preachers could also preach in homes and various other places that did not require official church approval. The key role of ordination was to set ministers apart for administering the biblical ordinances of baptism and holy communion. Ordination required the approval of the congregation and, where this applied, of the Association of which the local church was a member, and it entitled the minister to be addressed as 'elder'.

Before we look at women's ordination among the Christians, it is helpful to consider the external circumstances that stimulated this practice, and the internal

¹¹⁹⁷ W. Kinkade, *The Bible Doctrine*, 1829, p. 331.

¹¹⁹⁸ We are indebted to George Knight for the content of this paragraph (private e-mail 2013-02-27).

church conditions that made it possible. There are things to learn here in the present study.

Among the external social factors that caused an increase in public leadership roles for women and in ordinations of women in the United States in the nineteenth century, we note 'increasing educational opportunities for girls; women's financial and legal independence from their husbands and fathers; better health care and decreased birth rates; skills gained by women from taking care of homes, farms, businesses, and communities in the absence of men during the Civil War; the lack of educated men available to serve frontier church; and a growing sense among women that they had special gifts to use in service in the church, often born out of their experience in church missionary societies and in the social reform movements of the time.'¹¹⁹⁹

It is essential that we understand also the internal factors in the Christian churches, where women's ordination became prominent at this time in the United States. Hull makes the significant initial observation that compared to some other Protestant denominations (Presbyterians, Lutherans, and Episcopalians, for instance), women in the 'Christian' tradition 'were ordained early in the church's history, though wide acceptance of women in eldership occurred later'. She then probes deeper by saying the following: 'In general, in denominations where presiding at the table and other liturgical functions were performed by elders, ordination of women as pastors occurred earlier than the acceptance of women as elders; in denominations where pastors rather than elders filled the "priestly" roles, the pattern was reversed.' 'In addition', she notes, 'the first denominations to ordain women tended to be congregationally organised and to value local church power and autonomy. By and large, they were frontier churches that developed in sparsely populated regions with few seminary-trained preachers.'¹²⁰⁰ Thus, firstly, there is evidence to suggest that women's ordination was less controversial if it did not include responsibility for the administration of the ordinances. This was seen as a male duty because it had a 'priestly', representative function on behalf of the people before God, and, perhaps also because of the societal convention of male headship and female submission. Secondly, denominations organised as local churches with authority to make their own decisions for local needs would be better equipped to

¹¹⁹⁹ Debra B. Hull, 'Women in Ministry: Nineteenth Century', 2004, p. 776.

¹²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 777.

accept women's ordination than those where a hierarchic structure entailed many different entities that had to take the same decision and apply the same practice everywhere.

It has become a standard feature in the history of women's ordination that the Christian Connexion Church ordained women as ministers as early as 1810.¹²⁰¹ Some state that the Christians had women preaching, baptising, and organising churches as early as the first decades of the nineteenth century, with examples given from 1815.¹²⁰² Names associated with the movement are: Nancy Gove Cram, who worked as a missionary with the Oneida Indians by 1812, and Abigail Roberts (a lay preacher and missionary in the Christian Connexion), who helped establish many churches in New Jersey. Others included Ann Rexford, Sarah Hedges and Sally Thompson. In the following we will summarise the key factors in this movement based on the paper by Louis Billington.¹²⁰³

In north-eastern United States, during the period of 1790-1840, the Freewill Baptists, the Christians, and to a lesser degree, various small Methodist sects offered the most support for the mission of women preachers. These groups arose between 1780 and the 1830s and shared many common features. They emerged from within 'a tradition of popular revivalism' associated with the Great Awakening movement. They broke away from the still-dominant Calvinism of the older denominations and placed great emphasis on personal religious experience with 'signs and wonders' accompanying their revivals. Fundamentally, they included a powerful seeking after the restoration of 'primitive Christianity'. 'Clerical titles and the need for general or theological education were initially questioned, and many called for the end of a separate and paid ministry. Foot-washing and the holy kiss as religious ceremonies had their advocates and were only suppressed amidst much controversy and schism.' In time, however, leaders emerged who introduced a greater degree of order and formal government, but 'among the Freewill Baptists and Christians this process was not established until well into the nineteenth century'.¹²⁰⁴

While the established denominations, such as Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Regular or Calvinist Baptists, or the rapidly growing Methodist

¹²⁰¹ See, for example, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ordination_of_women_in_Protestant_churches.

¹²⁰² D. B. Hull, 'Women in Ministry', 2004, pp. 776-777.

¹²⁰³ L. Billington, 'Female Laborers in the Church: Women Preachers in the Northeastern United States, 1790-1840', 1985, pp. 369-394.

¹²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 370-371.

Episcopal Church, struggled to reach settlers of northern New England, they faced growing competition in this area from the Freewill Baptists and the Christians. Within the latter two groups, women preachers flourished in northern New England, which was the fastest growing area of the Republic between the Revolution and the War of 1812.¹²⁰⁵

Between 1790 and 1840 probably hundreds of women had some experience of preaching, at least within their own localities, but for a few dozen women whose careers covered much longer periods of time and whole areas it is possible to build up a collective profile. 'These women were overwhelmingly the daughters of small farmer-artisans, possessed a common school education, and had grown up in a small-scale Yankee Protestant world where settlements were often recent and class lines fluid'.¹²⁰⁶ During the years of their active preaching careers the majority were single, or occasionally widowed. In a youthful population, most were in their late teens or early twenties when they first felt called upon to preach. Most stopped itinerating when married, though some continued preaching in their own neighbourhoods or made occasional tours. Others worked in tandem with preacher husbands, sometimes developing their own small sects. Although the social origins and careers of most women preachers appear to fall into this pattern, those about whom we have substantial information suggest a somewhat more complex picture.¹²⁰⁷ Names that provide more details are Harriet Livermore (1788-1868), Nancy Towle, Clarissa Danforth, Salome Lincoln, and many black women preachers such as Jarena Lee.¹²⁰⁸

Since the Great Awakening, women had taken a prominent part in prayer meetings, special services and revivals across New England Congregationalists. However, it was regularly underlined that, although passionately eager to promote the Lord's mission, 'such women remained subordinate to their pastors, and did not stray from beyond their proper "sphere" which did not include preaching to mixed or "promiscuous" audiences.'¹²⁰⁹

However, sources indicate that at the height of a spiritual revival, the clear lines of demarcation between the genders became blurred, even among middle-

¹²⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 371-372.

¹²⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 372.

¹²⁰⁷ Ibid., 372-373.

¹²⁰⁸ See the summary and literature in *ibid.*, pp. 373-374.

¹²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 374.

class Calvinists. An example is Sarah Osborn in Newport, Rhode Island, who became the central figure in a revival movement in the 1760's. People crowded her house and were eager to receive her preaching and teaching. She struggled with this leading role, because if she encouraged their meetings in her home, it would be 'going beyond her sphere'. While persevering in the work, she remained anxious, 'fearing to go beyond her line as a woman' and insisted that 'all formal preaching was undertaken by her minister'.¹²¹⁰

Obviously, the established Christian denominations coming out of eighteenth century Europe, applied a strict gender distinction in ministry which had become linked to ordination. The Spirit of God, however, as it worked on the minds of people, did not seem to follow that distinction.

Billington makes the relevant observation that 'although there were restrictions on women's ministerial roles in denominations with a highly educated ministry and with a clear structure of worship and deep suspicion of excitement, noise or physical prostrations in religious services, distinctions between the sexes often broke down completely among Methodists, "New Lights", Freewill Baptists, Christians and other enthusiastic sects in frontier settlements where settled ministers were lacking'.¹²¹¹ Thus, in the movement of which the Christian Connexion was a part, there was a certain fluidity between denominational boundaries and practices, and it was often difficult to distinguish between praying in public, exhorting or urging sinners to repentance, and preaching, which in the context of the spiritual revivals often did not consist of a formal address but impassioned speeches driven by the Holy Spirit.¹²¹²

The core elements of the Christian Connexion were concepts of (a) freedom from established denominations and a return to primitive Christianity according to the Bible alone, (b) egalitarianism and a vision of unity between all humans or at least all Christians, and (c) a strong belief in the work of the Spirit through the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. Thus many converts and certainly many women converts in the Christian Connexion were 'dismissive of man-made order and government in the church' and ministerial authority was often challenged.¹²¹³

¹²¹⁰ Ibid., p. 375.

¹²¹¹ Ibid., p. 375.

¹²¹² Ibid., pp. 375-376; note the example of the Methodist Fanny Newell in Maine.

¹²¹³ Ibid., p. 376.

The driving force of the women exhorters or preachers among the Christians was 'their fierce religious conviction and sense of calling'. And yet, they did not challenge the social conventions of male ministerial dominance lightly. Hostile male ministers criticised them using various biblical passages, especially Paul's injunction in 1 Corinthians 14:33-34, which was read and applied in the strong biblical literalist tradition of interpretation current at the time. The women preachers defended themselves, however, and we have examples of that in Deborah Pierce's *A Scriptural Vindication of Female Preaching, Prophesying and Exhortation* (1817),¹²¹⁴ and Harriet Livermore wrote at even greater length about 'every instance recorded in Scripture of God's special notice and regard to my sex', in *Scriptural Evidence in Favour of Female Testimony in Meetings for the Worship of God* (1824).¹²¹⁵ Salome Lincoln stressed the text 'Woe to me, if I preach not the gospel', and most of the women pointed to Joel 2:28: 'I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and daughters shall prophesy ... And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit'. Other favoured texts included 'There is neither Jew nor Greek ... there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Gal. 3:28), and many women pointed to the fact that 'it was a woman who first preached that Christ was risen'.¹²¹⁶

Alongside Scriptural arguments women preachers 'showed a shrewd understanding of the societal pressures which worked against them and worked hard to counter these'.¹²¹⁷ Thus, they emphasised that 'female preaching was unpopular and unacceptable because it was not the custom of the more socially prominent denominations which still took their social conventions from England'.¹²¹⁸ This argument carried weight at the time, because in the decades after the American Revolution, freedom from everything English was a popular concept and this included the idea of freedom from the established Anglican, Calvinist and Methodist denominations.¹²¹⁹ They also argued that the key verses from 1 Corinthians 'were deliberately misconstrued and used by men to make "still more degraded" woman's social position'; 'woman had been "taught for ages to understand herself but a

¹²¹⁴ Published in Auburn, New York in 1817.

¹²¹⁵ Published in Portsmouth, NH, in 1824.

¹²¹⁶ See the references in L. Billington, 'Female Labourers in the Church', 1985, p. 379.

¹²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 379.

¹²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²¹⁹ W. W. Jennings, *Origin and Early History of the Disciples of Christ*, 1919, pp. 13-54.

subordinate being ... and hence merely *passive*", without the independence which men possessed to work in their chosen sphere'.¹²²⁰

The relationship of women preachers with the different church organisations varied, especially 'as local and regional church organisation and practice was still very fluid'. It is important to note, however, that Baptist, Methodist and Quaker practices were often mixed, while the rise of the Christians indicates the popularity of the quest for "primitive Christianity".¹²²¹ Thus, the Christians were liberated from the established systems of denominations and looked for a reformation based on the Word of the Bible as their only creed. Billington's research shows that 'most of the women preachers did not seek ordination, and some accepted that only men should celebrate the gospel ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper'.¹²²² He continues to point out that 'women were occasionally listed or mentioned as Elders or ordained ministers, and certainly many held pastoral responsibility for preaching, organising churches, making reports to regional meetings and acting as delegates to conferences. Most of these women were licensed, and listed as unordained preachers, assistant preachers, or "female laborers in Christ". In some areas of New England and New York, they made up between 1 and 5 percent of Freewill Baptist or Christian preachers, although the impact of their work might be greater than these numbers suggest. The predominant role of women preachers, however, was as itinerant evangelists, often without pastoral responsibility, and the more famous preachers like Clarissa Danforth, Nancy Towle and Harriet Livermore specialised in this work, moving between the Freewill Baptists, Christians and a wide range of Methodist sects as opportunity occurred'.¹²²³ Thus, they had virtually the same role as James White before and after his ordination in the Christian Connexion in 1843, as we see vividly depicted in his *Life Incidents*.

Women preachers of the kind considered here became less common in the 1840's. In a few areas where they had been popular there is some evidence of continuity with the women seeking ordination in a few churches later in the century.¹²²⁴ Leaders in the Christian Connexion began to place emphasis on order and discipline and to copy institutional practices of the more socially prominent

¹²²⁰ L. Billington, 'Female Labourers in the Church', 1985, p. 379.

¹²²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 380.

¹²²² *Ibid.*

¹²²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 380-381.

¹²²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 391.

churches.¹²²⁵ The view that became prominent was that practical needs would not necessarily require a 'thus saith the Lord' from the Bible and this went along with a desire to become more respectable in the eyes of society and become like the established denominations. Thus, the movement of women preachers was absorbed by the social convention of women staying within 'the sphere of their gender', as defined by tradition, not the Bible.

4.4.5.5 Conclusions. James White was baptized in the Christian Connexion in 1837 at sixteen years of age and ordained as a minister in the same church in 1843 when he was twenty-one. It is difficult to define in detail what ideas on ordination he brought with him into Millerism and the Sabbatarian Advent movement, but the following seems clear:

1. Ordination was based on congregational approval and was done by prayer and laying on of hands, according to a rite recorded in Scripture (Acts 6:1-6; 13:1-3).

2. Ordination was not a condition for preaching and teaching, for that gift was given by the Spirit of the Lord. Ordination gave the *authority* to celebrate the New Testament ordinances of baptism and holy communion, and brought with it a setting apart as 'elder' or leader in the church based on ability to preach God's Word, which was seen as the only creed.

3. 'Ordained ministers' were a guarantee for church order and unity, and would serve as protectors of true biblical teaching and preaching. At a time when itinerant evangelists and ministers of uncertain background was the order of the day, ordination was a safeguard.

4. Ordination was performed by the already ordained ministers and elders. Possibly, this was based on alleged biblical examples: the apostles were understood to 'ordain' the seven in Acts 6:1-6; the church through prophets and teachers 'ordained' Paul and Barnabas for their missionary journey in Acts 13:1-3; and Paul and Barnabas commissioned elders in Acts 14:23. However, it also included a succession of spiritual authority being conferred on the ordinand and separated the clergy from the laity. Such ideas are however not true to the teachings of the Bible.

5. While James White would have been familiar with the occurrence of female preachers, it is not clear what the practice was in his local church. The Christian

¹²²⁵ Ibid.

Connexion local church in Palmyra, Maine, seems to have belonged to the group that required ordination for performing the ordinances of baptism and holy communion. On one occasion, the Christian Connexion in Palmyra took serious issue with the perceived ‘liberalism’ of Alexander Campbell, the leader of the Disciples of Christ who were loosely connected with the Christians, when he advocated the view that the ordinances could be administered by any lay person. In view of that and the general context of a widespread social convention of keeping women ‘within their sphere’, we may conclude that the young James White did not bring with him from his past in the Christian Connexion a determined view regarding the ordination of women as ministers. However, he had been exposed to a widely held view that the Spirit equipped both men and women to speak, preach and teach the Word of God, and this prepared him to accept the prophetic gift of his wife Ellen.

4.5 ‘Ordain’ and ‘Ordination’ in English Bible Translations

4.5.1 General

For Christian movements and denominations in the English-speaking world that traced their roots to the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century, the Bible translation used for references to the concept of ‘ordination’ would have played a significant role. There is no doubt that the so-called King James Version (published 1611 and updated in the 1769 Oxford edition) was the dominant Bible translation in the United States in the nineteenth century, when the Sabbatarian Adventists developed the Seventh-day Adventist church organisation and their understanding of ordination. This *Authorized Version* of the Bible has been called ‘the most influential version of the most influential book in the world, in what is now its most influential language’.¹²²⁶ Although the *Authorized Version*’s former monopoly in the English-speaking world has diminished, it is still the most popular translation in the United States, especially among Evangelicals,¹²²⁷ and, we may add, Seventh-day Adventists.

For a biblical theology of ordination, it is important to bear in mind that (a) the referential meaning of the English noun ‘ordination’ is not carried by any term in the Bible (neither in Hebrew nor in Greek), and that (b) the same English verb, ‘ordain’,

¹²²⁶ ‘400 years of the King James Bible’, in: *The Times Literary Supplement*, 9 February, 2011.

¹²²⁷ *Ibid.*

is used in the KJV to translate 35 different words (11 Hebrew words in the Old Testament, 21 Greek words in the Apocrypha and the New Testament, and 3 Latin words in the Apocrypha) with a wide range of meaning, ‘including both divine and human acts of selecting, determining, establishing, appointing, and ordering in both religious and secular contexts’.¹²²⁸ This feature in the translation may have suggested to KJV readers for centuries that ‘ordination’ is a more biblical matter than it actually is. Moreover, ‘when the English word “ordain” is read [in the KJV] with one’s pre-conceived idea of ordination then it has tainted the interpretation of the biblical material’.¹²²⁹ In addition, the word ‘ordain’ has its roots in the administrative and cultic Latin of the Roman Empire and was absorbed by the Roman Catholic Church in the late second and third centuries, thus expressing the idea of the ordained minister receiving the special status of a group distinct from the laity (4.1; 4.2). In almost all contemporary Bible translations, including the New King James Version (1982), this deficit has been remedied and the word ‘ordain’ has almost disappeared from the Bible. However, the historical impact of the KJV rendering cannot be underestimated.

What we are saying here is not new. For example, *The Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (1996) states the following:

The word ‘ordain’ does not appear in the Greek New Testament. The word ‘ordain’ that appears in the King James Version actually translates a number of Greek words, including *poieo*, “appointed” (Mark 3:14); *ginomai*, “to become, select” (Acts 1:22); *tithemi*, “appoint, place, set” (1 Tim. 2:7); *kathistemi*, “cause to be, appoint” (Titus 1:5); *cheirotoneo*, “stretch out the hand, appoint” (Acts 14:23). The English word “ordain” has a Latin root, *ordinare*, which derives from Roman law, which conveys the idea of a special status or a group distinct from ordinary people. That is why most modern versions do not use the word ‘ordain’ – it does not give an accurate translation of the original meaning.

There are instances in the Old Testament where the KJV uses ‘ordain’ to translate various Hebrew words for ‘appoint, put in place, consecrate’. We have analysed these instances in chapter 3 above and none of them refer to the appointment of a Christian for ministry or a ministerial office. Looking a bit closer at the language of the New Testament, we may add some instances to the selected five mentioned in

¹²²⁸ R. L. Staples, ‘A Theological Understanding of Ordination’, 1998, p. 139; R. P. Lightner, ‘Ordain, ordination’, 1985, pp. 801-802; V. Norskov Olsen, *Church, Priesthood and Ordination*, 1990, pp. 122-125.

¹²²⁹ V. Norskov Olsen, *ibid.*, p. 123.

the quotation above. Thus, the KJV uses 'ordain' in the following instances (we have italicised the verb 'ordain' in the quotations for emphasis):

Mark 3:14 (KJV): And he *ordained* twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach (NKJV has 'appointed').

Note: The Greek term behind 'ordained' is *poieo*, which literally means 'make', thus 'he *made or appointed* twelve'.

John 15:16 (KJV): Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and *ordained* you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain (NKJV has 'appointed').

Note: The Greek term behind 'ordain' is *tithemi* (as in 1 Tim. 2:7), which literally means 'put, set, place' and can be translated 'assign, appoint' in some contexts. Jesus' reference here is not to laying on of hands or setting apart for a church office, but to his choice and appointment of the disciples as his close friends, in whom his words remain, who remain in his love by obeying his commands, and who show themselves to be his disciples (see 15:4-15). This appointment is rather to the priesthood of the believers than any particular ministry of leadership in the organised church.

Acts 1:22 (KJV): Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be *ordained* to be a witness with us of his resurrection (NKJV: 'become [a witness]').

Note: The Greek term behind 'ordained' is *ginomai*, which literally means 'become'. The context deals with the choice of one who has been with Jesus' disciples 'the whole time Jesus went in and out among us' and who is to *be or become* a witness with [the twelve] of Christ's resurrection. No 'ordination' for this role is mentioned just as Jesus did not 'ordain' the twelve (Mark 3:14). But the KJV translators believed that the role of the twelve apostles required 'ordination' and rendered the simple verb 'become' as 'ordain'.

Acts 10:42 (KJV; cf. 17:31): And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was *ordained* of God to be the Judge of quick and dead (NKJV has 'ordained')

Note: The Greek term behind 'ordained' derives from *horidzo* which means 'define, determine, appoint'. It is God who has 'appointed' Christ as judge of the living and the dead, and there is no warrant for introducing the technical term 'ordained'. It is probable, however, that 'ordain' in KJV is used here in a different sense, namely 'determine, decree, order'.

Acts 14:23 (KJV): And when they had *ordained* them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed (NKJV has 'appointed elders ... commended them to the Lord').

Note: The Greek term behind 'ordained' is *cheirotoneo*, which means 'appoint'. The same Greek word is used in 2 Corinthians 8:19, where it is said that Titus had 'been appointed by the churches to travel with' Paul. In this passage, however, the KJV has the word 'chosen', but in Acts 14:23 it has 'ordain'. The Greek word *cheirotoneo* is made of two words, *cheiros*, 'hand', and *toneo*, 'extend'. Thus giving the sense 'extend the hand', which was used either to designate a person ('point out') or to cast a vote ('raise the hand'). This was the Greek term that the early church later on,

around 200 A.D., used for what we now call 'ordination' (*cheirotomia*), and it survived in the Orthodox Church tradition and is the Greek term used by Greek-speaking Seventh-day Adventists for 'ordination'. It has different connotations from the Latin *ordinare* and *ordinatio* in that it refers to appointment by voting, not to setting aside to a separate higher order.

1 Timothy 2:7 (KJV): Whereunto I am *ordained* a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity (NKJV has 'appointed').

Note: The Greek term behind 'ordained' is again *tithemi* (cf. John 15:16), meaning 'put, set, place', in some contexts 'assign, appoint'.

Titus 1:5 (KJV): For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and *ordain* elders in every city, as I had appointed thee (NKJV has 'appoint').

Note: The Greek term behind 'ordain' is *kathistemi*, which means 'cause to be, arrange'.

Hebrews 5:1 (KJV): For every high priest taken from among men is *ordained* for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins (NKJV has 'appointed'). **Hebrews 8:3 (KJV):** For every high priest is *ordained* to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer (NKJV has 'appointed').

Note: In both passages, the Greek term behind 'ordained' is *kathidzo*, 'make to sit down, set, appoint, sit, settle'. We should keep in mind, however, that in none of the passages from Hebrews is the verb referring to a Christian minister, but in both cases to the high priest in the Old Testament.

We see here that, whereas the usage of the term 'ordained' in the KJV gives the impression of a set order, a consideration of the Greek New Testament reveals 'the fluidity and breadth of practice in the New Testament church'.¹²³⁰ What matters in the New Testament is 'the direct action of the Holy Spirit in calling leaders, a process of selection by the church, and the function of the apostles in appointing leaders in every place'.¹²³¹

At various points in our study of the history of ordination in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we see how references to 'ordination' in the Bible according to the King James Version influenced the understanding of the pioneers (4.6), and it may be assumed that the same impact of the erroneous translation 'ordain' is current in the English-speaking part of the world-wide Seventh-day Adventist Church.

It is clear that the occurrence of 'ordain' in the King James Version (1611) – not only in key passages like Mark 3:14; Acts 1:22; 14:23; 1 Tim 2:7; Titus 1:5, but

¹²³⁰ R. L. Staples, 'A Theological Understanding of Ordination', 1998, p. 139.

¹²³¹ Ibid.

also in many other instances in the Bible as a whole – followed a long English tradition going back to Roman Catholic times. In this usage, ‘ordain’ had a general sense, ‘command, decree’, and a specific sense, ‘set apart [for church office]’, and sometimes it may be difficult to distinguish between these two.¹²³²

The issue of how and when the verb ‘ordain’, found its way into the major English Bible translations would require its own study. A few observations will be included here, because it highlights the connotations of the Roman Catholic view of ordination which are carried by the term ‘ordain’ in the KJV Bible.

Let us first recognise that the Vulgate Latin translation by Jerome (c. 405 AD) does not use Latin *ordinare* but rather literal translations of the various commonplace Greek verbs found in Mark 3:14; Acts 1:22; 14:23; 1 Tim 2:7; Titus 1:5. For over a thousand years (c. AD 400–1530), the Vulgate was the definitive edition of the most influential text in Western Europe. For Western Christians, it was for hundreds of years the only version of the Bible ever encountered. The Vulgate's influence throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance into the Early Modern Period is considered to be even greater than that of the King James Version in English. Thus, for Christians during these times the phraseology and wording of the Vulgate permeated all areas of the culture. However, derivations of Latin *ordinare* do not apply to ordination texts in the Vulgate, although the verb existed in Latin and was used elsewhere in the Vulgate.¹²³³ Obviously, in regard to ‘ordination’, Jerome did not have a need to introduce ecclesiastical theology into his Bible translation but was faithful, at least on this point, to the original text.

4.5.2 John Wycliffe

John Wycliffe (ca. 1330-1384), an Oxford University professor and theologian, has given name to the first complete English language Bible — often called Wycliffe's Bible. His New Testament was completed in 1380 (each copy being hand-printed and issued in 1382) with the Old Testament following a few years later, although it is thought that a large portion of the Old Testament was actually translated by Nicholas Hereford.

¹²³² A similar observation has been made regarding Ellen White's use of ‘ordain’ in the writings: see D. Fortin, ‘Ordination in the Writings of Ellen G. White’, 1998, pp. 118-119.

¹²³³ See, for example, 2 Chron. 9:8; Songs 2:4; 1 Cor.9:14; 16:1, 15; 2 Cor. 8:19.

Several translations by various men are associated with the concept of the Wycliffe Bible. Wycliffe's version around 1380 is known as the 'early version'. In the decade following John Wycliffe's death in 1384, his friend John Purvey revised the text, and the complete text, including Purvey's 'Great Prologue', appeared by 1395. Portions of his revision, in particular the Gospels and other books of the New Testament, were in circulation as early as 1388. Historians refer to Purvey's work as the 'Later Version' of the Wycliffe Bible.¹²³⁴

While Wycliffe wanted to reform the Roman-Catholic Church (mainly by allowing the poor and uneducated people to read the word of God and by a moral reform of Christian faith and life among the church hierarchy), his text conformed fully to Catholic teaching, and it was rightly considered to be an unauthorised Roman Catholic version of the Vulgate text but 'with heretical preface and notes added'. This slightly misleading view was held by many Catholic commentators, including Thomas More (1478-1535). From the time of King Richard II until the time of the English Reformation, the Lollards who fervently read Wycliffe's Bible were persecuted, and the Roman Catholic Church in England put a ban on unauthorised Bible translations in 1408. Only in the late sixteenth century did the Roman Church approve of a Catholic English Bible translation (1582-1610).

Looking at Wycliffe's translation of the major ordination passages in the New Testament, we find that he used 'ordain' only in Acts 14:23 (*cheirotoneo*) and 1 Titus 1:5 (*kathistemi*). In the other instances, he translated 'made that there were apostles' (Mark 3:14; for *poieo*), 'be made a witness with us for the resurrection' (Acts 1:22; for *ginomai*), and 'set to be a herald and an apostle' (1 Tim. 2:7; for *tithemi*). Why then did he use 'ordain' only in Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5?

Both passages refer to an appointment of 'elders' (*presbyteroi*) in local churches. We know that the New Testament does not distinguish clearly between the 'elder' (*presbyteros*) and the 'overseer or bishop' (*episkopos*) – note particularly Titus 1:5-7 and 1 Timothy 3:1-11. Thus, the 'ordination' in these two texts was connected with the office of the 'bishop' and/or 'priests' and we may assume on good grounds that the Roman Catholic sacrament of holy orders impacted the reading, even for Wycliffe.

¹²³⁴ Terence P. Noble, 'Introduction' to *Wycliffe's Bible Comprising of Wycliffe's Old Testament and Wycliffe's New Testament (Revised Edition)*.

In Acts 14:23, Paul and Barnabas ‘ordained elders for [the disciples] in each church and with prayer and fasting committed them to the Lord’. It is noteworthy that this act by Paul and Barnabas follows their own ‘ordination’ in Antioch according to Acts 13:1-3 and that ‘prayer and fasting’ is occurring in both instances, which links the procedure of ‘ordination’ in these two passages. Thus, the context could be construed as implying some form of *succession* of ‘ordination’.

In Titus 1:5, Paul instructs Titus, his ‘true son in our common faith’ (1:4), that having been left by Paul in Crete to ‘set in order what was left unfinished’, he is to ‘ordain elders in every town’, as Paul directed him. Titus was an appointed ‘son’ of Paul which is a special title, normally implying a blessing by laying on of hands, as in the case of Timothy (2 Tim. 1:6). Titus was also associated with Barnabas, another co-worker with Paul (Gal. 2:1-3). He represented Paul in various functions, acted with Paul’s authority among the churches as an itinerant ‘(son of an) apostle’, and Paul calls him ‘my partner and fellow-worker among you’ (2 Cor. 2:13; 7:5-7, 13-16; 8:22-24; 12:18; 2 Tim. 4:10). In Titus 1:5, Titus performs Paul’s work as ‘directed by Paul’. This is evidence that, by implication, Titus, too, had been set apart by laying on of hands for his task and that he acts with Paul’s authority as he ‘appoints’ elders in every town.

Thus, it seems that Wycliffe uses ‘ordain’ only when a clear succession of ‘ordination’ is implied, and when the offices of ‘the higher orders’, the ‘bishop’ and the ‘priests’ are involved. In all other instances he uses more literal renderings of the Greek. Thus, it is enlightening to see how Wycliffe translated Titus 1:5-7:

For cause of this thing I left thee at Crete, (so) that thou amend those things that fail, and *ordain priests* by cities, as also I assigned to thee, (or I disposed to thee). **6** If any man is without crime, (or without great sin), a husband of one wife, and hath faithful sons, not in accusation of lechery, or not subject. **7** For it behooveth a *bishop* to be without crime, [as] a dispenser of God.¹²³⁵

We see here that the ‘elders’ (*presbyteroi*) to be ordained by Titus are named ‘priests’ (Greek *presbyteros* is the etymological origin of the term ‘priest’, which developed in the Roman church) and that they are interchanged or associated with the ‘bishop’, whose qualifications for ordination are provided in Titus 1:6-9.

The conclusion seems to be near at hand that Wycliffe was conditioned by the Roman Catholic view of ‘ordination’ as he chose ‘ordain’ only in Acts 14:23 and Titus

¹²³⁵ Emphasis supplied.

1:5, where there is a succession of authority from the church leaders in Antioch to Paul and Barnabas, and from them to the local elders in Asia Minor; the same is the case with Paul 'ordaining' Titus as his son, partner and co-worker. The apostolic succession and the Roman Catholic terminology of *ordinare* in the Canon Law probably served as the background for Wycliffe's translation. And the officers he has in mind in both passages are the 'priests' and 'bishops' of the Roman Church. This is in keeping with the general character of Wycliffe's translation: it conforms fully to Roman Catholic teaching.

4.5.3 William Tyndale

The use of the term 'ordain' for induction to church office which, as it seems, was initiated by Wycliffe at the end of the 1300's, became more widespread in Tyndale's translation of the New Testament in 1525 (the first *printed* English Bible translation).

Thus, in Tyndale's translation, all the ordination passages we have considered here have the English word 'ordain'. This is a peculiar fact, for Tyndale supported the Protestant Reformation and was inspired by Martin Luther's translation of the Bible into German – it appears, in fact that Tyndale translated the New Testament while in Wittenberg. On many points of translation, Tyndale was heavily criticised by the Roman Catholic Church for undermining Catholic doctrine, and he was eventually executed as a heretic. Any choice of wording that did not fit the Roman doctrines of the church and of the sacraments was heavily criticised. So, why did Tyndale use 'ordain' so consistently, although it was not a correct translation of the Greek (which he was eager to uphold overall, following Erasmus' devotion to the Greek original text), and although he was notoriously seeking to challenge the Roman doctrines, which he did not find were supported by the Bible?

Several explanations are plausible:

(a) 'Ordain' had in the Roman Catholic centuries before Tyndale become the common ecclesiastical word in English for appointment and induction to an office. The use of *ordinare* in the Latin Code of Canon Law had made the English term 'ordain' practical and more common. The term 'ordain' also had a dual meaning, both 'determine, decree (authoritatively)' and 'induct to higher orders', and, possibly, both these senses influenced Tyndale's choice.

However, this explanation does not account for Tyndale's deviation from his general principle of translating the Bible text as faithfully as possible according to the Greek text, and, by so doing, challenging Roman Catholic doctrine. Tyndale was very fond of Martin Luther's translation of the New Testament and would have been aware that Luther in his translation used the same common German word in all the ordination passages (*einsetzen*) except in Acts 1:22 (*werden*). Tyndale's general practice is especially visible when we consider the disapproval by the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church of many words and phrases. He was charged that he had intentionally mistranslated terms such as 'overseer' instead of 'bishop', 'elder' for 'priest', 'repent' for 'do penance', and 'love' instead of 'charity', in order to promote anti-clericalism and heretical views.¹²³⁶ Tyndale, citing Erasmus, contended that the Greek New Testament did not support the traditional Roman Catholic readings. More controversially, Tyndale translated the Greek *ekklesia* as 'congregation' rather than 'Church'. This translation was a direct threat to the Church's ancient — but non-scriptural (according to Tyndale) — claim to being the body of Christ on earth. Changing these words was to remove from the Church hierarchy its pretensions to be Christ's terrestrial representative, and to award this honour to individual believers who made up each congregation, according to the belief in the priesthood of all believers. The Church demanded that Tyndale would conform to Catholic doctrines in his translation. He did not, and, eventually, was executed.

(b) In light of this, there is another plausible explanation for Tyndale's generous use of the word 'ordain'. Wycliffe had used 'ordain' in his translation only where it was clearly connected with the apostolic succession of priests and bishops, the Roman-Catholic view of 'ordination' as a sacrament, and the technical term of Latin *ordinare*. Following his general tendency to correct any undue influence from Roman doctrines, Tyndale could undo Wycliffe's obvious support for Roman doctrine in one of two ways: either (a) he could replace 'ordain' in all the ordination passages with commonplace words that reflected the New Testament Greek, or (b) he could teach a different view of 'ordination' by using 'ordain' in *all the instances*, namely, for Jesus' appointment of the twelve (Mark 3:14), for God's appointment (through the casting of lots) of Matthias as a witness to the resurrection and as an apostle (Acts

¹²³⁶B. Moynahan, *William Tyndale: If God Spare my Life*, 2003, p. 72; A.C. Partridge, *English Biblical Translation*, 1973, pp. 40-41.

1:22), and for Paul's appointment by God as an apostle (1 Tim. 2:7). Tyndale did the latter. Thus, by his translation, 'ordination' in the New Testament became God's divine act, not the sacrament of the church (Acts 1:22; 1 Tim. 2:7); holding office in the church became founded on Jesus' 'ordination' of his disciples, not the apostolic succession from Peter (Mark 3:14); and 'ordination' to become a witness of the resurrection together with all the disciples was the basis for 'ministry and apostleship', not the church ritual and sacraments (Acts 1:21-25). Thus, Tyndale's purpose may have been not to do away with biblical references to 'ordination' but rather to define this concept in a biblical way and remove the alleged scriptural foundations of Roman ecclesiology and sacramentalism. But the price for this was the more frequent use of the verb 'ordain' to translate a variety of common Greek terms which, in themselves, focus simply on the action of 'appointment'.

4.5.4 The King James Version

In the ten years following his translation of the New Testament in 1525, Tyndale revised his New Testament in the light of rapidly advancing biblical scholarship and embarked on a translation of the Old Testament. Despite some controversial translation choices, the merits of Tyndale's work and prose style made his translation the ultimate basis for all subsequent renditions into Early Modern English.¹²³⁷ Thus, it is estimated that around 90% of the King James Version (1611) is from Tyndale's work with as much as one third of the text being word for word Tyndale.¹²³⁸ Thus, the prolific use of 'ordain' in KJV seems, superficially at least, to be a heritage from Tyndale and, in a lesser way, Wycliffe.

In 1539, Tyndale's New Testament and his incomplete work on the Old Testament became the basis for the *Great Bible*. This was the first 'authorised version' issued by the Church of England during the reign of King Henry VIII.¹²³⁹ When Mary I succeeded to the throne in 1553, she returned the Church of England to the communion of the Roman Catholic faith and many English religious reformers fled the country,¹²⁴⁰ some establishing an English-speaking colony in Geneva. Under the leadership of John Calvin, Geneva became the chief international centre of

¹²³⁷ D. Daniell, *The Bible in English: Its History and Influence*, 2003, p. 156.

¹²³⁸ D. Coggan, *The English Bible*, 1968, pp. 18-19; J. Nielsen & R. Skousen, 'How Much of the King James Bible is William Tyndale's? An Estimation Based on Sampling', 1998, pp. 49-74.

¹²³⁹ D. Daniell, *The Bible in English*, 2003, p. 204.

¹²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 277.

Reformed Protestantism and Latin biblical scholarship.¹²⁴¹ These English expatriates undertook a translation that became known as the *Geneva Bible*.¹²⁴² This translation, dated to 1560, was a revision of Tyndale's Bible and the *Great Bible* on the basis of the original languages.¹²⁴³ Soon after Elizabeth I took the throne in 1558, the flaws of both the *Great Bible* and the *Geneva Bible* (namely, that the Geneva Bible did not 'conform to the ecclesiology and reflect the episcopal structure of the Church of England and its beliefs about an ordained clergy') became apparent.¹²⁴⁴ In 1568, the Church of England responded with the *Bishops' Bible*, a revision of the *Great Bible* in the light of the Geneva Version.¹²⁴⁵ While officially approved, this new version failed to displace the Geneva translation as the most popular English Bible of the age – in part because the full Bible was only printed in lectern editions of prodigious size and at a cost of several pounds.¹²⁴⁶ Accordingly, Elizabethan lay people overwhelmingly read the Bible in the Geneva Version – small editions were available at a relatively low cost.

In May 1601, King James VI of Scotland attended the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland at St Columba's Church in Burntisland, Fife, at which proposals were put forward for a new translation of the Bible into English.¹²⁴⁷ Two years later, he ascended to the throne of England as King James I of England. The newly crowned King James convened the Hampton Court Conference in 1604. That gathering proposed a new English version in response to the perceived problems of earlier translations as detected by the Puritan faction of the Church of England.

As we consider the instructions to the translators, we detect the general, intended character of the KJV. Besides instructions that were meant to limit the Puritan influence on the new translation and the qualification that no marginal notes would be added (this had been an issue in the *Geneva Bible*), the King gave the translators instructions designed to guarantee that the new version would *conform to the ecclesiology of the Church of England*.¹²⁴⁸ Certain Greek and Hebrew words were to be translated *in a manner that reflected the traditional usage of the*

¹²⁴¹ Ibid., p. 291.

¹²⁴² Ibid., p. 292.

¹²⁴³ Ibid., p. 304.

¹²⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 339.

¹²⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 344.

¹²⁴⁶ B. Bobrick, *Wide as the Waters: The Story of the English Bible and the Revolution it Inspired*, 2001, p. 186.

¹²⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 221.

¹²⁴⁸ D. Darnell, *The Bible in English*, 2003, p. 439.

church.¹²⁴⁹ For example, old ecclesiastical words such as the word ‘church’ were to be retained and not to be translated as ‘congregation’.¹²⁵⁰ The new translation would *reflect the episcopal structure of the Church of England and traditional beliefs about ordained clergy*.¹²⁵¹

The task of translation was undertaken by 47 scholars, although 54 were originally approved.¹²⁵² All were members of the Church of England and all except Sir Henry Savile were clergy.¹²⁵³ The scholars were not paid directly for their translation work, but a circular letter was sent to bishops encouraging them to consider the translators for appointment to well-paid livings as these fell vacant. Many were supported by the various colleges at Oxford and Cambridge, while others were promoted to bishoprics, deaneries and prebends through royal patronage.

The committees started work towards the end of 1604. King James I of England, on 22 July 1604, sent a letter to Archbishop Richard Bancroft asking him to contact all English churchmen requesting that they make donations to his project.¹²⁵⁴ Thus, the translation project was very much a project by the Church of England, financially as well as theologically.

Bancroft was the chief overseer of the translation project. He was well-known from early on as a staunch opponent of the Puritans and the Reformed Churches linked to Geneva. He was also known for having a particularly high regard for the ‘divine right of the bishops’. He was the official that had primary responsibility for ensuring that the King’s instructions to the translators were followed: that the new version would ‘conform to the ecclesiology of the Church of England’, that ‘certain Greek and Hebrew words were to be translated in a manner that reflected the traditional usage of the church’, and that it would ‘*reflect the episcopal structure of the Church of England and traditional beliefs about ordained clergy*’.

As Archbishop of Canterbury, Bancroft was the primate of the Church of England and defended the ecclesiastical order of Anglicanism. We have seen what that meant for ordination (4.4.2). The Roman Catholic Church had points of similarities with the practice in Anglican churches, but the Anglican Church has gone

¹²⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹²⁵¹ Ibid.

¹²⁵² Ibid., p. 436.

¹²⁵³ Bobrick, *The Story of the English Bible*, 2001, p. 223.

¹²⁵⁴ D Wallehinsky, *The People's Almanac*, 1975, p. 235.

through a complex history when it comes to ordination, especially in the time of the Dissenters. From the beginning, Anglican ordination rites and language were based on Pre-Reformation Roman pontificals. Most Pre-Reformation rites of ordination varied considerably, but ‘much pomp and formality were deemed to be fitting to such an auspicious occasion’. From the beginning, the three orders of bishop, priest and deacon were believed to be the biblical offices of church government, and all were ordained to office with the imposition of hands. Minor orders did not receive this rite. Successive ordination was practised: a deacon might after a year’s service qualify as a priest, and a priest might later become a bishop. The bishops are held to be in *apostolic succession*. This, then, is part of the conceptual and theological foundation for the King James Version.

All committees had completed their sections by 1608, the Apocrypha committee finishing first. From January 1609, a General Committee of Review met to review the completed marked texts from each of the six committees. The original printing of the *Authorized Version* – popularly called King James Version – was then published by Robert Barker, the King’s Printer, in 1611 as a complete folio Bible.¹²⁵⁵

Regarding the ordination passages in the Bible, the KJV is consistently translating the various Greek and Hebrew terms with ‘ordain’, thus obscuring the fluidity and variety that emerges in the Bible, which we have seen (chapter 3). An example of the translation of different Greek words with the same English word is the use of ‘hell’ for ‘Hades’ and ‘Gehenna’, suggesting that the translation was driven by Anglican doctrine.¹²⁵⁶ There is an openness to translating the same Greek and Hebrew word with different English words,¹²⁵⁷ but that does not apply to ordination texts, where it appears that the doctrine that was to be defended was ‘the episcopal structure of the Church of England and traditional beliefs about ordained clergy’. Thus, Greek *episkopos* was consistently translated ‘bishop’, not ‘overseer’ (cf. 1 Tim. 3:1; Titus 1:7).

4.5.5 Conclusions

The King James Version (1611 and updated in the 1769) was the dominant Bible translation in the United States in the nineteenth century, when the Sabbatarian

¹²⁵⁵ D. Darnell, *The Bible in English*, 2003, p. 453.

¹²⁵⁶ H. Dunton, *Bible Versions: A Consumer’s Guide to the Bible*, 1998, p. 67.

¹²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

Adventists developed the Seventh-day Adventist church organisation and their understanding of ordination. It is still the most popular translation in the United States, especially among Evangelicals and Seventh-day Adventists.

Although the concepts of the English words 'ordination' and 'ordain' are not referred to in the Bible, 'ordain' is used in the KJV to translate 35 different words in Hebrew, Greek and Latin texts with a wide range of meanings. In almost all contemporary Bible translations, including the New King James Version (1982), this deficit has been remedied and the word 'ordain' has almost disappeared from the Bible translations.

This weakness in the translation came about partly for historical reasons and partly for doctrinal and political reasons in England. The term 'ordain' was introduced into the Bible by Wycliffe in 1380, where he tried to reflect the Roman-Catholic view of the apostolic succession and sacrament of orders and ordination as a rite that separates the higher orders, bishops and priests, from the laity and makes them into a separate class of Christians, according to models created in ancient pagan Rome. While Tyndale followed Martin Luther and sought to challenge the doctrinal system of the Roman-Catholic Church in England in 1525, he chose to use 'ordain' more often than Wycliffe in order to call attention to the supremacy in any ordination of God and Christ over the institution of the Roman Church. In the King James Version in 1611, other reasons of a doctrinal and political nature led the translators to use 'ordain' wherever possible in the whole Bible. These reasons were, among others, plain royal instructions to conform to the ecclesiology of the Church of England, choosing terms that reflected the traditional usage of the church, the episcopal structure of the Church of England, and traditional beliefs about ordained clergy.

The unfortunate introduction of 'ordain' into the Bible has perpetuated a Roman view of 'ordination' in many Protestant quarters, with ideas of apostolic succession, sacramentalism, orders that classify believers in the church, and the institution and power of the ordained clergy as governing, if not also being the church. The word 'ordain' has its roots in the administrative and cultic Latin of the Roman Empire and was absorbed by the Roman Church in the late second and third centuries, thus expressing the idea of the ordained minister receiving the special status of a group distinct from the laity (4.1; 4.2).

In the next chapter, we will see how the Sabbatarian Adventists handled the King James Version as they became aware of the need for organisation, order and

protecting the truth of the biblical teaching and preaching through specially appointed ministers.

4.6 Seventh-day Adventist Understandings of Ordination

4.6.1 The Move to Ordination in Early Adventism

The situation in the Sabbatarian Adventist movement around 1850 was that some leaders had been ordained as ministers in their previous churches, following the patterns for ordination in denominations such as the Christian Connexion (Joshua Himes, James White), Methodism (John Byington, Frederick Wheeler), and Baptism (A.S. Hutchins).¹²⁵⁸ In the early 1850's, however, ordination became an issue in the movement.

Ordained leaders and ministers had become a great need. With growth came issues of unity, recognised leadership, and the needs of administering the church ordinances. However, the movement hesitated because of its strong anti-organisational position.¹²⁵⁹ Gary Land has summarised this development as follows:

Many Adventists regarded ordination as a move in the direction of church organization, which they opposed. Nonetheless, James White and other leaders believed that ordination was necessary so that the small Adventist congregations would know which travelling preachers they could trust. It appears that the first ordination to the Adventist ministry took place at New Haven, Vermont, in the fall of 1853. In December of that year White wrote an article in the *Review and Herald* in which he argued for the necessity of ordination. About the same time that they began ordaining ministers, the Sabbatarian Adventists ordained deacons in their local congregations. By 1854 the *Review and Herald* was reporting several such ordination services. That same year, Joseph Bates suggested that Sabbatarian Adventists institute the office of elder to supervise local congregations between visits by an ordained minister. This position appears to have become established in 1856.¹²⁶⁰

In a series of four articles on 'Gospel Order' in *Review and Herald* in December, 1853, James White raised the issue of the biblical theology of ordination for the first time in Adventism.¹²⁶¹ The concept of 'gospel order'¹²⁶² – at times referred to as

¹²⁵⁸ G. R. Knight, 'Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination, 1844-1863', 1998, p. 104.

¹²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 101-103.

¹²⁶⁰ G. Land, *Historical Dictionary of the Seventh-day Adventists*, 2005, p. 218. See also G. R. Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil: The Development of Adventist Church Structure*, 2001, pp. 35-41.

¹²⁶¹ This was part of a series of four articles on 'gospel order' by James White, in *R&H*, 6 December, p. 173; 13 December, p. 180; 20 December, pp. 188-190; 27 December, pp. 196-197. The first article in the series was preceded by an article on 'Gospel Union' (*R&H*, 4:22, 6 December, 1853, p. 172).

‘Bible order’¹²⁶³ or ‘Church order’¹²⁶⁴ – was used by both James and Ellen White at least from as early as 1850.¹²⁶⁵ It focuses on the *New Testament* view of ‘ordination’ and ignores the ‘consecrational’ and ritual view of the Old Testament priestly ordination.

Each of James White’s four articles in the *Review* was introduced by the passage from 1 Corinthians 14:33: ‘For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.’ In the first article he defines the nature of the church as based exclusively on the Bible:

God has been leading his people out of Babylon ... The Advent people professed to *take the Bible as their guide in doctrine and in duty*. If they had followed this guide strictly, and had carried out the gospel principles of order and discipline, much confusion would have been saved. Many in their zeal to come out of Babylon, partook of a rash, disorderly spirit, and were soon found in a perfect Babel of confusion ... This peculiar people will *stand forth free from the confusion of creeds; free from the traditions and commandments of men* – keeping the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. This is enough to make them peculiar.¹²⁶⁶

Thus, the foundation for James White’s strong pleading for the church to embrace ordination of ministers is the principle of *sola Scriptura* and the ‘freedom from the traditions and commandments of men’. The same emphasis would, as we shall see, be advocated by Ellen White in her vision and message published around the same time, in January, 1854.

Some observations on the content of James White’s important article on December 20, 1853, are relevant here

1. Terminology: James White initially draws on biblical passages from the King James Version, such as Mark 3:14 and Titus 1:5, where Jesus is said to ‘ordain’

¹²⁶² This term seems to have been coined originally by George Fox in the 17th century. It was and continues to be used in the Quaker movement as a reference to a very central biblical concept. For example, based on a quotation from George Fox in 1656, one writer defines ‘gospel order’ as follows: ‘The simplest definition of Gospel order is that our lives as disciples and as a Church reflects the presence of the Lord in our midst. In other words, our decisions and actions reflect our trust in this reality, and that this trusting obedience brings us into *unity*, and this unity results in *confrontations* with the author of confusion, and results in *powerful ministry* that in turn results in healing and liberation.’ (J. Maurer, ‘Gospel Order Revisited’, 2007). Another explanation is: ‘Gospel order is the order established by God that exists in every part of creation, transcending the chaos that seems so often prevalent. It is the right relationship of every part of creation, however small, to every other part and to the Creator.’ (L. L. Wilson, *Essays on the Quaker Vision of Gospel Order*, 1997; cf. C. M. C. Mercer, ‘Gospel Order – I Insist’, 2009).

¹²⁶³ E. G. White, Manuscript 11, 25 December, 1850.

¹²⁶⁴ James White to Brethren, 11 November, 1851, quoted in G. R. Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil*, 2001, p. 35.

¹²⁶⁵ For a survey, see G. R. Knight, *ibid.*, pp. 33-38.

¹²⁶⁶ J. White, ‘Gospel Order’, 6 December, 1853, p. 173 (emphasis supplied).

twelve and where young Titus is asked by the apostle Paul to ‘ordain’ elders/presbyters in the local churches. There is today widespread awareness that ‘ordain’ is not an appropriate translation in these instances and that the passages refer to an act of ‘appointment’ (4.5). However, it needs to be underlined that James White in his article is not making an issue of Jesus’ manner of ‘ordaining twelve’; rather, he quotes the passage as if ‘ordained’ means ‘put in place, established, organised, arranged’ (which is also a common sense of ‘ordain’ in the KJV), and lets the following words in italics define its reference: ‘And he ordained twelve, *that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach*’. In his exposition and application of the text, he emphasises the preaching of the gospel.

2. The New Testament Authority: The article is profoundly biblical and nearly half of it consists of direct biblical quotations while the rest are expositions of those passages and applications to the current situation of the Sabbatarian movement. It should be noted, however, that *all scriptural references come from the New Testament*. The Old Testament passages that border on a sacramental understanding of ordination are left out. It should also be noted that James White is not doing an exegesis of the passages in the Greek original texts but relies on the King James Version as the generally accepted Bible version at the time.

3. Reasons for Ordination: The main overt reason for ordination is for the church to be in compliance with ‘the order of the gospel’ based on passages like Mark 3:14; Matt. 28:16-20; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Tim. 4:14-16; 2 Tim. 1:6. James White noted that Jesus ‘ordained twelve ... that he might send them forth to preach’ (Mark 3:14), and that Jesus then commissioned them to preach and baptise believers in his name (Matt 28:19-20). He added that the same calling by Christ was given to Paul (Gal. 1:11-12) and this pattern was to be followed in the church where ‘God has set some ... first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers,’ etc. (1 Cor. 12:28). Proceeding from Ephesians 4:11-16, he pointed out that the offices of preaching and teaching the gospel would be part of the church until the end of time:

From this we learn that the order of the gospel is that men who are called of God to *teach and baptize*, should be ordained, or set apart to the work of the ministry by the laying on of hands. *Not that the church has power to call men to ministry, or that ordination makes them ministers of Jesus Christ; but it is the order of the gospel that those who are called to the ministry should be ordained, for important objects.*¹²⁶⁷

¹²⁶⁷ J. White, ‘Gospel Order’, *R&H*, 4:24, 20 December, 1853, p. 189 (emphasis supplied).

Three points deserve to be noticed here: Firstly, understanding James White's thinking about ordination from his roots in the Christian Connexion, the function of 'preaching' would not in itself require ordination, for that was a gift of the Spirit and based on an appointment by God. When he therefore says that 'men who are called of God to teach *and baptize*, should be ordained', this is in keeping with his Connectionist background where the main reasons for ordination was the public recognition by the church and the conferred authority to administrate the ordinances, not merely to preach or teach the Word.

Secondly, James White's Connectionist understanding of the church and non-sacramental view of the ritual of imposition of hands is clearly expressed in the statement that 'the church does not have the power to call men to ministry' and that 'ordination does not make them ministers of Christ'.

Thirdly, the 'important objects' of ordination are three *practical* reasons emerging from *the current needs of the mission* of the Sabbatarian Adventist movement, namely, 'the spiritual good of the flock' and the unity of the church:

It is of the highest importance that those who go forth to teach the Word should be in union in sentiment and in their course of action.¹²⁶⁸

After outlining a brief understanding of ordination based only on the New Testament, James White provides the three 'important objects' of ordination:¹²⁶⁹

(a) 'That those who go out into a cold world to teach the Word of God may know that they have the approbation and sympathy of ministering brethren and of the church.' An ordained minister needs the approval of colleagues and the church. This has biblical roots in Acts 6:1-6 and Acts 13:1-3, and was the view in the Christian Connexion.

(b) 'To produce and secure union in the church. The laying on of hands should be done, we think in behalf of the church. A united expression of the church in this thing would certainly have a tendency to unite the people of God. It would also lead them to realize the situation of the ordained preacher, inquire for his wants, and follow him into the Lord's vineyard with their prayers ... The united action of the church relative to those who take the watch-care of the flock, would have a powerful influence to unite the church in love.' This reason amplifies the first point.

¹²⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 188.

¹²⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 189.

(c) 'To shut a door against Satan. In no one thing has the gospel suffered so much as by the influence of false teachers ... To save the flock from imposition of this kind, the gospel plan is sufficient. Let those who are called of God to teach and baptise, be ordained according to the Word, and known abroad as those in whom the body have confidence. By this course the greatest cause of evils that has existed among as a people, will be removed.' This reason for ordination may not be explicitly taught in any particular New Testament passage, but it is there by implication, for example, in 1 Timothy 3-4. This, too, was a pronounced concern in the Christian Connexion, as we have seen above.

4. Theology: James White points to ordination as (a) a calling and sending to the world by Jesus Christ (Matt. 10:16; Mark 3:14; Luke 6:13; Matt. 28:16-20; Gal. 1:11-12); (b) a calling from God (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11-16); (c) a fulfilment of the gospel order established by God in his Word (Titus 1:5; Eph. 4:11-16).

5. Practical Needs: White gives due attention to the *qualifications* of an ordinand (1 Tim. 3:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:12; 3:14-16; 4:14-15; Titus 1:7-9) and the *duties* of the ordained minister (2 Tim. 4:1-5; Titus 2:6-8; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-4), with all the content being based on direct quotations of Bible passages.

Reviewing this first major Adventist treatise of the subject of ordination, the following observations may be made:

1. The use of the term 'ordain' is based on the King James Version, but James White does not build his case on this term or other passages where it is used. He is concerned with the *function* of the minister and draws his comments on the manner of ordination from the passages that speak of prayer and imposition of hands (i.e. Acts 6:1-6; 13:3; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6)

2. There is a clear reflection of the practice and theology of ordination in the Christian Connexion where James White had been ordained in 1843.

3. The Bible is the only basis for ordination: reference is made to 'being ordained *according to the Word*'.

4. The New Testament is the sole source of biblical guidance for ordination. The Old Testament consecrations for the priesthood are completely ignored.

5. Ordination is based on a biblical 'gospel order' established by God in His Word and by Christ in His church, which, if the church follows it, will bring blessings, unity, fellowship, love, and strength to the church. It will, above all, protect the church from false and divisive teaching and forward the work of mission.

6. The fundamental condition of ordination is that of being called by God and Christ. The church does not have the power to *call* members to ministry, and neither the ordination ceremony nor the status of being ordained '*makes* them ministers of Jesus Christ'.

7. The qualifications of an ordinand are extremely important.

8. The manner of ordination is 'being set apart to the work of the ministry by the laying on of hands' and the passages of 1 Timothy 4:11-16 and 2 Timothy 1:6 (KJV) are adduced in support of this rite. The ritualistic or 'sacramental' aspect of imposition of hands is explicitly abrogated. We may add the observation here that the acceptance of imposition of hands, besides being found in Paul's letters to Timothy, might also be explained by the circumstance that ordination was a known institution from the churches that the Adventists had left, and, in fact, simple ordination ceremonies seem to have been in use among the Sabbatarian Adventists already for some time when James White wrote his article in December, 1853.

9. The imposition of hands is done on behalf of the whole church which in this way gives its approval of the ordinand's qualifications for ordination, recognises the ordained minister as a representative and spokesperson of the church, and sympathises with him and includes him in prayer.

10. There are no references to biblical passages regarding the headship of males as opposed to females. By the quotation of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and the comments made on this passage, it is implied, however, that an ordinand is thought of as a male. Although he comments on each detail in this passage, James White makes no reference to the phrase 'the husband of one wife'. Instead, the lengthiest comment is made on the ability to 'rule your own house' as a condition for ordination, thus suggesting that the ability to govern while being blameless is the key ingredient here. (Cf. our exegesis of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 in 3.1.4.)

Ellen White was of the same mind as her husband. Late in 1853, she wrote an article based on a vision received in September, 1852. She endorsed the importance of 'gospel order' as the church's way of undoing the damage done by unqualified ministers and the resulting confusion and disunion. She called attention to the New Testament church where 'God's solution was the setting apart of ministers by the laying on of hands'. In vision an angel told her that 'the church must flee to God's

Word and become established upon gospel order'.¹²⁷⁰ She referred to the apostolic example for the Adventist church:

Brethren of experience and of sound minds should assemble, and *following the word of God* and the sanction of the Holy Spirit, should, with fervent prayer, lay hands upon those who have given full proof that they have received their commission of God, and set them apart to devote themselves to His work.¹²⁷¹

Church historians recognise that 'the Sabbatarian leaders by the mid-1850's had no doubt as to the biblical validity of ordination'.¹²⁷² No sources beyond the Bible were used to justify the developing position on ordination.

Sabbatarian leaders were aware of how ordination functioned in other churches: 'After all, James White and others had been ordained in various denominations before their exit from "Babylon".¹²⁷³ It is therefore a reasonable conclusion, that the Sabbatarian Adventist approach to ordination was initially influenced by the practices in churches rooted especially in the Christian Connexion, and in Baptism and Methodism.¹²⁷⁴

The fact that the Sabbatarian Adventists were influenced by their historical background in other denominations should not be seen as undermining the divine influence on the development. As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe that God chose the right time for the Advent movement and called the men and women who led out, and that he surely used their cultural and denominational backgrounds to benefit his work, as God has always done since cooperating with man to accomplish his mission.

Deep faithfulness to the Bible as only creed, as for example demonstrated in the Christian Connexion, also characterised James White's introduction of ordination in 1853. However, using the King James Version and not the Greek original text and being driven by practical needs to establish gospel order for the sake of mission, some elements of Christian church tradition were initially accepted, especially (a) the

¹²⁷⁰ E. G. White, *Early Writings*, 1882, p. 99.

¹²⁷¹ E. G. White, *Supplement to the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White*, Published on 1 January, 1854, Reprinted in: *Early Writings of Ellen G. White*, 1882, p. 101 (emphasis supplied); cf. G. R. Knight, 'Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination', 1998, p. 103.

¹²⁷² G. R. Knight, *ibid.*, p. 104.

¹²⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷⁴ James White and Joshua Himes were ordained in the Christian Connexion which came out of Baptism, Congregationalism, Presbyterianism, and Methodism; Frederic Wheeler came from Methodism and John Byington from the Wesleyan Methodist Connection; A.S. Hutchins was ordained in the Freewill Baptist Church (*ibid.*, p. 105).

firm component of *imposition of hands*, and (b) the view that the *ordinances* could only be administered by an ordained minister.¹²⁷⁵ Later on, the Sabbatarians also accepted the idea of (c) a certain *successsion* of those who were laying on of hands, to which we will return shortly,¹²⁷⁶ and (d) the (originally Methodist) idea of a period of *ministerial probation* before a person was ordained.¹²⁷⁷ We will also note in a moment, that the early ordination ceremonies were deeply characterised by a special out-pouring of the *Holy Spirit*, but essentially upon the congregation taking part and not merely the ordinand.

The earliest preserved evidence of a Sabbatarian Adventist ordination ceremony for the gospel ministry was that of Washington Morse in July, 1851.¹²⁷⁸ *Review and Herald* reported on 19 August, 1851:

Bro. Morse was set apart by the laying on of hands, to the administration of the ordinances of God's house. The Holy Ghost witnessed by the gift of tongues, and solemn manifestations of the presence and power of God. The place was awful, yet glorious.¹²⁷⁹

Ordination to the gospel ministry did not become a general practice among Sabbatarians until the autumn of 1853, when James White, as he travelled among the scattered 'little flock', started to 'set apart' men 'to the work of the gospel ministry', which he did 'by the laying on of hands'.¹²⁸⁰ The ordination services were simple and straightforward. The key elements reported in the *Review and Herald* from 1853 and onwards were 'prayer and the laying on of hands of preaching brethren present'.¹²⁸¹ In this connection, George Knight makes the observation:

Thus there was nothing unique in the ordination service of Sabbatarian Adventists. They were quite in harmony with the practices of the evangelical churches of their time.¹²⁸²

The sources indicate that the presence of the Holy Spirit was such an outstanding element in the ordination services that this was always mentioned, as, for example,

¹²⁷⁵ In his article of 20 December, 1853, James White does not mention imposition of hands as part of Jesus' appointment of the twelve and only refers to this rite based on 1 Timothy 4:11-16 and 2 Timothy 1:6 (p. 189). He also makes a case for an ordained minister being the one that 'administers the ordinances of the gospel' (ibid.). We have seen how both these elements were dominant in the Christian Connexion (4.4.5).

¹²⁷⁶ Cf. G. R. Knight, 'Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination', 1998, p. 111.

¹²⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 108.

¹²⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 106.

¹²⁷⁹ *R&H*, 2:02, 19 August, 1851, p. 15.

¹²⁸⁰ [J. White], 'Eastern Tour', *RH*, 4:11, 20 September, 1953, p. 85; cf. G. R. Knight, 'Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination', 1998, p. 106.

¹²⁸¹ G. R. Knight, *ibid.*, p. 107.

¹²⁸² *Ibid.*

in the report from November, 1853, on the ordination of E.P. Butler, Elon Everts and Josiah Hart:

And while engaged in this most solemn duty, the presence of the Lord was indeed manifested. We never witnessed a more melting, precious season. The very atmosphere around us seemed sweet as heaven. How cheering to the Christian to *know* that his honest endeavours to do his duty are owned and blest of Heaven!¹²⁸³

George Knight notes that the experience of the Spirit in this mighty way ‘was also largely shared by other denominations. The sweet “melting” on such occasions was a phrase especially used by the Methodists in their encounters with the presence of God.’¹²⁸⁴

In our investigation of the practices in the Christian Connexion, where James White was ordained, we also noted several striking similarities between the theology and practice of ordination in the ‘Christian’ movement and the early Sabbatarian Adventists, for example, (a) the view of the Bible as only creed and the focus on the New Testament; (b) the congregational approval and the ceremony by prayer and imposition of hands according to a rite recorded in Scripture; (c) the emphasis on the Holy Spirit and the preaching of the Word of God not requiring ordination but the calling of God; (d) the authority to celebrate the ordinances of baptism and holy communion; (e) the use of the term ‘elder’ for one who had been ordained; (f) ordained ministers as a guarantee for church order and unity and a protection against false preachers; (g) the imposition of hands being made by experienced ministers and elders; and (h) an openness, at least in many congregations and in principle, for ordination of women to ministry (4.4.5).

In 1853, the first ordination of deacons is reported, by prayer and the laying on of hands.¹²⁸⁵ From 1855, reports were given on ordination of local elders, and the duties of gospel ministers, local elders, and deacons were defined.¹²⁸⁶

In October, 1861, when the Michigan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists was formed, ‘the process and meaning of ordination had been pretty well hammered out by the young church’.¹²⁸⁷ The organising meetings of the Conference confirmed already established practices. These practices became institutionalised by the

¹²⁸³ [J. White], ‘Eastern Tour’, *R&H*, 4:19, 15 November, 1853, p. 148.

¹²⁸⁴ G. R. Knight, ‘Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination’, 1998, p. 108.

¹²⁸⁵ H. S. Gurney, ‘From Bro. Gurney’, *R&H*, 27 December, 1853, p. 199.

¹²⁸⁶ G. R. Knight, ‘Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination’, 1998, pp. 108-109.

¹²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 109-110.

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists when it was organised on 21 May, 1863. This ordination system is essentially the same that is being used today.¹²⁸⁸

Thus, the Sabbatarian Adventist movement changed its initial radical anti-organisation position to the opposite – a strong church organisation (1861 and 1863) which included a system of ordination for gospel ministers, local elders and deacons. (The anti-organisation view was strongly advocated in the Christian Connexion from where many Adventist pastors, including James White, had come into the Millerite movement, where this position became even more emphasised as a result of the negative reaction of the organised churches towards the Millerites.) This change was governed by *the practical needs of the mission of the church*, particularly making clear to all – within and outside of the church – which ministers were faithful to the Sabbatarian message.

The approach of the Sabbatarians was ‘pragmatic and eclectic rather than built upon a tightly-reasoned theology of ordination’.¹²⁸⁹ This is still the case in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as we shall see in the next section.

The Sabbatarian leaders, including James and Ellen White, were particularly ‘concerned to justify their practices from the Bible’, while ‘the function of ordination was to serve the mission of the church’.¹²⁹⁰

It is noteworthy, finally, that ‘the Sabbatarians must have had some underlying idea of apostolic succession, since the ones performing the initial ordinations were those who had already been ordained in other Protestant denominations.’¹²⁹¹ This idea of a succession was not addressed, although it is in some ways hinted at in the New Testament (Acts 13:1-3 and the connection with 14:23; Titus 1:5) and is still being practised within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in that the only persons that can lay their hands on an ordinand for the gospel ministry are already ordained ministers. It raises the question, however, of what theological understanding of ordination such a practice implies. Ellen White circumvented this issue in 1854 by wisely using the expression ‘brethren of experience and sound minds’ should lay

¹²⁸⁸ For an outline of the essence of the ordination system at the constituting session for the Michigan Conference in October, 1861, see *ibid.*, pp. 110-111.

¹²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

¹²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

their hands on the ordinand, in the statement quoted above¹²⁹² – note, however, her statement that God has ordained that there should be ‘a succession of men who derive their authority from the first teachers of faith’ (4.6.2.1). Thus, it is their experience and wisdom that qualifies them for laying their hands on the ordinand ‘on behalf of’ and because of the approval of the church, *not the fact that they have been ordained*. As we shall see in the next section, there is reason to consider if the church today should not pay more attention to this early approach to ordination and abolish some developments after 1863.

4.6.2 Ordination in the Writings of Ellen White

Due to the great respect with which Seventh-day Adventists hold the ministry of Ellen White, a separate study of her view of ordination is useful.

We have seen already that she endorsed her husband James’ important initiative in December, 1853, which laid the foundation for ordination in our church. In his article from 1998,¹²⁹³ George Knight calls attention to the following:

Late in 1853 Ellen White wrote an article based essentially on a vision received in September 1852. ‘The Lord’, she wrote, ‘has shown that gospel order has been too much feared and neglected. That formality should be shunned; but, in so doing, order should not be neglected.’ There is order in heaven, and the church on earth had order both during Christ’s sojourn and after his ascension. And in ‘these last days ... there is more real need of order than ever before’, since the conflict between Christ and Satan will intensify. It is Satan’s aim, she argued, to keep order out of the church.¹²⁹⁴ Thus, she understood ordination as an important and positive step in the Great Controversy to provide the church with order and to counter the schemes of evil.

Ellen White then made a vital transition in her presentation and raised the damage done by unqualified ministers who are ‘hurried into the field; men without wisdom, lacking judgment’. She was concerned that men ‘whose lives are not holy, who are unqualified to teach the present truth, enter the field without being acknowledged by the church ... and confusion and disunion [are] the result’. She

¹²⁹² E. G. White, *Supplement to the Experience and Views of Ellen G. White*, 1854, pp. 15-19; cf. G. R. Knight, ‘Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination’, p. 103.

¹²⁹³ G. R. Knight, *ibid.*, p. 103.

¹²⁹⁴ E. G. White, *Supplement to the Experience and Views of Ellen G. White*, 1854, p. 15; our presentation here follows the summary in G. R. Knight, ‘Early Seventh-day Adventists’, 1998, p. 103.

also noted that ‘these men, who are not called of God, are generally the very ones that are most confident that they are so called’. Such ‘self-messengers are a curse to the cause’.¹²⁹⁵

We consider it important to underline here that, in arguing for the importance of ordination, Ellen White is neither expressing nor implying the importance of gender for ordination; what is important, however, is the calling of God, holy lives, experience, wisdom and judgement, qualifications to preach the present truth, acknowledgment by the church, and the unity of the church.

As did her husband, Ellen White appealed to the church to ‘flee to God’s word, and become established on gospel order’. ‘She pointed her readers back to the days of the apostles, when the church was also in danger of being deceived by false teachers. God’s solution, she noted, was the setting apart of ministers by the laying on of hands. These leaders could then baptize and administer the ordinances of the Lord’s Supper’.¹²⁹⁶

Thus, Ellen White is thoroughly building her view of ordination on the Bible. Ordination is seen as instituted by God, primarily to deal with false teachers through a divine order. But she is also underlining what the early Adventists following James White and his Connectionist roots would consider fundamental, namely, the imposition of hands as giving the authority to administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

As we have noted already in 4.6.1 above, Ellen White in this 1854 article did not directly refer to the succession of ordination, implying that those who laid their hands on the ordinand would necessarily have to be ordained themselves, but for this function she called attention to ‘brethren of experience and sound minds’ who would perform the act ‘with fervent prayer and the sanction of the Holy Spirit’.¹²⁹⁷

Two areas of study regarding Ellen White are particularly vital for the present study: her view of the theology of ordination and her view of women’s ordination. We will address these aspects in the following.

¹²⁹⁵ E. G. White, *Supplement*, 1854, pp. 15-18; G. R. Knight, *ibid.*, 1998, p. 103.

¹²⁹⁶ G. R. Knight, ‘Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination’, 1998, p. 103, with reference to Ellen White, *Supplement to the Experience and Views of Ellen G. White*, 1854, p. 19.

¹²⁹⁷ E. G. White, *ibid.*, p. 19.

4.6.2.1 Notes on Ellen White's Theology of Ordination. Assisted by Denis Fortin's instructive study,¹²⁹⁸ we will here consider Ellen White's theological understanding of ordination. It should be noted from the start, that Ellen White used the verb 'ordain' in her writings nearly one thousand times. Her usage reflects a strong influence from the King James Version of the Bible. Thus, 'ordain' may mean not only appointment to ministry or induction to an office by God and/or the church, but it can also mean 'to order or organize', or 'to command or decree'. (For the various nuances, see 4.5 above.)

1. The Mission of God: The Plan of Redemption

Fortin appropriately points out that within the context of the Great Controversy theme, Ellen White believed that Christians and the church 'are instruments that God uses to *witness* to the universe that he is a God of love, mercy, and justice'.¹²⁹⁹ Thus, *God's* nature and mission are the fundamental theological elements in her understanding of the church. And we believe this is an important recognition in an understanding of biblical ordination.

The expression Ellen White uses for 'the mission of God' is 'the plan of redemption (or salvation, or grace)' – an expression not literally stated in the Bible, but used by Christian theologians and becoming popular in the Evangelical movement, which began through Methodism in the 1730's and in the North-American revivals of the First and Second Great Awakenings (it was central also to the Restorationist 'Christians').

Ellen White considered the plan of redemption as 'the central theme of the Bible, the theme about which every other in the whole book clusters' and 'the unfolding of this wondrous theme' is 'the burden of every book and every passage of the Bible'.¹³⁰⁰ The content of God's mission has many facets. A primary one is communion between God and man, which requires God's victory over evil through Christ's death, resurrection, ascension and ministry in heaven as well as the creation of a new heaven and earth where God eternally communes with his people:

The purpose and plan of grace existed from all eternity. Before the foundation of the world it was according to the determinate counsel of God that man

¹²⁹⁸ D. Fortin, 'Ordination in the Writings of Ellen White', 1998, p. 116.

¹²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 116 (emphasis supplied), making reference to E. G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 6, 1885-1909, p. 12.

¹³⁰⁰ E. G. White, *Education*, 1903, p. 125.

should be created, endowed with power to do the divine will. But the defection of man, with all its consequences, was not hidden from the Omnipotent, and yet it did not deter Him from carrying out His eternal purpose; for the Lord would establish His throne in righteousness. God knows the end from the beginning ... Therefore redemption was not an afterthought ... but an eternal purpose to be wrought out for the blessing not only of this atom of a world but for the good of all the worlds which God has created.

The creation of the worlds, the mystery of the gospel, are for one purpose, to make manifest to all created intelligences, through nature and through Christ, the glories of the divine character. By the marvellous display of His love in giving "his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," the glory of God is revealed to lost humanity and to the intelligences of other worlds.

Jesus encircles the race with His human arm, while with His divine arm He lays hold upon infinity. He is the "daysman" between a holy God and our sinful humanity--one who can "lay his hand on us both" (Job 9:33).

The terms of this oneness between God and man in the great covenant of redemption were arranged with Christ from all eternity.¹³⁰¹

God's plan of redemption may also be described as a process of transformation and re-creation within man:

The central theme of the Bible, the theme about which every other in the whole book clusters, is the redemption plan, the restoration in the human soul of the image of God.¹³⁰²

Ellen White understood God's plan from a cosmic perspective, however, and placed it in the context of the great controversy:

But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe ... The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin.¹³⁰³

The unity of God and man is one of the key end-results of God's mission. This is described both as man's personal union with Christ and as God's eternal union with man on the new earth according to Revelation 21:1-5:

In Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken. Through the eternal ages He is linked with us. "God so

¹³⁰¹ Id., *God's Amazing Grace*, 1973, p. 129.

¹³⁰² Id., *Education*, 1903, p. 125.

¹³⁰³ Id., *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 1890, pp. 68-69.

loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." John 3:16. He gave Him not only to bear our sins, and to die as our sacrifice; He gave Him to the fallen race. To assure us of His immutable counsel of peace, God gave His only-begotten Son to become one of the human family, forever to retain His human nature ... God has adopted human nature in the person of His Son, and has carried the same into the highest heaven ... In Christ the family of earth and the family of heaven are bound together. Christ glorified is our brother. Heaven is enshrined in humanity, and humanity is enfolded in the bosom of Infinite Love ... The exaltation of the redeemed will be an eternal testimony to God's mercy. "In the ages to come," He will "show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." "To the intent that ... unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known ... the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Ephesians 2:7; 3:10, 11, (RV)

Through Christ's redeeming work the government of God stands justified. The Omnipotent One is made known as the God of love. Satan's charges are refuted, and his character unveiled. Rebellion can never again arise. Sin can never again enter the universe. Through eternal ages all are secure from apostasy. By love's self-sacrifice, the inhabitants of earth and heaven are bound to their Creator in bonds of indissoluble union.

The work of redemption will be complete. In the place where sin abounded, God's grace much more abounds. The earth itself, the very field that Satan claims as his, is to be not only ransomed but exalted. Our little world, under the curse of sin the one dark blot in His glorious creation, will be honoured above all other worlds in the universe of God. Here, where the Son of God tabernacled in humanity; where the King of glory lived and suffered and died, -- here, when He shall make all things new, the tabernacle of God shall be with men, "and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." And through endless ages as the redeemed walk in the light of the Lord, they will praise Him for His unspeakable Gift.¹³⁰⁴

Thus the great plan of redemption will reach its accomplishment in the final eradication of sin and the deliverance of all who have been willing to renounce evil.¹³⁰⁵

This wide scope of thought casts significant light on ordination in Ellen White's thought. Before we draw some conclusions, however, we introduce another important element in her view of ordination, namely her view of the church.

2. The Church: God's Representative and Agent of Mission in the World

Fortin opens his study by calling attention to Ellen White's basic theological notion regarding the church as God's representative on earth.¹³⁰⁶ Some key elements in

¹³⁰⁴ Id., *The Desire of Ages*, 1898, p. 26.

¹³⁰⁵ Id., *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, second edition, 1911, (first edition 1888), p. 485.

this concept are expressed on the opening page of her book *The Acts of the Apostles*:

The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning it has been God's plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency. The members of the church, those whom He has called out of darkness into His marvellous light, are to show forth His glory. The church is the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be made manifest, even to "the principalities and powers in heavenly places," the final and full display of the love of God. Ephesians 3:10.¹³⁰⁷

God's plan was from the beginning that 'his fullness and sufficiency shall be reflected through the church to the world'. The members are to 'show forth his glory'. The church is 'the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ' and 'through the church will eventually be manifest, even to the principalities and powers of heavenly places, the final and full display of the love of God'. In this context, ordination stands as the spiritual and formal process by which members and leaders in the church are appointed and inducted to service/ministry as God's representative, as God's agency for the salvation of men with its mission to carry the gospel to the world.

Being *God's representative* implies 'showing forth his glory', functioning as 'the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ' and the vision of eventually 'making manifest the final and full display of the love of God' not just to the peoples of the earth but all beings in the universe. Going back to the quotations from Ellen White in our previous section on 'The Mission of God', we may now draw the following two conclusions:

1. By the process of ordination in its wide sense, people are called by God, equipped with his Spirit, wisdom and skills, confirmed by and before the church as servants of God and representatives of the church for the salvation of the world and witnessing to the universe in God's great mission.¹³⁰⁸ However, this function is not only theirs but is shared by all members of the church: 'Every Christian has a role to play within the Great Controversy and is a representative of Christ'.¹³⁰⁹ We will come back to this point in more detail when we address 'the Priesthood of all Believers' below.

¹³⁰⁶ Id., *The Desire of Ages*, 1898, p. 290.

¹³⁰⁷ Id., *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1911, p. 9.

¹³⁰⁸ See the chapter 'A Consecrated Ministry' in: *ibid.*, pp. 359-371.

¹³⁰⁹ D. Fortin, 'Ordination in the Writings of Ellen White', 1998, p. 116.

2. Both the ordained minister and the non-ordained church members 'represent' (a) God whose mission it is to demonstrate his justice, love and grace to the universe and (b) Christ who in his dual nature unifies the divine with all humanity in eternity and binds the family on earth together with the family in heaven. Thus, by implication of Ellen White's view of the Plan of Redemption, the justice and love of God will be vindicated by His people reflecting his original intent in creating humans in his image, as male and female (Gen. 1:26-28), and in restoring the harmonious partnership by two equals according to Genesis 2. Moreover, by implication, as ordained clergy and members of Christ's body represent Christ, who eternally has united all humanity with the divine, they do the work of gospel ministry in a more credible way before this world and the entire universe if there is no gender distinction between them. Such gender distinction is immaterial in the vision of Revelation 21:1-5, where God communes with His people. This thought rings strongly through the following words of Ellen White:

Every man and every woman has a work to do for the Master. Personal consecration and sanctification to God will accomplish, through the most simple methods, more than the most imposing display.¹³¹⁰

Who can have so deep a love for the souls of men and women for whom Christ died as those who are partakers of His grace? Who can better represent the religion of Christ than Christian women, women who are earnestly labouring to bring souls to the light of truth?¹³¹¹

It is not the gender that is the issue in gospel ministry, but the consecration and sanctification to God. He will accomplish his work through both genders. The rhetorical question of who can better represent the religion of Christ than Christian women elevates female quality in the gospel ministry to a level that is if not higher than, at least equal to that of men. There is more to be said about this concept (4.6.2.2; 4.6.2.5).

Thus, as representatives of God and Christ, the ordained minister and the whole body of Christ bears witness to the world (a) of God's justice and love by calling attention to his original creation before the fall of man, and (b) of Christ's unification of divine and human in his body by witnessing to all humans and through all humans without gender distinction.

¹³¹⁰ This statement by Ellen White from *Review & Herald*, 9 May, 1899, is printed in *Evangelism*, 1946, p. 473.

¹³¹¹ E. G. White, *Welfare Ministry*, 1952, pp. 164-165.

3. *Ministry: The Priesthood of All Believers*

In her published writings, Ellen White never used the Protestant expression 'priesthood of all believers', but she fully affirmed its content. Fortin maintains that two passages of Scripture were foremost in her understanding of this concept: 1 Peter 2:9 and John 15:16.¹³¹² When she quotes or alludes to these passages she uses the King James Version:

But ye [are] a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. (1 Peter 2:9; KJV)

In her applications of this passage, Ellen White exhorts the reader to accept 'Christ's call to follow him', on one hand by 'imitating Christ's life of self-sacrifice and self-denial', and on the other hand by being 'interested in the great work of the redemption of the fallen race'.¹³¹³ She also uses the passage to underline the need for experiencing 'the vital attributes of Christ' as 'a vital, personal experience, that elevates and ennobles the whole man', and building 'a co-partnership with Christ' which sets 'an example that would help [the souls of many] heavenward'.¹³¹⁴ She urges believers to 'receive the heavenly inspiration' in order to 'point the weary, the heavy-laden, the poor, the broken-hearted, the perplexed soul, to Jesus, the source of all spiritual strength', being 'faithful minutemen to show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light' and 'telling it with pen and voice that Jesus lives to make intercession for us'.¹³¹⁵ She also used John 15:16:

Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained (*kathistemi*) you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it to you. (John 15:16; KJV)

Applying John 15:16 to the believers' mission, she says that God's people should learn to rely on the 'ordination' of Christ of every believer, which gives power to guide and wisdom and understanding to all his representatives everywhere, rather than narrowing down the ordering of the work of mission to ordained ministers or even the General Conference in Battle Creek:

¹³¹² D. Fortin, 'Ordination in the Writings of Ellen White', 1998, pp. 116-117.

¹³¹³ E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, 1885-1909, pp. 168-169.

¹³¹⁴ Id., *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, 1923, p. 422.

¹³¹⁵ Id., *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, 1885-1909, p. 123.

We should believe in the power of the Lord to guide, for He has the ordering of His own work. He will give wisdom and understanding to His representative men in every part of His great moral vineyard. He says, "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit." To my brethren in Battle Creek I would say: The Lord does not need to send His orders to His messengers in all parts of the world through Battle Creek. He does not lay this responsibility upon all those who assume to say to His workers, "Do this," and "Thou shalt not do that." God is dishonoured when men are led to look to Battle Creek to so large a degree.¹³¹⁶

In this statement, Ellen White argues in strong terms for the duty of believers to rely on Christ's 'ordination' of each one of them in making decisions for the mission of God and not relying too much on ordained ministers in the central governing body. By applying Christ's 'ordination' of his priesthood of believers, the believers 'honour God' and by not doing so, they 'dishonour him'. This terminology is deeply rooted in the Great Controversy perspective and God's Plan of Redemption: what brings glory and honour to God counters the attacks on God's character by Satan.

Thus, the concept of the priesthood of all believers 'underlies her understanding of both Christian service and ordination'.¹³¹⁷ This includes both wholehearted 'believer priestly' service and strong warnings against assuming that only ordained ministers are workers for God and called to accomplish God's mission. 'All who are ordained unto the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow men.'¹³¹⁸ 'Those who stand as leaders in the church of God are to realise that the Saviour's commission is given to all who believe in His name. God will send forth into His vineyard many who have not been dedicated to the ministry by the laying-on-of hands.'¹³¹⁹ Thus, every Christian is a minister of God: 'Everyone who names the name of Christ is expected by God to engage in this work'.¹³²⁰ A passage quoted by Fortin deserves particular attention here:

Brethren and sisters, how much work have you done for God during the past year? Do you think that it is those men only who have been ordained as gospel ministers that are to work for the uplifting of humanity? – No, no! Everyone who names the name of Christ is expected by God to engage in this work. *The hands of ordination may not have been laid upon you, but you are none the less God's messengers.* If you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, if you know his saving power, you can no more keep from telling this to

¹³¹⁶ Id., *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, 1923, pp. 212-213.

¹³¹⁷ Ibid., p. 117.

¹³¹⁸ E. G. White, 'Our Work', *Signs of the Times*, 25 August, 1898.

¹³¹⁹ Id., *Acts of the Apostles*, 1911, p. 110.

¹³²⁰ E. G. White, 'A Preparation for the Coming of the Lord', 1904, p. 7.

someone else than you can keep the wind from blowing. You will have a word in season for him that is weary. You will guide the feet of the straying back to the fold. Your efforts to help others will be untiring, because God's Spirit is working in you.¹³²¹

Clearly, Ellen White maintains no difference between clergy and laity in working for 'the uplifting of humanity'. She says that ordination does not make you 'God's messenger', but you are made God's messenger by 'God's Spirit working in you' as you 'taste that the Lord is gracious' and 'know his saving power'. Obviously, she has a dual concept of being called, appointed or ordained in the church, one that is *formal* and gives authority to administer the ordinances and to govern and one that is *informal* by the work of the Holy Spirit for doing all kinds of ministry. This distinction was clearly pronounced in the Christian Connexion where her husband James was originally ordained.

The distinction is also very much present in the Bible, where the formal ordination by human imposition of hands (where God's cooperation is invoked by prayer) stands beside the divine ordination which requires no human imposition of hands – note, for example, the appointment of the seventy elders (Num. 11:16-29) with that of the Levites (Num. 8:10), as well as the appointment of the seven (Acts 6:1-6) with that of the apostle Paul (Acts 26:12-18; cf. 1 Tim. 2:7), and many other examples both in the Bible and church history as outlined above.

Based on various statements by Ellen White, Fortin concludes, among other things: 'Church ordination, therefore, is not a prerequisite to serve God, because it is the Holy Spirit who gives fitness for service to Christians who in faith are willing to serve.'¹³²² 'Humility and meekness are character traits that God looks for in his servants to qualify them for ministry; these are more necessary than eloquence or learning.'¹³²³ 'In fact, as in the case of Paul and Barnabas, ordination from above precedes ordination by the church' – Ellen White says that while 'Paul and Barnabas had already received their commission from God Himself', 'neither of them had as yet been formally ordained to the gospel ministry'.¹³²⁴ This latter point implies that she believed in two 'ordinations' – one *spiritual* ordination or commissioning from

¹³²¹ Ibid. (emphasis supplied).

¹³²² D. Fortin, 'Ordination in the Writings of Ellen G. White', 1998, p. 117, referring to *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1911, p. 40.

¹³²³ D. Fortin, *ibid.*, p. 117, referring to Ellen G. White, 'Letter 10, 1899 to J. H. Kellogg', 14 January, 1899, *Manuscript Releases*, 2:32-33.

¹³²⁴ D. Fortin, *ibid.*, p. 117, referring to a statement quoted from *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1911, p. 160-161.

God by the Holy Spirit, and one *formal* ordination from the church. This is how James White experienced his ordination in the Christian Connexion according to his autobiography. He was first called by God and sent as an itinerant preacher to various churches in 1842-1843, and then in April, 1843, he was formally ordained by the church. This formal ordination gave him the authority to administrate the ordinances on behalf of the church. The same view of 'ordination' was exposed in his article on 'gospel order and ordination' in December, 1853.

Thus, in Ellen White's view, the *essential* 'ordination' was the first, spiritual calling and commissioning by God. And this is how she understood her own 'ordination' for the ministry (4.6.2.2). Despite never being formally ordained for the gospel ministry by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, she believed that God had ordained her to the prophetic ministry. In 1909, as she looked back at her experiences in 1844, she said: 'In the city of Portland, *the Lord ordained me as His messenger*, and here my first labours were given to the cause of present truth.'¹³²⁵

In regard to the concept of the priesthood of all believers, Fortin summarises Ellen White's view as follows: (a) Her concept of the priesthood of all believers is 'the fundamental qualification for Christian service; every Christian is intrinsically a priest for God. (b) In a spiritual sense, every Christian is ordained by God to this 'believer priesthood'. (c) Church ordination is not a requirement to serve God in ministry; formal church ordination sets a person apart for a special service on behalf of the church.

4. Church Offices: Particular Ministries

Fortin makes an observation which in our opinion is extremely vital for the purposes of this study. He notes that at the beginning of the chapter 'A Consecrated Ministry' in Ellen White's central book on the church – *The Acts of the Apostles* – she initially sets out, on the one hand, from the statement that 'the great Head of the church superintends His work through the instrumentality of men ordained by God to act as His representatives',¹³²⁶ but, on the other hand, she never mentions or even alludes to ordination in the rest of the entire chapter, although it is clearly focused on the calling, ministry and influence of the ordained minister in the church.

¹³²⁵ E. G. White, 'Letter 138, 1909', quoted in A. White, *The Ellen G. White Biography*, vol. 6, The Later Elmshaven Years, 1905-1915, 1986, p. 211.

¹³²⁶ E. G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1911, p. 360.

The one single thing that she says about ordination in this fundamental instruction to Seventh-day Adventists regarding ‘the ordained gospel minister’ is that gospel ministers are ‘ordained by God to act as His representatives’. She does not refer at all to the *formal* ordination performed by the church. Thus, it appears that of the two ‘ordinations’ noted above in the previous section, the spiritual one from God is by far the essential one.

Fortin comments that ‘her intent may be to emphasize that a minister’s ultimate ordination is not from men but from God himself’, and he notes appropriately that ‘the same shades of meaning are present in her statement about her call to the prophetic ministry: “the Lord ordained me as His messenger”. Fortin’s conclusion is one with which we concur: ‘Underlying Ellen White’s use of the verb “ordain” is the idea that God is the one who ordains or appoints a person to be his servant and, consequently, it is also God who spiritually lays his hands upon this servant’.¹³²⁷ Important statements supporting this view are:

Have you tasted of the powers of the world to come? Have you been eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of God? Then, although ministerial hands may not have been laid upon you in ordination, Christ has laid his hands upon you and has said: ‘Ye are My witnesses’.¹³²⁸

Many souls will be saved through the labours of men who have looked to Jesus for their ordination and orders.¹³²⁹

Ellen White had a general view of ministry, one which is for all believers, and the ordination for this ministry was from God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Even within this category, special ministries could exist, such as Ellen White’s prophetic ministry. Other such special ministries could be added for women, being formally marked by the laying on of hands (4.6.2.2). Even for the special ministry of the ordained gospel ministry, which requires formal ordination by imposition of hands, the ordination by God is the essential thing.

In view of this, what is the point of a formally ordained ministry as elders or pastors? In the quotation from the chapter ‘A Consecrated Ministry’ in *Acts of the Apostles*, Ellen White says that “the great Head of the church superintends His work through the instrumentality of men ordained by God to act as His representatives’. Thus, ‘ordination’ is closely related to church organisation. And organisation was an

¹³²⁷ D. Fortin, ‘Ordination in the Writings of Ellen D. White’, 1998, pp. 118-119.

¹³²⁸ E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, 1885-1909, p. 444.

¹³²⁹ Id., ‘Words to our Workers’, 1903, p. 7.

answer to the need for ‘gospel order’ in moments of crisis and need for harmony, order, and adaptability, so that the mission of God would go forward.¹³³⁰

We have already covered in this study the circumstances in the 1850’s which led James and Ellen White and other leaders of the Sabbatarian Adventists to recommend ‘gospel order’ including ‘ordination’ and ‘organisation’ (4.6.1). The situation was very much conditioned by the ideas inherited from the Restorationist movement of the Christians and the Christian Connexion. There was no creed or authority but the Bible alone, and organisation was kept to a minimum since it was always being questioned in view of the lack of biblical instruction about it (4.4.5). However, reality for the growing movement of the Sabbatarians in the 1850’s showed that ‘gospel order’ was needed. In her vision related in her 1854 *Supplement to “Experience and Views”*, Ellen White was instructed by an angel that God’s Word and gospel order were the solution, for these would bring the church into unity of faith and would secure the members from false teachers. The answer to how this would be done was – follow the New Testament church:

I saw that in the apostles’ day the church was in danger of being deceived and imposed upon by false teachers. Therefore the brethren chose men who had given good evidence that they were capable of ruling well their own houses and preserving order in their own families, and who would enlighten those who were in darkness.¹³³¹

Building on the experience of the early Christian church (particularly Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Timothy 3-4), and in the midst of disorganisation and disunity, Ellen White supported her husband James in recommending that the Sabbatarians follow the New Testament model by selecting believers and setting them apart to devote themselves entirely to God’s ministry by an act of sanction of the church. Harmony and order could be preserved through the ordination of ministers.

In the same context and for the same reasons, Ellen White also articulated the need for the church structure to be *adaptable* and *at the service of the church*. This point is of vital significance to the purposes of this study.

Commenting on the situation outlined in Acts 6:1-6 and the conflict arising in regard to the distribution of food, Ellen White pointed out that ‘the apostles must now take an important step in the *perfecting of gospel order* in the church, by laying upon

¹³³⁰ Cf. D. Fortin, ‘Ordination in the Writings of Ellen D. White’, 1998, p. 119.

¹³³¹ E. G. White, *Early Writings*, 1882, pp. 100-101.

others some of the burdens thus far borne by themselves'.¹³³² This 'perfecting of the gospel order' occurred when 'the apostles were led by the Holy Spirit to outline a plan for the better organisation of all the working forces of the church'.¹³³³ As she comments on this service, Ellen White says:

[The] organisation of the church in Jerusalem was to serve as a model for the organisation of churches in every place where messengers of truth should win converts to the gospel. Later in the history of the early church, when in various parts of the world many groups of believers were formed into churches, *the organization of the church was further perfected*, so that order and harmonious action might be maintained.¹³³⁴

We agree with Fortin's understanding of the implications of this statement when he says the following about Ellen White's position:

Her description of the events indicates that changes to the organisational structure of the church (as in the institution of a new ordained ministry) were made as the leadership realised new needs. This, in some sense, meant the 'perfecting' of the structures the apostles had inherited from Jesus; it also meant that the early organisational structure of the church had not achieved a static rigidity. The earlier organisational structure could be 'perfected' if, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the membership and the leadership thought it needed to be modified. This understanding of the adaptability, or the further 'perfecting', of the organisational structure of the church, is an important clue to understanding how early Seventh-day Adventists viewed the development of their own model of church governance.¹³³⁵

In keeping with this view, the *perfecting of gospel order* was a recurring principle in the development of the Seventh-day Adventist church structure.¹³³⁶

From Ellen White's understanding of the principles of (a) order and harmony and (b) being adaptable to new needs, we conclude that 'the church can determine, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which ministries are beneficial and who is to function as an officer of the church'.¹³³⁷ Thus, *the ordination of officers becomes a function of the church rather than the church being a function of the officers*.

According to Ellen White's reading of the Bible, Jesus 'ordained' twelve apostles and later on guided the early church to 'ordain' elders (or overseers) and

¹³³² Id., *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1911, p. 89 (emphasis supplied).

¹³³³ Ibid., p. 89.

¹³³⁴ Ibid., pp. 91-92 (emphasis supplied).

¹³³⁵ D. Fortin, 'Ordination in the Writings of Ellen G. White', 1998, p. 121.

¹³³⁶ A. Mustard, *James White and SDA Organization: Historical Development, 1844-1991*, 1987, pp. 134, 171-172, 221-222, 231-232.

¹³³⁷ D. Fortin, 'Ordination in the Writings of Ellen G. White', p. 122.

deacons.¹³³⁸ Although all Christians are priests and ministers in God's service, some are especially chosen by God to fulfil specific functions within the church – see 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. The ordained ministry has a God-ordained purpose.¹³³⁹ For this reason, Ellen White also cautioned that an ordained minister should be carefully selected.

5. Qualifications for Ordination

Throughout her ministry, Ellen White repeatedly cautioned the church to make a thorough investigation before a person is ordained as a gospel minister. She said:

[Those] who are about to enter upon the sacred work of teaching Bible truth to the world should be carefully examined by faithful, experienced persons.

After these have had some experience, there is still another work to be done for them. They should be presented before the Lord in earnest prayer that He would indicate by His Holy Spirit if they are acceptable to Him. The apostle says: 'Lay hands suddenly on no man' (1 Tim. 5:22). In the days of the apostles the ministers of God did not dare to rely upon their own judgment in selecting or accepting men to take the solemn and sacred position of mouthpiece for God. They chose the men whom their judgment would accept, and then they placed them before the Lord to see if He would accept them to go forth as His representatives. No less than this should be done now.¹³⁴⁰

Consequently, the qualifications for the ordained ministry are both spiritual and practical. Ellen White thought that they must be people whom God can teach and honour with wisdom and understanding: 'They must be thinking men, men who bear God's impress and who are steadily progressing in holiness, in moral dignity, and in an understanding of their work. They must be praying men.'¹³⁴¹ Ordained ministers and elders need spiritual discernment,¹³⁴² should be distrustful of self, and should labour in humility.¹³⁴³

Together with these spiritual qualifications, Ellen White considered the practical ones as equally important. Ministers must live the truth they preach in the pulpit.¹³⁴⁴ She urged a thorough investigation of a prospective minister's behaviour

¹³³⁸ E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 1898, p. 290; id., *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1911, pp. 160-161,

¹³³⁹ Id., *Testimonies to Ministers*, 1923, p. 52; id., *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 615.

¹³⁴⁰ Id., *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, 1885-1909, p. 406.

¹³⁴¹ Id., *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 5, 1885-1909, p. 549.

¹³⁴² Id., 'Be Gentle unto All Men', 1895, p. 305.

¹³⁴³ Id., *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, 1885-1909, p. 407.

¹³⁴⁴ Id., *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, 1885-1909, p. 530.

before ordination.¹³⁴⁵ She included the practice of health reform as a requirement for ministry.¹³⁴⁶

6. Ordination and Authority

Ellen White held the view that ‘the authority of an ordained minister is derived from God and conferred by the church. The first gives authority to teach the faith; the second, to act for the church’.¹³⁴⁷ Again, we see here the connection of her two understandings of ‘ordination’ – as a work of God which equips a believer to preach and teach the Word, and as a work of the church which is formal and sets believers apart for special services to the church.

Regarding her view of the ecclesiastical authority, her comments in *The Acts of the Apostles* on the ‘ordination’ of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13:1-3 are valid – although we have noted earlier in this study that the imposition of hands in this passage is not for a fixed office in the church and rather for the specific task or commission to bring the gospel to the gentiles in Asia Minor at the first missionary journey. According to her description of this event, the setting apart of Paul and Barnabas fulfilled five interrelated purposes:¹³⁴⁸

1. ‘The church invested them with full church authority to teach the truth, perform baptisms, and organise churches.’¹³⁴⁹

2. ‘Foreseeing the difficulties and the opposition ahead of them, God wished for their work to be above challenge and, thus, receive the sanction of the church.’¹³⁵⁰

3. ‘Their ordination was a public recognition that they had been chosen by the Holy Spirit for a special work to the Gentiles.’

4. ‘The ceremony of laying on of hands added no new grace or virtual qualification; it was the action of the church setting its seal of approval upon the work of God.’

¹³⁴⁵ Id., ‘Danger in Rejecting Light’, 1890, p. 642.

¹³⁴⁶ Id., Letter 23, 1896, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 7, p. 338.

¹³⁴⁷ D. Fortin, ‘Ordination in the Writings of Ellen G. White’, 1998, p. 126.

¹³⁴⁸ As set out in *ibid.*, pp. 124-125.

¹³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 125, based on E. G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1911, pp. 159-165. Fortin also refers to Ellen White’s indication that ordination in the early church also included the authority to perform the Lord’s Supper, according to *Early Writings*, 1882, p. 101.

¹³⁵⁰ D. Fortin, ‘Ordination in the Writings of Ellen G. White’, 1998, p. 125.

5. 'Hands were laid upon the apostles to ask God to bestow his blessing upon them.'

We agree with Fortin's conclusion that Ellen White's definition of ordination is altogether pragmatic: 'it is a public recognition of divine appointment and an acknowledged form of designation to an appointed office'.¹³⁵¹ Thus, the church gives authority to the ordained minister to preach the gospel, and to act in its name in the organisation of new local churches. Since only the church can authorise a believer to perform its rites, it does confer authority upon some chosen individuals through the ordination ceremony. Thus, the imposition of hands is a ceremony that serves the purpose of the church, and it is the church, guided by the Holy Spirit, which ultimately decided who is to be given authority through ordination.¹³⁵²

Ellen White also maintains that, as a Christian, an ordained minister has not only authority to perform duties for the church (ministering to the church), but also holds *divine* authority to preach and teach the gospel and serve as God's ambassador. However, this divine authority is fundamentally related to being part of the priesthood of all believers and not conveyed by ordination.¹³⁵³ This function is, so to say, God's ordination of all believers for mission, witnessing and evangelism.

We have noted in passing in connection with the historical development of ordination in Adventism (4.6.1) that an idea of '(apostolic) succession' seems to linger in (a) the initial practice of those performing the initial ordinations being already ordained in other Protestant denominations and (b) the later practice of allowing only already ordained ministers to represent the church in laying on of their hands on the ordinand. We will also see later on that one of the chief thought leaders on ordination among the Sabbatarian Adventists, Joseph Frisbie, who was a former Methodist, argued in his 1856 article that ordination gave the authority to ordain other ministers or elders (4.6.3.2). This is difficult to prove as a principle taught in the Bible, but it was certainly a key belief in the Methodist church coming out of the Anglican tradition with its apostolic succession belief (4.4.2).

Now, Ellen White also came from a Methodist background, as did many other Sabbatarians. Whether this had anything to do with a peculiar statement she made

¹³⁵¹ Ibid.

¹³⁵² Ibid.

¹³⁵³ Ibid., p. 126.

on succession in ordination or not is difficult to decide. This is the statement, or rather two statements:

[From] Christ's ascension to the present day, men ordained by God, deriving their authority from Him, have become teachers of the faith ... He has ordained that there should be *a succession of men who derive their authority from the first teachers of the faith* for the continual preaching of Christ and Him crucified. The Great Teacher has delegated power to His servants.¹³⁵⁴

Fortin admits that, on first sight, some formulations here (note the words in italics) 'may seem to validate a belief in episcopal apostolic succession',¹³⁵⁵ as held in some way by John Wesley and classical Methodism, coming out of the Anglican tradition. However, he also points out that Ellen White affirms that the authority of God's servants is *derived* from God (not the apostle Peter or the first teachers of faith), and this derivation of authority is based on faithfulness to the Word of God and truth. Fortin also adduces the clear statement by Ellen White in *The Desire of Ages* where she explains her thinking on apostolic succession:

Descent from Abraham was proved, not by name and lineage, but by likeness of character. So, the apostolic succession rests not upon the transmission of ecclesiastical authority, but upon spiritual relationship. A life actuated by the apostles' spirit, the belief and teaching of the truth they taught, this is the true evidence of apostolic succession. This is what constitutes men the successors of the first teachers of the gospel.¹³⁵⁶

This view of the apostolic succession as being a spiritual relationship evidenced by a sanctified life and faithfulness to God's truth and the teaching of the gospel does, of course, open the question of whether or not it then also includes spirit-filled and sanctified women who have taught and preached the gospel with or without formal ordination. And there is nothing that excludes women from being authorised by God through the call of His Spirit and being acknowledged by the church by imposition of hands and prayer – the first giving authority to teach the faith and the second to act for the church.

7. Diversity and Efficiency of Pastoral, Evangelistic and Teaching Ministry

In the context of the theological perspective outlined in the preceding pages, it is understandable that Ellen White allowed for the church to decide on whether some

¹³⁵⁴ E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, 1885-1909, p. 393, 529.

¹³⁵⁵ D. Fortin, 'Ordination in the Writings of Ellen G. White', 1998, p. 126.

¹³⁵⁶ E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 1898, p. 467.

people, other than ‘pastoral gospel ministers’, should be set apart by ordination for other ministries. The Seventh-day Adventist Church had already decided that besides pastors, local church elders and deacons should be ordained (4.6.3). However, Ellen White went further than that and recommended that people be ordained by imposition of hands *for various kinds of ministries*. The theological basis for this view included the priesthood of all believers and the organisational church structure being adaptable to new needs of mission.

Another key element in her thinking was her conviction that the ordained pastoral ministry alone was insufficient to fulfil God’s commission to the church and that God, therefore, is calling believers of all professions to dedicate their lives to his service. Thus, we detect in her thinking on ordination (a) elements of *urgency* in view of the impending coming of the Lord and the vast task of global mission, of (b) calling for greater *efficiency* and the need for mobilising all the people of God to fulfil His mission and mandate to the church, and of (c) branching out in a *variety of ministries* to benefit from expertise, experience and giftedness.

Before we proceed to consider some of her statements in this regard, it is useful to review her open and diversified view of ordination in the light of the Bible. On one hand, Ellen White’s understanding of some key New Testament passages on ordination seems to follow Christian tradition. For example, she accepted the King James Version in Mark 3:14 and stated that Jesus ‘ordained’ his twelve disciples, even describing an imagined scene of him laying his hands on them,¹³⁵⁷ although the Greek verb means ‘appointed’ and there is no explicit reference to an imposition of hands in any of the four gospels, not even in the appointment of Matthias as the stand-in for Judas (Acts 1:12-26). She also reads Acts 6:1-6 as an ordination of deacons,¹³⁵⁸ although that office is not stated in the passage. And she reads Acts 13:1-3 as a record of Paul’s ‘formal’ ordination as a minister and the beginning of his apostleship,¹³⁵⁹ although the context suggests that it is the church’s confirmation of God sending Paul and Barnabas as missionaries to the Gentiles, and although Paul’s ‘ordination’ seems to be basically his ‘appointment as a servant and a witness’ by Jesus Christ (see Acts 26:15-18). However, these readings were commonly

¹³⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 296.

¹³⁵⁸ Id., *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1911, pp. 87-90.

¹³⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 159-165.

accepted among Christians in her time and her purpose was, it seems, not to bring new light on exegetical issues but to build up faith and encourage mission.

What is much more significant for our purposes, however, is the fact that she grasped the vital point in the Bible regarding 'ordination', namely that it was carried out in the New Testament church for a variety of functions, in a variety of contexts, and that the rite of the imposition of hands was in fact used for many different purposes, such as blessing, healing, baptism and being set apart for official functions as well as particular commissions. (We have reported these findings in the Bible at various points in chapter 3 above.) Thus, ordination in Ellen White's understanding is not by any means exclusively reserved for induction to the pastoral gospel ministry, but it is an expression by the church that sets people apart for a divinely assigned ministry, indicated by the ordinand's faithfulness, ability and character, as well as spiritual gifts and divine appointment. The implications of this view are significant, as we will now see.

Fortin calls attention to the fact that since, according to Ellen White, 'the church can branch out into different kinds of ministries to meet the needs of the people', she argued in favour of, for example, the ordination of medical missionaries and women in ministry.

The work of the medical profession was seen as an effective means of proclaiming the gospel and, for that reason, medical missionaries should be ordained for ministry:

The work of the true medical missionary is largely a spiritual work. *It includes prayer and the laying-on-of-hands; he therefore should be as sacredly set apart for his work as is the minister of the gospel.* Those who are selected to act the part of missionary physicians, are to be set apart as such. This will strengthen them against the temptation to withdraw from the sanitarium work to engage in private practice.¹³⁶⁰

In this passage Ellen White draws a parallel between the 'sacred setting apart' of the medical missionary and the minister of the gospel. Since the role of the physician is one of function rather than status in the church structure, there is no implication here of a gender issue, but, if accepted as a principle, male as well as a female physicians would be ordained in the same way. Fortin says: 'To sacredly set apart a medical missionary is viewed as a form of "ordination" in which the church

¹³⁶⁰ Id., *Evangelism*, 1946, p. 546 (emphasis supplied).

acknowledges the blessings of God upon the chosen individual and serves as a means of strengthening the dedication of the worker in his service for God.¹³⁶¹

Ellen White also favoured that women in gospel ministry be set apart by prayer and imposition of hands, in other words, that *women in gospel ministry be ordained for their task*. We will review more closely her position later (4.6.2.3).

The point to be made here is that her fundamental reason for supporting the setting apart of women and medical missionaries is in keeping with her view on *the adaptability of church structures and orders* to meet new needs in *accomplishing the mission of God*. And this in turn is *part of his plan of redemption in the context of the Great Controversy and the impending coming of the Lord*.

Fortin describes her view in these terms: 'Under the guidance of God, the church can and should branch out in its methods of labour by setting apart in ordination Christians serving in various ministries.'¹³⁶² We believe that, in making the following statements, Ellen White instructed the Seventh-day Adventist church that God is leading the church in this direction and that it is God's will for the church to 'branch out', to be strengthened and to be built up by ordination of women who labour in the gospel ministry:

*There are women who should labour in the gospel ministry ... We need men and women who understand the reasons for our faith and who realize the work to be done in communicating truth, and who will refuse to speak any words that will weaken the confidence of any soul in the Word of God or destroy the fellowship that should exist between those of like faith.*¹³⁶³

Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. *They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands*. In some cases they will; need to counsel with the church officers or the minister; but if they are devoted women, maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in the church. *This is another means of strengthening and building up the church. We need to branch out more in our methods of labour. Not a hand should be bound, not a soul discouraged, not a voice should be hushed; let every individual labour, privately or publicly, to help forward this grand work*. Place the burdens upon men and women of the church that they may grow by reason of the exercise, and thus become effective agents in the hand of the Lord for the enlightenment of those who sit in darkness.¹³⁶⁴

¹³⁶¹ D. Fortin, 'Ordination in the Writings of Ellen G. White', 1998, p. 127.

¹³⁶² Ibid., p. 128.

¹³⁶³ E. G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 472 (emphasis supplied).

¹³⁶⁴ Id., 'The Duty of the Minister and the People', 1895, p. 434 (emphasis supplied).

4.6.2.2 Ellen White's View of Her Own Ministry. Before looking in more detail at Ellen White's teaching regarding women's ordination, we will consider briefly her own ministry as a woman.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church believes that God appointed Ellen White, a woman, to minister as the central prophetic and guiding voice in the formative phase of the church over a period of seventy years, even to the point that her speaking and writing ministry is included as a fundamental belief taught in the Word of God, which says that manifested in her ministry; is 'a gift of the Holy Spirit' which is 'an identifying mark of the remnant church', and 'as the Lord's messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction'.¹³⁶⁵ Therefore, the church in the Trans-European Division does not accept that any passage of Scripture containing injunctions for church order has been truthfully understood if adduced as evidence for the view that Scripture prohibits women to speak, teach or preach within the church life and worship, *by virtue of their gender*. In our opinion, Scripture and Ellen White teach that women can and shall work in gospel ministry as care-takers, healers, speakers, advisors, teachers, and preachers.

Ellen White was never ordained by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In her time, it was not the order of the church to ordain women as pastors or gospel ministers, and she abided by that. She did however by vote receive an 'ordained minister's credentials' for many years by the Michigan Conference and later by the General Conference,¹³⁶⁶ but without having been ordained by prayer and imposition of hands.

As we have seen above, she considered herself to be ordained by the Lord. The 'formal' ordination to the pastoral ministry was seen in the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a sign of 'ecclesiastical authority' (4.6.3), and it is apparent that Ellen White did not see herself as taking on that role in a context where women were generally, both in family, society and church, seen as subordinate to their husbands (in the family context) or to the ordained minister (in the context of the church organisation). However, *the more she became engaged in the growth of the mission of the church, she began to underline the involvement of women in the gospel ministry in notable terms*, as we shall see later.

¹³⁶⁵ *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, revised edition, 2010, p. 162.

¹³⁶⁶ See, for example, the report in *R&H*, vol. 40:13, 10 September, 1872, p. 102.

The cultural bias against women doing anything outside of their homes was, of course, the pattern in the North American nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For example, even in the Restorationist Christian movement in 1790-1840, which had a large group of women in ministry, some of whom were ordained, the social convention in New England was that women should remain subordinate to their pastors and stay within their 'proper sphere' due to the social conventions of male ministerial dominance (4.4.5.4). This convention was however not always followed among 'the Christians' and many active women at the time used various arguments from Scripture and common sense to overcome this hindrance.

It is general knowledge that women's equality with men in social life developed gradually in the western world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with local variations. The situation today, where anti-discrimination laws are promulgated in many countries based on the definitions of gender equality in terms of human rights by world bodies such as the United Nations,¹³⁶⁷ has created a wide gap between the social context of the Church in Ellen White's time and in many countries today. This is also reflected in the *General Conference Working Policy*, where the statement on 'Human Relations' in BA 60 stipulates that 'positions of service and responsibility (except for those requiring ordination to the gospel ministry) on all levels of church activity shall be open to all on the basis of the individual's qualifications', and that 'the world Church supports nondiscrimination in employment practices and policies and upholds the principle that both men and women, without regard to race and color, shall be given full and equal opportunity within the Church to develop the knowledge and skills needed for the building up of the Church'. The cultural gap between Ellen White's time and many countries of today must, as a matter of principle, be bridged by a consideration of the historical context of her writings and by applying her universal, biblical principles to our time.¹³⁶⁸

¹³⁶⁷ See, for example, the article 'Gender Equality' at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_equality (accessed 12 July, 2013).

¹³⁶⁸ This principle has been elaborated in regard to biblical interpretation in 2.5 above, and has been applied by the SDA Church to Ellen White's writings, for example, in 'The Role of the Ellen G. White Writings in Doctrinal Matters', *Adventist Review*, September 4, 1980, p. 15 – note the point made that 'Ellen G. White's total context and situation in life, with attention to time and place, must always be taken into consideration'. Cf. G. R. Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 1997, pp. 77-84, 100-104.

4.6.2.3 Ellen White's View of Ministry and Ordination of Women. Ellen White's view of women's ordination to the gospel ministry seems to be that, on the one hand, she was 'very cautious' and 'never encouraged church officials to depart from the general customs of the church in those matters',¹³⁶⁹ and, on the other hand, she never stated, as far as we know, that women should not be ordained; in fact, she seems to have become increasingly concerned with spiritual and gifted women's involvement in the ministry and mission of the church, especially towards the later part of her life. She emphasises more and more strongly the call of God and the spiritual preparation for ministry which includes women. This is the biblical view of ordination and it is the understanding she applied to her own ministry, namely, that she was ordained by God. We will see in this section several examples of how she almost disregards the role of ordination for the gospel ministry, while emphasising the spiritual preparation and the need to branch out and involve all the church in the ministry. This is also a central thought in her Letter to the Brethren in 1901, which we will analyse in some detail later (4.6.2.4).

Her cautious attitude is perfectly understandable in view of the conventional gender roles at the time and the ecclesiastical structure developing in the Seventh-day Adventist Church (see 4.6.3 below). Her primary focus would be on spiritual unity within the church and efficient mission to the lost. Issues of female ordination could possibly have damaged both internal unity and led to loss of trust in the gospel among unbelievers at the time. How sensitive she was on this point, although the issue related to dress reform, is revealed by this statement:

'No occasion should be given to unbelievers to reproach our faith. We are considered odd and singular, and should not take a course to lead unbelievers to think us more so than our faith requires us to be.'¹³⁷⁰

It is clear, however, that in several statements she opens the door for women to do ministry and even to be set apart by imposition of hands. This topic has already been comprehensively explored by Jerry Moon.¹³⁷¹ We will follow his main headings and draw on his study in the following twelve subsections.

1. Use of the Term 'Ministry' with Reference to Women

¹³⁶⁹ See the correspondence between Ellen White's secretary, Clarence Crisler, and Mrs. L. E. Cox, March 12, 22, and June 16, 1916 in E. G. White, *Daughters of God: Messages Especially for Women*, 1998, pp. 253-255 .

¹³⁷⁰ E. G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 1, 1885-1909, p. 420.

¹³⁷¹ J. Moon, 'Ellen G. White on Women in Ministry', 1998, pp. 187-209.

Basically, Ellen White used the terms ‘minister’ and ‘ministry’ for the work of the priesthood of all believers.¹³⁷² Thus, all Christians are called to ‘work for the salvation of their fellow men’. Within this general and broad concept, there are two subordinate referential meanings: (a) *specific vocations* that support and augment the ‘ministry of the word’, for example, medical missionary work and literature evangelism; (b) the work of *officially recognised clergy of the church*, called ‘gospel ministry’, ‘ministry of the word’, or ‘ordained ministry’.

Moon demonstrates that Ellen White used the term ‘ministry’ to designate the work of women in both of these categories. One of her most emphatic statements about women in the gospel ministry is from 1898. A few paragraphs before, she describes ‘women who should labour in the gospel ministry’ as ‘women who should labour in the gospel’, who ‘do work that is in the line of ministry’, and who are ‘necessary to the work of ministry’. Moon also notes that the context of the statement is a question that several had asked Ellen White: ‘Should ministers’ wives adopt infant children?’ To some of these she answered: ‘No; God would have you help your husband in his work.’ A few lines later she explains why:

There are *women who should labour in the gospel ministry*. In many respects they would do more good than the ministers who neglect to visit the flock of God. Husband and wife may unite in this work, and when it is possible, they should. The way is open for *consecrated women*. But the enemy would be pleased to have the women whom God could use to help husbands, binding up their time and strength on one helpless little mortal, that requires constant care and attention.¹³⁷³

For some women who have special ability to ‘help to give the message’, the work of the ministry is *a higher priority* than child rearing. A similar point was made when she recognised that a woman in ministry may sometimes need to put ‘her housework in the hands of a faithful, prudent helper’, and leave ‘her children in good care, while she engages in the work’.¹³⁷⁴

Ellen White shows a clear preference for *team ministry*, especially husband and wife working together. She refers to ‘young women’ without mentioning their marital status as being trained for this work, and widows of ministers continuing in

¹³⁷² E. G. White, *Desire of Ages*, 1898, p. 822; J. Moon, *ibid.*, p. 188.

¹³⁷³ MS 43a, 1898, in: *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 5, p. 325.

¹³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 324.

his work, showing that while a husband-and-wife team has advantages, it is not the only setting in which women are called to ministry.¹³⁷⁵

In order to find support for the essential role of women in ministry, she urged General Conference President A. G. Daniells to ‘study the Scriptures for further light on this point’. She stated to him that ‘women were among Christ’s devoted followers in the days of His ministry, and Paul makes mention of certain women who were “helpers together” with him “in the gospel”’.¹³⁷⁶ Moon adds the relevant observation that in *The Acts of the Apostles* (1911) she expresses the belief that the ‘elect lady’ of 2 John 1 was one of the unnamed women leaders of the New Testament church – ‘a helper in the gospel work, a woman of good repute and wide influence’.¹³⁷⁷

Attention is also called to the following statement:

Women helped our Saviour by uniting with Him in His work. And the great Apostle Paul writes ... ‘I entreat thee also, true yoke-fellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel’ [Phil. 4:3].¹³⁷⁸

Moon observes that following the citation from Philippians 4:3, she paraphrased Paul’s words about ‘women who labored in the gospel’, appropriating the Pauline precedent in support of ‘modern women who should labor in the gospel ministry’.¹³⁷⁹

2. The Need, Legitimacy, and Divine Mandate for Women in Ministry

The basic premise undergirding all Ellen White’s counsels about women in ministry is that ‘neither men nor women can do alone the quality of work that the two can do together’.¹³⁸⁰ Thus, there is a *complementarity* in letting women work in ministry side by side with men:

When a great and decisive work is to be done, God chooses men and women to do this work, and it will feel the loss if the talents of both are not combined.¹³⁸¹

Ellen White also urges the *necessity* of women in ministry: ‘The participation of women in the work of the gospel is not merely an option to be allowed in exceptional

¹³⁷⁵ J. Moon, ‘Ellen G. White on Women in Ministry’, 1998, p. 190 with references given.

¹³⁷⁶ Ellen White to A. G. Daniells, 27 October, 1909, Letter 142, 1909, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 17, p. 37. Moon observes that ‘the Scripture reference appears to be a conflation of Rom. 16:3 and Phil. 4:3, possibly with 2 Cor. 1:11 in the background’ (ibid., p. 205, footnote 21).

¹³⁷⁷ E. G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1911, p. 554; cf. J. Moon, ibid., p. 190.

¹³⁷⁸ E. G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 5, p. 554.

¹³⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 325; J. Moon, ‘Ellen G. White on Women in Ministry’, 1998, p. 190.

¹³⁸⁰ J. Moon, ibid., p. 190.

¹³⁸¹ White, Letter 77, 1898, cited in *Evangelism*, 1946, p. 469; see also *Counsels on Health*, 2002, pp. 544, 547.

circumstances, but it is an *essential element* for the highest success in preaching the gospel'.¹³⁸² In 1879 she wrote:

Women can be the instruments of righteousness, rendering holy service. It was Mary that first preached a risen Jesus ... Those who engage with the Son of God in his work, be they ever so aspiring, can have no greater, no holier work than this. If there were twenty women where now there is one, who would make this holy mission their cherished work, we should see many more converted to the truth. The refining, softening influence of Christian women is needed in the great work of preaching the truth ... we are lacking in deeds of sympathy and benevolence, in sacred and social ministering to the needy, the oppressed, and the suffering. Women who can work are needed now, women who are not self-important, but meek and lowly of heart, who will work with the meekness of Christ wherever they can find work to do for the salvation of souls.¹³⁸³

Ellen White believed women to be 'indispensable for ministry, because they can minister in ways that men cannot':¹³⁸⁴

The Lord has a work for women as well as for men. ... They can do in families work that men cannot do, a work that reaches the inner life. They can come close to the hearts of those whom men cannot reach. Their labour is *needed*.¹³⁸⁵

There is a great work for women to do in the cause of present truth. Through the exercise of womanly tact and a wise use of their knowledge of Bible truth, *they can remove difficulties that our brethren cannot meet. We need women workers to labour in connection with their husbands, and should encourage those who wish to engage in this line of missionary effort.*¹³⁸⁶

To those who questioned the legitimacy of a woman preaching to congregations, Ellen White cited her own experience.¹³⁸⁷ Furthermore, she insisted that women who devote their full time to ministry should be paid just as male ministers are:

Injustice has sometimes been done to women who labour just as devotedly as their husbands, and who are recognised by God as being necessary to the work of the ministry. The method of paying men labourers, and paying their wives who share their labours with them is a plan not according to the Lord's order, and if carried out in our conferences, is liable to discourage our sisters from qualifying themselves for the work they should engage in.¹³⁸⁸

¹³⁸² J. Moon, 'Ellen G. White on Women in Ministry', 1998, pp. 190-191 (emphasis supplied).

¹³⁸³ E. G. White, 'Address and Appeal, Setting Forth the Importance of Missionary Work', *R&H*, vol. 53:01, 2 January, 1879, p. 1.

¹³⁸⁴ J. Moon, 'Ellen G. White on Women in Ministry', 1998, p. 191.

¹³⁸⁵ E. G. White, 'Words to Lay Members', *R&H*, vol. 79:34, 26 August, 1902, p. 7 (emphasis supplied).

¹³⁸⁶ E. G. White, White, Letter 142, 1909, cited in *Evangelism*, 1946, p. 491.

¹³⁸⁷ See her statement in id., 'Looking for that Blessed Hope', *Signs of the Times*, 24 June, 1889.

¹³⁸⁸ E. G. White, *Gospel Workers*, 1915, pp. 452-453.

Ellen White might well have argued that as it is expected of every layperson to spread the gospel without pay, women should not object to these conditions. To the contrary, however, she argued the necessity of fair pay for ministering women. Asking women to do full-time ministerial work without pay, she calls ‘exaction’, ‘partiality’, ‘selfishness’, and ‘robbery’. ‘When self-denial is required because of a dearth of means, do not let a few hard-working women do all the sacrificing. Let all share in making the sacrifice.’¹³⁸⁹ She warned of the danger of discouraging the women from devoting themselves to ministry as a vocation. Moon points out that she believed large numbers of women (‘twenty ... where now there is one’) should be ‘preaching the truth’,¹³⁹⁰ qualifying themselves for the work they should engage in’,¹³⁹¹ and that to hinder them would be to hinder the work of God.

‘Seventh-day Adventists are not to in any way belittle woman’s work’, she said. ‘If a woman puts her housework in the hands of a faithful prudent helper, and leaves her children in good care, while she engages in the work, the conference should have wisdom to understand the justice of her receiving wages.’¹³⁹²

Finally, Ellen White asserted the legitimacy of paying women ministers from the tithe, which she elsewhere maintained is to be sacredly reserved for the support of the gospel ministry.¹³⁹³ ‘The tithe should go to those who labour in word and doctrine, be they men or women’, she wrote.¹³⁹⁴

Many of the quotations on women in ministry mention ‘wives of ‘ministers’. Moon makes the important observation, however, that other references apply the same concept to women not specified as minister’s wives, and to widowed women, showing that Ellen White saw some form of ministry as an appropriate career choice for women:¹³⁹⁵

Some women are now teaching young women to work successfully as visitors and Bible readers [i.e. persons giving ‘Bible readings, a question-and-answer form of Bible study]. Women who work in the cause of God should be given *wages proportionate to the time they give to the work* ... As the devoted minister and his wife engage in the work, they should be paid wages proportionate to the *wages of two distinct workers*, that they may have means

¹³⁸⁹ E. G. White, Manuscript 47, 1898; see also *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 5, pp. 323-327; vol. 12, pp. 160-167; vol. 17, pp. 36-37.

¹³⁹⁰ E. G. White, *Evangelism*, 1946, pp. 471-472.

¹³⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 492-493.

¹³⁹³ E. G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 81, 101-103.

¹³⁹⁴ E. G. White, Manuscript 149, 1899, cited in *Evangelism*, 1946, p. 492.

¹³⁹⁵ J. Moon, ‘Ellen G. White on Women in Ministry’, 1998, p. 192.

to use as they shall see fit in the cause of God. The Lord has *put His spirit upon them both*. If the husband should die, and leave his wife, *she is fitted to continue her work in the cause of God, and receive wages for the labour she performs.*¹³⁹⁶

Ellen White's view of the need, legitimacy and divine mandate for women in ministry may be summarised in the following points:

1. There are women who should labour in the gospel ministry.
2. Women's work is essential and needed, and without it the cause will suffer great loss.¹³⁹⁷
3. Women's work in ministry is *complemental* to that of men; due to women's gifts, there are tasks in ministry that women can do better than men.
4. Women in ministry should receive just wages.
5. These wages may appropriately come from the tithe, for which 'the Lord has commanded' that 'those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel' (1 Cor. 9:14).
6. The call to ministry can take priority over house work and child care.
7. Some women should make ministry a lifelong vocation in which they earn their livelihood.
8. Conferences should not discourage women from qualifying themselves for ministerial work.¹³⁹⁸

We therefore agree fully with Moon's conclusion: 'All these factors in her appeal justify the conclusion that she considered the call to promote and encourage the participation of women in ministry, not merely as an option, but as *a divine mandate*, the neglect of which results in diminished ministerial efficiency, fewer converts, and "great loss" to the cause, compared with the fruitfulness of the combined gifts of men and women in ministry.'¹³⁹⁹

3. Role Descriptions for Women in Ministry

What was Ellen White's scope in calling women to ministry? What particular roles did she have in mind? What place did she see for women in relation to men in ministry?

¹³⁹⁶ E. G. White, 'The Laborer is Worthy of His Hire', Manuscript 43a, 22 March, 1896, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 5, pp. 323-324.

¹³⁹⁷ E. G. White, *Evangelism*, 1946, p. 493.

¹³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 492.

¹³⁹⁹ J. Moon, 'Ellen G. White on Women in Ministry', 1998, p. 193 (emphasis supplied).

Moon finds that the most frequently mentioned vocations in which Ellen White calls women to minister are those of ministry to families',¹⁴⁰⁰ 'giving Bible studies'¹⁴⁰¹ in either evangelistic or pastoral contexts',¹⁴⁰² 'teaching in various capacities',¹⁴⁰³ and 'canvassing'.¹⁴⁰⁴ In regard to teaching, Ellen White said that 'again and again the Lord has showed me that women teachers are just as greatly needed to do the work to which He has appointed them as are men'.¹⁴⁰⁵ The context of this statement refers to house-to-house pastoral-evangelistic visiting and Bible teaching.

She also mentions medicine (specifically obstetrics and gynaecology),¹⁴⁰⁶ chaplaincy for medical and other institutions,¹⁴⁰⁷ personal counselling with women,¹⁴⁰⁸ and temperance leadership (particularly in connection with the Women's Christian Temperance Union).¹⁴⁰⁹

In some remarkable statements, she speaks freely about women as 'pastors' or 'ministers', as working in 'the gospel ministry' or doing 'pastoral labor':

All who wish an opportunity for *true ministry*, and who will give themselves unreservedly to God, will find in the canvassing work opportunities to speak upon many things pertaining to the future immortal life. The experience thus gained will be of the greatest value to those who are *fitting themselves for the work of the ministry*. It is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that *prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God*.¹⁴¹⁰

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.¹⁴¹¹

It is not always men who are best adapted to the *successful management of a church*. If faithful women have more deep piety and true devotion than men, they could indeed by their prayers and their labors do more than men who are unconsecrated in heart and in life.¹⁴¹²

¹⁴⁰⁰ E. G. White, *Evangelism*, 1946, pp. 459, 464, 470,-471, 479, 491.

¹⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 493, 456, 469,-470, 475, 477, 491-493.

¹⁴⁰² *Id.*, *Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 322-323; vol. 4, pp. 390; vol. 8, pp. 229-230; *id.*, *Evangelism*, 1946, pp. 467-473, 491-495.

¹⁴⁰³ *Id.*, *Evangelism*, 1946, pp. 469, 473-477.

¹⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 469-470; *id.*, *Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 322-323; vol. 8, pp. 229-230.

¹⁴⁰⁵ *Id.*, 'The Labourer is Worthy of His Hire', Manuscript 43a, 22 March, 1898, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 5, p. 325.

¹⁴⁰⁶ *Id.*, *Counsels on Health*, 2002, p. 365.

¹⁴⁰⁷ *Id.*, *Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 143-144.

¹⁴⁰⁸ *Id.*, *Evangelism*, 1946, p. 460.

¹⁴⁰⁹ *Id.*, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 1, p. 125.

¹⁴¹⁰ *Id.*, 'Canvassers as Gospel Evangelists', 1901, p. 33 (emphasis supplied).

¹⁴¹¹ *Id.*, *Evangelism*, 1946, p. 472.

¹⁴¹² E. G. White, Letter 33, 1879.

Missionary work – introducing our publications into families, conversing, and praying with and for them – is a good work, and one which will *educate men and women to do pastoral labor*.¹⁴¹³

The Lord has given Christ to the world for *ministry*. Merely to preach the Word is not ministry. The Lord desires *His ministering servants* to occupy a place worthy of the highest consideration. In the mind of God, *the ministry of men and women* existed before the world was created. He determined that *His ministers* should have a perfect exemplification of Himself and His purposes.¹⁴¹⁴

If men and women would act as the Lord's helping hand, doing deeds of love and kindness, uplifting the oppressed, rescuing those ready to perish, the glory of the Lord would be their rearward ...

Christ said of His work, 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to preach liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn.' ...

Wake up, wake up, *my brethren and sisters*. You must do the work that Christ did when He was upon this earth. Remember that *you may act as God's helping hand* in opening the prison doors to those that are bound. Wonderful is the work that God desires to accomplish through *His servants*, that His name may constantly be glorified ...

Of those who act as *His helping hand*, the Lord says, 'Ye shall be named *Priests* of the Lord; men shall call you the *Ministers* of our God ... [Isa. 6:6-11; 62:2]'¹⁴¹⁵ (Cf. 4.6.2.4.)

In these statements, Ellen White speaks of women working or educating themselves for working as pastors or ministers, even including the concept of 'management of a church'. While her language seems to imply access for women also to the formal church offices of 'gospel minister' or 'pastor', we know that, historically, the church did not ordain women as such. However, on 4 April, 1882, when *The Review and Herald* published her statement that missionary work in families 'will educate men and women to do pastoral labor', only a few months had passed since the General Conference Session resolution on 5 December, 1881, 'that females possessing the necessary qualifications to fill that position, may, with perfect propriety, be set apart by ordination to the work of the Christian ministry'.¹⁴¹⁶ An openness to women's ordination for ministry was in the air at the time in the Seventh-day Adventist Church,

¹⁴¹³ Id., 'Our Publications', 1882, p. 209.

¹⁴¹⁴ Id., Diary Entry March 12, 1891, Manuscript 23, 1891.

¹⁴¹⁵ E. G. White, Letter 7, 1901.

¹⁴¹⁶ S. N. Haskell & U. Smith, 'General Conference: Business Proceedings', 1991, p. 392.

and her statement of 4 April, 1882 fits well into such a setting. (We shall return to this matter in 4.6.3.2 below and the circumstances in which the General Conference Committee, to whom the resolution was referred, never took any action, although the resolution was made by the General Conference Session.)

We may add here that Ellen White's acceptance of the General Conference issuing her with ordained minister's credentials suggests that, if the Lord has 'ordained' a woman by his Spirit, and if the Church so decides, Ellen White accepted that she can be considered an ordained minister and do the work of an ordained minister.

4. Supporting Roles in Team Ministry

In many of her statements on women in ministry Ellen White speaks in the context of a team ministry in which women employ their gifts largely, but not exclusively, in teaching, visiting, and counselling private individuals and small groups, especially families. She specifically says that *women will be more successful in this area of ministry than men*.¹⁴¹⁷

The Lord has a work for women, as well as for men. They may take their places in His work ... and He will work through them. If they are imbued with a sense of their duty, and labour under the influence of the Holy Spirit, they will have just the self-possession required for this time. The Saviour will reflect upon these self-sacrificing women the light of his countenance, and will *give them a power that exceeds that of men*. They can do in families *a work that men cannot do*, a work that reaches the inner life. *They can come close to the hearts of those whom men cannot reach*. Their labour is needed.¹⁴¹⁸

Despite their relative lesser public recognition – because they spend more of their time in a private and small-group teaching, counselling, and visitation – it is precisely in this supporting role that their power and work exceeds that of men.

Ellen White's references to women as teachers were not limited to private teaching of individuals, families, and small groups. She also mentions Sabbath School teachers and superintendents, teachers of camp meeting Bible classes, and elementary school teachers, as well as those who teach from the pulpit.¹⁴¹⁹

During her time in Australia, she spoke approvingly of two Bible instructors, Sister Robinson and Sister Wilson who were 'doing just as efficient work as the

¹⁴¹⁷ J. Moon, 'Ellen G. White on Women in Ministry', 1998, p. 193.

¹⁴¹⁸ E. G. White, 'Words to Lay Members', 1902, p. 7 (emphasis supplied),

¹⁴¹⁹ E. G. White, *Evangelism*, 1946, pp. 469, 473-477; id., *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, pp. 90-96.

ministers'. She reported that at 'some of the meetings when the ministers are called away, Sister Wilson takes the Bible and addresses the congregation'.¹⁴²⁰

5. Women as Teachers

One of the objections sometimes raised against Ellen White's own ministry was that 'women were not to "teach" men (1 Tim. 2:12)'.¹⁴²¹ Her colleagues refuted this by arguing that this rule did not constitute 'a rigid and universal prohibition'.¹⁴²²

J. N. Andrews' biblical argumentation is interesting. He maintained that 'there are some exceptions to this general rule to be drawn even from Paul's writings', as well as 'from other Scriptures'. Then he cited Paul's women co-workers (Phil. 4:3); Phoebe's position as deaconess (Rom. 16:1); Priscilla's association with Paul (Rom. 16:3), and her participation in 'instructing Apollos' (Acts 18:26); Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis (Rom. 16:12); Philip's daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:8-9), and others, to prove that women were not absolutely excluded from teaching roles. He concluded that Romans 10:10, which requires public confession of the faith as integral to salvation, 'must apply to women equally with men'.¹⁴²³

Moon mentions, however, that Ellen White seldom spoke in her own defense on this point, generally allowing her male colleagues to formulate such responses. She tells about the experience when Elder Haskell dealt with this kind of objection against her, from a 'Campbellite' (i.e. from the Disciples of Christ), stating that 'Elder Haskell made it plain before all the people'.¹⁴²⁴ She also cited the work of Aquila and Priscilla in reaching Apollos as an example of 'a thorough scholar and brilliant orator' being taught by two lay persons, one of whom was a woman.¹⁴²⁵ This shows that she implicitly rejected the traditional interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:12. On the contrary, Moon says, she urged A. G. Daniells, then General Conference President, to employ in public evangelism 'many men and women who have ability to preach and teach the Word'.¹⁴²⁶

¹⁴²⁰ E. G. White, Letter 169, 1900, cited in *Evangelism*, 1946, p. 473.

¹⁴²¹ J. Moon, 'Women in Ministry', 1998, p. 194.

¹⁴²² J. N. Andrews, 'May Women Speak in Meetings?', 1879, p. 4.

¹⁴²³ Ibid.

¹⁴²⁴ E. G. White to J. White, from Oakland, CA, Letter 17a, 1 April, 1880, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 10, p. 70.

¹⁴²⁵ E. G. White, *Sketches from the Life of Paul*, 1883, p. 119.

¹⁴²⁶ E.G. White to A. G. Daniells, 27 October, 1909, Letter 142, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 17, pp. 35-36.

Ellen White did not only encourage women in supporting leading roles, but also women equipped for public leadership. For example, when Mrs S. M. I. Henry, national evangelist for the Women's Christian Temperance Union, became a Seventh-day Adventist, Ellen White encouraged her to continue her public ministry. She said:

We believe fully in church organisation, but in nothing that is to prescribe the precise way in which we must work; for all minds are not reached by the same method ... Each person has his own lamp to keep burning ... You have many ways opened before you. Address the crowd whenever you can; hold every jot of influence you can by any association that can be made the means of introducing the leaven to the meal.¹⁴²⁷

Teaching and preaching was clearly allowed for women in church settings, worship and evangelistic meetings. She does not believe in anything that is to 'prescribe the precise way in which we must work'.

6. 'Women Who Should Be Engaged in the Ministry'

Moon notes a certain ambiguity in the following statement by Ellen White:

The Lord calls upon those connected with our sanitariums, publishing houses and schools to teach the youth to do evangelistic work. Our time and energy must not be so largely employed in establishing sanitariums, food stores, and restaurants that other lines of work will be neglected. *Young men and young women who should be engaged in ministry, in Bible work, and in the canvassing work should not be bound down to mechanical employment.*

The youth should be encouraged to attend our training schools for Christian workers, which should become more and more like the schools of the prophets. These institutions have been established by the Lord, and if they are conducted in harmony with His purpose, the youth sent to them will quickly be prepared to engage in various lines of missionary work. *Some will be trained to enter the field as missionary nurses, some as canvassers, and some as gospel ministers.*¹⁴²⁸

The ambiguity allegedly occurs in the final sentence of the first paragraph. 'Being engaged in ministry, Bible work, and in the canvassing work' begs the question if these are three distinct vocations, or if the first term, 'ministry' has a general reference which is then specified by 'Bible work' and 'canvassing work'. Moon notes that 'Bible work' and 'canvassing work' are referred to elsewhere as aspects of 'ministry'.¹⁴²⁹ On the other hand, the fact that Ellen White enumerates them

¹⁴²⁷ E. G. White to S. M. I. Henry, 24 March, 1899, Letter 54, 1899, quoted in *R&H*, 1983, pp. 346-348.

¹⁴²⁸ E. G. White, *Testimonies* vol. 8, pp. 229-230 (emphasis supplied).

¹⁴²⁹ See e.g. MS 43a 1898, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 5, pp. 325, 323-327.

individually ‘would seem to imply that she is distinguishing them as different vocations’, and if that is a correct understanding, the expression ‘the ministry’ most likely refers to the pulpit preaching and administrative office of ministry in contrast to the more individual and family-oriented ministry of the Bible worker and the ministry of book-distribution of the canvasser.

Moon also notes that ‘of Ellen White’s many references to women “in ministry”, the majority refer specifically to the ministry of evangelistic and pastoral visiting, giving Bible instruction and spiritual guidance to families – the calling spoken of as ‘Bible work’.¹⁴³⁰

7. Women as Pastors

At least two statements from Ellen White mention women in pastoral roles.¹⁴³¹ But what did she mean by ‘pastoral’?

Sometimes, she used pastoral terminology for the personal visitation aspects of a minister’s work, as distinct from public pulpit ministry.¹⁴³² The personal visitation was of fundamental importance to her, and she could denounce ministers who ‘only preach’, or worse yet, merely ‘sermonise’, while they neglect ‘personal labour’ because they lack the ‘watchful, tender compassion of a shepherd. The flock of God has a right to expect to be visited by their pastor, to be instructed, advised, counselled in their own homes’.¹⁴³³ In another statement she says that ‘the pastor should visit from house to house among his flock, teaching, conversing, and praying with each family’, as well as seeing that prospective members are ‘thoroughly instructed in the truth’.¹⁴³⁴ This is the same kind of work that Ellen White elsewhere recommends for women in team ministry, namely, ‘visiting from family to family, opening the Scriptures to them’.¹⁴³⁵ It is in this pastoral work that women are promised ‘a power that exceeds that of men’.¹⁴³⁶

8. ‘Women to Do Pastoral Labour’

¹⁴³⁰ See Manuscript 43a, 1898, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 5, pp. 323-327.

¹⁴³¹ E. G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 390; vol. 6, pp. 322-323.

¹⁴³² Id., *Testimonies*, vol. 3, pp. 232-233; id., *Evangelism*, p. 350.

¹⁴³³ Id., *Appeal and Suggestions to Conference Officers*, Pamphlet no. 2, 17.

¹⁴³⁴ Id., *Gospel Workers*, 1915, quoted in *Evangelism*, 1946, p. 350.

¹⁴³⁵ Id., *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 5, p. 325, 325-327.

¹⁴³⁶ Id., *Welfare Ministry*, p. 145.

Moon adduces two statements need to be considered in the context of the previous observations, which show that the spiritual gift of pastoring is given to women as well as men. The first of these is the following:

If there is one work more important than another, it is that of getting our publications before the public, thus leading them to search the Scriptures. Missionary work – introducing our publications into families, conversing, and praying with and for them – is a good work and one which will educate men and women to do pastoral labour.¹⁴³⁷

She says here that door-to-door ‘missionary work’ literature-evangelism has two special benefits: (a) It is a good work in itself, and (b) it is a useful preparation for larger responsibilities. It will ‘educate men and women to do pastoral labour’. These very same themes characterise the context of another mention of women as ‘pastors’, which we will consider in the next section.

9. Women Should Be ‘Pastors to the Flock of God’

The points that (a) literature evangelism is itself a form of pastoral ministry, and (b) that it also prepares for pastoral ministry within a congregation, are evident in the following statement (sentences numbered for easy reference):

[1] All who desire opportunity for true ministry, and who will give themselves unreservedly to God, will find in the canvassing work opportunities to speak upon many things pertaining to the future, immortal life. [2] The experience thus gained will be of the greatest value to those who are fitting themselves for the ministry. [3] It is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God.¹⁴³⁸

Sentence 1 states that the canvassing work is ‘true ministry’. Sentence 2 recommends this work to ‘those who are fitting themselves for *the* ministry’, i.e. for ministerial leadership of a church. Sentence 3 affirms that the Holy Spirit ‘prepares workers, both men and women, to become *pastors* to the flock of God’. The logical conclusion is that the clause ‘prepares for the ministry’ in sentence 3 is parallel to ‘fitting for the ministry’ in sentence 2.¹⁴³⁹ The point is *preparation* for pastoral ministry. This theme of *preparation* is prominent in the immediate context. The chapter that forms the context is called ‘The Canvasser a Gospel Worker’ and opens with this sentence:

¹⁴³⁷ Id., *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 390.

¹⁴³⁸ Id., *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 322.

¹⁴³⁹ J. Moon, ‘Ellen G. White on Women in Ministry’, 1998, p. 198.

The intelligent, God-fearing, truth-loving canvasser should be respected; for he occupies a position equal to that of the gospel minister'.¹⁴⁴⁰

This statement expresses the theme of sentence 1 above. The next sentence shows that Ellen White was not just promoting the canvassing work, which she sought to elevate to an equality with other forms of ministry, but she was promoting it especially to 'young ministers and those who are fitting for the ministry'. Now, that is the theme of sentence 2: literature evangelism as preparation for *the* regular ministry. Ellen White expands on this theme as follows:

Many of our *young ministers and those who are fitting for the ministry* would, if truly converted, do much good by working in the canvassing field. And by meeting the people and presenting to them our publications they would *gain an experience* which they cannot gain by simply preaching. As they went from house to house they could converse with the people, carrying with them the fragrance of Christ's life. In thus endeavouring to bless others they would themselves be blessed; they would *obtain an experience* in faith; their knowledge of the Scriptures would greatly increase; and they would be constantly *learning* how to win souls for Christ. (Emphasis supplied.)

Three paragraphs later we come to the passage that concerns us here:

The experience thus gained will be of greatest value to those who are *fitting themselves for the ministry*. *It is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God.* (Emphasis supplied.)

Moon scrutinises the context and notes that the themes of preparation and growth in evangelistic effectiveness continue in the rest of the paragraph. Canvassers who are 'fitting themselves for the ministry' will 'learn', 'be educated', 'practice', 'be purified', 'develop, and 'be gifted' with spiritual power.¹⁴⁴¹

On the next page is found another connection with the main sentence under consideration:

The *preaching* of the word is a means by which the Lord has ordained that His warning message shall be given to the world. In the Scriptures the faithful *teacher* is represented as a *shepherd* of the flock of God. He is to be respected and his work appreciated ... [T]he canvassing work is to be a part both of the medical missionary work and of the ministry.¹⁴⁴²

Moon draws some valid and significant conclusions from the whole passage: 'Ellen White repeatedly applies to the literature ministry terms commonly associated with

¹⁴⁴⁰ E. G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 321.

¹⁴⁴¹ *Id.*, *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 322.

¹⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 323 (emphasis supplied).

the ministry of preaching, to show that the true literature evangelist is a preacher. Similarly, she uses terms associated with teaching to reinforce her concept of the canvasser as a teacher. Thus, the paragraph that groups the terms “preaching”, “teacher”, and “shepherd of the flock of God” constitutes a statement that not only the regular minister, but the canvasser also preaches and teaches, hence also deserves to be “respected” and “appreciated” as a “shepherd to the flock of God”.¹⁴⁴³

Finally, Moon takes note of the fact that ‘shepherd of the flock of God’ stands in direct parallel to the expression ‘pastors to the flock of God’ on the previous page, showing that by ‘pastors’, Ellen White includes all who teach and preach the gospel, including literature evangelists. Comparing these parallel statements suggests that the Holy Spirit ‘prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors’, i.e. ‘shepherds to the flock of God’, but this shepherding role may take a variety of vocational forms.

The references to the ‘Holy Spirit’, ‘gifts’, ‘pastor’, ‘teachers’, and ‘shepherd’, as well as the focal sentence ‘the Holy Spirit ... prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God’,¹⁴⁴⁴ express the point that the spiritual gift of pastor-teacher (Eph. 4:11) is given both to men and women.

10. ‘Adapted to the Successful Management of the Church’

Ellen White’s view that both women and men are potentially qualified for church leadership is expressed in her statement that ‘it is not always men who are best adapted to the successful management of a church’. The context is a scathing rebuke to a Brother Johnson who had ‘a disposition to dictate and control matters’ in a certain local church, and who had only ‘sneers’ for the work of women in the same church. ‘Jesus is ashamed of you’, she wrote, and on the next page continued:

You are not in sympathy with the great Head of the church ... This contemptible picking, fault-finding, seeking spot and stain, ridiculing, gainsaying, that you with some others have indulged in, has grieved the Spirit of God and separated you from God.

It is not always men who are best adapted to the successful management of a church. If faithful women have more deep piety and true

¹⁴⁴³ J. Moon, ‘Ellen G. White on Women in Ministry, 1998, p. 199.

¹⁴⁴⁴ E. G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 6, 1885-1909, pp. 322-323.

devotion than men, they could indeed by their prayers and their labours do more than men who are unconsecrated in heart and life.¹⁴⁴⁵

Her words 'it is not always men' imply that the addressees were assuming that in any situation, the best leader for a church would always be a man. Ellen White maintains, however, that there are times when the person best qualified to lead a church is a woman. The words 'best adapted' point to personal talents and spiritual gifts which along with 'deep piety and true devotion' constitute the qualifications for spiritual leadership. Thus, it is Ellen White's view that 'the primary determinant of fitness for church leadership is not gender, but *character*.'¹⁴⁴⁶

We wish to add here a statement not quoted by Moon. It keeps a focus on men and women and their qualifications for the ministry that God's cause needs at this time:

At this time God's cause is in need of men and women who possess rare qualifications and *good administrative powers*; men and women who will make patient, thorough investigation of the needs of the work in various fields; those who have a large capacity for work; those who possess warm, kind hearts, cool heads, sound sense, and unbiased judgment; those who are sanctified by the Spirit of God and can fearlessly say, No, or Yea and Amen, to propositions; those who have strong convictions, clear understanding, and pure, sympathetic hearts; those who practice the words 'All ye are brethren'; those who strive to uplift and restore fallen humanity'¹⁴⁴⁷

The character and skills of ideal church leaders are here applied to both men and women.

11. Set Apart by Prayer and Laying on of Hands

The one statement where Ellen White recommended ordination for women appeared in *The Review and Herald*, 9 July, 1895, at a time when she lived in Australia.¹⁴⁴⁸

Ellen White's burden in this article is the lack of involvement of the majority of church members in the work of the church. To remedy this, she urges the ministers to involve the congregation both in 'planning' and 'in executing the plans that they have had a part in forming'. She also urges that 'every individual who is considered a

¹⁴⁴⁵ E. G. White to Brother Johnson, Letter 33, 1879, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 19, pp. 55-56 (emphasis supplied).

¹⁴⁴⁶ J. Moon, 'Ellen G. White on Women in Ministry', 1998, p. 200. Moon also refers here to two articles that expand on this point: R. M. Davidson, 'Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture', 1998, pp. 259-295; P. M. van Bemmelen, 'Equality, Headship, and Submission in the Writings of Ellen G. White', 1998, pp. 295-311.

¹⁴⁴⁷ E. G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 249 (emphasis supplied).

¹⁴⁴⁸ Id., 'The Duty of the Minister and the People', 1895, p. 433. Cf. the careful examination of the statement in: J. Moon, 'Ellen G. White on Women in Ministry', 1998, pp. 201-203.

worthy member of the church' should be given a definite part in the work of the church. Then follows the statement about women:

Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be *appointed* to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. *They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands.* In some cases they will need to counsel with the church officers or the minister; but if they are devoted women, maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in the church. This is another means of strengthening and building up the church. We need to branch out more in our methods of labour. Not a hand should be bound, not a soul discouraged, not a voice should be hushed; let every individual labour, privately or publicly, to help forward this grand work.¹⁴⁴⁹

Moon points out correctly that these are laywomen who are 'willing to consecrate some of their time', not their full time, to church work. Thus, it is clear that this is not a career choice by which they will earn their livelihood, but a part-time volunteer ministry. At the same time, in view of the terms 'appointed' and 'set apart by laying on of hands', there can be no doubt that these were Ellen White's characteristic expressions for a ceremony of ordination.¹⁴⁵⁰

An important question here is, of course, to what ministry did Ellen White suggest ordination of women? What roles did she refer to? To understand this, one needs to read the additional articles that Ellen White wrote for the *Review and Herald* as part of the series in which the 1895 statement appeared. We also need to bear in mind that, when Ellen White wrote this, she was in the Australasian Union and addressed the impoverished conditions in that large area with a view to the 'inadequate working force to evangelise the cities'.¹⁴⁵¹ She said: 'The Lord's vineyard is a more extensive one than the present working force is able properly to cultivate. Therefore it is necessary that everyone should labor to the full extent of his ability'. As pointed out by B. Haloviak, she bemoaned that ministers were too preoccupied with 'sermonising' to local churches and 'those who know the truth, instead of being used to enlighten the ignorant'. She said that 'every agent is to be set in operation, not to work for the churches, but to work for those who are in darkness of error'.¹⁴⁵²

¹⁴⁴⁹ E. G. White, 'The Duty of the Minister and the People', 1895, p. 434 (emphasis supplied).

¹⁴⁵⁰ See E. G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1911, pp. 160-161; id., 'Separated unto the Gospel', 1911, p. 4; id., *Gospel Workers*, 1915, pp. 15, 188, 452; id., *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 5, pp. 29, 323; id., *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 444; id., *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 2, p. 32; vol. 8, p. 189.

¹⁴⁵¹ B. Haloviak, 'A Response to Two Papers by David Trim', 2013, p. 15.

¹⁴⁵² E. G. White, 'Even So I Send You', 1895, p. 401. Cf. B. Haloviak, *ibidem*.

She had a special burden for evangelising the cities, and here she advances the thought that God's calling matters more than ordination:

Who is willing to go to these cities, and, clothed in the meekness of Christ, work for the Master? Will any one presume to lay hands upon those who are willing to engage in house-to-house labor, and say, "You must not go unless we send you"? God is calling for workers, and the end of all things is at hand. If one tithe of the labor that has been expended upon our churches had been devoted to those who are perishing in ignorance, living in sin, many would have repented long ago.¹⁴⁵³

She underlines the biblical view of ordination, namely, that it is based on God's calling and spiritual gifts, and she warns the ordained, elected leaders not to stand in God's way. In the paragraph immediately preceding her statement on the ordination of women, she says:

God will inspire men who do not occupy responsible positions to work for him. If ministers and men in positions of authority will get out of the way, and let the Holy Spirit move upon the minds of the lay brethren, God will direct them what to do for the honor of his-name. Let men have freedom to carry out that which the Holy Spirit indicates. Do not put the shackles upon humble men whom God would use. If those who now occupy positions of responsibility had been kept at one class of work year after year, their talents would not have developed, and they would not have been qualified for the positions they hold; and yet they make no special effort to test and develop the talents of those newly come into the faith.¹⁴⁵⁴

In the same context, Ellen White informed the membership of her intentions as she focussed on Luke 14:23:

There has been so much preaching to our churches that they have almost ceased to appreciate the gospel ministry. The time has come when this order of things should be changed ... It is by engaging in earnest work, by hard, painful experience, that we are enabled to reach the men and women of our cities, to call them in from the highways and byways of life.¹⁴⁵⁵

Gospel ministry is here defined by Ellen White as reaching the 'poor, crippled, lame, and blind', as emphasised in Luke 14:12-14. Later in her July 9 article, she underlined the nature of the ministry practised by Christ: 'Should not all have an opportunity to learn of Christ's methods by practical experience?'¹⁴⁵⁶ She pointed out that some should labour in this ministry 'privately' or as local church volunteers and some should 'labour publicly', i.e. as instructors of those volunteers and as paid

¹⁴⁵³ E. G. White, 'Go Ye into All the World', 1895, p. 369.

¹⁴⁵⁴ Id., 'The Duty of the Minister and the People', 1895, p. 434.

¹⁴⁵⁵ Id., 'Go Ye into All the World', 1895, pp. 369, 370.

¹⁴⁵⁶ Id., 'The Duty of the Minister and the People', 1895, p. 433. (433-434)

denominational workers going from place to place and paid by the Australasian Union to instruct those labouring ‘privately’.

Almost three years later, Ellen White spoke of the injustice done to women who labour just as devotedly as their husbands:

Injustice has been done to women who labor just as devotedly as their husbands, and *who are recognized by God* as being as necessary to the work of ministry as their husbands ... *The Lord has put his spirit upon them both*. If the husband should die, and leave his wife, she is fitted to continue her work in the cause of God, and receive wages for the labor she performs ... Again and again the Lord has shown me that *women teachers are as greatly needed to do the work to which he has appointed them as are men*.¹⁴⁵⁷

As pointed out by B. Haloviak, in this quotation, the women described are not described as being necessary to the ministry of their husbands, but ‘to the work of ministry’. ‘Trained women workers, paid by the Australasian Union Conference from tithe funds, and being valued as crucial members of itinerant evangelistic teams, were functioning throughout Australia and New Zealand both prior to and following Ellen White’s ordination statement of July, 1895. That fact should provide crucial context and insight to her call: “let every individual labour *privately* or *publicly*”, in *spreading the gospel message*’. We therefore agree with Haloviak that ‘she was clearly not talking about a limited “deaconess” role’.¹⁴⁵⁸ Understood in the context of her time and the themes she addressed in the context of her statement, she is referring to women being ordained for gospel ministry, particularly as evangelists and teachers.

Three instances are known where the church responded to Ellen White’s appeal. On 10 August, 1895, a month after her article was published, the Ashfield church in Sydney, not far from where Ellen White was then working, held an ordination service for newly elected officers. ‘Pastors Corliss and McCullough of the Australian conference set apart the elder, deacons [deaconesses] by prayer and laying on of hands’.¹⁴⁵⁹ Moon underlines that ‘identical ordination terminology is used for all three officers’.¹⁴⁶⁰ A similar ordination service was held on 6 January, 1900, in the same church, for two elders, one deacon and two deaconesses, with Ellen

¹⁴⁵⁷ Id., ‘The Laborer is Worthy of His Hire’, Manuscript 43a, 22 March, 1898, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 5, pp. 323-324 (emphasis supplied).

¹⁴⁵⁸ B. Haloviak, ‘A Response to Two Papers by David Trim’, 2013, p. 16.

¹⁴⁵⁹ Minutes of the Ashfield SDA Church, Sydney, Australia, 10 August, 1895, cited in A. N. Patrick, ‘The Ordination of Deaconesses’, 1996, pp. 18-19.

¹⁴⁶⁰ J. Moon, ‘Ellen G. White on Women in Ministry’, 1998, p. 202.

White's son Willie White officiating. Finally, it is known that in February or March, 1916, E. E. Andross, then president of the Pacific Union Conference, officiated at a woman's ordination service and cited Ellen White's article from 1895 as his authority.

The evidence shows the following:

1. Ellen White did not view ordination as such, to be a gender-specific ordinance, but a ceremony of consecration that might rightly be conducted for both men and women. It includes 'designation to an appointed office', 'recognition of one's authority in that office', and a request for 'God to bestow His blessing' upon the ordinand.¹⁴⁶¹

2. The association of ordination with the office of deaconess suggests the need for further investigation. The New Testament word transliterated as deaconess is rightly translated 'minister' (Eph. 3:7, where Paul uses the same root word for his own ministry), and there were women who filled this ministerial office (see Rom. 16:1).¹⁴⁶²

3. Of the originally seven elected to serve tables in Acts 6:2, two of them superseded the terms of their ordination, becoming highly successful speakers and evangelists. If the women ordained as deaconesses are set apart to minister to the sick, the young and the poor, would go on to evangelising and planting churches in which the sick, the young, and the poor would become healthy, mature, and prosperous, continuing to expand the Kingdom, their ordination will have fulfilled its purpose in accomplishing the mission of God and the plan of redemption.

12. Conclusions

The following conclusions deserve careful attention:¹⁴⁶³

1. The combined talents of both men and women are essential for the highest success in the work of the ministry. Therefore the ideal is team ministry, especially by husband-and-wife ministerial teams.

2. The list of roles open to women in gospel ministry embraces a wide range of job descriptions and vocational options, including preaching, teaching, pastoral care, evangelistic work, literature evangelism, Sabbath School leadership, chaplaincy, counselling, and church administration.

¹⁴⁶¹ E. G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1911, p. 162.

¹⁴⁶² See R. Johnston, 'Shapes of Ministry in the New Testament and Early Church', 1998, pp. 45-58.

¹⁴⁶³ J. Moon, 'Ellen G. White on Women in Ministry', 1998, pp. 203-204.

3. Ellen White believed that the spiritual gifts of pastoring and teaching (Eph. 4:11) are given by the Holy Spirit to both men and women, and some women possess gifts and abilities for the 'successful management' of churches. (We would add here the recognition that men and women may have 'good administrative powers'.)

4. Her most strongly worded recommendations regarding women in ministry was that self-sacrificing wives who join their husbands in team ministry should receive wages proportionate to the time they devote to ministry. The issue of fair pay for every ministerial wife who chooses to devote herself to ministry rather than to some other profession was certainly a higher priority with Ellen White than ordination; yet her strong denunciations of paying only the male half of the ministerial team are still, with a few isolated exceptions, largely disregarded by the Church. (It certainly gives cause for reflection if the Church assigns great importance to what Ellen White *did not say* about women's ordination to the gospel ministry, while completely ignoring what she *did say* about fair pay for ministerial wives.)

5. Ellen White recommended the ordination of lay women to a local ministry that would meet the needs of the sick, the young, and the poor. Thus she showed her understanding that ordination is an ordinance of appointment and consecration that may rightly be conducted for both men and women, and this includes prayer and imposition of hands. Her contemporaries understood this as a call for ordaining deaconesses on the same basis as deacons, but the practice was never widely accepted in the Church.

The question that is left unanswered is: Since Ellen White believed ordination is important for laywomen in a ministry to physical and emotional needs, would she also see some form of ordination as important for women who are labourers 'in word and doctrine'? In Ellen White's view, however, it is clear that a woman's place in ministry is secure. Thus, even if 'the hands of ordination have not been laid upon her, she is accomplishing a work that is in the line of ministry'.¹⁴⁶⁴

4.6.2.4 'God's Helping Hands' – Ellen White's Letter of 1901. In a remarkable letter from 1901, Ellen White speaks of men and women as 'God's helping hand' in

¹⁴⁶⁴ E. G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 5, p. 323.

his mission to the world. She applies to men and women in the Church two spiritual gifts:

(a) God's call and 'ordination' of Christ for his ministry of salvation according to Luke 4:14-21 (where Jesus quotes Isa. 61:1-2 and announces its fulfilment in him and his ministry) is applied to both men and women in the Church; and

(b) God's promise to Israel through Isaiah (61:6-11; 62:2) is applied to men and women in the Church who act as 'His helping hand': You shall be named 'priests of the Lord' and called the 'ministers of our God'.

Thus, God's initial commitment to his people at Sinai (Ex. 19:6) and his renewed commitment to those who are his people in Christ (1 Pet. 2:4-5, 9-10; 4:10) is applied to men and women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church: 'You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation ... and each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms'.

Ellen White's letter is deeply spiritual and characterised by a profound godliness in its Christ-centred beauty. She writes here seventy-four years old and is able to look back at a long and varied experience of ministry and ordination in the Church. The content of the letter is significant for an Adventist theology of ordination (chapter 5). Since it reveals Ellen White's deepest thoughts about the nature of ministry in the church, we will consider it here in its entirety. In the following we have numbered the paragraphs for easy reference, while highlighting some key concepts:

To: B.
St. Helena, California
January 17, 1901

I cannot sleep after half past two o'clock.

(1) I wish to speak to my brethren who occupy positions of trust. As God's husbandry you are invested with the responsibility of acting in His stead, as *His helping hand*. Those who are placed in positions of trust must have the authority of action, but they are never to use this authority as a power to refuse help to the needy and helpless. It is never to be exercised to discourage or depress one struggling soul. Let those to whom have been given positions of influence ever remember that God desires them to carry out the mind of Christ, who, by creation and redemption, is the owner of all men. Just as long as a man is imbued with the Spirit of Christ, he is registered in the books of heaven as a co-partner with God. He is *God's helping hand*.

(2) As the disciples received bread from the hands of the Saviour to give to the people, so he receives divine grace to impart to those in need. And in the distribution, the gift is increased.

I wish we could appreciate more fully the value of the lesson taught by the miracle of feeding the five thousand. He who makes it his lifework to labor together with God, not apart from Him, is carrying out the purposes of Christ. It is only such who are fit to be entrusted with the work of dealing with human minds. Those who are not partakers of the divine nature cannot properly estimate the value of the human soul. They do not share in Christ's deep, earnest longing for the souls which cost such an immense price. They have not a personal piety. They cannot be trusted to work in Christ's lines, to lift up, not to tear down; to encourage, not to depress; to restore, not to mar and deface by their own imperfection. They are not safe, accurate judges of the necessities of the soul; they have not the pure, unselfish Spirit of Christ; and therefore they are not qualified to judge of human merit in cases that present peculiar difficulties.

(3) By the great law of God man is bound up with his fellow man. To the answer given by the lawyer, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself,' Christ said, 'Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live.'

In these few words are laid down the terms of eternal life. True godliness is measured by the work done. Profession is nothing; position is nothing; a character like the character of Christ is the evidence we are to bear that God has sent His Son into the world. Those who profess to be Christians, yet do not act as Christ would were He in their place, greatly injure the cause of God. They misrepresent their Saviour, and are standing under false colors.

(4) The true disciple, in whose heart Christ abides, shows forth to the world Christ's love for humanity. He is *God's helping hand*. The glow of spiritual health thrills his whole being as he receives from the Saviour grace to give to others. This is medical missionary work. Its performance heals the wounds inflicted upon disordered human nature by the one who was once a covering cherub, but who through self-exaltation lost his high and holy estate, and took up a warfare against God and man. By his subtlety he led human beings into the pit of degradation, and it cost the life of the Son of God to redeem them. Christ gave His life to save every sinner. He is the light and life of men. He came as a mighty physician, a great medical missionary, to heal the wounds sin had made in the human family. His mighty healing power sends a glow of spiritual health into the soul.

Pure and undefiled religion is not a sentiment, but a doing of works of love and mercy. This religion is necessary to health and happiness. It enters the polluted soul-temple and with a scourge drives out the sinful intruder. Taking the throne, it consecrates all by its presence, illuminating the heart with the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness. It opens the windows of the soul heavenward, letting in the sunshine of God's love. With it comes serenity and composure. Physical, mental, and moral strength increase, because the atmosphere of heaven, as a living, active agency, fills the soul. Christ is formed within, the hope of glory.

(5) God calls upon us to show, by the exercise of true piety, that we are under divine enlightenment. When *those connected with the service of God* center their hopes on Jesus, a change will be seen in their deportment.

Supreme love for God and unselfish love for their fellow men will place them on vantage ground.

(6) The gospel is good tidings of great joy. Its promises bring light to the soul and shine forth as light to the world. Therefore Christ says to those who have received the gospel, 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.'

Again, He illustrates the living reality of a Christian life by the saving properties of salt. 'Ye are the salt of the earth,' He says, 'but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted?' Solemn question! If the saving principles of truth are not exemplified by professing Christians, what benefit does the world derive from their lives? When salt has lost its savor, 'it is henceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.' When Christians do not reveal Christ, of what value are they? Are they not like savorless salt, 'good for nothing?' But when they reveal in their lives the saving properties of the truth, poor, sin-hardened souls are not left to perish in corruption. Good works are seen; for the living principles of righteousness cannot be hidden. The gospel acted is like salt which contains all its savor. It is powerful in the saving of souls.

(7) Christ inculcates the value of obedience, saying, 'Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.' Is it not best for us to keep the commandments, so that through us God can reveal His power? If all God's people were obeying His commandments, they would indeed be lights in the world.

God's promises to the obedient are 'good tidings of great joy.' They are gladdening to the humble, contrite soul. The life of the true Christian is radiant with the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness.

(8) *If men and women would act as the Lord's helping hand*, doing deeds of love and kindness, uplifting the oppressed, rescuing those ready to perish, the glory of the Lord would be their rearward. Then they would not send thousands of miles to learn from human beings their duty. They would call, and the Lord would answer, 'Here am I.' They would turn to the One close beside them, who has given them the promise, 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.'

Look, thirsty, bewildered souls! Can ye not see the fountain of life opened for the weary, wayworn traveller? Can ye not hear the voice of mercy as she beckons to you saying, 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.' 'Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.' The waters of this fountain contain medicinal properties which will heal spiritual and physical infirmities. All are invited to wash away their pollution in this fountain. Drink deeply from the fountain opened for Judah and Jerusalem. Then you can take the refreshing cup to parched, fainting souls.

(9) Christ said of His work, 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to preach liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the

acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn.' Notice; you are not to comfort only the few whom you are inclined to regard with favor, but all that mourn, all who apply to you for help and relief; and more, you are to search for the needy. Job says, 'The cause that I knew not, I searched out.' He did not wait to be urged, and then turn away, saying, 'I will not help him.' 'To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.'

(10) Wake up, wake up, *my brethren and sisters*. You must do the work that Christ did when He was upon this earth. Remember that you may act as *God's helping hand* in opening the prison doors to those that are bound. Wonderful is the work that God desires to accomplish through *His servants*, that His name may constantly be glorified. He is waiting to work through His people. Those who are willing to be used will obtain a rich experience, an experience of the goodness of God.

(11) Of those who act as *His helping hand*, the Lord says, 'Ye shall be named *Priests* of the Lord; men shall call you the *Ministers* of our God; ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves. For your shame ye shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion; therefore in their land they shall possess the double; everlasting joy shall be unto them. For I the Lord love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among all the people; all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations ... And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness and all kings thy glory; and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.' [Isa. 61:6-11; 62:2]

(12) Shall we not try to crowd all the goodness and love and compassion we can into our lives, that these words may be said of us?¹⁴⁶⁵

The letter deserves a thorough analysis which we are unable to present here. A few observations are particularly relevant for our study. Some general observations are quite obvious at a first glance:

1. Ellen White places the whole church, men and women, all leaders, disciples, ministers/servants in the service/ministry of the mission of God through Christ – in this context there is neither gender distinction nor distinction between

¹⁴⁶⁵ E. G. White, Letter 7, 1901.

clergy and laity. This is the implied context for the peculiar expression of acting as 'God's helping hand', which is repeated six times (1 [twice], 4, 8, 10, 11).

2. She refers to God's initiative towards the world in terms of 'God has sent His Son into the world' (3), '[the true disciple] shows forth to the world Christ's love for humanity' (4), 'the gospel is good tidings of great joy' and 'its promises bring light to the soul and shine forth as light to the world' (4), '[men and women] must do the work that Christ did when He was upon this earth' and 'God desires to accomplish a work through *His servants*, that His name may constantly be glorified' (10). 'God is waiting to work through His people' (10), and 'of those [men and women] who act as *His helping hand*, the Lord says, Ye shall be named *Priests* of the Lord; men shall call you the *Ministers* of our God' (11). The mission of Christ and the mission of the servants/ministers of Christ in the Church are set in the context of the Great Controversy between God and Satan. Thus, acting as 'God's helping hand' means to perform the 'medical missionary work' of Christ which 'heals the wounds inflicted upon disordered human nature by the one who was once a covering cherub, but who through self-exaltation lost his high and holy estate, and took up a warfare against God and man. By his subtlety he led human beings into the pit of degradation, and it cost the life of the Son of God to redeem them. Christ gave His life to save every sinner' (4).

3. The point of the letter is that what matters in the mission of God is not profession or position, but the Spirit of Christ and the character of Christ which makes his servants/ministers become 'God's helping hand' (3).

4. Ordination is not mentioned, but it is implied by the opening direct address to 'brethren who occupy positions of trust' and the defining statement that 'as God's *husbandry*¹⁴⁶⁶ you are *invested* with the *responsibility of acting in His stead*, as His helping hand'. She acknowledges that 'those who are placed in positions of trust must have *the authority of action*' but this authority is endorsed only if leaders 'carry out the mind of Christ' and serve as 'God's 'helping hand' (1; emphasis supplied).

5. Men and women who are 'God's helping hand' are filled with the Spirit of the Lord God and are anointed to preach good tidings unto the meek', just as Christ was, and are called to 'do the work that Christ did when he was on earth'. Thus, being a Christian disciple, minister/servant is to be 'ordained' by God, Christ, and the

¹⁴⁶⁶ I.e. 'management of affairs and resources' (*Collins English Dictionary*, s.v. 'husbandry', p. 716).

Holy Spirit for God's mission of salvation to the meek, the brokenhearted, the captives, the prisoners, and all that mourn (9, 10).

6. There is no distinction between men and women when it comes to *ministry* in God's service. The distinction is between those who act in the Spirit of Christ and those who do not.

The way in which Ellen White connects the existing state in the church with the state she proposes in her letter is significant. Drawing on methods advocated in interpreting texts, we may in theory distinguish between (a) the *presupposed* information, i.e. the established/known information which the writer and intended readers share, and (b) the *proposed* information, i.e. the modifying/unknown information that the writer introduces in order to influence and change the reader's conceptual world and behaviour.¹⁴⁶⁷

Thus, Ellen White *presupposes* the existence in the church of pastoral *leaders* (men) and *ministers/servants* (men and women). This is what exists and she accepts it. Her *proposed* information, however, is that *all* are 'God's helping hand', and her purpose is to explain exactly what that means and what its implications are. In her explanation she not only merges her two concepts of ministry and ordination – the *formal* authority conveyed by the Church in ordination and the *informal-spiritual* authority conveyed by God through the Holy Spirit and the presence of Christ – but she places the latter *above* the former, even to the point that she denies the value of 'profession and position' *per se*.

The group of leaders, who are part of the *presupposed* information, are referred to as 'brethren who occupy positions of trust', 'God's husbandry invested with the responsibility of acting in his stead, as his helping hand', 'those who are placed in positions of trust with the authority of action', and 'those to whom have been given positions of influence' (1).

(b) The second group of servants/ministers are referred to as 'the true disciple(s)', 'medical missionaries' (4), 'those connected with the service of God' (5), 'those who have received the Gospel', 'professing Christians' (6), 'all God's people' (7), 'men and women as the Lord's helping hands' (8), 'brethren and sisters', 'his servants', 'his people' (10), 'those who act as His helping hand' (11).

¹⁴⁶⁷ For this theory, see Ö. Dahl, 'What is New Information?', 1976, pp. 37-50; for a development of the theory and a practical application on a biblical text, see B. Wiklander, *Prophecy as Literature*, 1984, pp.142-148.

However, in her *proposed* information, both groups are *subordinate* to the function of being 'God's helping hand' and to being filled with the Spirit of Christ – *it is God's mission through Christ that ultimately matters*. At a crucial point early in her letter she switches from speaking of the leaders holding positions of trust to the true disciples, i.e. to 'he who makes it his lifework to labor together with God', 'who is carrying out the purposes of Christ' (2), who has 'true godliness, the character of Christ, and acts as Christ' (3), 'in whose heart Christ abides and shows forth to the world Christ's love for humanity', and who is God's helping hand' (4). At this strategic point she says: 'True godliness [referring to the fulfilment of God's great law of love to God and the neighbour] is measured by the work done. *Profession is nothing; position is nothing*; a character like the character of Christ is the evidence we are to bear that God has sent His Son into the world' (3; emphasis supplied).

Thus, in sections 2-12, Ellen White describes *the true minister* in the church whether clergy or laity, whether men or women. She proceeds on the basis that profession or position is 'nothing', which means that an ordained or unordained minister, an elected leader or member, is of no use to God, unless he/she participates in the following life, faith, actions, and attitudes:

carries out the mind of Christ (1)
 is imbued with the Spirit of Christ (1)
 is a co-partner with God (1)
 is God's helping hand (1, 4, 8, 10, 11)
 receives divine grace to impart to those in need (2)
 is a partaker of the divine nature (2)
 shares in Christ's deep, earnest longing for souls (2)
 has a personal piety (2)
 has the pure, unselfish Spirit of Christ (2)
 has true godliness measured by the work done (3)
 has a character like the character of Christ (3)
 acts as Christ would were he in his/her place (3)
 is a true disciple in whose heart Christ abides (4)
 receives grace from Christ to give to others (4)
 receives a glow of spiritual health into the soul from Christ's mighty healing power (4)
 has a pure and undefiled religion that does works of love and mercy (4)
 is consecrated by the presence of Christ (4)
 has the serenity and composure that comes from God's love in the soul (4)
 has Christ being formed within, the hope of glory (4)
 shows that he/she is under divine enlightenment (5)
 exercises true piety (5)
 centres his/her hope on Jesus (5)
 has supreme love for God and unselfish love for his/her fellow men (5)
 is light and salt (6)
 exemplifies the saving principles of truth (6)

acts the gospel which is powerful in the saving of souls (6)
 obeys God's commandments (7)
 does deeds of love and kindness (8)
 uplifts the oppressed (8)
 rescues those ready to perish (8)
 has the Spirit of the Lord (9)
 preaches good tidings unto the meek (9)
 binds up the brokenhearted (9)
 preaches liberty to the captives (9)
 opens the prison to them that are bound (9)
 comforts all that mourn, searching for the needy (9)
 does the work that Christ did when He was upon this earth (10)
 be a servant through whom God accomplishes his work (10)
 crowds all the goodness and love and compassion in his/her life (10)

The servants/ministers, men or women, who has this Spirit of Christ and acts as his helping hand will be named 'priests of the Lord' and will be called 'ministers of our God' (Isa. 61:6), in fulfilment of God's commitment to Israel in Exodus 19:6.

Thus, in this letter Ellen White defines the faithful performance of the mission of God and the mission of Christ as the very core of the church. She states, in fact, that an *unordained* minister (man or woman) who fulfils the ministry of Christ, who is 'ordained' by God through the Holy Spirit and 'anointed' to preach good tidings, like Christ (9), and is 'consecrated' by the presence of 'doing of works of love and mercy' (4), is not only of *greater* value to God and his church than an ordained minister who fails to represent Christ, but is of *exclusive* value to the mission of God, being his helping hand. Thus, it is not the *gender* of the servant/minister or the *ordination* of a servant/minister that matters. What matters is the full integration of the person in God's mission through Christ and through the Church.

It is in this context of thought that we need to understand her concluding statement where she applies God's promise in Isaiah to men and women who function as God's helping hand: 'Of those who act as *His helping hand*, the Lord says, "Ye shall be named *Priests* of the Lord; men shall call you the *Ministers* of our God".' (11) By this statement Ellen White unifies clergy and laity, men and women in the Church, and, perceiving them all as *one* in God's ministry, she invokes his promise through Isaiah as being fulfilled now in the Church (note the conclusion in 12), that all believers, men and women, are *priests* of the Lord and *ministers* of our God. This understanding is rooted in the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel on the day of Pentecost, which defines the Church as a body upon which God 'pours out his

Spirit, 'on my servants, both men and women', and 'they will prophesy' (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:15-21).

As the Church seeks wisdom to apply Ellen White's teaching in this letter, it must choose on what grounds it wants to issue the permission of ordination for the gospel ministry: on traditional and historical grounds of dubious origin, as we believe this study is amply and consistently demonstrating, or on the grounds of what is the will of God in accomplishing his mission of salvation.

4.6.2.5 The Homiletical Exposition of Mark 3:13-15. The chapter 'He Ordained Twelve' in Ellen White's book *The Desire of Ages*¹⁴⁶⁸ opens with a quotation from the *Authorized Version* (the so-called Kings James Version, 1611) of Mark 3:13-14, which is also the source of the chapter heading:

Mark 3:13-14 And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came to him. **14** And he ordained (*poieo*) twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach ...

The KJV translators in 1611 rendered the common verbal expression *epoiesan* ('he made') in the original Greek text with the ecclesiastically more significant expression 'he ordained'.¹⁴⁶⁹ The KJV uses 'ordain' in several senses, one of them being 'order, set in place, arrange',¹⁴⁷⁰ so it is possible to understand the KJV as saying that Jesus 'appointed twelve', which nowadays is the rendering in the *New King James Version* (1982).

However, judging from a brief passage towards the end of her chapter in *The Desire of Ages*, this was not how Ellen White applied Mark's words. She places the scene in Mark 3:13-15 in the context of a beautiful and deeply spiritual exposition on how Jesus selected, trained and developed his disciples, and towards the end, in a brief paragraph of little more than four lines, she writes:

Desire of Ages (1898) When Jesus had ended His instruction to the disciples, He gathered the little band close about Him, and kneeling in the midst of them, and *laying His hands upon their heads*, He *offered a prayer* dedicating them to His sacred work. Thus, the Lord's disciples were *ordained to the gospel ministry*.¹⁴⁷¹

¹⁴⁶⁸ E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 1898, pp. 290-297.

¹⁴⁶⁹ For the background and context of this translation, see 4.5 above.

¹⁴⁷⁰ Cf. 4.5 above.

¹⁴⁷¹ E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 1898, p. 296 (emphasis supplied).

How are we to understand the relationship between this expository paragraph and the sense of the original Greek text, where Mark 3:14 literally says ‘and he made (*poieo*) twelve’? (Luke 6:12-16 adds that Jesus had spent the preceding night praying to God and that after the appointment he ‘named them apostles’.)¹⁴⁷²

Obviously, the biblical text does not explicitly state that Jesus laid his hands on the disciples, or that he prayed, kneeling in their midst. Neither is the phrase ‘Thus, the Lord’s disciples were ordained to the gospel ministry’ found in the Bible.

As we address this matter, we note that Ellen White’s wording does not contradict the terse version in Mark, but it does *amplify* it. The immediate impression is that Ellen White amplified the phrase ‘he ordained twelve’ (KJV) according to the common understanding of Mark 3:14 in Seventh-day Adventist and other Protestant circles in her nineteenth-century setting.

Ellen White used many different Bible translations in her writings, but – especially in the early decades of her ministry – the Authorized KJV was preferred when she wrote about ordination.¹⁴⁷³ This was the most common and highly respected English Bible translation of her time, but it also used systematically the same term ‘ordain’ in many different passages where the Greek original had a variety of words meaning ‘appoint’; thus, KJV allowed the reader to connect various ‘ordination’ passages, which facilitated an Anglican ecclesiastical understanding of ordination in the Bible.¹⁴⁷⁴

What could be the source of her homiletical expansion of the biblical text, what did she mean and what was her purpose? This question becomes significant as we consider the claim by some that Ellen White’s amplified version of the gospel ordination should be treated as an historical source of information regarding how ordination was introduced in early Christianity. Taking such a view would mean that Christ himself instituted ordination with kneeling in the circle of the disciples, prayer, and laying on of hands on their heads, and that the twelve apostles were solemnly

¹⁴⁷² The latter phrase seems to have been inserted in Mark 3:14 in the text tradition attested by, among others, *Vaticanus* and *Sinaiticus*. We follow here Nestle’s text edition based on a large number of text witnesses; applying the text-critical rule of *lectio difficilior lectio probabilior*, it is easier to explain how Luke’s phrase may secondarily have been supplied in Mark than to say that the rather significant phrase in Luke was secondarily dropped from Mark.

¹⁴⁷³ Before the arrival of the *Revised Version* in 1881, Ellen White seems to have used, besides the *Authorized Version* (KJV): B. Boothroyd, *A New Family Bible, and Improved Version*, vol. 3, 1824, and G. R. Noyes translations (*The New Testament: Translated from the Greek Text of Tischendorf*, 1868); cf. F. Hardy, *Ellen White’s Use of Bible Versions Other than King James*, 2007.

¹⁴⁷⁴ For the Anglican influence on KJV, see 4.5.4 above.

'ordained' before Pentecost. This would not agree with the New Testament evidence, which is silent on 'ordination' through prayer and the imposition of hands in all the Gospels and merely speaks of 'appointment' (3.5.1).

So, what could be the *source* of her homiletical expansion of the biblical text, and what did she mean by it?

1. The Date of the Gospel Ordination Passage. Ellen White began writing about the life of Jesus very early in her ministry. She started in 1858, following her visit to Lovett's Grove, Ohio, where many scenes from the conflict between Christ and Satan were revealed to her in vision. Her written account of that vision, found in volume one of *Spiritual Gifts* includes over fifty pages on the life of Christ. In 1876 and 1877, however, she rewrote and enlarged her narrative of Christ's life and work so that it comprised more than 640 pages in volumes two and three of *Spirit of Prophecy*. Then, in the 1890's, she expanded the account still further, until it filled three books: *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (1896), *The Desire of Ages* (1898), and *Christ's Object Lessons* (1900).¹⁴⁷⁵

The ordination passage from 1877 is almost the same as the one in *The Desire of Ages* as we see from this comparison:

The Spirit of prophecy (1877) Gathering His disciples about him, Jesus bowed in their midst, and, laying His hands upon their heads, offered a prayer, dedicating them to His sacred work. Thus were the Lord's disciples ordained to the gospel ministry.¹⁴⁷⁶

The Desire of Ages (1898) He gathered the little band close about Him, and kneeling in the midst of them, and laying His hands upon their heads, He offered a prayer dedicating them to His sacred work. Thus, the Lord's disciples were ordained to the gospel ministry.¹⁴⁷⁷

The wording in *The Desire of Ages* (1898) was consequently based on Ellen White's own earlier work in *The Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 2, from 1877. This is in harmony with the general picture we have of how she wrote *The Desire of Ages*:

In the preparation of *The Desire of Ages*, as in the preparation of other later publications, Mrs White did not write the book straight through, chapter by chapter, in the order in which the chapters appeared in printed form. This was not necessary, for during the preceding thirty-five years she had written many hundreds of pages on this theme, much of which had already been published. With this background of material, she instructed those who were employed as

¹⁴⁷⁵ R. W. Olson, 'How the *Desire of Ages* Was Written', 1979.

¹⁴⁷⁶ E. G. White, *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, 1877, p. 203 (emphasis supplied).

¹⁴⁷⁷ E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 1898, p. 296 (emphasis supplied).

her helpers to gather from her published books, articles, letters, and manuscripts that they could find on the subject. With this in hand, she wrote many additional articles as the experiences of Christ were opened anew to her.¹⁴⁷⁸

The material already written came from the 1870's and was published in volumes two and three of *The Spirit of Prophecy* and in a number of pamphlets.¹⁴⁷⁹ To understand the origin of Ellen White's gospel ordination passage, then, we must turn to the earlier text in the second volume of *The Spirit of Prophecy* from 1877.

Concerning the writing of this volume, Arthur White states that 'probably Ellen White never had such an opportunity to write as she did in April and May of 1876'.¹⁴⁸⁰ In 1870, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, volume one, had been published, covering Old Testament history to the reign of Solomon: 'It was largely a reprint of volumes three and four of *Spiritual Gifts*, with some amplification' (a volume of 414 medium-sized pages).¹⁴⁸¹ Now, Arthur White says, 'she turned her mind to producing a volume similar in size on Christ's life and work'. This turned out to become two volumes,¹⁴⁸² however, and the passage that concerns us is found in volume two on page 203, printed in 1877.

Judging from the detailed information in Arthur White's biography over his grandmother Ellen, it seems very probable that she wrote the chapter on 'the Sermon on the Mount' with the gospel ordination passage early in the intense month of writing in April, 1876.¹⁴⁸³ Her secretary and assistant at this time was Mary Clough, the daughter of Ellen White's sister. Mary was a Christian but not a Seventh-day Adventist.¹⁴⁸⁴

2. Ellen White's Sources. Representatives of the E. G. White Estate agree on outlining three sources for Ellen White's writing on Christ's life:¹⁴⁸⁵

- a. The Bible, particularly the four Gospels;
- b. Visions;
- c. 'Bible Histories' and other books;

¹⁴⁷⁸ A. L. White, *Ellen G. White: Messenger to the Remnant*, 1969, p. 59.

¹⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

¹⁴⁸⁰ A. L. White, *Ellen G. White*, vol. 3, 'The Lonely Years 1876-1891', 1984, p. 21.

¹⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-26.

¹⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 22.

¹⁴⁸⁵ See R. W. Olson, 'How the *Desire of Ages* Was Written', 1979; A. L. White, *Ellen G. White*, vol. 3, 'The Lonely Years 1876-1891', 1984, pp. 31-33.

Regarding ordination, however, a fourth source may be considered, namely, earlier statements on practices in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We will review each of these options here.

(a) The Bible as Source: Ellen White knew her Bible well, and used it freely in all of her books on Christ's life and teachings. R. W. Olson underlines that 'the Scriptures were to Ellen White the primary source of information regarding what Jesus did and said'.¹⁴⁸⁶ She was consistently adamant that the Bible had 'absolute primacy' in the Church, and, based on her writings, the Church states as its Fundamental Belief that the Scriptures are 'the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history'.¹⁴⁸⁷ In 1911 she clarified the relationship between her writings and the Bible by saying:

The Spirit [i.e., a reference to spiritual gifts given to the church and in particular her gift of prophecy] was not given — nor can it ever be bestowed — to supersede the Bible; for the Scriptures explicitly state that the Word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested.¹⁴⁸⁸

In light of this, the Seventh-day Adventist Church acknowledges that Ellen White's writings 'make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested'.¹⁴⁸⁹

In her first printed statement on ordination among the Sabbatarian Adventists in January, 1854, Ellen White records a vision in which an angel instructed her that, concerning ordination, 'the church must flee to God's Word and become established on gospel order'; she adds that 'this is indispensably necessary in order to bring the church into the unity of the faith'.¹⁴⁹⁰

However, Ellen White's Bible was the King James Version and it stated in Mark 3:13-15 that Jesus 'ordained twelve'. Many other New Testament passages in KJV also had the term 'ordain' instead of 'appoint' (John 15:16; Acts 1:22; 14:23; 1 Tim. 2:7; Heb. 5:1; 8:3). It may therefore not be excluded that she understood 'ordained' in her Bible in the same way as most of her contemporaries, namely, as a

¹⁴⁸⁶ R. W. Olson, *ibid.*, 1979, p. 6.

¹⁴⁸⁷ *SDA Church Manual*, 2010, p. 156 (emphasis supplied).

¹⁴⁸⁸ E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, second edition, 1911, p. vii; see also *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 192, 193; cf. D. Fortin, 'Ellen White and the Bible', 2008, pp. 22-23.

¹⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.* (emphasis supplied).

¹⁴⁹⁰ E. G. White, *Early Writings*, 1882, pp. 99-100.

reference to 'ordination' as commonly practised in the contemporary Protestant churches.

That this Bible Version of Mark 3:14 had an impact on Ellen White's understanding of 'ordination' in the New Testament is clear from the much later passage in *The Acts of the Apostles* (1911):

It was at the ordination of the Twelve that the first step was taken in the organization of the church that after Christ's departure was to carry on His work on the earth. Of this ordination the record says, 'He goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto Him whom He would: and they came unto Him. And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach.' Mark 3:13, 14.¹⁴⁹¹

She quotes here the KJV version of Mark 3:13-14 as *the record* of 'the ordination of the twelve', but she has left out any reference to Christ kneeling in their midst, laying his hands on them and praying. We also see that, when Ellen White mentioned Christ's setting apart his disciples *without any explicit reference to Mark 3:14* (KJV), her text is simpler and does not even include the term 'ordain', as in *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (1896):

Alone upon a mountain near the Sea of Galilee, Jesus had spent all night in prayer for these chosen ones. At the dawn He called them to Him, and, with words of prayer and instruction, laid His hands upon their heads in benediction, setting them apart to the gospel work.¹⁴⁹²

The imposition of hands in this passage is explicitly defined as a benediction, which has parallels in other acts of blessing by Jesus, although not in an ordination.

The clear impression we get from this is that she uses the biblical passage, or motif, or concept, for *didactic* purposes, according to what assists her best in illustrating a certain point of teaching. And this fits with what we know of her use of translations in general: she felt free to use different translations, 'depending on the point that she was trying to make'.¹⁴⁹³

Thus, before the arrival of the *Revised Version* (1881), she used, besides the King James Version (1611), Boothroyd's Family Bible (1824) and G. R. Noyes' (1868) translations.¹⁴⁹⁴ The surprising thing is that both of these translations used

¹⁴⁹¹ E. G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 1911, p. 18.

¹⁴⁹² E. G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, 1896, p. 4.

¹⁴⁹³ R. W. Olson, *One Hundred and One Questions*, 1981, p. 42.

¹⁴⁹⁴ F. Hardy, *Ellen White's Use of Bible Versions Other than King James*, 2007.

‘appoint’ instead of ‘ordain’ in Mark 3:14.¹⁴⁹⁵ Why, then, was Ellen White so determined to follow King James Version here? We will come back to this question in a moment.

Comprehensive studies of Ellen White’s interpretation of Scripture have demonstrated that ‘[her] writings are generally homiletical or evangelistic in nature and not strictly exegetical’.¹⁴⁹⁶ If that is the case regarding the gospel ordination passage in Mark 3, it is more essential to understand what she meant with her homiletical exposition than to read it as record of an historical fact.

An issue is involved here regarding how we understand and apply Ellen White’s writings. R. W Olson warns in strong terms against giving Ellen White’s writings ‘complete interpretive control over the Bible’:

1. To give an individual complete interpretive control over the Bible would, in effect, elevate that person above the Bible. It would be a mistake to allow even the apostle Paul to exercise interpretive control over all other Bible writers. In such as case, Paul, and not the whole Bible, would be one’s final authority.

2. Ellen White’s writings were available to no one before the nineteenth century. Even now, the distribution of her works throughout the world is limited largely to Seventh-day Adventists. If the Scriptures can be understood only as they are interpreted by Ellen White, most people will never be able to understand God’s word.¹⁴⁹⁷

In view of these considerations, Ellen White’s amplification of Mark 3:14 should not be understood as an addition to the authoritative biblical canon, but as a *homiletical exposition* of the biblical text.

(b) Vision as a Source. In her first account of Christ’s life, written in 1858, Ellen White frequently made such declarations as ‘I saw’, ‘I then viewed’, ‘I was shown’, etc. However, she seldom used those expressions when she rewrote the account of Christ’s life in the 1870’s and 1890’s.¹⁴⁹⁸ While it is possible that she may have seen the gospel ordination scene in a vision, there is no indication in her writings that she claimed that.¹⁴⁹⁹ This gives the interpreter two options:

On the one hand, if we believe that Ellen White saw the gospel ordination scene in a vision, based on Mark 3:13-15, the question is what she saw and how we

¹⁴⁹⁵ B. Boothroyd, *A New Family Bible, and Improved Version*, vol 3, 1824, p. 63; G. R. Noyes, *The New Testament: Translated from the Greek Text of Tischendorf*, 1868, p. 79.

¹⁴⁹⁶ R. W. Olson, *One Hundred and One Questions*, 1981, p. 41.

¹⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹⁸ A. L. White, *Ellen G. White*, vol. 3, ‘The Lonely Years 1876-1891’, 1984, p. 31.

¹⁴⁹⁹ R. W. Olson, ‘How the *Desire of Ages* Was Written’, 1979, pp. 4-5.

understand her record of it. Her visions would not always be ‘action replays’ of the actual event referred to. Sometimes, they would be ‘flashlight scenes’, where she needed to consult commentaries and books by other authors to get the chronology and location right.¹⁵⁰⁰ And sometimes, a vision can refashion matters so as to communicate meaningfully to someone in a different time and culture. Thus, for example, if the scene of the ‘appointment’ (‘ordination’; KJV) of the disciples is described in familiar, acceptable terms, it facilitates the reader’s understanding. Such a ‘refashioned’ scenery of the gospel ordination may have been seen in vision, and then the point at issue was not to reveal the *manner* of ordination, but something else which the vision was given to convey. In the Bible, we see that a vision could be a symbol or a model that was not *corresponding* to reality, but it could represent a *different* meaning from what it showed (see, for example, Peter’s vision in Acts 10:9-17). This is, of course, only a hypothetical reasoning, since there is no evidence that Ellen White saw the gospel ordination scene in vision.

On the other hand, if we accept that she did not see this scene in a vision, how does that affect our faith in the inspiration of Ellen White? In reply to this question, R. W. Olson, former Director of the E. G. White Estate says: ‘It is not necessary for us to believe that every single fact mentioned in *The Desire of Ages* was first seen in vision in order also to believe that the book came from a truly inspired pen’.¹⁵⁰¹ Ellen White’s inspiration did not always work through visions, but often through illuminations of her mind, and as a rule, in order to build up the Church.

In view of these considerations, there is no compelling reason for concluding that Ellen White’s expansion of Mark 3:14 was based on a vision that adds an authoritative revelation to the biblical text. Even if we choose to believe that a vision was involved, it is impossible to determine what she saw and how it relates to what she writes.

(c) ‘Bible Histories’ and Other Books. In Ellen White’s time, the genre of retelling the Bible in narrative form was popular and very common. As was the case with *The Desire of Ages* in the same genre, known as ‘a devotional classic’, the purpose was to present a devotional reading with Jesus at the centre in order to nurture Christian faith.

¹⁵⁰⁰ A. L. White, *Ellen G. White*, vol. 3, ‘The Lonely Years 1876-1891’, 1984, p.p. 32-33.

¹⁵⁰¹ R. W. Olson, *One Hundred and One Questions*, 1981, p. 105.

Research has revealed that there are literary dependencies in *The Desire of Ages* upon ten such other books, corresponding to about 30% of the text.¹⁵⁰² The Veltman Report did not include chapter 30 with Jesus' 'ordination' of his disciples, but we see from our own survey of many of these books that they expressed the widely accepted view that Jesus 'ordained' his disciples, although there was a difference of opinion regarding exactly how the act of 'ordination' was performed.¹⁵⁰³

One of the most popular books in the genre was William Hanna's *The Life of Christ* (first edition probably 1863),¹⁵⁰⁴ which was designed to be 'practical and devotional', and which Veltman found had parallels in thirteen of the fifteen *Desire of Ages* chapters that he investigated (Hanna's work heads Veltman's list of sources with ten or more literary parallels per chapter in *The Desire of Ages*).¹⁵⁰⁵ As noted earlier, the paragraph in *The Desire of Ages* (1898) was taken from the earlier work *The Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 2 (1877), and it has been recognised by R. W. Olson of the E. G. White Estate that Hanna's book was used as a source, 'since some of her phraseology in *The Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 2, written at this time [1876], is similar to the language of Hanna'.¹⁵⁰⁶

Comparing Hanna's chapter 'The Sermon on the Mount'¹⁵⁰⁷ (ca. 1863) with Ellen White's chapter 'Sermon on the Mount' (1877), there are many parallels and similarities, in the order of events, in the selection and combination of material from the Gospels to create a story line, but also in wordings. It is clear that Hanna talks repeatedly of Jesus' 'ordination' of the disciples, which seems to have been generally accepted among the readers at the time:

The night upon this mountain was spent by Christ in prayer – alone perhaps upon the higher summit, the disciples slumbering below. At dawn he called them to him, and out of them he chose the twelve and *ordained* them, 'that

¹⁵⁰² This was demonstrated in the so-called Veltman Report: F. Veltman, 'The *Desire of Ages* Project: The Data', Part One, *Ministry* 63:10, October, 1990, pp. 4-7; *idem*, 'The *Desire of Ages* Project: The Data', Part Two, *Ministry* 63:12, December, 1990, pp. 11-15; R. W. Olson & D. C. Jarnes, 'Olson Discusses the Veltman Study', *Ministry* 63:12, December, 1990, pp. 16-18.

¹⁵⁰³ The books briefly investigated were A. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 1, 1907 (1st edition in two volumes, 1883; condensed into one volume 1890); F. Farrar, *The Life of Christ*, vol. 1, 1874; J. Fleetwood, *The Life of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, 1859; C. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*, 1883; W. Hanna, *The Life of Christ*, 1863[?]; J. Harris, *The Great Teacher: Characteristics of our Lord's Ministry*, 1836; and D. March, *Night Scenes in the Bible*, 1872; *idem*, *Walks and Homes of Jesus*, 1866.

¹⁵⁰⁴ We have used Ellen White's own edition which is kept on file by the E. G. White Estate. It gives no year when it was printed, but the preface is dated in 1863.

¹⁵⁰⁵ F. Veltman, 'The *Desire of Ages* Project', Part One, p. 6; *ibid.*, Part Two, p. 13.

¹⁵⁰⁶ R. W. Olson, 'How the *Desire of Ages* Was Written', 1979, p. 6. See also A. L. White, *Ellen G. White*, vol. 3, 'The Lonely Years 1876-1891', 1984, p. 32.

¹⁵⁰⁷ W. Hanna, *The Life of Christ*, 1863[?], pp. 213-221.

they might be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach.’ But on what principle was the selection made? In what manner was the *ordination* effected? It may be presumed that some regard was had to the personal qualifications of those whom the Lord chose for this high office ... [inclusion of the selection of Judas based on Matt. 8:19-20; Luke 9:57-58]

Was it by simple designation to the office without any form or ceremony? Or was it by laying of Christ’s hand solemnly on the head of each, then gathering the circle around him and offering up a consecration prayer, that the apostles were set apart? We cannot tell. It is surely singular, however, that the manner of the *ordination* of the apostles by our Lord himself, in like manner as the *ordination* of the first presbyters or bishops of the church by the apostles, should have been left unnoticed and undescribed.

The *ordination* over, Jesus descended to a level spot, either between the two summits or lying at their base.¹⁵⁰⁸

Ellen White’s passage expands some themes and reduces others, but she writes closely to Hanna’s text:

Jesus spent the entire night in prayer, while his disciples slept at the foot of the mountain. About dawn he came and wakened them. The disciples were now about to receive an office of sacred responsibility, second only to that of Christ himself. They were to be set apart for the gospel work. They were to be linked with Jesus, to be with him, to share his joys and trials, to receive his teachings, and be faithful witnesses of his mighty works, that they might be able to impart the instruction thus gained to the world ...

While Jesus was preparing his disciples for their *ordination*, and instructing them as to the duties of the great work that lay before them, Judas urged his presence among them ... [inclusion of the selection of Judas based on Matt. 8:19-20; Luke 9:57-58]

Gathering his disciples about him, Jesus bowed in their midst, and, laying his hands upon their heads, offered a prayer, dedicating them to this sacred work. Thus were the Lord’s disciples *ordained* to the gospel ministry. This being accomplished, Jesus with his companions returned to the sea-side, where the multitudes were already gathering to hear him ... Jesus therefore moved up the mountain to a level space where the people could be accommodated.¹⁵⁰⁹

Ellen White’s son, Willie C. White, points out regarding his mother’s technique of borrowing from other authors that she had a ‘habit of using parts of sentences found in the writings of others and filling in a part of her own composition’. (He adds that ‘when critics pointed out this feature of her work as a reason for questioning the gift which had enabled her to write, she paid little attention to it’.)¹⁵¹⁰ This seems to be

¹⁵⁰⁸ W. Hanna, *The Life of Christ*, 1863[?], pp. 213-214 (emphasis supplied).

¹⁵⁰⁹ E. G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, 1877, pp. 202-204.

¹⁵¹⁰ E. G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 3, 1980, p. 460.

the technique she used for the gospel ordination scene. Hanna's text and her text are very similar, but not identical.

However, while Hanna repeatedly endorses that Mark 3:14 records an 'ordination', he also stated that 'we cannot tell' by what form or ceremony this was done. He even expresses astonishment at the fact that 'the manner of ordination of the apostles by our Lord himself, in like manner as the ordination of the first presbyters or bishops of the church by the apostles, has been *left unnoticed and undescribed*', and he describes this as 'surely singular'.

Hanna's cautious view was not shared by Ellen White, however. Despite the translations 'he appointed twelve' instead of 'he ordained twelve', which we know she used in the 1870's, and despite Hanna's statement that 'we cannot tell' which form or ceremony Jesus used, she still produced her gospel ordination passage.

We must therefore ask: What led Ellen White to ignore Hanna's cautions and include a wording that amplified the biblical text? That she may have been led on by the term 'ordained' in the King James Version and Hanna's wording is quite possible. But there seems to have been also another reason for her gospel ordination passage, namely, that she wanted to *make plain an important spiritual truth*. This was generally her purpose as a writer – it was certainly not to 'invent' history. Willie C. White says in a letter to S. N. Haskell (1912):

We will make a great mistake if we lay aside historical research and endeavour to settle historical questions by the use of Mother's books as an authority when she herself does not wish them to be used in any such way.¹⁵¹¹

In another letter to L. E. Froom (18 February, 1932), Willie C. White writes that 'the principal use of the passages quoted from historians was not to make a new history, not to correct errors in history, but to *use valuable illustrations to make plain important spiritual truths*.'¹⁵¹² What, then, was the important spiritual truth she wanted to make plain by the *illustration* of the gospel ordination passage? We suggest that it concerned the true meaning of 'ordination', which Ellen White had stated clearly together with her husband in the 1850's, but which was not always remembered in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

¹⁵¹¹ W. C. White to S. N. Haskell, 31 October, 191, White Estate Document File #65 (quoted in R. W. Olson, *One Hundred and One Questions*, 1981, p. 49).

¹⁵¹² R. W. Olson, *One Hundred and One Questions*, 1981, p. 49.

3. Ellen White's Understanding of Ordination and the Need to Build up the Church. Ellen White had a very clear biblical understanding of ordination (4.6.2.1), which is reflected in how she viewed the following: (a) the simple manner in which the *ceremony* was to be conducted, (b) her denial that the act conferred any special grace but the affirmation that it *confirmed* God's call and appointment, (c) the *qualifications and spiritual gifts* were to be demonstrated beforehand through an appropriate *preparation*, and (d) the authorisation by Christ to preach and teach the Word gave the ordinand *authority* in the Church. We will comment on each of these four aspects in the following.

Firstly, concerning *the form of the ceremony* of ordination, the gospel ordination paragraph in volume two of *Spirit of Prophecy* (1877) follows closely her husband James White's reading of Mark 3:13-14 in his initial argumentation for gospel order, as well as Ellen White's own, earliest description of the manner of ordination in January, 1854. A review of this evidence brings important clues to light concerning the *manner and meaning of ordination* according to James and Ellen White.

In his articles on 'gospel order' in *Review and Herald*, in December, 1853, James White took a strictly *biblical* approach to ordination. While quoting and merging Luke 6:13 and Mark 3:14 (KJV) – the same passages explicitly referred to as the *sources* for chapter 30 in *The Desire of Ages* – he stated:

We will now briefly notice the calling, qualifications, and the duties of a gospel minister. And first, he must be called to this responsible station by the Great Head of the church. In the morning after Jesus 'continued all night' in the mountain, 'in prayer to God', he 'called unto him his disciples, and of them he chose twelve'. (Luke 6:13) 'And he ordained twelve that they should be with him and that he might send them forth to preach'. (Mark 3:14)¹⁵¹³

Obviously, James White does not refer to (a) Jesus kneeling in the midst of the disciples, or (b) prayer and (c) imposition of hands. Only later in the same article, he adduces 1 Timothy 4:14 and 2 Timothy 1:6 in support of the practice of laying on of hands.¹⁵¹⁴ Consequently, following the Bible, he did not express the view that Jesus 'ordained' his disciples by kneeling, prayer, and imposition of hands. The ceremony was described in very simple terms and closely followed the wording of Mark 3:14 and Luke 6:13.

¹⁵¹³ J. White, 'Gospel Order', *R&H*, 4:24, 20 Dec, 1853, p. 188.

¹⁵¹⁴ For a detailed review of his article, see 4.6.1 above.

Ellen White's first major reference to ordination is found in the *Supplement to the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White* published on 1 January, 1854 (reprinted in *Early Writings* 1882). This was written at about the same time as the publishing of James White's December article, 1853. In her lengthy statement, no reference is made to the Gospels and Jesus' appointment of his disciples, but only the example of the apostles.¹⁵¹⁵

Thus, from the beginning, James and Ellen White understood the ceremony of ordination as very simple, following the biblical text, and making no reference to an ordination ceremony with prayer and imposition of hands by Jesus.

Secondly, concerning the *theological significance* of ordination, the White's had also taken a strong *biblical* view in the early 1850's. In his article of 20 December, 1853, James White was adamant that the rite of ordination did not have any power in itself and that it must always be performed based on clear evidence of the calling of God to teach and baptize. He says:

From this we learn that the order of the gospel is that men who are called of God to teach and baptize, should be ordained, or set apart to the work of the ministry by the laying on of hands. *Not that the church has power to call men to ministry, or that ordination makes them ministers of Jesus Christ*, but it is the order of the gospel that those who are called to the ministry should be ordained, for important objects.¹⁵¹⁶

Thus, the church has no power to call to ministry, only Christ has. The performance of the rite of ordination is only *confirming* God's call which is already given. The rite of ordination does not *make* the ordinand a minister of Jesus Christ, only Christ does.

The same understanding was fundamental to Ellen White, starting with her statement on ordination in January, 1854. It continued to be her firm conviction through the years. In *The Acts of the Apostles* (1911),¹⁵¹⁷ she calls attention to the dangers connected with the rite of ordination and how it may run counter to the biblical instruction. After fully endorsing the ordination of Saul and Barnabas in Acts 13:1-3, she explains:

Both Paul and Barnabas had already received their commission from God Himself, and the ceremony of the laying on of hands added no new grace or virtual qualification. It was an acknowledged form of designation to an

¹⁵¹⁵ E. G. White, *Early Writings*, 1882, pp. 99-100.

¹⁵¹⁶ J. White, 'Gospel Order', 1853, p. 189 (emphasis supplied).

¹⁵¹⁷ Reprinted in a chapter with the title 'Ordination' in the second edition of *Gospel Workers*, 1915.

appointed office, and a recognition of one's authority in that office. By it the seal of the church was set upon the work of God.¹⁵¹⁸

In a following paragraph, she addresses the dangers of making the ordination rite a magic ritual that transfers divine power to the ordinand:

At a later date, the rite of ordination by the laying on of hands was greatly abused; unwarrantable importance was attached to the act, as if a power came at once upon those who received such ordination, which immediately qualified them for any and all ministerial work. But in the setting apart of these two apostles, there is no record indicating that any virtue was imparted by the mere act of laying on of hands. There is only the simple record of their ordination, and of the bearing that it had on their future work.¹⁵¹⁹

Referring to 'a later date', Ellen White is calling attention to the development in the Christian church after ca. 100 A.D. when the New Testament writings were completed. This development was endorsed by the Roman Catholic Church and this abuse of ordination survived in some Protestant churches after the Reformation (we have reviewed this in 4.1 – 4.5).

Thirdly, concerning the importance of the *right preparation and qualifications* for ordination, the White's had taken an equally strong view that followed from the theological significance of the act: since the act was only a confirmation of what God had already done, the preparation of the candidate was central. In her statement in January, 1854,¹⁵²⁰ the following points in her statement deserve attention:

1. The cause for bringing ordination into the Church is the *false teachers* and the *destruction of the unity* of God's people that the Sabbatarians faced in the 1850's. This was James White's reason for recommending 'gospel order' and ordination of ministers in his articles in the *Review* a few weeks before. Thus, *the rationale for ordination is placed in the context of the Great Controversy* (or the Plan of Redemption, or the Mission of God). Because of this rationale, the *qualifications* of the ordinand are of central importance, and they must be the work of Christ who through ordination challenges Satan.

2. In her statement on ordination in January, 1854, Ellen White uses the phrase 'I saw ...', but none of these instances refer to things that add content to the Bible; rather, the emphasis is pointedly and repeatedly on *following* what the Bible says. The instances when she says 'I saw' refer to (a) the needs and duty of the

¹⁵¹⁸ E. G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 1911, p. 161.

¹⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

¹⁵²⁰ E. G. White, *Early Writings*, 1882, pp. 99-100.

church to protect the truth and the unity of God's people; (b) the same dangers being present in the day of the apostles; and (c) the *example of the apostles* according to the Bible, as they resorted to apply ordination which included an *examination* of the candidate and an inquiry of God (ascertaining the divine call, life, and qualifications; cf. 1 Tim. 3:1-13), a *choice* by the church (cf. Acts 6:1-6), a *ceremony* of prayer and imposition of hands by experienced brethren of sound mind who set the ordinands apart (cf. Acts 6:1-6; 13:1-3), and an 'approbation' or 'sanction' (*authorisation*) to teach, preach, baptize, and 'administer the ordinances of the Lord's house'.

3. All references to biblical examples concern 'the church in the day of the apostles', and some of her wordings imply knowledge of the requirements for overseers and deacons in 1 Timothy 3:1-13.

4. She mentions an angel with whom she is talking in vision, who says: 'The church must flee to God's Word and become established upon gospel order, which has been overlooked and neglected.' Thus her vision underlines the *authority of the biblical text* and the need for 'gospel order' which reflects the divine order revealed in the Bible, but there is no addition to the biblical text and Mark 3:14 is not quoted.

5. Ordination should only be practised by '*following the word of God* and the sanction of the Holy Spirit' and is a dual act that *confirms* the '*commission* from God and the *approbation* of the church'.

However, in many different situations, she would face serious threats to this biblical view. Christian devotional books were in circulation where a different view was exposed. Thus, for example, in Boothroyd's Family Bible, which we know Ellen White used herself, Jesus' appointment of the twelve in Mark 3:13-15 was explained thus: 'This appointment consisted in his imparting to them spiritual gifts, as it follows.'¹⁵²¹ However, the more serious threat came from within the Seventh-day Adventist Church itself.

By 1876, the Seventh-day Adventist Church had settled the once so keenly debated issue of ordination and church organisation (ca. 1853–1863). An article on 'church order' by Joseph Frisbie in 1855, shows that Adventists were already in the 1850's established on Christ 'ordaining' his disciples. Frisbie said: 'Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you (John 15:16; cf. Luke 6:13; Mark 3:14). God is the head of all, and he chose Christ, and Christ chose his

¹⁵²¹ B. Boothroyd, *A New Family Bible*, vol. 3, 1824, p. 63.

disciples, and ordained them, and sent them out to preach.¹⁵²² Thus, Ellen White was not saying anything new or contentious at the time when she provided the ordination scene in 1877 and 1898.

However, there are indications that Ellen White's biblical view of ordination was not completely followed by the Church. For example, there were persistent trends in the Seventh-day Adventist Church towards accepting influences from the Christian (particularly Methodist and Presbyterian) tradition of ordination (4.6.3).

Ellen White emphasised the simplicity of the ceremony of ordination and denied that it conferred any spiritual power. However, the Church gradually embellished it. David Trim describes the development as follows:

Adventist ordination was regularly carried out by the laying on of hands by men 'of experience and sound minds' and/or those who had been ordained previously, whether as ministers or elders. Public prayers during the ceremony were introduced and soon became the norm. Increasingly often, all the ministers at a meeting joined in laying on of hands and prayer. Indeed, as conferences were founded, their annual sessions, and then camp meetings, became the habitual venues at which ministers would be ordained. This ensured a good turn-out of other ministers, but it also made the service a public spectacle. In the mid-1860s, a charge by a senior minister, in addition to the prayer, was added to the service and became common, adding another ritualistic element to the service.¹⁵²³

Thus, 'Adventist ordination consisted of those already ordained laying their hands on an appointee as part of an increasingly elaborate ceremony, perceived as having *spiritual as well as ecclesiological significance*'.¹⁵²⁴ Trim describes the development of Adventist ordination in the 1860's and 1870's as a 'ceremony [that] began to verge on *ritual*'.¹⁵²⁵ One of the clearest examples of how the act of ordination was perceived occurred in a resolution of the 1879 General Conference Session, which described ordination in sacred and ritualistic terms:

We regard ordination as a solemn and impressive ceremony, sanctioned by the Holy Scriptures and indicating the setting apart, or separation, of the person receiving it from the body of believers with whom he has been associated, to perform the office to which he is ordained, and as *suggestive of the conferring of those spiritual blessings which God must impart to properly qualify him for that position*.¹⁵²⁶

¹⁵²² J. B. Frisbie, 'Church Order', 1855, p. 154.

¹⁵²³ D. Trim, 'Ordination in Seventh-day Adventist History', 2013, p. 8.

¹⁵²⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵²⁵ Ibid., p. 9; Trim adds that he uses the term 'ritual' advisedly.

¹⁵²⁶ Eighteenth Session, 12th meeting, Nov. 24, 1879, 7 p.m. (General Conference Session Minutes 1863–1888, p. 162).

Ordination is regarded as ‘a solemn and impressive ceremony’ (= formal ritual) *indicating* (= ordination’s first symbolic meaning) the ‘setting apart’ of the person ‘receiving it’ from the body of believers (= separating clergy from laity), ‘to perform the office to which he is ordained’ (= ministry is institutionalised and ordination gives access to office of authority, as first practised in the pagan Roman Empire and then in the Roman Church), and as ‘suggestive of the conferring’ (= vague allusion to spiritual gifts/blessings being conferred by the act of ordination) ‘of those spiritual blessings which God must impart to properly qualify him for that position’ (= God qualifies a person for the office and it is not clear if this happens before or through the act of ordination).

At the 1885 GC Session, the Church continued to develop the idea of the elder’s ordination. A report to the Session concluded that ‘an elder’s ordination shall stand good for all time, except in the case of apostasy’. Trim notes that ‘ordination, again, was something unique, special, sacred – like baptism, it was not to be repeated, except in the case of apostasy. Adventists were coming very close here to a sacramental view of ordination’.¹⁵²⁷ In an article from 1914, the former GC President Ole Olsen (served 1888-1897) stated:

[I have] known instances where persons appointed as leaders of companies have taken it upon themselves to administer baptism and to celebrate the ordinances of the Lord’s house, not being consecrated to such service by prayer and laying on of hands. That is wrong: it brings the most sacred service of God and the most sacred ordinances down to the level of the common affairs of life.¹⁵²⁸

Trim’s concluding comments are noteworthy: ‘This is doubly revealing: first, of how it was now established Adventist practice that, *in certain conditions*, ordained elders could carry out the “ordinances”; second, though, of how the ordinances had taken on almost a sacramental quality (they are “the most sacred ordinances”, set apart from the mundane things of this world); and third, of how an ordination ceremony – even one for elders rather than ministers – was held to have sacred characteristics.’¹⁵²⁹

¹⁵²⁷ D. Trim, ‘Ordination in Seventh-day Adventist History’, 2013, p. 17.

¹⁵²⁸ O. Olsen, ‘Qualifications, Duties, and Responsibilities of Elders and Deacons of the Local Church, No 6’, October, 1914, p. 1.

¹⁵²⁹ D. Trim, ‘Ordination in Seventh-day Adventist History’, 2013, p. 18.

Thus, on virtually all the points of importance in Ellen White's biblical view of ordination, the Church had a tendency to drift toward a sacramental view of ordination, and Trim even states in the conclusion of his paper that 'our pioneers perpetuated attitudes and practices of other churches'.¹⁵³⁰ Trim summarises the view of ordination in the Church during the first half-century as follows:

It is notable that early Adventists did not theorize that much about ordination; their theology of ordination, as I have tried to recover it in this paper, to some extent has to be worked out from their practice. Because of this, where our pioneers perpetuated attitudes and practices of other churches it is not always clear when they had first subjected them to scrutiny and decided to keep them because they were Biblical, and when they simply were continuing in the ways they had been brought up to think and act. In the 1850s, to be sure, Adventists gave sustained critical attention to Biblical passages on organization. But there is less theoretical evidence for why their practice evolved in the ways it did after 1863 and for the actions taken by GC Sessions of the 1860s, '70s and '80s. Our founders were not impervious to the prejudices of the time and they may have not always realized how much they had inherited from the Christian past.¹⁵³¹

In this context, it is therefore perfectly in keeping with Ellen White's prophetic ministry that she took issues with some of these ideas and practices. A strong case can in fact be made for the conclusion that she used the genre of biblical narrative as a tool to teach the Church various aspects of ordination that she felt were neglected or misunderstood in the Church. It is in this context that we should understand her gospel ordination passages published in 1877 and 1898.

4. The Gospel Ordination Passage as a Homiletical Illustration of the True Meaning of 'Ordination'. Following Ellen White's writings on ordination through her life time, we see that she addressed various issues on various occasions. In the 1850's, she was engaged with her husband in seeking to convince the Sabbatarian Adventists that ordination (as part of a church organisation) would not only be *biblical*, but it would also deal with the *threat to unity* coming from *false teachers*. With this argument she connected a deep emphasis upon the need for preparation for ordination and the need to identify the proper qualifications.

When we come to the gospel ordination paragraph in April, 1876 (published in 1877), she follows William Hanna's outline in her narrative of Jesus rallying his disciples before sharing the sermon on the mount, and perhaps she was also

¹⁵³⁰ Ibid., p. 28.

¹⁵³¹ Ibid.

influenced somewhat by Hanna's wording of the ordination scene which amplified Mark 3:14. However, she deviates from Hanna and gives particular attention to the matters of (a) the disciples' preparation for ordination, which was above all a question of 'being linked with Jesus', and (b) the 'office of sacred responsibility, second only to that of Christ himself', for which ordination would confirm them. The qualifications were not only for the 'gospel' work', or to be 'linked with Jesus', or to 'impart his instruction to the world', but Jesus wanted the disciples to 'gain an experience in the gospel labour while he was on earth to comfort and direct them, so that they would be able to successfully continue the work after his death, and lay the foundation of the Christian church'. The ordination is part of God's mission of salvation, and this point is important to Ellen White.

By the amplification of Mark 3:14, she teaches in narrative form (a) the simplicity of ordination (no formal ritual or sacramentalism!); (b) that no grace is conferred by ordination but the disciples were simply committed to a great responsibility; (c) that their preparation through close communion with Jesus was crucial as a condition for ordination (which prompted a separate whole page about the selection of Judas borrowed from Hanna); and (d) that ordination confirms Christ's calling to an office under his authority.

In *The Desire of Ages*, this is significantly deepened and expanded, especially regarding Jesus' personal and patient formation of the Christ-like character of his disciples which is required to make them worthy. The brief gospel ordination paragraph concludes the extensive story-line and leads to its narrative climax. It functions as a logical conclusion of her homiletical and expository instruction regarding the nature of ordination. Thus, it is not intended to add historical information to the biblical record in Mark, but it serves as a means to teach the true significance of ordination for the building up of the reader's faith and correcting erroneous views of ordination *en vogue* in the Church at the time.

In conclusion, the amplification of Mark 3:13-15 in *The Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 2 (1877) and *The Desire of Ages* (1898) is an interpretation of 'Jesus ordained twelve' in the King James Version. It provides no new revelation, but is an expository and homiletical expansion of the biblical text for an instructional and edifying purpose in accordance with the 'Life of Jesus' literary genre, which was common and accepted at the time. The ordination scene was in harmony with the common understanding of ordination shared by the intended readers, but Ellen

White had some special purposes: to confirm gospel order, using the common understanding of the ordination ceremony; to remind the readers of the simplicity of biblical ordination, its non-sacramental and non-ritualistic nature. By including the passage as the climactic point of how Jesus formed and molded the personality and Christian ethos of his disciples in preparation for ordination, she also reminds the readers that ordination is the crown of a spiritual process of growth in Christ, and, as such, she is saying that ministry is worthless without Christ, which was the point she made in her letter of 1901 (4.6.2.4). Ordination is based on the *prior* ministry of Christ in the heart of the ordinand. It *confirms* the gift of the spirit of Christ and does not bestow it.

Thus, the general characterisation that she was ‘more homiletical and evangelistic than strictly exegetical’¹⁵³² seems to apply also in this case. We must therefore let the biblical text in Mark 3:14 stay side by side with Ellen White’s exposition without conflict or contradiction. The purposes of the two are mutually complementary. It means that we read Ellen White’s biblical paraphrase, not as a better story than the original authoritative story of the Bible (which contains the ‘true record of God’s acts in history’), but as a didactic, edifying, instructional work that uses paraphrased biblical material to convey its spiritual lessons. In no way does this diminish the spiritual gift of Ellen White.

4.6.3 Ordination in Seventh-day Adventist History

The state of research on the Seventh-day Adventist history of ordination is not entirely satisfying. While some articles exist in print, usually focusing on the early history,¹⁵³³ there is no monograph that takes a comprehensive and deep view of the matter.¹⁵³⁴ Our purpose here, therefore, is not to try to sketch the history from 1863 to today. Instead, we will seek to (a) trace some main *theological* ideas that were

¹⁵³² R. W. Olson, *One Hundred and One Questions*, 1981, p. 41.

¹⁵³³ See, for example, B. Haloviak, ‘A Place at the Table: Women and the Early Years’, 1995; G. R Knight, ‘Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination, 1844-1863’, 1998.

¹⁵³⁴ Ordination is treated in the context of the development of the Adventist history of organisation: see G. R Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil*, 2001 (cf. the second edition: *Organizing for Mission and Growth*, 2006); A. Mustard, *James White and SDA Organization*, 1987; B. Oliver, *SDA Organizational Structure*, 1989. Cf. the papers presented to the TOSC in 2013: D. Trim, ‘Ordination in Seventh-day Adventist History’, 2013; id., ‘The Ordination of Women in Seventh-day Adventist Policy and Practice’, 2013. Note, however, the objections to Trims papers in: B. Haloviak, ‘A Response to Two Papers by David Trim’, 2013.

associated with ordination in our history and then (b) *evaluate* them in the light of our biblical and historical study.

David Trim concludes his review of the history of Seventh-day Adventist theology and practice of ordination¹⁵³⁵ by noting the following:

(a) 'The Seventh-day Adventist understanding of what ordination signified, both in general, and in the particular context of ministers, *developed relatively quickly* and then remained remarkably stable and consistent for at least the first half of our history.'¹⁵³⁶

(b) 'It is notable that early Adventists did not theorize that much about ordination; *their theology of ordination to some extent has to be worked out from their practice*. Because of this, *where our pioneers perpetuated attitudes and practices of other churches it is not always clear when they had first subjected them to scrutiny and decided to keep them because they were biblical, and when they simply were continuing in the ways they had been brought up to think and act*.'¹⁵³⁷

(c) 'In the 1850s, to be sure, Adventists gave *sustained critical attention to Biblical passages on organization*. But there is less theoretical evidence for why their practice evolved in the ways it did after 1863 and for the actions taken by GC Sessions of the 1860's, '70's and '80's. *Our founders were not impervious to the prejudices of the time and they may have not always realized how much they had inherited from the Christian past*.'¹⁵³⁸

(d) 'One response to the history whose contours I have sketched out would be to say that *it is not Biblical* – or rather, *is only incompletely Biblical*.'¹⁵³⁹

We maintain that it is important for the Church today to understand in what way our ordination practice is 'only incompletely biblical' and to identify in what ways it was influenced by Protestant, Christian tradition. This tradition should, then, be related to the pre-Reformation practice of ordination in the Roman Catholic Church. This should give us a grasp of the points where Seventh-day Adventist ordination practice needs to be *reformed* in order to better fit the theology and teaching of the Bible (see 4.6.5).

¹⁵³⁵ D. Trim, "Ordination in Seventh-day Adventist History", 2013.

¹⁵³⁶ Ibid., p. 28 (emphasis supplied).

¹⁵³⁷ Ibid. (emphasis supplied).

¹⁵³⁸ Ibid. (emphasis supplied).

¹⁵³⁹ Ibid. (emphasis supplied).

Thus, in the following, we will highlight the lingering influence in Seventh-day Adventist ordination of ‘incomplete biblical practices’ and ‘ecclesiological presumptions and practices inherited from the denominations and sects [the pioneers] had left’. In a concluding section, we will summarise from our own study the influences that via other Protestant churches have brought aspects of Roman ordination practices into Adventism.

4.6.3.1 Ecclesiastical Offices and Ordination. Historians would agree that the early Adventists ‘inherited ecclesiological presumptions and practices from the denominations and sects they had left’.¹⁵⁴⁰ This may have influenced *the structure of the ecclesiastical offices*. At first, the church seems to have had itinerant evangelists or ministers, either ordained or licensed, and then stationary elders and deacons in the local churches.¹⁵⁴¹ As ordination became accepted in the church, ordination was practised for these three offices: the (itinerant) minister, the elder, and the deacon.¹⁵⁴² Our survey of the roots of James White in the Christian Connexion (4.4.5), demonstrated that this structure was very much at home in those circles. Initially, there were strong objections both from James and Ellen White against a stationary pastor.¹⁵⁴³ In the 1860’s and 1870’s, we see, however, how within the initial evangelistic perspective, ‘there were attempts to incorporate a caring, pastoral ministry’. It appears that ‘women, as members of husband-wife evangelistic teams, performed such roles’.¹⁵⁴⁴ And, gradually, women received recognition as licensed ministers.¹⁵⁴⁵ Coming out of the Christian Connexion, where women played a significant role as preachers and teachers and some of them were even ordained (4.4.5.4), it is no surprise that James White considered the ministry of women important:

My views and feelings are that the minister’s wife stands in so close a relation to the work of God, a relation which so affects him for better or worse, that she should, in the ordination prayer, be set apart as his helper.¹⁵⁴⁶

¹⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 5; cf. G. R. Knight, ‘Early Seventh-day Adventism and Ordination’, 1998, pp. 105-106.

¹⁵⁴¹ B. Haloviak, ‘A Response to Two Papers by David Trim’, 2013, pp. 1-2, 4-7.

¹⁵⁴² James White describes how he ordained a brother Strong as minister and then the elder and the deacon in the local church (‘Report from Brother White’, 1867, p. 136).

¹⁵⁴³ Ibid., p. 1.

¹⁵⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁵⁴⁵ Id., ‘A Place at the Table: Women and the Early Years’, 1995, pp. 29-32.

¹⁵⁴⁶ J. White, ‘Report from Brother White, 1867, p. 136.

As time passed and churches became larger and more numerous, the minister became more stationary and the Church settled for the threefold order of pastor or minister, elder and deacon, 'which was almost universal among Christian churches'.¹⁵⁴⁷ From early on, the practice of having two classes of pastors, or ministers: the licensed and the ordained, with the later being senior, had been taken over 'from some North American Protestant denominations, including those from which Adventists most commonly sprang'.¹⁵⁴⁸

Comparing this structure with the Bible, we note that the New Testament has charismatic and itinerant apostles, teachers and prophets as a broad class of servants, and two formal offices in the local church, namely: (a) the 'overseer' (*episkopos*) or 'elder' (*presbyteros*), and (b) the 'deacon' (*diakonos*). None of these are 'ordained' in the Bible. The two-fold structure in the local church is maintained in the earliest post-biblical sources of Clement of Rome (4.1.1) and *Didache* (4.1.2), but in the course of the second century the 'overseer' (*episkopos*) is separated from the 'elder' (*presbyteros*) which created the three offices that continued as a fundamental part of the sacrament of higher orders in the Roman Catholic Church and that survived in main-stream Protestantism. Thus, the Roman threefold structure of bishop (overseer), priests (elders) and deacons survived in Protestantism as minister, elder and deacon, and they were all ordained.

Moreover, in the New Testament use of 'servants/ministers', there is no ranking that corresponds to 'the licensed and ordained ministers. Rather, what matters in early Christianity is the spiritual call from Christ and the fruit of the ministry.

Another point concerns the recognition by historians that the Sabbatarian Adventists 'adopted the traditional Christian practice of publicly acknowledging appointment to one of these offices by having recognised leaders place their hands on the appointee. From an early stage this was termed "ordination" and took the form of a ceremony, which evolved into, in effect, a ritual that was held to symbolize the deeply sacred nature of the offices held by those who were ordained'.¹⁵⁴⁹

The New Testament does not, however, give a basis for 'recognised leaders placing their hands on the appointee'. We found that (a) in Acts 6:1-6 and 13:1-3, it is

¹⁵⁴⁷ D. Trim, 'Ordination in Seventh-day Adventist History', 2013, p. 5.

¹⁵⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴⁹ Ibid.

not clear in the Greek text if the congregation, or a group of leaders, or both lay their hands on the seven and Barnabas and Saul, that (b) in Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5, where Barnabas/Saul and Titus ‘appoint’ elders, there is no mentioning of prayer and the imposition of hands, that (c) in 1 Timothy 4:14 and 5:22, the Greek text is not clear and probably not referring to ‘ordination’ but another kind of imposition of hands, and that (d) in 2 Timothy 1:6, the reference is to a single individual, Paul, who, in a Jewish fashion, blesses and adopts Timothy as his ‘son’ and associate. In none of these instances, moreover, does the biblical text refer to the ‘ordination’ of a ‘gospel minister’ or ‘pastor’ as the highest office in an order of three offices.

Regarding ‘ministers’, it is appropriate to note that not only did the Sabbatarians ‘inherit presumptions about pastoral ministry’, but they ‘inherited ordained ministers from the denominations out of which the Millerites emerged’.¹⁵⁵⁰ Thus, James White was ordained as a minister in 1843 in the Christian Connexion (4.4.5; 4.6.1); ‘both Frederick Wheeler and John Byington were ordained Methodist ministers, and A. S. Hutchins was ordained in the Freewill Baptist Church. There were a few others.’¹⁵⁵¹ It has been pointed out that ‘the fact of their ordination apparently gave them a *de facto* pre-eminence among the Sabbatarian Adventist congregations’ which is evident from ‘the first credentials issued to Adventist ministers – a simple card that declared them “approved in ... the gospel ministry” – signed by two ministers whose status was widely accepted: frequently by James White and Joseph Bates [who] signed ... themselves as “leading ministers”.’

As the first ordinations began among the Sabbatarians from 1851, the imposition of hands was used, *according to the ecclesiastical tradition*, not necessarily based on a comprehensive study of the Bible. James White argued in December, 1853, that the New Testament taught that ‘the order of the gospel is that men who are called of God to teach and baptize, should be ordained, or set apart . . . by the laying on of hands’ (4.6.1), referring to 1 Timothy 4:11-16 and 2 Timothy 1:6. It is worth noting that none of these passages use the term ‘ordain’ in the KJV, but both refer in the KJV to a connection between the imposition of hands and a spiritual gift. This would probably go down better with those who fiercely resisted the idea of ordination and organisation at the time.

¹⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.; see 4.6.1 above.

¹⁵⁵¹ A. W. Spalding, *Captains of the Host*, 1949, p. 269; G. R. Knight, ‘Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination, 1844-1863’, 1998, p. 104; D. Trim, ‘Ordination in Seventh-day Adventist History’, 2103, pp. 5-6.

In early 1854, Ellen White published an instruction on gospel order and ordination, where she advised that, the Church should follow *the example of the apostles* who took special measures ‘to secure the peace, harmony, and union of the flock’. However, no scriptural references are given; there is only a possible allusion to 1 Timothy 3:1-13. She continued:

Brethren of experience and of sound minds should assemble, and following the Word of God and the sanction of the Holy Spirit, should, with fervent prayer, lay hands upon those who have given full proof that they have received their commission of God, and set them apart to devote themselves entirely to His work. This act would show the sanction of the church to their going forth as messengers to carry the most solemn message ever given to men’.¹⁵⁵²

A year later, in January 1855, Joseph Frisbie, who was an influential figure in the development of the Sabbatarian Adventists’ beliefs, published a lengthy article in the *Review & Herald* on ‘Church Order’. It addressed a range of issues, but in a section titled ‘Gospel order in the ministry’, Frisbie frankly declared that ‘Christ chose his disciples, and ordained them’, then described how the church at Antioch ‘laid their hands on’ Paul and Barnabas, and termed this the ‘ordination of Paul’.¹⁵⁵³ Frisbie’s references to the Bible were made as final arguments, based on the view of the biblical text at the time, according to which the biblical meaning (in the KJV) was plain and could not be understood in any other way. The Bible was subjected to the traditional system of interpretation common to American Pietistic Evangelicalism since the 18th century,¹⁵⁵⁴ which we have described earlier (2.3). It had philosophical underpinnings from ‘the positivist assumptions of the Scottish Common Sense Philosophy or the objectivist Baconian method in particular but also generally the Enlightenment’s rationalistic framework’.¹⁵⁵⁵ It was focussed on the text as an objective entity which provides facts and propositional truth, so that the preferred way of reading and understanding the Bible becomes the literalist approach.

Thus, we need to realise that ordination by prayer and the imposition of hands was something that existed and was already practised when ordination became urgent in the early 1850’s. All the underlying biblical interpretations in the examples given above were common in the Christian denominations from which the

¹⁵⁵² E. G. White, *Early Writings*, 1882, pp. 99-100.

¹⁵⁵³ J. B. Frisbie, ‘Church Order’, 1855, p. 154.

¹⁵⁵⁴ J. Barna, *Ordination of Women in Adventist Theology*, 2012, pp. 286-291.

¹⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 269ff., 290-291.

Sabbatarians had emerged. No deep exegesis was done on the Greek text. The common method of biblical interpretation was the proof-text method which allowed for free connections between texts with related topics or similar words, all facilitated by the King James Version, which excelled in using 'ordain' as the term for 'appoint', thus inviting the reader to connect passages that were in important ways very different. Ellen White did not quote any biblical text when she urged the Church to follow the example of the apostles – only 1 Timothy 3:1-13 is alluded to in her article on 'Gospel Order' in January, 1854, but this passage does not mention ordination by prayer and imposition of hands. (It may be noted here that Ellen White seems to have had a good grasp of the biblical theology of ordination [4.6.2], but never went into exegetical depths when she spoke about the practice of the ordination act and its ecclesiastical ramifications.) James White in his article on 'Gospel Order' in December, 1853, quoted Mark 3:14 (KJV) and referred to 1 Timothy 4:11-16 and 2 Timothy 1:6. While the passages from 1 and 2 Timothy do refer to acts of imposition of hands, it is not clear in the Greek text who does it to whom and for what purpose. The *semikat zeqenim* in 1 Timothy 4:14 may not have involved Timothy as appointee for an office, but many different interpretations are possible (3.5.4.4). 2 Timothy 1:6 is hardly referring to an ordination, but a blessing or endorsement of Timothy as Paul's faithful servant (3.5.4.4). Frisbie's references to the Bible cannot be supported either. There is no biblical record that Christ 'ordained' his disciples – the wording in KJV is misleading in Mark 3:14 (4.5; 4.6.2.5). Moreover, the rite of the imposition of hands in Antioch cannot be seen as 'Paul's ordination', since the ceremony in Acts 13:1-3 is merely a commissioning of Barnabas and Saul for their first missionary journey, and not an 'ordination' to an office (3.5.4.2). In the same passage, there is no clear indication as to who performed the imposition of hands – the congregation, or the group of prophets and teachers, or both. Paul's 'ordination' was by direct 'appointment' by Christ (Acts 26:12-18) and it seems to have been utterly foreign to him to regard the church's act as constituting him as an apostle (cf. Gal. 1:1; 1:13-2:10). It seems, therefore, that the early ordinations among the Sabbatarians in the 1850's were not taken directly from the Bible based on a satisfactory exegesis, but were undertaken on practical grounds and in close keeping with Christian tradition.

In regard to *elders and deacons*, Trim notes that at first there was considerable debate about the function of the elder. However, two articles, by Joseph Frisbie and Roswell Cottrell in 1855-1856, seemed to settle the matter of

ordination of local elders as well as deacons and ministers.¹⁵⁵⁶ The arguments were primarily practical. The elder cared for spiritual matters and the deacon for temporal matters.¹⁵⁵⁷ The ministers were itinerant evangelists, preachers and teachers who would initially not come by very often. The elder and the deacon would often handle the ordinances of the church. By 1879 Ellen White could describe ‘the laying on of hands’ as ‘an acknowledged form of designation to an appointed office’, not just to the office of minister.¹⁵⁵⁸ What was once debated had become established practice.

Thus, while the Church held the Bible as the only authority for faith and practice, and therefore may have avoided to develop a ‘biblical theology of ordination’ by going directly to the individual Bible passages, the way in which those passages were understood and combined included several assumptions that are not directly stated in the biblical text. For example, an ordination with prayer and the laying on of hands of pastors, elders and deacons is not stated, described or commanded, in the Bible. But all three offices, and their ordination, were practices common in the Christian denominations from which the Millerites-Sabbatarians had emerged.

Concerning the *ordination ceremony* Trim’s paper brings some very important facts to light. He says:

...even before the Seventh-day Adventist Church was founded, Adventist ordination was regularly carried out by the laying on of hands by men ‘of experience and sound minds’ and/or those who had been ordained previously, whether as ministers or elders. Public prayers during the ceremony were introduced and soon became the norm. Increasingly often, all the ministers at a meeting joined in laying on of hands and prayer. Indeed, as conferences were founded, their annual sessions, and then camp meetings, became the habitual venues at which ministers would be ordained. This ensured a good turn-out of other ministers, but it also made the service a public spectacle. In the mid-1860s, a charge was by a senior minister, in addition to the prayer, was added to the service and became common, adding another ritualistic element to the service. All this, along with the tone of Ellen White’s words, and the description of one ordination service (of two deacons) as a ‘solemn and heavenly season’, strongly suggest that ordination quickly became, widely if not invariably, a special ceremony and by the end of the 1860s was tending towards an informal ritual.¹⁵⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵⁶ J. B. Frisbie, ‘Church Order’, 1855, p. 154; *idem*, ‘Church Order’, 1856, p. 70; R. F. Cottrell, ‘What are the Duties of Church Officers?’, 1856, p. 173.

¹⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

¹⁵⁵⁸ E. G. White, ‘Mission of Paul and Barnabas’, 1879, p. 177.

¹⁵⁵⁹ D. Trim, ‘Ordination in the Seventh-day Adventist Church’, 2013, p. 8.

One of the clearest statements about how the act of ordination was perceived occurred in a resolution of the 1879 General Conference Session, which declared:

We regard ordination as a solemn and impressive ceremony, sanctioned by the Holy Scriptures and indicating the setting apart, or separation, of the person receiving it from the body of believers with whom he has been associated, to perform the office to which he is ordained, and as suggestive of the conferring of those spiritual blessings which God must impart to properly qualify him for that position.

Trim concludes that ‘from an early point, Adventist ordination consisted of those already ordained laying their hands on an appointee as part of an increasingly elaborate ceremony, perceived as having *spiritual as well as ecclesiological significance*. Indeed, the ceremony began to verge on *ritual* (a term I use advisedly)’.¹⁵⁶⁰

Despite Ellen White’s constant warnings against ‘formalism’ in ordination,¹⁵⁶¹ a solemn ritual with spiritual and ecclesiastical significance developed – in close imitation of the practice in other denominations. This feature is not based on explicit biblical instructions, but contains elements of Roman Catholic tradition (4.1 and 4.2). Thus in our brief analysis of the GC Session decision in 1879 (4.6.2.5), we noted that ordination is regarded as ‘a solemn and impressive ceremony’ (= formal ritual) *indicating* (= ordination’s first symbolic meaning) the ‘setting apart’ of the person ‘receiving it’ from the body of believers (= separating clergy from laity), ‘to perform the office to which he is ordained’ (= ministry is institutionalised and ordination gives access to office of authority, as first practised in the pagan Roman Empire and then in the Roman Church), and as ‘suggestive of the conferring’ (= vague allusion to spiritual gifts/blessings being conferred by the act of ordination) ‘of those spiritual blessings which God must impart to properly qualify him for that position’ (= God qualifies a person for the office and it is not clear if this happens before or through the act of ordination).

In conclusion, in regard to the offices that require ordination and the nature of the ceremony, the early Adventists followed the traditions of their previous denominations and, while the Bible was essential as a creed, it was not studied deeply exegetically, but was quoted from the ‘ecclesiastical’ translation of the KJV

¹⁵⁶⁰ Ibid. (emphasis supplied).

¹⁵⁶¹ See, for example, the article on ‘Gospel Order’ printed in January, 1854, reprinted in *Early Writings*, 1882, p. 97: ‘Formality should be shunned’.

according to principles of biblical interpretation that made the assumption of plain reading the standard and with generous use of the proof-text method. A tendency to formalism, ritualism and even a slight sacramentalism was endorsed even by the General Conference Session.

4.6.3.2 The Significance of Ministerial Ordination. In the early period of 1844-1863, Adventist pioneers questioned accepted orthodoxies and had a deep-seated suspicion of formal organisation making them wary of hierarchical structures.¹⁵⁶² This was a heritage from the Christian Connexion and related movements which provided the background for many of the pioneers (4.4.5). Some Sabbatarian Adventists were therefore hostile to the transition to a traditional-style ordained ministry and were willing to consider ‘a redefinition of the traditional understanding of ministry into a function rather than an office’, even abandoning the concept of a full-time clergy formally differentiated from the laity by ordination.¹⁵⁶³ This group wanted a more radical adaptation to the New Testament teaching on ordination. This did not happen, however. Possibly, in a way that resembles the reactions of the early church in the second century, fear of disunity and false teachings tipped the balance in favour of a traditional view of ordination, together with the specific historical circumstances of the American Civil War in 1861-1865, which prompted the Adventists to organise. ‘The majority of Sabbatarian Adventists seem to have settled fairly quickly on what ordination signified’. Ordination meant that an appointee was ‘set apart’ to a special role.¹⁵⁶⁴

To what was ‘the minister’ set apart by ordination? Seven areas may be identified:

1. Right to Preside Over the Ordinances. James White defined in the 1850’s what the minister was set apart to do. Following closely the significance of ordination in the Christian Connexion, where he had been ordained in 1843, he first acknowledged that the duty of a gospel minister was ‘to preach the word, to teach faithfully the plain declarations of the word of God’, and when that initial duty was performed, the minister should move on.¹⁵⁶⁵ However, the preaching and teaching of

¹⁵⁶² G. R. Knight, *Organizing for Mission and Growth*, 2009, pp. 28-47.

¹⁵⁶³ D. Trim, ‘Ordination in Seventh-day Adventist History’, 2013, p. 9.

¹⁵⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶⁵ J. White, ‘Do Your Own Business’, 1858, p. 156; cf. B. Haloviak, ‘A Response to Two Papers by David Trim’, 2013, p. 1.

the word in the Christian Connexion was done by the minister in response to God's call and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, while ordination was to a large extent a matter of an ecclesiastical authority to handle the ordinances (4.4.5). Thus, James stated as early as in September, 1853, as he reported on having laid hands on brother Lawrence at the Pottsdam Conference held in the Wesleyan (Methodist) meeting-house in Morley, that Lawrence was being 'set apart to the work of the gospel ministry, to administer the ordinances of the church of Christ, by the laying on of hands'.¹⁵⁶⁶ This added authority from 'the church of Christ' did however not obscure the central fact that the gospel minister was a minister of the word of God. We noted earlier (4.6.1) that James White in December, 1853, underlined that ordination by the laying on of hands does not imply that 'the church has power to call men to ministry, or that ordination makes them ministers of Jesus Christ'. In his report on the 'Eastern Tour' in September, 1853, James makes this very clear as we read his mentioning of ordination as providing the right to administer the ordinances in context:

'It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us', to set apart our dear Bro. Lawrence to the work of the gospel ministry, to administer the ordinances of the church of Christ, by the laying on of hands. The church was of one accord in this matter. We hope our dear brother will be able to give himself wholly to the study and the preaching of the word; and wherever he may labor, give from the word alone the reason of his hope. There has been, in that part of the field, too much dwelling upon feelings. But the brethren are now seeing the importance of having a well-grounded faith on Bible truth. They also see that the Spirit and Word agree, and that those who have most of the Word, have most of the pure Spirit of God, abiding with them.

James took a clear position against sacramentalism and focussed on the preaching and teaching of the word as central in gospel ministry. On this he was supported by his wife Ellen. However, Joseph Frisbie, one of main debaters on Adventist ordination, maintained in his major 1856 article that the New Testament texts 'show quite conclusively' that an important 'part of the ... duty' of the minister or elder was to 'administer the emblems of bread and wine', and this interpretation was accepted by the church without any deep biblical study.

Today, we ask ourselves if the New Testament indeed teaches that ordination is a requirement for presiding over holy communions and baptisms. The last supper is a communal meal of remembrance, and no biblical instruction contradicts that it

¹⁵⁶⁶ J. White, 'The Eastern Tour', 1853, p. 85.

could have been served by deacons or special servants, or anyone who had the trust of the believers, albeit under prayer and solemn fellowship. Similarly, baptism is nowhere in the New Testament reserved for an ordained minister or anybody having been first ordained. Overall, one gets the impression, therefore, that Frisbie too easily applied his Methodist traditions on ordination in his understanding (cf. 4.4.2).

The link between administering the ordinances and ordination for the gospel ministry also impacted the matter of women's ordination. This link went back to the part of the Christian Connexion from where James White came and was a heritage there from Baptism (although at times questioned), Methodism, and Presbyterianism – all of them denominational fathers of the Christian Connexion (4.4.5). As already pointed out, however, this in no way obscured the central role of serving as a minister of the word of God, for this role was seen as a divine calling, and women would frequently receive this spiritual gift, too. While women therefore were licensed ministers and served as preachers and teachers, the issue for women's ordination to the gospel ministry seems to have been the ecclesiastical authority as 'head' that ordination was understood to convey by the church. Despite these reservations in many quarters, however, a proposal from the Resolution Committee discussed at the 1881 General Conference did recommend women's ordination, since several women were licensed ministers and had the gift of the Spirit to teach and preach the word.¹⁵⁶⁷ The text discussed was:

Females possessing the necessary qualifications to fill that position, may, with perfect propriety, be set apart by ordination to the work of the Christian ministry.¹⁵⁶⁸

This proposal was not voted by the Session, but it was not stricken in the minutes and was referred to the General Conference Committee, where it was not acted upon.¹⁵⁶⁹

2. A Sign of Church Authority. James and Ellen White included a second aspect of 'being set apart for the gospel ministry', and that was the 'gospel order' which implied 'formal organisation'. Trim notes that 'this tells us something about the

¹⁵⁶⁷ As documented and outlined in D. Trim, 'Ordination in Seventh-day Adventist History', 2013, pp. 5-8.

¹⁵⁶⁸ *R&H*, 58:25, 20 December, 1881, p. 392. Note the discussion regarding the divergent reports in the *Review* and *Signs of the Times*, in: B. Haloviak, 'A Place at the Table', 1995, p. 43, note 10; D. Trim, 'The Ordination of Women in Seventh-day Adventists Policy and Practice', 2013, pp. 9-10.

¹⁵⁶⁹ Cf. the different opinions on how to interpret the sources in: B. Haloviak, 'A Place at the Table', 1995, pp. 32-33; D. Trim, 'Ordination in Seventh-day Adventist History', 2013, pp. 12-17; id, 'The Ordination of Women in Seventh-day Adventist Policy and Practice', 2013, pp. 8-12; B. Haloviak, 'A Response to Two Papers by David Trim', 2013, pp. 13-14.

White's concept of the ordained minister's position: it was an authoritative one' (cf. Ellen White's comments on the 'authority' of men in leading positions in 4.6.2.4 above). This, too, can be traced as a heritage from the Christian Connexion and Methodism. In the Christian Connexion, for example, we have seen that the minister's authority was deeply rooted in his demonstration of spirit-filled preaching and teaching of the word of God. Since the Bible was the only creed and authority in the Church, the ordained minister's demonstrated ability to preach and teach the Word would give him a position of the highest authority in the church. The leading theologian among the Connectionists, Walter Scott, promoted a dual view of the Holy Spirit's work. The Spirit worked both through the written Word and through the spiritual gift of a believer.¹⁵⁷⁰ This was a central tenet in the understanding of ordination as a confirmation of the minister's authority, for it could be argued both via the Word of God and via the church. This understanding of 'authority' became a key factor in James White's concern for safeguarding church unity and eliminating the threat of false teachers, which was also a concern well-known in the Christian Connexion. In view of his Methodist background (4.4.2), Joseph Frisbie would also endorse the view of the ordained minister's authoritative role, but he would argue it along the lines of office and hierarchy rather than being spirit-filled in exposing the Word of God in Scripture. In this we can see his Methodist background, not that of the Christian Connection which tended to be opposed to hierarchies.

Trim also calls attention to Ellen White's vision in the autumn of 1853. An angel told her: 'The church must flee to God's Word and become established upon gospel order, which has been overlooked and neglected'. She continued in the same context that 'those who have given full proof that they have received their commission of God' should be 'set ... apart to devote themselves entirely to His

¹⁵⁷⁰ Walter Scott was the leading theological writer among the Christians where Joseph Bates and James White were members. Influenced by Francis Bacon and John Locke, Scott believed theology should be reasonable, able to be explained in reasonable terms and able to withstand reasonable criticism (W. W. Jennings, *Origin and Early History*, 1919, p. 105; M. G. Toulouse, 'Scott, Walter', 2004, p. 676). Scott understood the Holy Spirit to work both through biblical inspiration and the church; fundamentally, he saw the Spirit working *externally* through Scripture and teaching to convert sinners, rather than through an internal experience (W. W. Jennings, *ibid.*, p. 105). Scott also believed that, before repentance and baptism, the Spirit works *externally* by bringing to individuals the evidence of Scripture through teaching and preaching about the acts of God, and that the individual then evaluates the evidence and rationally decides to respond in faith (*Ibid.*). Again, we see the fundamental influence of a Baconian common sense philosophy, which Scott would have absorbed during his six years of theological studies at the University of Edinburgh in 1812-1818. This commonsense thought of the Scottish Enlightenment had acquired significant following in Christian theology in the United States in the decades following the American Independence (M. G. Toulouse, 'Scott, Walter', 2004, p. 676).

work. This act would show the sanction of the church to their going forth as messengers to carry the most solemn message ever given to men.’ These words confirm that Ellen White supported the view that the authority of the gospel order entrusted to the ordained minister was, more than anything else, fundamentally based on the preaching and teaching of Scripture. We have pointed out repeatedly in this study that this understanding of ordination is rooted in the Connectionist setting in which James White received his ordination in 1843. And we can trace this even further back in time, namely to the early Reformation, when ordination lost its sacramental status and was liberated from Roman ecclesiology (4.4.1.5). However, in Protestantism, it continued to function as a means to regulate authority in the state-church coalition. It continued to be used by the state to govern the people and preserved the gap between clergy and laity. An authoritative body of leaders inducted by ordination continued to be considered necessary to preserve the doctrinal and organisational unity of the church. Thus, the Reformation shifted ‘the locus of succession of authority’ from the person of the ordinand to the preaching of the Word, but only an ordained man was permitted to preach. The sacraments, two in number now instead of seven, had, at least in part, lost their sacramental character, but authority to administer them was still reserved for the ordained minister.¹⁵⁷¹ Theologically, the magisterial reformers recognised that there was no difference of essence in the priesthood of the ministers and the priesthood of other believers, but in reality ‘the structure had changed but little’ and the clergy continued to be as powerful as their Roman counterparts.¹⁵⁷² This characterisation of ordination in the Reformation continued to be relevant also in early Adventism. What needs to be asked, however, is in what way this institution is commanded in the Bible.

James White’s articles in 1853 and Ellen White’s article in 1854 reveal another set of four meanings of ministerial ordination:

3. Ordination Was a Sign of a Vocation. Ministerial ordination was a sign of a full-time calling – cf. Ellen White’s statement in the letter of 1901 on ‘making it one’s lifework to labor together with God’ (4.6.2.4).

4. A Call to Preach. This was understood as a spiritual calling from Christ.

5. Responsibility for Sound Scriptural Teaching. This, too, was seen as a spiritual calling from Christ, and several biblical texts were adduced to support it.

¹⁵⁷¹ M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 1982, pp. 61-62.

¹⁵⁷² *Ibid.*

6. Authority to Ordain Other Ministers. In his 1856 article Frisbie expanded on the White's views regarding ordination and authority. Another significance of ordination, in his view, was that it gave the authority to ordain other ministers or elders. This is hard to prove as a principle taught in the Bible, but it was a key issue in the Methodist church coming out of the Anglican tradition with its apostolic succession – and we have already noted Frisbie's Methodist roots.

7. Authority to Found New Local Churches. Frisbie suggested yet another meaning of ministerial ordination, namely, that only an ordained minister could found new churches. It was mentioned only in passing and was not taken up by the Adventists until the GC Session in 1866. It was then stipulated that local churches were not fully organised until they had 'ordained officers', which confirmed Frisbie's earlier proposal that ordination gave the minister authority to organise churches.

There is, however, no biblical basis for this rule, but it complies with the Methodist understanding, rooted in Anglicanism and ultimately going back to Roman Catholicism. We have seen in some detail above that the Roman Catholic Church developed the idea around 1200 that ordination was something apart from any particular congregation and was instead tied to the persons of bishops and priests and their power to celebrate the eucharist that 'makes present the risen Christ' and that the 'church' is defined as a body that rightly handles the sacraments. Since no one can effect the sacrament of the eucharist except the priest who has been duly ordained in accordance with the keys of the Church, which Jesus Christ Himself gave to the apostles and their successors, there is no 'church' unless it has a properly ordained minister (4.2.2). (This understanding came from Cyprian, who, without support of the New Testament, was drawing on Old Testament priestly language and made the bishop the provider of salvation.) Frisbie assigned some of this episcopal and priestly authority to the Seventh-day Adventist ordained minister and the result was a close connection between ordination and the power to organise and dissolve a church.

The authoritative nature of the minister's office was to be emphasised still further as the denomination developed over time. The Seventh-day Adventist Church's first formal statement specifically on ordination was adopted at the 1879 GC Session. It includes the observation that 'ordination signifies the setting apart, or appointment, of a person to some official position'. The resolution concluded: 'That we consider it inconsistent for our conferences to grant credentials to individuals ...

who have never been ordained or set apart by our people'.¹⁵⁷³ Thus, ordination was definitively settled as necessary for a credentialed minister, underlining the minister's status. Furthermore, a report was adopted at this Session which declared that it was the minister, rather than the elders or deacons, whose responsibility it was to 'set things in order in the church, give good counsel ... bring up the members to a proper standard ... and thus edify and build up the church'. The importance of courses of study was also emphasised. Pastoring became described as 'the work of the ministry'. 'The effect of these trends was to start to differentiate pastors from parishioners in a way not true for most early Adventist ministers'.¹⁵⁷⁴ The question for the church now, therefore, is to decide if we wish to make a change, to bring ourselves closer to the Bible and continue the Protestant Reformation based on *sola Scriptura*.

4.6.3.3 The Relationship of the Ordained Minister to Other Church Offices

(1850-1914). 'The concept of a licensed minister was, like concepts of ordination, a legacy'.¹⁵⁷⁵ Since Protestant denominations were known to license ministers before ordaining them, and this was held to be a good model for the future, it is possible that licensed ministers functioned even before the first, foundational General Conference Session in 1863, at which regulations for issuing licenses were introduced.¹⁵⁷⁶ Thus, for example, William Miller was licensed by the Baptists, but not ordained.¹⁵⁷⁷

The important point, however, is that with the establishment of a church organisation in 1863, the Church *confirmed* the distinction between ordained and licensed ministers, which was based on being ordained or not. Thus, many women worked as licensed ministers, but they were not ordained. Apart from that, it is important to note the 1863 State Conference Constitution included the licensed minister within its definition of 'all ministers in good standing'.¹⁵⁷⁸ Female ministers, who were licensed, were in other words accepted as 'ministers in good standing'. The office of the minister was, in the main, that of an itinerant preacher and teacher

¹⁵⁷³ See the reference in D. Trim, 'Ordination in Seventh-day Adventist History', 2013, p. 13, footnote 67.

¹⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

¹⁵⁷⁷ S. Bliss & A. Hale, *Memoirs of William Miller*, 1853, pp. 108-111.

¹⁵⁷⁸ B. Haloviak, 'A Response to Two Papers by David Trim', p. 3.

of the Word, called and 'ordained' by Christ. This is how Ellen White understood her ordination. And the concept can be traced back to the Christian Connection.

The ordained or licensed minister's relation to elders and deacons developed over time. Frisbie wrote in 1855 that there were 'two classes of preaching elders in the churches at that time; one had the oversight of all the churches as evangelical or travelling *elders or bishops* ... Another class of local elders ... had the pastoral care and oversight of one church'. This confirms the point made earlier that the Sabbatarian Adventists considered three offices – itinerant elder/bishop, local elder, and local deacon – which is closer to the tradition of the Christian church than any plain biblical text. Frisbie's statement is, again, perfectly in harmony with his Methodist background on ordination and the hierarchical offices of 'the local ordained elder' and 'the ordained bishop' (cf. 4.4.2).

Similarly, Frisbie was clear on his distinction between elder and deacon, and this, too, is understandable in the context of his Methodist tradition on ordination and church offices. In drawing his distinctions between elder and deacon, however, Frisbie was not too happy with the fact that New Testament 'servants/deacons' preached. He rather concedes that there may have been temporal circumstances that required deacons to preach, but, he says 'it is quite certain they were not teachers by virtue of that office'.¹⁵⁷⁹ Thus, Frisbie reveals, again, the view that teaching was primarily the duty of the minister. The classification of the duties of church officers, as well-known among Protestant churches, and ultimately going back to Roman Catholicism, is again apparent.

Frisbie's view of the function of the ordained minister is in keeping with the tradition from Calvin. As we have seen earlier (4.4.1.2; cf. the Presbyterian tradition according to 4.4.1.4), Calvin took the view that the most important ministries are those of the pastors and doctors, to whom are entrusted the teaching of the doctrine and the explanation of the holy books, and these two offices merged into one in his own case. Calvin regarded the elders and deacons as purely 'lay ministries' and created a clear distinction between them and the ordained pastor/doctor. Thus, Frisbie's influential 1855 article is seemingly imbued with Protestant tradition, but does not always reflect what we see in the Bible. His views influenced the Adventist

¹⁵⁷⁹ J. Frisbie, 'Church Order', 1855, p. 155.

Church at a time when some very fundamental steps were taken in defining and practising ordination.

In his 1856 article, R. F. Cottrell made a clear distinction between elders and ministers (including the licensed minister, which could be a woman), implying that 'while an elder *may* (or might even be *expected* to) preach and teach, the minister *must*'.¹⁵⁸⁰ However, a major part of Cottrell's argument is that 'elders and deacons ought to be permitted, in the minister's absence, to act in his place'.¹⁵⁸¹ While Cottrell is adamant that the main duties of the minister were to administer the ordinances, including baptism, and to ordain elders and deacons, 'he is also confident that deacons and elders, ordained by a minister, ought to stand in for a minister as necessary, even in the administration of the ordinances'.¹⁵⁸²

In an article in the *Review & Herald*, 1860, by E. S. Lane, we see that, as the Sabbatarian Adventists were shaping their view of ordination and offices, they thought that the deacons 'were chosen to attend to these things which the ministers ... could not attend to on account of their being called to attend to the ministration of the word'.¹⁵⁸³ This view was considered to harmonise with the biblical passage in Acts 6:1-6, because the identification of the seven was widely accepted as being that of 'deacons'. It overlooks the fact, however, that there is no mentioning of 'deacons' in this passage and it is therefore questionable if this argument should apply to a system of offices in the Church (cf. 3.3.7.5; 3.5.4.1).

The elder's authority to *stand in* for the minister became accepted in the Church, however. Practical rather than biblical reasons facilitated this development – the minister was often absent and the elder had to perform in his place. There is no plain text in the Bible to support this view. Moreover, since the elder's role as a stand-in for the minister embraced the administration of the ordinances, which was strongly viewed as the ordained minister's special prerogative, the elder, too, had to be ordained. Thus, the ordination of elders by imposition of hands, although not explicitly stated in the Bible, became applied in order to enable an elder to perform the function that was considered to be requiring ordination. (The passages in Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5 refer to 'appointment' of elders but not with the imposition of hands, and there is no description of what the appointment signified.)

¹⁵⁸⁰ D. Trim, 'Ordination in Seventh-day Adventist History', 2013, pp. 15-16.

¹⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁵⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸³ E. S. Lane, 'Church Trials', 1860, p. 119.

Not only practical concerns were therefore involved here, but also an underlying tendency to a sacramental view of ordination linked to the administration of the ordinances and the view that such administration required the status that the ritual of ordination confirmed or conferred.

At the 1885 GC Session, the Church continued to develop the idea of the elder's ordination. A committee reporting to the Session concluded that 'an elder's ordination shall stand good for all time, except in the case of apostasy'. Trim notes that 'ordination, again, was something unique, special, sacred – like baptism, it was not to be repeated, except in the case of apostasy'. He continues: 'Adventists were coming very close to a sacramental view of ordination'. Continuing from this recognition, Trim raises the article by the former GC President Ole Olsen in 1914 where the following was stated:

[I have] known instances where persons appointed as leaders of companies have taken it upon themselves to administer baptism and to celebrate the ordinances of the Lord's house, not being consecrated to such service by prayer and laying on of hands. That is wrong: it brings the most sacred service of God and the most sacred ordinances down to the level of the common affairs of life.

Trim's comments here are noteworthy: 'This is doubly revealing: first, of how it was now established Adventist practice that, *in certain conditions*, ordained elders could carry out the "ordinances"; second, though, of how the ordinances had taken on almost a sacramental quality (they are "the most sacred ordinances", set apart from the mundane things of this world); and third, of how an ordination ceremony – even one for elders rather than ministers – was held to have sacred characteristics.'¹⁵⁸⁴

The Adventist view of ordination is here brought close to the Roman Catholic tradition which some Protestant churches continued. The Old Testament sacramentalism associated with special 'consecration' of people for service at the temple has also become introduced. This occurred in the Adventist history of ordination, despite the clear teaching in the New Testament that the Old Testament sacramental priesthood has been replaced in the Christian church by Christ's high-priestly ministry in heaven and the priesthood of all believers in the gospel ministry.

Trim brings a very essential summary of the significance of ordination for elders and deacons:

¹⁵⁸⁴ D. Trim, 'Ordination in Seventh-day Adventist History', 2013, p. 18.

It was an external signifier of their appointment to a designated office, to be sure. However, the dignity and authority of the office in question were gradually restricted from the later 1850s through the mid-1880s. Deacons lost the right to baptize and administer communion and foot washing. Elders continued to have that right, subordinated to an ordained minister, but it was limited in time and space. Furthermore, while elders could take part in the ordination of other elders, they no longer ordained ministers; and they had no right to organize new local churches.¹⁵⁸⁵

At the foundation of the Church in 1863, the institution of a licensed ministry was confirmed. From the start, it was strongly emphasised that the right of licensed ministers (including women), even their duty, was to *preach*. At the 1878 Session, the purpose of a license was specified as that of ‘preaching the third angel’s message’. However, they had no right to administer the ordinances, ordain, organise churches, and so on. Both in the Session of 1879 and 1885, this strict regulation applied. We have made the observation that the emphasis on preaching as a forerunner of ordination was perfectly in keeping with the practice in the Christian Connexion and actually reflects James White’s experience according to his autobiography (4.4.5.3; 4.4.5.5). A report that was adopted by the GC Session in 1885 stated:

It is well understood that a license from the conference does not authorise the licentiate to celebrate ordinances, to administer baptism, or to organize a church. And, therefore, if a local elder receive a ministerial license, it does not enlarge his sphere of action as an elder; it gives him no authority to celebrate the ordinances outside of the church of which he is acting as elder.

Thus, while the ordained elder could administer the ordinances in one local church at a time and could not organise a new church, the licensed minister could do none of these things. Trim notes that ‘the geographical (or one might say quantitative) scope of the licensed minister’s authority was more extensive than the elder’s, but qualitatively it was much less.’¹⁵⁸⁶ The license was ‘a recognition that the licentiate had demonstrated a set of attributes, knowledge and/or skills that warranted being given a place of trust and a ministerial role in the church, one that was general, unlike that given to elders and deacons, who of course were restricted to a particular church. In particular, the licensed minister had demonstrated the ability, or potential, to preach and publicly proclaim biblical truth – but lacked the experience, expertise,

¹⁵⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 19.

achievements, or innate attributes regarded as necessary for ordination to take place.¹⁵⁸⁷

In this way, ordination was made into the tool by which women were separated from having equal access to the role of a gospel minister in the Church. However, these measures were not founded on the Bible, but were motivated by Christian tradition, practical needs, and perhaps a good deal of patriarchal prejudice regarding women's proper place. In this historical context, therefore, the counsel of Ellen White regarding women in ministry and women's ordination is nothing less than revolutionary (see 4.6.2.3 and 4.6.2.4).

4.6.3.4 Conclusions regarding the Period of 1850-1914. Trim concludes his survey of the Adventist history of ordination by noting that 'within the first quarter-century of the organised existence of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the titles, roles, prerogatives and jurisdictions of the basic ecclesiastical offices had been defined. Deacon, Elder, Licentiate (or licensed minister), and minister (or ordained or credentialed minister): each had its own conceptual and geographical spheres of influence, each of which was relatively clearly demarcated.¹⁵⁸⁸ There was as yet no strong sense of the *pastoral* (stationary) role of the minister and there was even some hostility to it. However, as noted earlier, the vital pastoral role in the churches was carried by the minister's wife, who did such an outstanding work that James White talked of mentioning the wife in the ordination prayer and setting her apart for her ministry.¹⁵⁸⁹ Nevertheless, the minister had both a direct and indirect pastoral role by the various functions he was expected to have and the strong authority given him.

At about 1914, the role of ordination had developed into a central feature of the concept of 'ministry' in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The view of ordination acquired over time has been described as follows:

In this system, moreover, the ceremony of ordination had central significance that was more than functional; *it verged on the ritualistic*. It was a key rite of passage which as well as recognizing the Holy Spirit's calling of the individual also symbolized the *imparting of authority* to the individual by the Church. It was, consequently, an honour not accorded lightly. As the denomination developed and grew, the ceremony became more elaborate and what it

¹⁵⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 20-21.

¹⁵⁸⁹ B. Haloviak, 'A Response to Two Papers by David Trim', 2013, pp. 1-2.

symbolized seems to have developed, too. It was not sacramental, for Adventists never held that it was by going through ceremony that one received the spiritual gifts associated with and needed for ministry. However, the language used about it strongly suggests that the ceremony was seen as more than just an acknowledgement of a calling. Even if in a limited way, it *imparted a spiritual quality as well as ecclesiastical authority*, to those who underwent ordination.¹⁵⁹⁰

This statement applies to Adventist history and, we believe, to current practices world-wide. However, in order to live up to our beliefs about the authority of the Bible, the Church today should evaluate if this view of ordination is in harmony with the expressed words of the Bible and ensure that its policies and practices follow the Word of God.

4.6.3.5 Policy Making in 1863-1977. Starting in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1:6-9, from an early time, there was great concern that all ministers should meet certain standards. This was underlined by the expressed need to safeguard true doctrine and unity in the church by a credentialed ministry, a concern that James White would have become familiar with during his time in the Christian Connexion.

The GC Session in 1879 is notable, not only for setting criteria, but also for asserting the principle that in granting ministerial credentials ultimate authority rests with the General Conference.¹⁵⁹¹ Thus, the basic criteria for a minister in 1879 identified ‘spiritual qualification(s), knowledge, and practical capabilities, especially the ability to set things in order in the church and build it up’, while those of 1893 underlined ‘familiarity with “present truth” and proven ability in the sacred work of the ministry’.¹⁵⁹²

In modern Adventism, ordination may acknowledge a call not only to the work of the gospel ministry, but also to the work of administration. This was not the practice of the nineteenth-century denomination. At the Annual Council in 1942, the growing trend to ordain workers simply for their administrative skills (especially financial) was addressed in a statement that warned against ‘the spirit of office-seeking’ and encouraged ‘the preaching of the word in soul-winning service as of chief responsibility and highest honour’.¹⁵⁹³

¹⁵⁹⁰ D. Trim, ‘Ordination in Seventh-day Adventist History’, 2013, p. 21.

¹⁵⁹¹ Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁵⁹² Ibid.

¹⁵⁹³ Ibid., p. 23.

The *Manual for Ministers* in 1925 provided that the decision about whom to ordain was vested at the conference level and was to be taken at a regular conference session on recommendation from the committee on licenses and credentials after counsel from the union.

As the first *Working Policy* was issued in 1926, nothing was said about ordination. In 1930, however, policies on ordination were included. They outlined in harmony with earlier instructions the procedure for decisions on ordination, and for the ceremony itself. No criteria were provided. The major development was the statement that 'ordination of the ministry is the setting apart of the man to a sacred calling, not for one local field alone, but for the entire church'.¹⁵⁹⁴ The principle was thus adopted that any person ordained should be able to serve world-wide. Again, it is difficult to see what biblical foundation this rule from 1930 had. In the New Testament, the few examples we have of laying on of hands for induction to a leadership responsibility took place locally, for local needs of ministry, and it is questionable if the Bible commands a dominance of the total church which restricts the local work of ministry, if it is guided by the Holy Spirit.

In his *Principles of Church Organisation* (1942), an experienced church administrator by the name of Oliver Montgomery expressed his views on ordination. In fact, he summarised the prevailing consensus on what ordination signified, in terms that reveal how the model forged between 1850 and 1880 was still relevant:

The ordination of a man to the gospel ministry confers upon him the authority to minister in all spiritual things. He is sent forth to preach the gospel, to baptize believers, to administer the sacraments of the church, to solemnize marriages, to organize churches ... By ordination he is authorized to preside at business meetings of the churches in the conference as need may require. His ordination gives to him the right and authority to have a part in ordaining other men to the gospel ministry and to ordain local church elders and deacons.¹⁵⁹⁵

Trim notes appropriately that 'here we have gone from "ordinances of the Lord's house" to "sacraments of the church"!' The description is however not far removed from Olsen's language in 1914 of a 'solemn, sacred service'. As repeatedly stated here, we question the biblical basis for this 'sacramental' concept of ordination.

¹⁵⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 25 with reference to the *Working Policy* 1930, p. 71.

¹⁵⁹⁵ O. Montgomery, *Principles of Church Organization and Administration*, 1942, p. 134.

Finally, the 1955 edition of the *Working Policy* included thirteen criteria that are to be met during the process of ‘Examination of candidates for ordination’. Despite this, Trim notes that ‘a great deal was still taken for granted’.¹⁵⁹⁶

4.6.4 Current Official View of Ordination

The Seventh-day Adventist Church outlines its current understanding of ordination in the *GC Working Policy* (2012-2013),¹⁵⁹⁷ the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (2010),¹⁵⁹⁸ and the *Seventh-day Adventist Minister’s Handbook* (2009).¹⁵⁹⁹ Articles on ‘laying on of hands’ and ‘ordination’ are published in the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* (1979) and the *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (1996).¹⁶⁰⁰ Papers have been presented to church committees on the issue of the theology of ordination,¹⁶⁰¹ and various articles and books have addressed the same topic.¹⁶⁰²

Ordination is seen as biblical, sacred and of utmost importance. It is however treated essentially from a practical perspective and the presentation is divided between matters relating to the gospel ministers (or pastors), church elders, deacons and deaconesses. There is no systematic presentation of how and on what grounds biblical ordination in principle applies to the various offices for which ordination is required.

The Church is most articulate on the theology of ordination when it describes ‘ordination for the gospel ministry’. Thus, in this context, ordination is described as ‘the setting apart of men for the sacred work of the ministry’. It is seen as ‘one of the most vital concerns of the church’ in that it concerns ‘the spiritual growth of God’s people’.

Ordination is seen as being based on Scripture. Under ‘Scriptural Counsel’ (L 35 10), the *General Conference Working Policy* says:

¹⁵⁹⁶ D. Trim, ‘Ordination in Seventh-day Adventist History’, 2013, p. 26.

¹⁵⁹⁷ *Working Policy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists*, 2012-2013 edition, 2012, sections L 35 – L 60, pp. 397-408.

¹⁵⁹⁸ *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 2010, pp. 33-36, 72-73, 76-77, 78-70.

¹⁵⁹⁹ *Seventh-day Adventist Minister’s Handbook*, 2009, pp. 85-95.

¹⁶⁰⁰ *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 1996, pp. 253-255.

¹⁶⁰¹ Among others, R. Dederen, ‘A Theology of Ordination’, 1984, pp. 146-155; ‘Theology of Ordination Statement’, voted by the GC Annual Council, 1989 (printed with few changes in: *Seventh-day Adventist Minister’s Manual*, 1992, pp. 75-78.

¹⁶⁰² Among others, R. Dederen, ‘A Theology of Ordination’, 1978, pp. 24K-24P; V. Norskov-Olsen, ‘Called to Be a Minister’, 1995, pp. 11-17, 28; K. A. Burton, ‘A Practical Theology of Ordination’, 1996, pp. 26-27, 29; R. L. Staples, ‘A Theological Understanding of Ordination’, 1998, pp. 135-154; N. Vyhmeister, ‘Ordination in the New Testament?’, 2002, pp. 24-27.

The apostle Paul speaks of himself as ‘a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God’ (Rom. 1:1). This matter of separation to the ministry was made very clear to him by the Lord Himself when, appearing to him on the Damascus road, He said, ‘I have appeared unto thee ... to make thee a minister ...; delivering thee from the people ... unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God’ (Acts 26:16-18). He was delivered from the people, separated to the ministry, and then as the anointed representative of God sent back to the people to be God’s mouthpiece and to open their eyes to the glories of the gospel. Later in writing of the work of the minister he spoke of it as a high calling (Phil. 3:14).

In the Epistle to the Hebrews we read, ‘No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God’ (5:4).

In the adduced counsel from Ellen White, particular emphasis is placed on the following points:

1. Ordination for the gospel ministry is based on ‘being accepted by God as an able minister of the gospel’.¹⁶⁰³

2. Evidence of being called by God to the ministry is seen by the fruit of the ministry, especially ‘the conversion of sinners and their sanctification through the truth’.¹⁶⁰⁴

3. It is therefore important to examine the ordinand’s ‘Christian experience and his knowledge of the Scriptures, the way in which he holds present truth’, and it is underlined that ‘no one should be accepted as a laborer in the cause of God, until he makes it manifest that he has a real, living experience in the things of God.’¹⁶⁰⁵

Apart from these references, in its policies, the Church focuses attention on who can be ordained, the process of examination, the process and manner of ordination, the authority of ordination, and preserving the integrity of ordination.

In a different section of the *Working Policy*, the Church addresses ‘Human Relations’ (BA 60 05), where it states that ‘the Church rejects any system or philosophy which discriminates against anyone on the basis of race, colour, or gender’. The passage in Galatians 3:28 is quoted here:

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

In the next section regarding the Church’s ‘Official Position’ on Human Relations (BA 60 10), it is stated:

¹⁶⁰³ E. G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 1911, p. 328.

¹⁶⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰⁵ E. G. White, *Gospel Workers*, 1915, pp. 437-438.

The world Church supports non-discrimination in employment practices and policies and upholds the principle that both men and women, without regard to race and colour, shall be given full and equal opportunity within the Church to develop the knowledge and skills needed for the building up of the Church. Positions of service and responsibility (except those requiring ordination to the gospel ministry*) on all levels of church activity shall be open to all on the basis of the individual's qualifications.

The asterisk indicates the following added comment:

The exception clause, and any other statement above, shall not be used to reinterpret the action already taken by the world Church authorizing the ordination of women as local church elders in divisions where the division executive committees have given their approval.

In nine points, the policy then outlines the Church's consistent commitment to non-discrimination based on race, colour, or gender, but with the clearly expressed exceptions of any office or function where ordination to the gospel ministry is required.

In the outline of the 'Basic Principles' for Human Relations (BA 60 05), the Church states its conviction:

Seventh-day Adventists believe in the universal fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man and are dedicated to the proclamation of the message of Revelation 14:6-12 to all peoples of the earth. This philosophy and its resultant course of action have made the Church multiracial, multiethnic, and gender inclusive. The Church is enriched by such membership and by the valuable contribution to its mission of both men and women of different nationalities and races as they serve as laypersons and employees at various levels of the Church.

For the Church to make exceptions to this important principle, members would expect a clear biblical rationale. However, the *Working Policy* contains no outline of the Church's understanding of the Bible which provides the basis for the exception to the principle of non-discrimination based on gender. This issue is one of the factors that continue to stimulate the current debate within the church and which continue to divide the Church.

4.6.5 Aspects of Ordination Rooted in Roman Practices

Drawing on David Trim's study and our own work, we have pointed out many examples of how Adventists accepted the traditions of the Protestant denominations from which they came, and how no profound exegetical study of the Bible was applied as a groundwork. Through the spiritual gift of Ellen White, important advice

was given regarding the theology of ordination and she issued many instructions on how ordination could be corrected in order to conform to the Bible. However, she does not seem to have been much involved in policy-making and ecclesiastical debates. She acted rather as a 'Messenger of the Lord' who addressed the spiritual life and the ethical and spiritual adherence to the Bible.

However, the influence from the mother denominations, the pragmatic attitude, the dependence on the King James Version, the prominent view of the biblical text as ready-made propositional truth that could be accessed by reason, the proof-text method, and other circumstances, led to an acceptance of ideas on ordination that have no clear foundation in what the biblical text says and intends to say, and via Protestant tradition, aspects of ordination practices were accepted that emerge from the Roman Catholic understanding of ordination.

Undoubtedly, the Seventh-day Adventist pioneers had from the beginning a strong commitment to the Bible as their only authority and rejected Roman Catholic theology in no uncertain terms. However, as ordination became practically needed for the sake of order in the 1850's, the Sabbatarian Adventists applied models of ordination that were used in other churches and they read the biblical passages on 'ordination' as they were traditionally read in those churches. In our study, we found numerous examples of quotations and interpretations of biblical passages connected with 'ordination' that were adduced by the Adventist pioneers that, when checked against the Greek original text, cannot be maintained. Thus, traditions from Methodism, Baptism, and the Christian Connexion lived on, although Ellen White constantly called for a close adherence to the word of the Bible.

Some elements of ordination from the Medieval Roman Catholic Church survived the Reformation, continued in the Protestant churches, and eventually threatened to find their way into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In view of the Seventh-day Adventist consistent emphasis on the Bible as 'our only creed' and the strong rejection of Roman Catholic practices, the Church may do well to review and, as needed, revise its current ordination practices to align them more closely with the Bible. One ironic aspect of this recognition is that, opponents of women's ordination who refer to the authority of the Bible to sustain their view, may not have a solid biblical basis for their view of the ordination of men.

A brief summary shows the following:

1. *The priesthood of Christ and the apostolic succession* is a vital and necessary concept for the Roman Catholic understanding of ordination. It is the belief that all ordained clergy are ordained by bishops who were ordained by other bishops, and so on, all the way back to bishops ordained by the apostles, who were ordained by Christ, the great High Priest, who conferred his priesthood upon his apostles.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church practices the rule that only ordained ministers can ordain other ministers. If the Bible is the only creed of Seventh-day Adventists, however, a biblical form of ordination would not need to include a strict succession of ordained pastors performing the ordination. In Acts 6:1-6 (the clearest New Testament example of an 'ordination'), neither the congregation nor the twelve apostles – one or the other or both laid their hands on the seven – were ordained.

2. *Three higher orders led by the bishop:* There are three orders of ordination in the Roman Catholic Church, namely, bishop, presbyter (priest), and deacon.

Although the Bible speaks of two offices in the local church, 'overseer/presbyter' and 'deacon' (possibly with the 'presbyters/elders' as a general term for church leaders forming a body of counsellors), and then itinerant 'apostles, prophets and teachers', the current Seventh-day Adventist order of offices that require ordination are in some ways similar to that of the Roman Catholic Church: the [gospel] minister (pastor) functions like a bishop who may have responsibility for a district or a conference or a union or a division or the General Conference; the [local church] elder functions like a presbyter/priest in a congregation; and the deacon/deaconess assists the pastor and/or the elder. The vital point here is that the Seventh-day Adventist model of offices does not follow that of the New Testament¹⁶⁰⁶ but depends on a traditional heritage going back to post-biblical innovations intended to strengthen the authority of the bishop. The Bible gives no warrant for such an understanding.

3. *Only the bishop ordains:* Ordination of a bishop is performed in the Roman Catholic Church by several bishops; ordination of a priest or deacon is performed by a single bishop.

¹⁶⁰⁶ Cf. K. A. Burton, 'A Practical Theology of Ordination', 1996, pp. 26-27, 29.

This seems to be somewhat reflected in the Seventh-day Adventist practice of requiring *several* ordained ministers to take part in the examination of the candidate for ordination to the gospel ministry and in the ensuing ceremony. However, for ordination of a local church elder, one officiating ordained pastor is sufficient, although other ordained pastors and local elders may participate; for a deacon/deaconess, only one officiating ordained pastor is sufficient. None of these practices are stipulated in the Bible. In Acts 6:1-6 and 13:1-3, the full congregation seems to have played some kind of role in the ceremony, since the authority of the ordinands was seen as an extension of the congregation, who appointed them as their representatives.

4. Only a bishop or priest (originally ‘presbyter/elder’) may celebrate the eucharist in the Roman Catholic Church, and only a person ordained to the priesthood may administer most sacraments: This step was taken most decisively by Cyprian, who, without support of the New Testament, was drawing on Old Testament priestly language and made the bishop the provider of salvation.¹⁶⁰⁷

This practice was strongly defended in Methodism; it was fundamental even in the Christian Connexion in Maine, where James White was ordained; and it was repeatedly endorsed by Ellen White and is still the Seventh-day Adventist practice: the ordinances of baptism and holy communion are administered by an ordained pastor or (local church) elder. However, this practice has no explicit basis in a biblical text.

5. Separation clergy – laity in the Roman Catholic Church: This goes back to Tertullian¹⁶⁰⁸ and has clear connections with the orders into which the pagan Roman society was divided, including its administrative and religious orders or professions (4.1.5). Such separation of classes was known as *ordo et plebs* (‘order and the people’) and is an expression found in Tertullian.¹⁶⁰⁹

While the Seventh-day Adventist Church advocates the priesthood of believers, the very strong emphasis on ministerial ordination, according to the GC

¹⁶⁰⁷ D. Jankiewicz, ‘The Problem of Ordination’, 2013, p. 20.

¹⁶⁰⁸ *Exhortation to Chastity* 7.3.

¹⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.* The Latin phrase is: *Differentiam inter ordinem et plebem constituit ecclesias auctoritas per ordinis consensum sanctificatus* (It is the authority of the church, and the honour which has acquired sanctity through the joint session of the Order, which has established the difference between the Order and the laity – translation by S. Thelwall in ANF 4, p. 54)

Working Policy L 35, in actual fact maintains a clear separation between clergy and laity:

The *setting apart* of men for the sacred work of the ministry should be regarded as *one of the most vital concerns of the church* ... The spiritual growth of God's people, their development in the virtues of Christ, as well as their relationship to one another as members of His body, are *all closely bound up with and in many respects dependent upon the spirituality, efficiency, and consecration of those who minister in Christ's stead.* (emphasis supplied)

It needs to be emphasised strongly, however, that on this point Ellen White consistently counselled an interaction and close cooperation of those formally ordained for office (clergy) and those spiritually ordained by God (laity) (4.6.2.4). The Church may need to ask itself before the Bible if the priesthood of all believers and the servanthood of Christ which is the true calling of a 'minister' are points of faith that are well served by the ceremony of ordination and the weight attached to it.

6. *Character indelibilis*: In the Roman Catholic Church, through ordination, the ordinand receives a special, permanent seal upon his soul, variably referred to as *character indelibilis*, *dominicus character*, or *sacramental character*.¹⁶¹⁰ This indelible mark 'assures that the actions of the priest, such as baptism and administration of the Lord's supper, are valid in a sacramental sense, i.e. they convey God's salvific grace'.¹⁶¹¹ It has been noted that 'according to this view, ordination becomes one of the most important Roman Catholic rites since it allows the priest to function as a channel of God's grace' and 'salvation, in some way, thus depends on ordination'.¹⁶¹² The current official catechism explains this as a sign that a bishop or a priest functions as *vicarius Christi*, that is, in the place of Christ.¹⁶¹³ This development can be traced from the time of Augustine of Hippo (ca. 354-430). It is connected with a view of the originally pagan Roman concept of *sacramentum*.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, with the Protestant Reformers, strongly rejected the notion that the imposition of hands in ordination confers a *character indelibilis* as defined in the Roman Catholic Church. However, via Anglicanism and John Wesley, the Seventh-day Adventist Church from early on has insisted that the ordinances of baptism and holy communion can only be administered by an ordained

¹⁶¹⁰ E. J. Cutrone, 'Sacraments', 1999, pp. 741-747.

¹⁶¹¹ D. Jankiewicz, 'The Problem of Ordination' 2013, p. 21.

¹⁶¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

¹⁶¹³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par. 1558, p. 389.

pastor or ordained elder. And in *GC Working Policy* L 35 quoted above, the thought is expressed that the entire well-being of the laity depends on the ‘spirituality, efficiency, and consecration of those who minister in Christ’s stead’. While the concepts are fundamentally different, the language is somewhat similar in a way that has no obvious biblical foundation.

7. Ordination as a sacrament: The understanding of ordination as a ‘sacrament’ in the Roman Catholic Church goes back to the pagan Roman understanding of *sacramentum*, i.e. the *sacramentum militare* which was the oath of loyalty and commitment taken by soldiers in pledging their loyalty to the consul in the Republican era or later to the Emperor. The *sacramentum* made the soldier *sacer*, that is, ‘sacred’.

With the radical wing of the Protestant Reformation, the Seventh-day Adventist Church rejected the concept of ‘sacraments’ and does not use the term. However, in some contexts, the pioneers and official church documents speak of the ‘sacred’ work of the ministry, the importance of the ‘consecration’ of the ordained minister, and priestly terminology from the Old Testament is rather frequent, although this is not explicitly associated with the New Testament concepts of the priesthood of all believers and the servanthood of Christ in the church.

8. Absolute ordinatio: The Roman Catholic Church practice of *absolute ordinatio* means ‘an ordination in which hands are laid upon a minister without his being asked to fulfil a particular task or minister to a particular community’.¹⁶¹⁴ Until the fifth century, only those who had been called by a particular church community to be its pastor and leader, or to a particular missionary task, were actually ordained, and the rite was consequently attached to the task at hand, which seems to be closer to the view of the New Testament. Thus, absolute ordination is ‘attached to a person rather than a task’. This was possible because the church had incorporated a key tenet from pagan Roman religion, namely, that sacramental rites appropriately performed had an efficacy in increasing the power of prominent human beings and in directing it to leaders individually and in groups.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church does not practice absolute ordination in this sense, but it is in danger of coming close to it when the ordination is operated by conference officials and other ordained ministers, who are detached from the local

¹⁶¹⁴ D. Jankiewicz, ‘The Problem of Ordination’, 2013, p. 22.

congregation, and when the ordination is bestowed upon individuals who function as administrators or institutional heads without a vital congregational environment (this has been a matter of debate, however, and the GC spring meeting in 1985 voted that ‘men not be ordained unless in true ministerial work’ – cf. 4.6.5).

9. *Successive ordination:* The Roman Catholic Church applies the principle of service in lower orders and a gradual promotion to higher orders.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church applies at least five different categories of ‘ministers’, one for the male ministers (Intern, Licensed Minister, Ordained Minister), and one for the female ministers (Commissioned Minister’s License and Commissioned Minister’s Credential), and in both cases a minister is ‘raised’ to a higher level of authority after a certain period of time in the ‘lower’ rank. This bears some superficial resemblance with Roman Catholic practices of successive ordination.

We might continue and consider the ceremony of ordination, for example, by noting the many similarities between Seventh-day Adventist ordination and the guidelines published by Martin Luther, in which there were several clear parallels with the Roman Catholic medieval rituals (4.4.1.1).

However, the point that is made here is that the Seventh-day Adventist Church should review its practices and terminology of ordination in general, making them more genuinely biblical and taking on board an abundance of spiritual counsel from Ellen White. This will be reflected in our recommendations to the church in chapter 7.

4.7 Summary and Conclusions

The central conclusion of our review of ordination in the history of the Christian church is that Christian tradition after the New Testament has deviated from the teachings of the Bible. Ministry and ‘ordination’ in the Bible was not understood, taught, or heeded. A portion of this heritage has become accepted in the Seventh-day Adventist understanding and practice of ordination, mainly because it was treated as a practical rather than a theological issue. A reform of ordination that brings it closer to the teaching of particularly the New Testament and is informed and guided by the theme of the Bible as a whole will assist Seventh-day Adventists in living up to its creed: the Bible, and the Bible alone. As this will be decisive in the

end-time conclusion of the conflict between God and his enemies, this reformation needs to be implemented urgently in order to bring a full and inclusive release of all 'servants and ministers' of God in bringing the gospel to the world and fulfil the task of the church in God's great mission.

1. The Biblical Background

The New Testament speaks in very simple terms about church offices and 'ordination' (3.1.3; 3.5). Church leaders such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers were appointed or called by God and equipped with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In the local church, a model emerges which resembles the Jewish diasporic synagogal system with an 'overseer' (*episkopos*) and a 'servant' (*diakonos*), and with a body of 'presbyters/elders' (*presbyteroi*) in charge of the administration of the local church organisation. There is no record of overseers or servants being 'ordained', but there are hints at some form of appointment of 'presbyters/elders' in local churches. The concept of 'ordination' associated with the English term is, however, not found in the Bible, but emerges in the second century in the Christian church as this originally foreign concept in Christian thought is taken over from the administrative, cultic, and legal terminology of the Roman Empire.

2. The Post-Biblical Church

In the early church of the apostolic fathers, a development begins which culminates in the Medieval hegemony of the Roman Catholic Church:

(a) the 'appointment' (*cheirotomia*) for office (i.e. the New Testament concept) becomes 'ordination' by the introduction of Roman (Latin) terminology;

(b) a clear distinction between the ordained clergy and the laity is adopted, which threatens the biblical doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and which derives from the classification of Roman society, both population and officials, according to 'orders';

(c) the bishop becomes hierarchically the supreme office and only the bishop gets the power to ordain, while the biblical two offices (overseer/elder, servant) expand to three (bishop, elder/priest, deacon);

(d) in his ordination, the bishop is ranked as part of an unbroken apostolic succession from Christ, which at first has to do with the appropriate transmission of true Christian teachings and later becomes a status or rank of 'holy order';

(e) the models and practices of ordination in the Roman civil and religious administration are transferred to the church, at first by Tertullian and Cyprian to 'contextualise' the church in the Roman culture, then through Constantine's elevation of the church to being the state religion; and finally through the rediscovery of the *corpus iuris civilis* ca. 1200, where the administrative and legal material of pagan Rome was preserved;

(f) ordination becomes a 'sacrament', which is a Roman term for a pledge or commitment to an 'order' and with the addition of the doctrine of the transubstantiation, ordination becomes a rite that makes the bishop/priest a sacrificial priest who performs the sacrifice of Christ and distributes his merits (salvation) to the world;

(g) ordination becomes an act which conveys spiritual power, divine grace, and a *character indelibilis* to the ordinand and changes him once and for all.

In view of these and many other profound changes, the historical conceptual baggage of the term 'ordination' is considerable.

3. Roman Catholic Ordination

Ordination in the Roman Catholic Church became a procedure of ceremonial appointment applied to higher orders of church offices. It became an act of 'officiation', i.e. an induction to or instalment in a particular office. Each ordination – of the bishop, presbyter (gradually referred to as 'priest'), or deacon – was a conferral of a defined status, spiritual power, and ecclesiastical authority. In all these respects, the church was strongly influenced by the pagan Roman practice of ordination for magisterial and sacerdotal orders, through concepts and terminology introduced by Tertullian and Cyprian. The church was seen as presided over by Christ as high priest according to the Old Testament passages of ritual consecration of priests and Levites. Clement and Irenaeus had applied models of ordination to Christian ministry that were originally integrated with the temple theology in ancient Israel. Cyprian expanded Tertullian's concept of the Christian 'priest' as the Roman *sacerdos* by developing the theology of priesthood through a large-scale application of the Old Testament priestly language to the ministry of a Christian pastor. The Apostolic Constitutions (375-380 A.D.) codified this priestly understanding of ordination. The personal authority of Moses, which was transferred to Joshua, was also used as a basis for conferring spiritual power to the ordinand by imposition of

the bishop's hands. Ultimately, this *resulted in a wide separation of the clergy and the laity in the church*, which violates the New Testament teaching of the priesthood of all believers, but which had antecedents in pagan Rome and its distinction between *ordo et plebs* ('order and the people'). The first ordination ceremony along the lines briefly outlined here is described in Hippolytus' Roman ritual from around 200 A.D.

4. The Reformation

In the Reformation, ordination lost its sacramental status and was liberated from Roman ecclesiology. However, through the political dependence of the Reformers on civil authorities, ordination *continued* to function as a means to regulate authority in the state-church coalition. It *continued* to be used by the state to govern the people and preserved the gap between clergy and laity. It *continued* to preserve an authoritative body of leaders inducted by ordination, because of fears for the doctrinal and organisational unity of the church. Since ordination no longer conferred a *character indelibilis* on the ordinand, the power of the clergy centred less on him personally, and more on his function as an authority on the Word. Thus, the theological education of the minister became a central concern, as a means of equipping him for ministry. The theological knowledge became a power that was used in the authoritative position to which ordination inducted the appointee.

The historical material reviewed in the present chapter reveals that *the breach with Rome was not consistent in the Reformation*. This conclusion should not come as a surprise to Seventh-day Adventists. We see ourselves as part of the continuing reformation of the Christian Church, and we have many examples of how the Protestant Reformation was incomplete. To the doctrines of the Sabbath and state of the dead, among others, we may also add the theology of ordination. Luther recognised that it is *not ordination* which creates or validates the office, but *the appointment*. If this simple biblical recognition had been further explored with an open mind in seeking to understand the Bible (not proving already held views), an abundant material for guidance to the church would have become apparent, as we have seen in chapter 3.

5. The Protestant Churches

While the theology of ordination changed in the Reformation, many elements of the practice of ordination did not. As a popular and visible ceremony that all could see, it lived its own life, and its link with the theology of the Bible as a whole was not understood or sought.

Ordination in the Reformation was generally relegated to the area of *adiaphora*, and the biblical support for the continued practice was not stringently heeded. While it was acknowledged that the Bible did not include any commands from the Lord regarding ordination, and merely *fragmentary* examples from the time of the apostles could be adduced with the conclusion that it is 'likely' that they used imposition of hands for ordination, the needs for (a) order, government, unity, and true teaching, and (b) safeguarding the people's respect for the dignity of ministry, resulted in a continued church tradition in which semi-sacramental rituals of ordination with imposition of hands prevailed, inducting ministers or priests to a status and function above the laity.

We noted in Luther's, Calvin's, and Bucer's understanding of ordination, as well as in all the Protestant church organisations that developed after them, that elements of the practice of ordination from the pre-Reformation era survived and thrived. We noted in some detail how these practices continued in Presbyterianism, Anglicanism, Methodism, and in the Baptist movement. We followed the history to North America in the early nineteenth century when the first indigenous American religious denomination developed, namely the Christians or the Christian Connexion (4.4.5), where James White and Joseph Bates, and many more of the pioneers were members during the Millerite era.

In a separate section, we studied the peculiar translation of the ordination passages in the Bible in the King James Version (1611) and its enormous influence (4.5). The reliance on the Catholic tradition of ordination and terminology in this thoroughly 'Anglican' translation of the Bible influenced Protestant churches for centuries.

6. Ordination in Seventh-day Adventism

James White was baptized in the Christian Connexion in 1837 at sixteen years of age and ordained as a minister in the same church in 1843 when he was twenty-one. He would have brought along the following ideas about ordination into the Millerite movement and the Sabbatarian Adventism:

1. Ordination was based on congregational approval and done by prayer and imposition of hands (a conference organisation might also have had a say, if there was one).

2. Ordination was not a condition for preaching and teaching, for that gift was given by the Spirit of the Lord, i.e. the 'ordination by God'. Formal ordination by the church through prayer and the imposition of hands gave the *authority* by the church to administer the New Testament ordinances of baptism and holy communion and to act as a leader with the authority received by knowledge of the word of God and a character that reflected the life of Christ.

3. Ordained ministers were a guarantee for church order and unity, and served as protectors of true biblical teaching and preaching.

4. Ordination was performed by the already ordained ministers and elders. This included a 'succession' of spiritual authority conferred on the ordinand, which separated clergy from laity.

5. While James White would have been familiar with the occurrence of female preachers in the Christian Connexion, even women being ordained, he may not have had a determined view regarding the ordination of women as ministers. Because of the view that the Spirit would equip both men and women to speak, preach and teach the Word of God, however, this circumstance would not prevent him from accepting as appropriate his wife Ellen's messages from the Lord.

Ordination was introduced among the Sabbatarian Adventists mainly to bring order, unity, and to protect the teaching of the Word in the 1850's. James White underlined that 'men who are called of God to teach and baptize should be ordained or set apart to the work of ministry by the laying on of hands'. He denied that the church has power to call men to ministry, or that ordination makes them ministers of Jesus Christ – this is only in Christ's hands. He refers to 'the order of the gospel' (i.e. the authority of the Bible) as the only reason for ordination and its *practical* motives emerging from *the current needs of the mission* of the Sabbatarian Adventist movement, namely, 'the spiritual good of the flock' and the unity of the church.

James and Ellen White's view of ordination in the early 1850's may be summarised as follows:

1. The use of the term 'ordain' is based on the King James Version, and there is a clear reflection of the practice of ordination in the Christian Connexion where James White had been ordained in 1843.

2. The New Testament is the sole source of biblical guidance for ordination. The Old Testament consecrations for the priesthood are completely ignored.

3. Ordination is based on a biblical 'gospel order' established by God in His Word and by Christ in His church, which, if the church follows it, will bring blessings, unity, fellowship, love, and strength to the church. It will, above all, protect the church from false and divisive teaching and forward the work of mission.

4. The fundamental condition of ordination is that of being called by God and Christ. The church does not have the power to *call* members to ministry, and neither the ordination ceremony nor the status of being ordained *makes* them ministers of Jesus Christ.

5. The qualifications of an ordinand are extremely important.

6. The manner of ordination is 'being set apart to the work of the ministry by the laying on of hands' (the only quoted texts are 1 Timothy 4:11-16 and 2 Timothy 1:6; KJV). The ritualistic or 'sacramental' aspect of imposition of hands is explicitly abrogated. The acceptance of imposition of hands, besides being found in Paul's letters to Timothy, may also be explained by the circumstance that ordination was a known, firm institution in the churches that the Adventists had left. In fact, simple ordination ceremonies seem to have been in use among the Sabbatarian Adventists already for some time when James White wrote his article by the end of 1853.

7. The imposition of hands is done on behalf of the whole church which in this way gives its approval of the ordinand's qualifications for ordination, recognises the ordained minister as a representative and spokesperson of the church, and sympathises with him and includes him in prayer.

8. There are no references to biblical passages regarding the headship of males as opposed to females. By the quotation of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and the comments made on this passage, it is implied, however, that an ordinand is thought of as a male. However, although he comments on each detail in this passage, James White makes no reference to the phrase 'the husband of one wife'. Instead, the lengthiest comment is made on the ability to 'rule your own house' as a condition for ordination, thus suggesting that the ability to govern while being blameless is the key ingredient here. (Note our exegesis of 1 Timothy 3:1-13 in 3.1.3.11.)

In the history of ordination in the Seventh-day Adventist Church after 1863, the basic practical and Bible-based model of James White remained as a core model. It was however embellished by ecclesiological presumptions and practices

from the denominations and sects which the Sabbatarians had left. This led to an inclusion of practices that had an incomplete biblical support and derived from the Protestant traditions regarding ordination which, in important respects, preserved elements of the Roman Catholic practice. This has been summarised by David Trim as follows:

(a) 'The Seventh-day Adventist understanding of what ordination signified, both in general, and in the particular context of ministers, *developed relatively quickly* and then remained remarkably stable and consistent for at least the first half of our history.'

(b) 'It is notable that early Adventists did not theorize that much about ordination; *their theology of ordination to some extent has to be worked out from their practice*. Because of this, *where our pioneers perpetuated attitudes and practices of other churches it is not always clear when they had first subjected them to scrutiny and decided to keep them because they were biblical, and when they simply were continuing in the ways they had been brought up to think and act*.

(c) 'In the 1850s, to be sure, Adventists gave *sustained critical attention to Biblical passages on organization*. But there is less theoretical evidence for why their practice evolved in the ways it did after 1863 and for the actions taken by GC Sessions of the 1860's, '70's and '80's. *Our founders were not impervious to the prejudices of the time and they may have not always realized how much they had inherited from the Christian past*.

(d) 'One response to the history whose contours I have sketched out would be to say that *it is not Biblical* – or rather, is *only incompletely Biblical*.'

Thus, we noted (in some detail) elements in the Seventh-day Adventist history of ordination that revealed a reliance on Christian tradition rather than the clear teaching of the Bible (4.6.3; 4.6.5).

7. Ellen White's View of Ordination

We reviewed Ellen White's view of ordination at some length (4.6.2). God's nature and mission are the fundamental theological elements in her understanding of the Bible. God's *plan of redemption* is 'the central theme of the Bible, the theme about which every other in the whole book clusters' and 'the unfolding of this wondrous theme' is 'the burden of every book and every passage of the Bible'. Our proposal that a theology of ordination should be founded on the concept of the Mission of God

(the Great Controversy, or the Plan of Redemption) is therefore in harmony with Ellen White's view.

God's nature and mission are also the elements that determine her view of the church. The church is 'God's representative and agent of mission in the world'. In accordance with the concept of the priesthood of believers, all members of the church represent God and function as his agents of mission to the lost world.

By the divine process of ordination in its widest sense, people are called by God, equipped with his Spirit, wisdom and skills, confirmed by and before the church as servants of God and representatives of the church for the salvation of the world and witnessing to the universe – all this being part of God's great mission.

Together, the formally ordained minister and the non-ordained church members represent (a) God, whose intention is to demonstrate his justice, love and grace to the universe, and (b) Christ, who in his dual nature unifies the divine with all humanity and binds the family on earth together with the family in heaven. Thus, God's justice and love will be vindicated by his called-out people, reflecting his original intent in creating humans in his image, as man and woman, and in restoring the harmonious partnership by man and woman as equals.

Men and women do the work of gospel ministry most efficiently and credibly by working together as 'God's helping hands': 'Every man and every woman has a work to do for the Master' and their 'personal consecration and sanctification to God' is what matters. In gospel ministry, therefore, gender is not the issue, but the personal consecration to God and the commitment to serve him in his mission: 'Who can better represent the religion of Christ than Christian women, women who are earnestly labouring to bring souls to the light of truth?'

Every Christian is intrinsically 'a priest for God'. In a spiritual sense, and formally through baptism, every Christian is 'ordained' by God to this 'believer priesthood'. Formal ordination by the church is not a condition for serving God in ministry. 'Profession and position is nothing', but being filled with the Spirit and character of Christ are the needed requirements for a gospel minister (4.6.2.4).

The 'ordination' for the believer ministry is from God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Within this general ministry, special ministries could also exist, such as Ellen White's own prophetic ministry. Other special ministries could include women, even the gospel ministry, being formally marked by the laying on of hands. A careful consideration of the context in which she wrote her famous statement in 1895, that

women should be ordained by the laying on of hands, shows that she is referring to gospel ministry in large cities and according to Luke 14:12-14, not merely how we today would define the work of a deaconess.¹⁶¹⁵

The ordination by God is more important than the ordination ceremony. Formal ordination is an external means of public appointment for a position of trust which conveys the church's authority and *confirms* God's call and Christ's authority which have *already been given*. Thus, an implication of Ellen White's view of ordination is that the decision on ordaining women may be made by the church. God and Christ has already called and equipped women for ministry. What is missing is the church's formal endorsement of what God has done.

Having worked closely with her husband James during the early years when formal ordination was introduced as a means of establishing gospel order, Ellen White later on became more and more silent on the formal ordination that sets a person apart for a special service on behalf of the church. She accepted it (at a time when women had no rights to vote in political life and rarely sustained the family by a work position), but she gives primary attention to *mobilising all members for the mission of God* and warns the church not to 'tie any hands' in God's mission. *The work is enormous and the time is short, so release women as workers and ministers!*

In view of this, what is the point of a formally ordained ministry as elders or pastors? In the chapter 'A Consecrated Ministry' in *The Acts of the Apostles*, she says that 'the great Head of the church superintends His work through the instrumentality of men ordained by God to act as His representatives'. Thus, 'ordination' is closely related to church organisation. And organisation was an answer to the need for 'gospel order' in moments of crisis and need for harmony, order, and adaptability, so that the mission of God would go forward.

Ellen White also articulated the need for the church structure to be adaptable and to be at the service of the church as God's representative. This point is of vital significance to the purposes of this study. Commenting on the situation outlined in Acts 6:1-6, she pointed out that 'the apostles must now take an important step in the *perfecting of gospel order* in the church, by laying upon others some of the burdens thus far borne by themselves'.¹⁶¹⁶ This 'perfecting of the gospel order' occurred when 'the apostles were led by the Holy Spirit to outline a plan for the better organisation

¹⁶¹⁵ See 4.6.2.3, point 11.

¹⁶¹⁶ E. G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1911, p. 89 (emphasis supplied).

of all the working forces of the church'.¹⁶¹⁷ Thus, ordination as part of gospel order might well be *changed*. She says:

[The] organisation of the church in Jerusalem was to serve as a model for the organisation of churches in every place where messengers of truth should win converts to the gospel. Later in the history of the early church, when in various parts of the world many groups of believers were formed into churches, *the organization of the church was further perfected*, so that order and harmonious action might be maintained.¹⁶¹⁸

This quotation indicates that changes to the organisation of the church (as in a new ordained ministry) were made as new needs were recognised. Thus, the early Adventist church organisation had not achieved a static rigidity. The earlier organisational structure could be 'perfected' if, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, members and leaders thought it needed to be modified. This understanding of the adaptability, or the further 'perfecting', of the organisational structure of the church, gives an important explanation of how early Seventh-day Adventists viewed the development of their model of church governance:¹⁶¹⁹ *the perfecting of gospel order* was a recurring principle in the development of the church structure.¹⁶²⁰

From Ellen White's understanding of the principles of (a) order and harmony and (b) being adaptable to new needs, 'the church can determine, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which ministries are beneficial and who is to function as an officer of the church'.¹⁶²¹ *Thus, the ordination of officers becomes a function of the church rather than the church being a function of the officers.*

According to Ellen White's reading of the Bible, the ordained ministry has a God-ordained purpose.¹⁶²² For this reason, Ellen White also cautioned that an ordained minister should be carefully selected and she gave strong emphasis on the qualifications for being formally ordained.

The primary and most important requirements are being called by God and spiritually 'ordained' by Christ. Here she sees no difference between men and women. Rather, in some respects, she elevates women as being superior to men. As she talks about the ministers' personal abilities, she says: 'They must be thinking

¹⁶¹⁷ Ibid., p. 89.

¹⁶¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 91-92 (emphasis supplied).

¹⁶¹⁹ D. Fortin, 'Ordination in the Writings of Ellen G. White', 1998, p. 121.

¹⁶²⁰ A. Mustard, *James White and SDA Organization: Historical Development, 1844-1991*, 1987, pp. 134, 171-172, 221-222, 231-232.

¹⁶²¹ D. Fortin, 'Ordination in the Writings of Ellen G. White', 1998, p. 122.

¹⁶²² E. G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, 1923, p. 52; id., *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, 1885-1909, p. 615.

men, men who bear God's impress and who are steadily progressing in holiness, in moral dignity, and in an understanding of their work. They must be praying men.'¹⁶²³ Each of these capacities, she also sees being present in women. What holds the women back is the common understanding in society and in the church that it is inappropriate for a woman to serve as the head in a position of authority. Ellen White accepted this view, but she did not teach it as the will of God, except in some situations when she applied it to the home and the marriage.

Ellen White held *two views of women in ministry*: (a) one is *in the home*, where the married woman is formally submitted to her husband who is the head of the family, but where mutual humility is the better rule, and (b) one is *in the church*, where any woman is submitted to Christ as head of the church, working side by side with her male colleagues, or husbands, or her brothers and sisters in the faith.

When Ellen White warns women against aspiring to important positions, this is the same advice she would give men, because it displays selfishness and lack of humility which is incompatible with the influence of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, she did not say that a married woman's highly respected place in the home *excludes* her deep and prolific involvement in gospel ministry. On the contrary, she believed that, if married, women should *combine* homemaking with ministry, and that there are unmarried women who also have a task in ministry (see 4.6.2.4 above).

Thus, the often heard arguments against women in church leadership based on the alleged principle of male headship and female submission are not only invalid in view of a careful study of the relevant biblical passages (3.1), but they are invalid when directed against women *per se*. The biblical counsels regarding wives' submission to husbands were motivated by the need for order and decency in a patriarchal society, and in some ways Ellen White lived in a similar setting. However, in her writings, we see that even the married woman's submission did not apply to all women, for not all women in the church are married or will be married, and not all married women have children. However, Ellen White made significant efforts to clarify that, even a married woman with children may still combine this role with an active, fruitful and God-given ministry.

Ellen White's definition of ordination is altogether pragmatic: 'it is a public recognition of divine appointment and an acknowledged form of designation to an

¹⁶²³ Id., *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 5, 1885-1909, p. 549.

appointed office'.¹⁶²⁴ Thus, the church gives authority to the ordained minister to preach the gospel, and to act in its name in the organisation of new local churches. Since only the church can authorise a believer to perform its rites, it does confer authority upon some chosen individuals through the ordination ceremony. Thus, the imposition of hands is a ceremony that serves the purpose of the church, and it is the church, guided by the Holy Spirit, which ultimately decides who is to be given authority through ordination.¹⁶²⁵

Ellen White held the view that 'the authority of an ordained minister is derived from God and conferred by the church'.¹⁶²⁶ God gives authority to teach the faith; the church gives authority to act for the church. Again, we see here the connection of her two understandings of 'ordination' – as a work of God which equips a believer to preach and teach the Word, and as a work of the church which is formal and sets believers apart for special services to the church.

Ellen White also maintains that, as a Christian, an ordained minister has not only authority to perform duties for the church (ministering to the church), but also holds *divine* authority to preach and teach the gospel and serve as God's ambassador. However, this divine authority is fundamentally related to being part of the priesthood of all believers and not conveyed by ordination.¹⁶²⁷ This function is, so to say, God's ordination of all believers for mission, witnessing and evangelism.

Ellen White allowed for the church to decide on whether some people, other than 'pastoral gospel ministers', should be set apart by ordination for other ministries. We have seen that the Seventh-day Adventist Church decided that besides pastors, local church elders and deacons should be ordained. However, Ellen White went further than that and recommended that people should be ordained by the imposition of hands *for various kinds of ministries*. The theological basis for this view was (a) *the priesthood of all believers*, and (b) the belief that the organisational church structure was *adaptable to new needs of mission*.

Another key element in her thinking was her conviction that the ordained pastoral ministry alone was *insufficient* to fulfil God's commission to the church and that God, therefore, is calling believers of all professions to dedicate their lives to his

¹⁶²⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶²⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶²⁶ D. Fortin, 'Ordination in the Writings of Ellen G. White', 1998, p. 126.

¹⁶²⁷ Ibid.

service. *The mission of God is the overarching principle, not the traditional rite of ordination.*

Thus, we detect in her thinking on ordination (a) elements of *urgency* in view of the impending coming of the Lord and the vast task of global mission, of (b) calling for greater *efficiency* and the need for mobilising all the people of God to fulfil His mission and mandate to the church, and of (c) branching out in a *variety of ministries* to benefit from expertise, experience and giftedness.

On the one hand, Ellen White's understanding of some key New Testament passages on ordination seems to follow Christian tradition. However, these readings were commonly accepted among Christians in her time and her purpose was, it seems, not to bring new light on exegetical issues but to build up faith and encourage mission. What is much more significant for our purposes, however, is the fact that she grasped the vital point in the Bible regarding 'ordination', namely that it was carried out in the New Testament church *for a variety of functions, in a variety of contexts*, and that the rite of imposition of hands was in fact used *for many different purposes*, such as blessing, healing, baptism and being set apart for official functions as well as particular commissions. Thus, ordination in Ellen White's understanding is not by any means exclusively reserved for induction to the pastoral gospel ministry, but it is an expression by the church that sets people apart for a divinely assigned ministry, indicated by the ordinand's faithfulness, ability and character, as well as spiritual gifts and divine appointment. The implications of this view are significant.

According to Ellen White, 'the church can branch out into different kinds of ministries to meet the needs of the people'. Thus, for example, she argued in favour of the ordination of medical missionaries and women in ministry. The work of the medical profession was seen as an effective means of proclaiming the gospel and, for that reason, medical missionaries should be ordained for ministry.¹⁶²⁸ Thus, Ellen White makes an analogy between the 'sacred setting apart' of the medical missionary and the minister of the gospel. Since the role of the physician is one of function rather than status in the church structure, there is no implication here of a gender issue, but, if accepted as a principle, male as well as a female physicians would be ordained in the same way. Denis Fortin says: 'To sacredly set apart a medical missionary is viewed as a form of "ordination" in which the church

¹⁶²⁸ E. G. White, *Evangelism*, 1946, p. 546 (emphasis supplied).

acknowledges the blessings of God upon the chosen individual and serves as a means of strengthening the dedication of the worker in his service for God.¹⁶²⁹

Ellen White also favoured that women in gospel ministry be also set apart by prayer and imposition of hands, in other words, that *women in gospel ministry be ordained for their task*. The point to be made here is that her fundamental reason for supporting the setting apart of women and medical missionaries is in keeping with her view on *the adaptability of church structures and orders* to meet new needs in *accomplishing the mission of God*, which is part of his plan of redemption in the context of the Great Controversy and the impending coming of the Lord. Fortin describes her view in these terms: 'Under the guidance of God, the church can and should branch out in its methods of labour by setting apart in ordination Christians serving in various ministries.'¹⁶³⁰ Thus, in making the following statements, Ellen White instructed the Seventh-day Adventist Church that God is leading the Church in this direction and that it is God's will for the Church to 'branch out', to be strengthened and built up by ordination of women who labour in the gospel ministry:

*There are women who should labour in the gospel ministry ... We need men and women who understand the reasons for our faith and who realize the work to be done in communicating truth, and who will refuse to speak any words that will weaken the confidence of any soul in the Word of God or destroy the fellowship that should exist between those of like faith.*¹⁶³¹

Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. *They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands*. In some cases they will need to counsel with the church officers or the minister; but if they are devoted women, maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in the church. *This is another means of strengthening and building up the church. We need to branch out more in our methods of labour. Not a hand should be bound, not a soul discouraged, not a voice should be hushed; let every individual labour, privately or publicly, to help forward this grand work*. Place the burdens upon men and women of the church that they may grow by reason of the exercise, and thus become effective agents in the hand of the Lord for the enlightenment of those who sit in darkness.¹⁶³²

Ellen White's view of women's ordination to the gospel ministry seems to be that, on the one hand, she was 'very cautious' and 'never encouraged church officials to

¹⁶²⁹ D. Fortin, 'Ordination in the Writings of Ellen G. White', 1998, p. 127.

¹⁶³⁰ Ibid., p. 128.

¹⁶³¹ E. G. White, *Evangelism*, 1946, p. 472 (emphasis supplied).

¹⁶³² Id., 'The Duty of the Minister and the People', 1895, p. 434 (emphasis supplied).

depart from the general customs of the church in those matters',¹⁶³³ and, on the other hand, she never stated, as far as we know, that women should not be ordained; in fact, she seems to have become increasingly concerned with spiritual and gifted women's involvement in the ministry and mission of the church, especially towards the later part of her life.

Her cautious attitude is perfectly understandable in view of the conventional gender roles at the time and the ecclesiastical structure developing in the Seventh-day Adventist Church (4.6.3). Her primary focus would be on spiritual unity within the church and efficient mission to the lost. Issues of female ordination could possibly have damaged both internal unity and led to loss of trust in the gospel among unbelievers at the time. How sensitive she was on this point, although the issue related to dress reform, is revealed by this statement:

No occasion should be given to unbelievers to reproach our faith. We are considered odd and singular, and should not take a course to lead unbelievers to think us more so than our faith requires us to be.¹⁶³⁴

It is clear, however, that in several statements she opens the door for women to do ministry and even to be set apart by the imposition of hands. This topic has already been comprehensively explored by others, and we have summarised those findings (4.6.2.3). In brief, she issued the following advice:

1. She often and always positively used the term 'Ministry' with reference to women.
2. She underlined the need, legitimacy, and divine mandate for women in ministry.
3. She provided role descriptions for women in ministry.
4. She recommended supporting roles for women in team ministry.
5. She recommended that women would minister as teachers.
6. She referred to 'women who should be engaged in the ministry'.
7. She recommended that women could serve as pastors.
8. She talked about 'women who should do pastoral labour'.
9. She referred to women 'pastors to the flock of God'.
10. She stated in no uncertain terms that women are 'adapted to the successful management of the Church'.
11. She recommended, for certain forms of gospel ministry, that women be 'set apart by prayer and laying on of hands'.

The following additional comments to this list deserve careful attention:

¹⁶³³ See the correspondence between Ellen White's secretary, Clarence Crisler, and Mrs. L. E. Cox, March 12, 22, and June 16, 1916 in id., *Daughters of God: Messages Especially for Women*, 1998, pp. 253-255 .

¹⁶³⁴ Id., *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 420.

1. The combined talents of both men and women are essential for the highest success in the work of the ministry. Therefore the ideal is team ministry, especially by husband-and-wife ministerial teams.

2. The list of roles open to women in gospel ministry embraces a wide range of job descriptions and vocational options, including preaching, teaching, pastoral care, evangelistic work, literature evangelism, Sabbath School leadership, chaplaincy, counselling, and church administration.

3. Ellen White believed that the spiritual gifts of pastoring and teaching (Eph. 4:11) are given by the Holy Spirit to both men and women, and some women possess gifts and abilities for the 'successful management' of churches. (We would add here the recognition that men and women may have 'good administrative powers'.)

4. Her most strongly worded recommendations regarding women in ministry was that self-sacrificing wives who join their husbands in team ministry should receive wages proportionate to the time they devote to ministry. The issue of fair pay for every ministerial wife who chooses to devote herself to ministry rather than to some other profession was certainly a higher priority with Ellen White than ordination; yet her strong denunciations of paying only the male half of the ministerial team are still, with a few isolated exceptions, largely disregarded by the Church. (It certainly gives cause for reflection that decision-makers in the Church assigns great importance to what Ellen White *did not say* about women's ordination to the gospel ministry, while completely ignoring what she *did say* about fair pay for ministerial wives.)

5. Ellen White recommended the ordination of lay women to a local ministry that would meet the needs of the sick, the young, and the poor. Thus she showed her understanding that ordination is an ordinance of appointment that may rightly be conducted for both men and women, and this includes prayer and the imposition of hands.

The question remains: Since Ellen White believed ordination is important for laywomen in a ministry to physical and emotional needs, would she also see some form of ordination as important for women who are labourers 'in word and doctrine'? In Ellen White's view, it is clear that a woman's place in ministry is secure. Thus,

even if 'the hands of ordination have not been laid upon her, she is accomplishing a work that is in the line of ministry'.¹⁶³⁵

In a concluding analysis of a remarkable letter from 1901 (4.6.2.4), we have demonstrated how Ellen White defines the faithful performance of the mission of God and the mission of Christ as the very core of the church. She states here that an *unordained* minister (man or woman), (a) who fulfils the ministry of Christ, (b) who is 'ordained' by God through the Holy Spirit and 'anointed' to preach good tidings, like Christ, and (c) who is 'consecrated' by the presence of 'doing of works of love and mercy', is not only of *greater* value to God and his church than an ordained minister who fails to represent Christ, but is of *supreme* value to the mission of God, as his helping hand. Thus, neither *gender* nor *ordination* of a minister matters. What matters is the person's full integration in God's mission through Christ's presence.

It is in this context of thought that we need to understand her concluding statement in 1901 where she applies God's promise in Isaiah to men and women who function as God's helping hand in the ministry of the Church:

Of those [men and women] who act as *His helping hand*, the Lord says, 'Ye shall be named *Priests* of the Lord; men shall call you the *Ministers* of our God'. (Isa. 61:6).

Ellen White unifies clergy and laity, men and women, and perceives them as *one* in God's ministry. She invokes his promise through Isaiah as fulfilled when men and women function as '*priests* of the Lord and *ministers* of our God'. This understanding is rooted in the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel on the day of Pentecost, which defines the church as one body upon which God 'pours out [his] Spirit on [his] servants, both men and women, and they will prophesy' (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:15-21).

Guided by Ellen White's teachings, the Church must choose its grounds for issuing credentials for the gospel ministry: on traditional grounds of dubious historical origin, as our study has amply and consistently demonstrated, or on the grounds of what the Bible reveals as the will of God in accomplishing his mission of salvation.

¹⁶³⁵ E. G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 5, p. 323.

CHAPTER 5:

A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF ORDINATION

Based on our biblical and historical study, we outline here the essence of a biblical theology of ordination. We will first briefly review the work already done within the Seventh-day Adventist Church (5.1) and explain in what way our proposal is ‘biblical’ (5.2). We then proceed to The Mission of God (5.3), The Mission of Christ (5.4), The Mission of the Church (5.5), Ministry (5.6), Church Offices (5.7), and a Summary Statement (5.8).

5.1 Seventh-day Adventist Theology of Ordination since the 1960’s

When *The Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* was published in 1966, it included an article on ‘ordination’,¹⁶³⁶ which was reprinted in the second edition 1976. It firmly outlined the three offices of ministers, local elders and deacons, and provided the following ‘biblical reasons for the SDA Practice’:

(a) The ‘ordination’ of Joshua by Moses (Num. 27:18-19) with a reference also to the ‘ordination’ of the Levites in Numbers 8:10-11, and

(b) The ‘appointment’ of Paul and Barnabas in Antioch for their first missionary journey (Acts 13:3) with references to Acts 6:6; 1 Timothy 4:14; 5:22, 2 Timothy 1:6; and Titus 1:5.

The article was considerably expanded in the 1996 edition with added sections on the issues of women’s ordination, the unfortunate translations of the Greek common verbs for ‘appoint’ with ‘ordain’ in the King James Version, and the origin of the concept of ‘ordination’ in pagan Rome.¹⁶³⁷

In 1978, however, Raoul Dederen attempted to provide an initial framework for a theology of ordination.¹⁶³⁸ It resurfaced as a chapter with the same title in 1984 as part of the documents submitted to the Role of Women Commission.¹⁶³⁹ Dederen’s article was reduced to a few pages and voted at the GC Annual Council in 1991 and appeared in the *Minister’s Manual* the following year.¹⁶⁴⁰ However, as one compares Dederen’s original text with the voted statement, it seems that the officially

¹⁶³⁶ *The Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, vol. 10, 1966, pp. 925-927.

¹⁶³⁷ *The Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, vol. 10:2, 1996, pp. 253-255.

¹⁶³⁸ R. Dederen, ‘A Theology of Ordination’, 1978, pp. 24K-24P.

¹⁶³⁹ Id., ‘A Theology of Ordination’, 1984, pp. 146-155; cf. id., ‘Theology of Ordination’, 1995, pp. 183-195.

¹⁶⁴⁰ *Seventh-day Adventist Minister’s Manual*, 1992, pp. 75-78.

voted document attempted to provide a biblical justification for the current practice of ordination in the Church. Neither the voted document, nor Dederen's larger document provide a developed biblical-theological investigation. Thus, the General Conference Sessions in 1990 and 1995 have dealt with issues of women's ordination without having a developed biblical-theological basis.

The latest official document which appeared on the subject in 2000, once again came from the pen of Dederen.¹⁶⁴¹ However, although Dederen deals in the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* with 'the government of the Church' and the offices and ministries of apostles, elders or presbyters (otherwise known as bishops or overseers), and deacons,¹⁶⁴² he does not address the matter of ordination as a relevant theological topic for the Church. The three-fold structure of ministry (deacon-elder-pastor), which used to be at the heart of Seventh-day Adventist ordination theology, is left out. Besides these contributions, Dederen has also published a study on the priesthood of all believers which contains ecclesiological insights that concern a theology of ordination.¹⁶⁴³

In the meantime, however, distinct calls for a theology of ordination have been made within the Church.¹⁶⁴⁴ A slightly different approach to that of Dederen was published in 1998.¹⁶⁴⁵ Russell L Staples attempted to place ordination in a wider perspective, such as the 'acts of God in Christ' and the 'mission of the church'. He starts with Christology and Eschatology as two *foci* that need to be kept in balance, but this is applied in order to understand the patterns of ordination in church history rather than providing a genuine theological context for ordination.

At the General Conferences Session in 2010, a delegate moved that the Church would study the Theology of Ordination and report to the next Session in 2015, and the motion was carried. This has led to the setting up of the Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC) in 2011, and the study process of which the present Report is a part.

¹⁶⁴¹ R. Dederen, 'Church', 2000, pp. 538-581

¹⁶⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 552-553.

¹⁶⁴³ R. Dederen, 'The Priesthood of [All] Believers', 1998, pp. 1-16.

¹⁶⁴⁴ See, for example, T. H. Blincoe, 'Needed – A Theology of Ordination', 1978, pp. 22-24; V. Norskov Olsen, 'Called to Be a Minister', 1995, pp. 11-17, 28, 31; C. E. Bradford, 'An Emphasis on Ministry: Is Ordination for Honor or for Service?', 1995, pp. 8-10; K. A. Burton, 'A Practical Theology of Ordination', 1996, pp. 26-27, 29; N. Vyhmeister, 'Ordination in the New Testament?', 2002, pp. 24-27.

¹⁶⁴⁵ R. L. Staples, 'A Theological Understanding of Ordination', 1998, pp. 135-154.

The papers presented to TOSC in January and July, 2013, have mainly focused on issues and details in the discussion of ordination, but in January, 2013, a group within the GC-BRI led by Angel Rodriguez presented a paper comprising fifty-five pages with the title 'Towards a Theology of Ordination'.¹⁶⁴⁶ This is an important step leading the Church forward. After a study of (a) 'the biblical passages where the laying on of hands is part of a ritual of ordination', and (b) 'the contributions of Ellen White regarding ordination', the paper concludes with a section on the theology of ordination as it derives from these two primary sources.¹⁶⁴⁷ Four sections are included: (a) God, the Church, and Laying on of Hands,¹⁶⁴⁸ (b) Ordination and the Church,¹⁶⁴⁹ (c) Nature of the Rite of Ordination,¹⁶⁵⁰ and (d) Ordained to Serve.¹⁶⁵¹

The merits of this contribution are several, for example:

1. Ordination is seen in a *wider biblical context*, especially ecclesiology.

2. Hints are made at the understanding that the church and ordination are part of a *wider divine initiative*: 'The church 'came into existence as a result of the work of the Godhead'.¹⁶⁵² God set servants apart 'to accomplish his purpose and will'.¹⁶⁵³ 'The theology of ordination establishes that the church continues to be under the leadership of Christ as its head. He is Lord over the church.'¹⁶⁵⁴

3. Beyond the work of the Godhead, there are hints at a *wider background and purpose*: 'The ordained ministry preserves order in the setting of a cosmic conflict that threatens the unity of the church, its mission, and its message'.¹⁶⁵⁵

4. The doctrine of *spiritual gifts* is given a central role.

5. It is clearly stated that the act of ordination by prayer and imposition of hands is a non-sacramental '*acknowledgement of God's presence and activity* in the life of the church in the election and call of certain individuals to ministerial service'. 'It is through the laying on of hands that those called by the Lord are officially *constituted into representatives* of the church and enabled to speak in the name of

¹⁶⁴⁶ 'Towards a Theology of Ordination', Paper Prepared by the GC Biblical Research Institute for the Theology of Ordination Study Committee, presented on January 16, 2013 (unpublished). The paper is accessible at www.adventistarchives.org/january-2013-papers-presented.

¹⁶⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 41-52.

¹⁶⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 42-43.

¹⁶⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 43-47.

¹⁶⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 47-50.

¹⁶⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 50-52.

¹⁶⁵² Ibid., p. 41.

¹⁶⁵³ Ibid., p. 43.

¹⁶⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 42-43.

¹⁶⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 43.

the Lord and to act on behalf of the church. They are invested with ecclesiastical authority delegated to them by the church.¹⁶⁵⁶

6. It is openly acknowledged that the Bible gives *little or no explicit teaching on 'ordination'* and that the Church needs to *build on biblical principles*; thus, while the Church is 'bound by the Scriptures in determining who should be ordained and to what positions', 'the problem the church confronts ... is that the cases in which the laying on of hands is mentioned in the Bible are related to particular circumstances within the apostolic church. Therefore it is difficult to create a final biblical list of individuals upon whom the laying on of hands can be performed. The New Testament nowhere *explicitly* states that church elders, pastors, and deacons should be ordained. Yet, the church has to work with the insights provided by the Scriptures.'¹⁶⁵⁷

However, what we feel is missing in this discussion paper are particularly the following elements:

1. The principle of *sola and tota Scriptura* would make it better to start from the overall theme of the Bible as a whole, and not only with ecclesiology; the question is why God needs the church and how ecclesiology relates to creation and eschatology.

2. The inclusion of principles from Ellen White's early writing on ordination, which for obvious, practical reasons emphasised gospel order, overlooks her theology of ordination, which clearly underlines the Plan of Redemption or the Great Controversy as fundamental themes (4.6.2.1).

3. The emphasis in the discussion paper on gospel order and church unity as rationale for ordination captures only the church as the community of the saved and the mission of the church to proclaim salvation; the Bible, however, provides a wider perspective.

It is our view, therefore, that Jan Barna's paper, which is planned for publication in 2013,¹⁶⁵⁸ shows a further way forward. Barna sees ordination as a part

¹⁶⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 47-50.

¹⁶⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 44-45.

¹⁶⁵⁸ J. Barna, 'Towards a Biblical-Systematic Theology of Ordination: What the Theological Constructive Task Cannot Forget', 2013, pp. 1-2.

of a wide, comprehensive biblical theme with God's mission as Creator in the centre.¹⁶⁵⁹ The nature of Barna's approach has been adopted in our Report.

5.2 The Nature of a 'Biblical' Theology

Applying the principles of a 'theological' study which Norman Gulley has proposed in his *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena* (2003), we proceed on the following assumptions:

1. A theology of ordination must begin with God and all that he is.¹⁶⁶⁰
2. A theology of ordination must keep Christ as both its centre and context.¹⁶⁶¹
3. Our information about God and Christ derives from Scripture, which is the 'sole foundation of theology'.¹⁶⁶²
4. Theology is based on dealing with the Bible as a (canonical) whole and articulating its theological significance for the present time.¹⁶⁶³

In order to make these principles practical, we follow the view advanced by Jan Barna that the interpretative process must not only include considerations relating to the *text* (exegesis) and the *reader* (application/theology), but also considerations concerning the perspective of the *author* (biblical theology), who wrote the text. Barna appropriately calls attention to the fact that 'the basic fact is that when biblical authors wrote their "texts", they wrote them already with specific thematic contexts in mind. Individual texts therefore are part of larger diachronic canonical themes which transcend even individual books of the Bible'.¹⁶⁶⁴

The grand story of the Bible has traditionally been referred to within Seventh-day Adventism as 'the Great Controversy theme'¹⁶⁶⁵ or 'the Story of Redemption'.¹⁶⁶⁶ For practical reasons, we will refer here to this overarching theme of the Bible as 'the Mission of God'.¹⁶⁶⁷ This allows us to see within the overarching *mission* (of God)

¹⁶⁵⁹ This concept is now included in the Church's intensified study of ecclesiology: see, for example, J. Moskala, 'Mission in the Old Testament', 2013, pp. 61-79; C. Wahlen, 'Mission in the New Testament', 2013, pp. 81-104. What we feel is still missing is the theme of 'the Mission of God in the Bible'.

¹⁶⁶⁰ N. T. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena*, 2003, p. 374.

¹⁶⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

¹⁶⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 139.

¹⁶⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 168-188.

¹⁶⁶⁴ J. Barna, 'Towards a Biblical-Systematic Theology of Ordination', 2013, pp. 1-2.

¹⁶⁶⁵ See E. G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, 1911.

¹⁶⁶⁶ See E. G. White, *The Story of Redemption*, 1947.

¹⁶⁶⁷ Following C. J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, 2006. The term 'mission of God' has been coined by the German missiologist Karl Hartenstein to express the idea, reflecting

both the *mission* (of Christ) and the *mission* (of the church) as part of a dynamic spiritual continuum.¹⁶⁶⁸

We are concerned here with the Seventh-day Adventist ‘creed’, maintained generally within Protestant Christianity, of the *sola, prima* and *tota Scriptura*.¹⁶⁶⁹ We propose that the thematic or theological themes within which the practice of ‘ordination’ becomes meaningful are the themes of *God’s Mission, Jesus’ Mission* and *the Church’s Mission*.¹⁶⁷⁰ Within these biblical themes the individual texts relating to ‘ordination’ can be understood in the context of the Bible as a whole and then applied in a theology of ordination.¹⁶⁷¹

5.3 The Mission of God

The Bible reveals God as Creator and Sustainer of the world. This theme is central in Genesis 1-2 but is emphatically underlined across the entire Bible.¹⁶⁷² Each text in the Bible is to be read as an expansion of this theme.¹⁶⁷³

In Genesis 1, God created the earth in six days and completed his creation by resting on the Sabbath day. The narrative conveys the impression that the created world becomes a kind of sanctuary, a dwelling place for God with the humans. Man and woman are co-dwellers with God, but they are also seen as performing the functions of ‘rulers’ and ‘priests’. The creation of man as male and female takes the pattern of a royal ‘ordination’. They are to function as priestly *mediators* of God’s presence and to *rule* as divinely instituted servants (created ‘in the image of God’) who represent God’s good rule towards the created earth.¹⁶⁷⁴

Important hints in the text show that the arrangement of the Garden of Eden resembled the later Israelite sanctuaries.¹⁶⁷⁵ In Genesis 2:8, 10, the Garden is the

Karl Barth’s suggestion, that ‘mission is grounded in an intratrinitarian movement of God himself and that it expresses the power of God over history’ to which obedience is the only appropriate response; see L. A. Hoedemaker, ‘The People of God and the Ends of the Earth,’ 1995, p. 163. For a brief survey of the history of the term, see D. J. Bosh, *Transforming Missions: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 1991, pp. 389-393.

¹⁶⁶⁸ As suggested by J. Barna, ‘Towards a Biblical-Systematic Theology of Ordination’, 2013, pp. 5-10, 10-12, and 12-16.

¹⁶⁶⁹ See chapter 2 above.

¹⁶⁷⁰ J. Barna, ‘Towards a Biblical-Systematic Theology of Ordination’, 2013, pp. 3-4.

¹⁶⁷¹ Cf. *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷² See, for example, Gen. 14:22; Ex. 20:8-11; Ps. 104; 148; Isa. 45:12, 18; Mark 13:19; Col. 1:16; Rev. 4:11; 10:6.

¹⁶⁷³ We follow Jan Barna’s exposition of the theme (*ibid.*, pp. 5-10), but have occasionally adapted and added to his text.

¹⁶⁷⁴ *Ibid.* p. 5. For details, see 3.1.1.1 in the present study.

¹⁶⁷⁵ See 3.1.1.1 and 3.1.1.2.

dwelling place of humans which is attached to Eden – the place where God is present. Several textual parallels between Eden and later sanctuaries support this view:

(a) 'Eden' as 'the Garden of God' is identified with the heavenly sanctuary in Ezekiel 28:13 (cf. Gen. 2:8, 10, 15). (b) Both Eden and later sanctuaries were entered from the East (Gen. 2:8; Ex. 27:13-16; 36:20-30; 38:13-18; 1 Kings 7:21; Ez. 47:1). (c) The activity of 'planting' (*nata*) is mentioned in connection with Eden and the sanctuaries (Gen. 2:8; Ex. 15:17; cf. 1 Chron. 17:9). (d) The tree of life was placed in the midst of (*betok*) the Garden and the living presence of God was in the midst of (*betok*) the sanctuary (Gen. 2:9; Ex. 25:8). (e) Cherubim are guarding the entrance to Eden and they are also 'guarding' the entrance to the holy of holies. (c) The Menorah in Hebrew tradition symbolised the tree of life. (d) Together, the Hebrew verbs with which God commissions humans in Genesis 2:15 ('*abad* 'to work', and *shamar*, 'to watch') are used only in sanctuary contexts within the Pentateuch. (e) Precious stones, 'gold and onyx', which are mentioned in the Garden, are also used extensively in sanctuaries. (f) The river from Eden that waters the Garden (2:10) has parallels in sanctuary symbolism and is understood as flowing from the throne of God (Rev. 22:1-5; cf. Ez. 47:1-12; Zech. 14:8; Ps. 46:5; John 7:37-39; Rev. 7:17).¹⁶⁷⁶

Thus, Israel would understand these signals in the text as suggestions of a sanctuary environment where God is present. Thus, the Garden of Eden becomes the blueprint for how the whole earth should be – a sanctuary where humans live in communion with God, as described also in the eschatological passage of Revelation 21:1-4. As mentioned already, the commission of man and woman in this sanctuary and in the missionary context of creation is their service as priestly *mediators* of God's presence. They are also to function as 'rulers' who represent the good rule of God before the created earth, and they are therefore also acting in this thematic context as 'royals' who represent God by their being created 'in his image' (Gen. 1:26-28). By their life, work, nourishment, Sabbath rest, marriage and procreation,

¹⁶⁷⁶ Barna (ibid.) refers to D. Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: Exploring God's Plan for Life on Earth*, 2008; D. T. Alexander & S. Gathercole, *Heaven on Earth: The Temple in Biblical Theology*, 2004; and G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 2004. This understanding has been summarised in R. M. Davidson, 'Should Women Be Ordained as Pastors? Old Testament Considerations', 2013, pp. 17-20, 45-47.

they are to *mediate* God's kingship and his presence with his created beings.¹⁶⁷⁷ Man and woman are *God's servants* or ministers.

This ideal is however *narrowed down* in the Bible by at least three turns of events: the Fall of humanity, the Election of Israel, and the Kingdom of the line of David.

The First Narrowing of the Mission of God Theme: The Fall (Gen. 3). Straightaway after introducing the grand blueprint mission, the Bible story takes an unexpected turn. In Genesis 3, the Bible introduces a change to the status and condition of humanity who are now unable to provide what was originally expected of them. The man is not in a position to extend God's presence, because he is now hiding from it.¹⁶⁷⁸

The serpent brings disunity between God and humanity. He convinces man and woman that they are not made for what God told them, because, he says, they are actually equal to God, and, hence, their purpose and mission is higher than what God has ordained for them. The consequences are that, tragically, humanity pulls out of God's mission blueprint.

Within this 'secondary context', the theme of the mission of God is to 'undo the human-divine disunity'. Human existence continues with pain and toil leading to death, but God is faithful to his blessing on man and woman (created 'in his image') and provides them with some limited safeguards (Gen. 3:16-22; cf. 3.1.1.3). However, the key mission purpose of God is to address the power of evil brought by the serpent. At the very heart of his mission is the purpose stated in Genesis 3:15, where God presents an embryonic statement about the woman's seed' (Hebrew *zera'*), i.e. an individual representing humanity, at first thought to be the patriarch Israel and his people but later acknowledged and proclaimed as Messiah-Christ and his people. This promised 'seed' would come from the woman, who is not cursed in the first part of God's sentence of her (Gen. 3:16a-b). The ability to procreate, which is now central to God's plan, is guarded by their marriage which is based on the wife's 'desire for her husband' (3:16c) and his 'being responsible for and caring for her needs' (3:16d).¹⁶⁷⁹ Thus, the woman's seed will defeat the serpent (representing the evil power opposed to God), his lies and what he brought to the world. The

¹⁶⁷⁷ J. Barna, 'Towards a Biblical-Systematic Theology of Ordination', 2013, pp. 5-6.

¹⁶⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁶⁷⁹ See 3.1.1.3.

promised seed will bring back harmony, and God will once again be present and made known in the world. Thus, God's mission is channelled through Adam's and Eve's broken humanity,¹⁶⁸⁰ and God underlines this by dressing them after the Fall in garments of skin, which was the special outward sign of priestly dignity (3.1.1.3).

The theme further develops from Genesis 3 through specific attention being given to 'seed-line' characters that are followed with dogmatic attention from generation to generation in Genesis 5-11. This line starts with Seth (second generation) and going through Enoch (seventh) and Noah (tenth) and eventually ending with Abraham (twentieth). When Abraham appears on the scene, the mission theme returns to being more focused and specific.¹⁶⁸¹

The Second Narrowing of the Mission-of-God Theme: Israel (Gen. 12 and Ex. 19). Abraham is commanded to be a blessing to other nations, and God promises that he will become a nation. His mission will be to extend to the world the 'blessing',¹⁶⁸² which is an echo of the creation ideal,¹⁶⁸³ and is also reflected in the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11:10-32, in the table of nations in Genesis 10, and in the blessing of Noah and his sons in Genesis 9:1.¹⁶⁸⁴

The seed-line, as promised, multiplies itself over time into the nation of Israel, and the words and actions of this seed-line nation are now seen in the light of the Abrahamic commission. The function of Israel is no different from Abraham's or the first human beings for that matter. Israel is a collective seed of Abraham and Adam/Eve, and is now operating on a 'global' scale as a nation among the nations of the world. They are to de-mask the lies about God, tell the true story of God, share God's presence and extend his good rule to other nations (the earth is turned into a world of nations in Gen. 10-11).¹⁶⁸⁵ Much later in the history of Israel, through the prophet Isaiah, God would define Israel as being set as a light to the nations (Isa. 42:6; 49:6).

The passage in Exodus 19:1-6 becomes theologically significant within the theme of Israel. Here, the people of God are given the same title that was implied for Adam and Eve – 'kingdom of priests'. The people of Israel are to be a royal

¹⁶⁸⁰ Although we follow Barna (ibid., p. 7) in the general drift of this paragraph, we have – with his approval – embellished his text by the findings in our study in 3.1.1.3.

¹⁶⁸¹ Cf. ibid., p.7.

¹⁶⁸² Gen. 12:1-3; 15; 17.

¹⁶⁸³ Gen. 1:28; 2:18, 23; 3:15-16.

¹⁶⁸⁴ Cf. D. J. A. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch*, 1984, pp. 66-69.

¹⁶⁸⁵ J. Barna, 'Towards a Biblical-Systematic Theology of Ordination', 2013, p. 7.

priesthood and to function as ‘priests’ and ‘royals’, just as man and woman were commissioned in the creation.¹⁶⁸⁶

Therefore, as we trace the development of the theme in Genesis-Exodus, it is no surprise that it ends with instructions for building a tabernacle (sanctuary) where God would dwell and Israel would meet him. The seven-fold account of the construction of the sanctuary in Exodus is repeating the seven-fold creation account in 1:1-2:4a, as if it intends to say that God is making a new attempt to live with his people.¹⁶⁸⁷ Thus, Exodus 25:8 forms the climax of this thematic context: ‘And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them’. This message is repeated in Exodus 29:45-46, in connection with the ‘ordination’ of the Aaronic priests in the sanctuary (3.2.4): ‘And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the Lord their God.’¹⁶⁸⁸

Israel can now know God at close range and they are to share his presence and good rule. This was God’s mission goal in the creation and the blueprint of the Garden of Eden. Israel is now the centre from where God’s grace and good rule will spread to the whole world (later on envisaged, for example, in Isa. 2:2-4 and many royal Psalms). Theologically, this context frames all that Israel will do, including the ‘ordination’ and specific cultic commission of the Levites and the priestly descendants of Aaron.¹⁶⁸⁹ As priests and servants, they will operate within the thematic and theological context of all Israel being called to be ‘priests’ and ‘royals’.¹⁶⁹⁰ The priests and Levites have a special function within Israel, to enable all the people to carry out God’s mission in the world, by ritually mediating God’s presence among them.

It is in this thematic context that all God’s provisions for Israel – not just the cultic ones – need to be understood. Thus, the laws (moral, social and health), the

¹⁶⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸⁷ This was first observed in J. Blenkinsopp, ‘The Structure of P’, 1976, pp. 275-292; it has been further expanded in J. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate*, 2009, especially pp. 78-92. Cf. 3.1.1.1 above.

¹⁶⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 7-8.

¹⁶⁸⁹ Ex. 28:1-29:46, Num. 8:5-26, 27:12-23 and Deut. 34:9. The duties of the Levitical priesthood included: the teaching of the Law (Lev. 10:11); offering sacrifices (Lev. 9); maintaining the Tabernacle and the Temple (Num. 18:3); officiating in the Holy Place (Ex. 30:7-10); inspecting ceremonially unclean persons (Lev. 13 and 14); they arbitrated in disputes (Deut. 17:8-13); they functioned as tithe collectors (Num. 18:21, 26, Heb. 7:5).

¹⁶⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 8.

formal organisation, the leadership structure, the sacrificial system, the priestly order and its functions, the religious festivals and the tabernacle functions are all meant to teach Israel to be ‘priests’ and ‘royals’ in God’s mission and to keep them faithful to this calling. God’s mission is what matters and leadership office and ‘ordination’ for such office is fully subject to that. All that God provides for Israel is meant to form them and equip them for their specific task of sharing God’s presence and his good rule to the whole earth. None of the institutions of Israel, including the levitical priesthood, have any purpose in themselves, but they must all be seen in the light of their larger purpose defined by all Israel being priests according to Exodus 19.¹⁶⁹¹

The levitical and Aaronic priesthood is often singled out as the necessary context for ‘priests’ in the Bible. From the perspective of the larger theme of God’s mission, however, the mission of spreading God’s presence and his good rule was not only dependent on them, but *all Israel* was involved in this task. God’s call to do his mission is to a people, and the role of their leaders, Levites and priests is to serve the people and enable the people to function in God’s mission as he wants them to do. The larger thematic context here helps to clarify both Israel’s and the levitical and Aaronic priesthood’s meaning and function.¹⁶⁹²

The act of ‘ordination’ to the priesthood, therefore, is not superior to being royal priests as God’s people, but because the mission of God in the world is the superior activity for which God gives all Israel responsibility, it is *an act that serves the people in their servanthood of God for the salvation of the nations and the eradication of evil*. This was also Ellen White’s understanding of ministry and ordination (4.6.2; 4.6.2.4).

For the induction of Israel to priesthood in God’s service, God’s call and descent from Abraham was sufficient. The priests in the sanctuary went through a ritual ceremony to purify them for service, and the Levites were ‘ordained’ by the imposition of hands by the people which made them into representatives of the people (3.2.4).

The Third Narrowing of the Mission of God Theme: Kingdom (2 Sam. 7).

Within Israel, there is yet one tribe and one family that God will specifically call, and it is not the Levites or the family of Aaron. From 1 Samuel, the story of this dynasty becomes the central focus of God’s mission theme for the rest of the Old Testament.

¹⁶⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹² Ibid., pp. 8-9.

Although not being the firstborn of the twelve sons of Jacob, the tribe of Judah has prophetically been singled out already in Genesis 49:9-10 as fulfilling a specific function. However, its function becomes activated much later. From the time of Samuel the concepts of 'kingdom', 'king', 'servant', 'son-father' are introduced to specify the theme of God's mission (2 Samuel 7:12-14).¹⁶⁹³

David and his descendants will now spearhead the mission of God. This was initially not God's preference, but he conceded to the will of the people, suggesting again that, in pursuing his mission, *God accepts human and cultural concepts as long as they work as means of advancing his mission*. When they no longer work to accomplish his purpose, he exchanges them for a better service with a better outcome. The massive promise David received in 2 Samuel 7 alters the direction and language of God's mission theme, and we need to listen carefully to catch its progression through the Bible.

The theological perspective of the biblical writers from the first book of Samuel – without exception – is directed towards the royal commissioning of David. Out of his descendants will come the decisive divine-human answer both to the particular (Gen. 3) and the overall (Gen. 1) task of the mission of God. A king will come who is like David. He must therefore bring a kingdom similar in nature to David's. He will address God as his father and God will call him his son, just like David was a son to God and God was his father, indicating a close unity between the king and God. In the logic of the biblical story, David's identity as king and how he rules his kingdom becomes the sign by which Israel will recognise the promised king – the Messiah.¹⁶⁹⁴

Thus, it is striking that the king is not a power figure. His kingdom is championing social justice and knowledge of the Lord – but not power. The poor, the needy and the oppressed are not forgotten in his kingdom.¹⁶⁹⁵ The ultimate Davidic king must present these kingdom signs, for otherwise he would not be a legitimate king.¹⁶⁹⁶ And all along, through his prophets, God reminds Israel and its kings of their divine role of being 'a light to the nations' (Isa. 42:6; 49:6).

The story of Davidic descendants will become distorted, and the Old Testament prophets will often cry out their condemnations, because the key signs of justice and righteousness were not present in Israel and Judah (e.g. Zach. 7:9-10).

¹⁶⁹³ Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁶⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹⁵ For example Ps. 72:1-4, 12-14, Ps. 2:7-8, 12 and Ps. 89:36-7.

¹⁶⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 9-10.

Nonetheless, the specific Davidic commission will not be forgotten and the prophets will also cast a vision of a time when the promises to David will indeed be fulfilled. This fulfilment is a concomitant fulfilment of God's plan through David, Israel and also Adam and Eve (Zach. 6:12-13 and Jer. 23:5-6).¹⁶⁹⁷

Thus, as a central part of the mission of God, he selects and calls his servants. They are primarily his people, men and women, taken as a whole and based on descent from the patriarchs. Constantly, in Israel's history, God's direct call of a servant, man or woman, continues to be central, as we see among Nazirites, prophets, and wise men and women. As the nation of Israel becomes institutionalised through the sanctuary and the kingdom, servants are installed with specific duties (priests, kings) who serve God and the people. The call of God, anointment, and acclamation by the people seems to have been involved for the first kings, but otherwise the Davidic line through the firstborn was the normal process for the appointment. The king carried the title 'anointed' (Messiah, Christ), which involved the symbol of oil for honour, blessing, and even the power of the Holy Spirit.¹⁶⁹⁸ However, there is no mentioning of the laying on of hands, except in the two exceptional cases of the Levites being made representatives of the people and Moses duplicating his personal authority in Joshua – both through the rite of *samak yad/yadim*, 'leaning of the hand(s)'. Obviously, the form of human acknowledgement of God's call is variable and follows local and temporal cultural customs.

5.4 The Mission of Christ

Of special significance for this study is the overarching conceptual framework in which the mission of God operates in the New Testament. From the beginning, the theme of the kingdom and its king is emphasised in the Gospels. A few examples will illustrate this:

Jesus' descent from David is vital to Matthew (Matt. 1). His birth is surrounded with royal terminology (Matt. 2). Jesus at his birth is described by the magi as 'the king of the Jews' (Matt. 2:2). The kingdom is announced by Jesus from the very beginning: 'The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has drawn near; repent and believe the Gospel' (Mark 1:15). In Luke, the expectation that God is fulfilling his promises of a royal Messiah/Christ is central (Luke 1-2). Nathaniel confesses him as

¹⁶⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁶⁹⁸ See 3.1.2.3 and 3.2.2. Cf. Zech. 4:1-14; Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38).

'king of Israel' (John 1:49); after the multiplication miracle the crowd wanted 'to take him and make him king' (John 6:15); on his entry to Jerusalem he was called 'your king comes to you' (Matt. 21:5, Luke 19:38, John 12:32, cf. Zach. 9:9); before Pilate when he was accused of being a king of the Jews, Jesus admits 'I am a king' (John 18:37); to his disciples he said that he will appear as a glorious king at his *parousia* (Matt. 25:34); when they crucified him they wrote above his head: 'King of the Jews'.¹⁶⁹⁹

Statistically speaking, the expression 'kingdom of God' and its parallels appear almost 160 times in the New Testament. Out of these, more than 120 occurrences are found in the Gospels. This is especially the case in Matthew where it appears 50 times. The kingdom is announced by Jesus from the very beginning: 'The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has drawn near; repent and believe the gospel' (Mark 1:15).¹⁷⁰⁰

The gospel' is the good news about the arrival of the kingdom.¹⁷⁰⁰ Scholars have observed that the expression 'drawn near' in the perfect indicative means 'an extreme closeness', 'imminence', and even 'presence'. Luke 11:20 and Matt. 12:28 confirm such an understanding: 'If I cast out Demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come'. Here the expression 'has come' is in the aorist perfect and it points to a (continued) presence of the kingdom of God. This significant link between 'coming' and 'being close' and actually 'being present' is confirmed again by Jesus in John 4:23 and 5:25 'the hour is coming and is now'.¹⁷⁰¹

¹⁶⁹⁹ Barna (ibid., pp. 10-11) refers to O. P. Ceslas Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament: Volume 1*, 1996, pp. 265-266. He also makes the comment that 'later, the early church was accused by the Jews that they are contravening "Caesar's edict by saying [preaching] that there is another king Jesus" (Acts 17:7)'.

¹⁷⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁷⁰¹ Barna (ibid.) makes the following comments and references here: There has been a long discussion concerning whether the kingdom is present already in the ministry of Jesus or if it became a reality only as a result of his death on the cross. This debate has significant theological consequences and it centers on the interpretation of Matt. 12:28 and Luke 17:21. The realized eschatology school of C. H. Dodd interprets these as saying that the kingdom is already present in the ministry of Jesus while A. Harnack's non-eschatological school tends to see these as indicating close future or immanence in the case of Matt. 12:28 and spiritual presence in the case of Luke 17:21. Still others, most prominently Chrys Caragounis, suggest that Matt. 12:28 uses an idiom that means that the kingdom is imminent, not present yet, but will come soon (at the death of Christ); cf. C.C. Caragounis, 'Kingdom of God/Heaven', 1992), pp. 417-430. Also C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, London: Nisbet, 1935 (republished several times); id., *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Development* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1936); Adolf von Harnack, *What is Christianity?*, 1908; and for an overview of the debate see for example Caragounis' article (ibid.) and Larry R. Helyer, *The Witness of Jesus, Paul and John: An Exploration in Biblical Theology*, 2008), pp. 130-144. In Luke 17:20-21 the kingdom is 'among you' already could mean (1) "in your midst" - i.e. in Israel, or (2) 'in you' meaning in each person who acts spiritually. See O. P. Ceslas Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament: Volume 1*, 1996, pp. 266-267.

What this all means is that in the Gospels Jesus is acting as a king who is bringing the promised kingdom to Israel, God's servant in the world. Thus, there is a specific kingdom Christology in the Gospels, which will form the basis for the New Testament theology of the church, ministry and its ecclesiastical functions (there are other themes as well, for the New Testament writings were directed also to people outside of Israel, where other themes were more relevant).

We would make a mistake if we relegated the idea of the kingdom of God as the central context for Jesus' ministry and mission exclusively to the eschatological corner. This would seriously prevent us from seeing the central thematic theological context within which the mission of Jesus is unfolding and which has consequences for what is the theological perspective of the New Testament ministry and mission, including its specific functions such as commissioning or 'ordination'.

Jesus brought the theme of God's mission to its climax. Those who hear his story in the Gospels – within its antecedent Old Testament theme – hear a radical call to become part of Jesus' kingdom mission. This is at first a mission to Israel (e.g. Matt. 10:5-6), but already in the Gospels Jesus is moving the mission of God to the Gentiles (Matt. 8:5-13, 28-34; 12:15-21; 15:21-28; 21:33-46; 22:1-14; and parallels). This was in keeping with God's original call to all Israel to be a kingdom of priests and a light to the nations. After his resurrection, now as Lord of the world with all authority received from God, Jesus sends his disciples to all nations (Matt. 28:16-20, with parallels). The role of the servant of God that Jesus took upon himself in bringing the news of the kingdom to Israel is the role that the new community, the church, will *now* take towards the world.¹⁷⁰² The church will *minister* to the world as God's servant, bringing to the world the news of the kingdom of God.

In the New Testament, however, the kingdom mission of Jesus merges with his high-priestly mission – it was common in the ancient Near East and in the Bible to assign priestly functions to the king: sanctified by his anointing and adopted by God, 'he was a sacred person' and was therefore 'empowered to perform religious functions'.¹⁷⁰³ As the servanthood of man and woman in creation embraced both

¹⁷⁰² J. Barna, 'Towards a Biblical-Systematic Theology of Ordination', 2013, p. 12. Barna calls attention to the following: Howard Marshall in his magnum opus on New Testament theology is arguing that all NT documents are hanging together around the recognition of Jesus as Lord or King. He suggests that the NT material then is a commentary on Jesus' inauguration of the kingdom of God. See H Marshall, *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel*, 2004, pp. 34-35.

¹⁷⁰³ R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 1973, pp. 113-114.

priestly and ruling functions, in the same way Jesus is king and priest as God's servant and son. Jesus assumes the role of a 'second Adam' as he restores humanity to what God intended (Rom. 5; 1 Cor. 15).

This theme is particularly developed in Hebrews – note especially 1:8; 2:17; 3:1-6; 4:14-10:18. For example, by defining Jesus as 'a priest for ever in the order of Melchizedech', he shares Melchizedech's functions as 'king of Salem and priest of El-Elyon' (Gen. 14:18). In Hebrews 7:2, the author explains the meaning of Melchizedech's name, saying: 'First, his name means "king of righteousness"; then also, "king of Salem" means "king of peace".' As 'apostle and high-priest', Jesus was 'faithful to the one who appointed him' (Hebrews 3:1-2). His faithfulness has been manifested as the faithfulness of 'a son over God's house', i.e. the church (3:6). The passage in Hebrews 1:2-2:17 (NRSV) speaks of Jesus as God's 'royal son' and 'high-priest of his people' in the context of a summary of God's mission through Christ's mission as king and priest:

Hebrews 1:2-2:17: ... but in these last days [God] has spoken to us by a Son, whom he has appointed heir to all things, through whom he also created the worlds. **3** He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. **4** When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high ... **8** But of the Son he says: 'Your throne, o God, is forever and ever, and the righteous sceptre is the sceptre of your kingdom. **9** You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.' ... **2:9** we do see Jesus ... now crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone ... **11** For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father ... **14** Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, **15** and free all those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death ... **17** Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people.

The priesthood in the Old Testament 'was appointed to provide the means of access to God, without fear, on the basis of an already-existing redemption'.¹⁷⁰⁴ Israel had already experienced the delivery from Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea. In the same way, the priesthood of Christ was meant to give the Christians access to God,

¹⁷⁰⁴ R. Dederen, 'The Priesthood of All Believers', 1998, p. 13.

without fear,¹⁷⁰⁵ based on the redemption already provided by the death and resurrection of Christ. However, these two priesthoods are not the same. The 'ordination' of the Old Testament priests was to make them ritually pure for the sacrifices and rituals in the temple service, in order to keep Israel internally near God, while all Israel, as part of the mission of God, was engaged in proclaiming the glory of God to the nations. The 'ordination' of Christ as High-Priest was his appointment by God through a series of actions culminating in the resurrection, his receipt of all authority in heaven and on earth, and his being seated at the right hand of God, or entering the most holy in the heavenly sanctuary.¹⁷⁰⁶

We may therefore summarise Christ's mission as follows: The breach of the peace in God's kingdom that was caused by human beings as they walked away from him has been remedied through Christ's saving mission, which is to restore everything into harmony with God's will. Christ has established the kingdom of God on earth, building it afresh, in a better way, namely, upon his victory over evil and death as demonstrated by his life, death and resurrection, and he has been set apart by God as the royal Son of God and High-Priest of his people. While Christ is keeping his faithful people in close communion with God through his heavenly ministry of intercession, he *appoints and authorises all his followers (men and women) to minister as priests in God's kingdom*. As the church (*ekklesia*) that he has called out from the world, its mission is the mission of Christ within the mission of God. Until God completes his mission by the creation of a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21:1-5), the church is God's agent under the *headship of Christ* to complete his mission of salvation to 'every nation, tribe, language and people' (Rev. 14:6).

Thus, in the church and its ministry, Christ is the *head* and all ministers, regardless of gender, are *submitted* to him. A survey of five Bible passages that refer to Christ as head over the church (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:15-16; 5:23; Col. 1:18-19; 2:19) indicates that 'head', biblically defined, does not mean what it means in the English language. 'Head' is never given the meaning of authority, boss or leader. It describes the servant function of provider of life, growth and development. This function is not one of top-down oversight but of bottom-up support and nurture.

¹⁷⁰⁵ Heb. 4:14-16; 10:19-25.

¹⁷⁰⁶ Eph. 1:22; Heb. 1:2; 3:2; 5:1-10; 6:19-20; 7:28-8:7.

The centrality and primacy of Christian submission is rooted in Jesus Christ. As he emptied himself of his divinity and became like one of us, he was *submissive* until his death on the cross, and it is because of his attitude of submission to God, as a *servant* or *minister* of God, that he was given all authority to the glory of God (Phil. 3:5-11). At his second coming, Christ will *subject* himself to him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to every one (1 Cor. 15:24-28).¹⁷⁰⁷

The attitude of *submission* is a key element in the grand narrative of the Bible, i.e. the Mission of God. It means that all believers, including those who hold any kind of leadership role in the church, are simultaneously ‘servants’ or ‘ministers’ of God (in his mission) and Christ (in his mission) and the Church (in its mission). The New Testament teaches that this *ministry* or *servanthood* is the fundamental element of any minister in the Church (note the use of ‘servant’ and ‘slave’ in 3.5.3, and the emphatic instruction of Ellen White according to 4.6.2.4 above). It does not teach a female submission to men within the sphere of ministry; if any such submission is brought forward in Paul’s letters addressing issues in the local churches of Corinth or Ephesus, it relates only to what was considered appropriate and decent in his time, in the home and the marriage relationship (3.1.3). Submission to all others, i.e. Christ’s attitude of servanthood, is what the New Testament expects of all believers, in particular those who have received the trust and confidence to act as leaders or ‘heads’.¹⁷⁰⁸

Ultimately, there is only one relevant version of submission in the church: the *submission* of all servants and ministers to God, which is appropriate in the kingdom of God. Introducing a special theological submission of women to men in the church distorts the full submission to God and is therefore false.

It is significant that no text in the Gospels record that Christ laid his hands on his disciples (or apostles) as part of their appointment for service. We have explained the reasons why this is so (3.5.1). We also explained why the first documented example of a Christian ‘ordination’ is prompted by specific circumstances and relates to functions that were temporal (3.5.2; cf. Acts 6:1-6; 13:1-3). Thus, neither the imposition of hands nor any rite of induction to ministry in Christ’s mission is supported by a divine command.

¹⁷⁰⁷ Cf. the summary on submission in L. Richards, ‘How Does a Woman Prophesy and Keep Silence at the Same Time? (1 Corinthians 11 and 14)’, 1998, pp. 324-326.

¹⁷⁰⁸ See L. Richards, ‘How Does a Woman Prophesy and Keep Silence at the Same Time? (1 Corinthians 11 and 14)’, pp. 324-326. Cf. Ellen White’s letter to the Brethren in 1901 regarding ‘God’s helping hands’ (4.6.2.4).

However, Christ's authority and role as head of the church is undisputed and God's call to service in the church comes through the calling of Christ. Like Israel, the church, men and women, is now a priesthood of believers, called by Christ (2 Peter 2). He calls men and women to bring the gospel to the world (Matt. 28) and to do ministry of all kinds (1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4). He equips men and women for their ministry through spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12). God and his servant Jesus through the Holy Spirit do not restrict a function of service to any particular class or gender of people in the church – there is no biblical text that says so. The restrictions that are found come from the needs of the church to promote the gospel successfully among outsiders and to preserve order and spiritual unity internally. Therefore, these restrictions are practical, time-bound, and conditioned by local and temporal customs. Throughout history, God has consistently adapted his mission to human forms (we have noted that repeatedly in our study), as demonstrated also in the incarnation of himself into humanity. But in Christ and until the end of time, he works through a kingdom of priests where men and women are one in Christ (2 Peter 2; Rev. 1:5-6: 5:10; 20:3; Gal. 3:28).

5.5 The Mission of the Church

The role of Jesus as the promised King (Messiah) provides a *mission-oriented* focus in our understanding of the New Testament. The early church understood that Jesus of Nazareth became the resurrected 'Lord' and Messiah-Christ.¹⁷⁰⁹ The result was that, the kingdom of God began to take hold in this world with its new foundations in the risen Christ, and the church was 'sent' (cf. the Latin verb *mitto*, *misi*, *missum*, and the cognate noun *missio*) to invite the world to accept the kingship of God through the lordship of Jesus (Matt. 28:18-20). The mission of God and the mission of Christ now included the mission of the church.¹⁷¹⁰ This has been expressed in this way:

It is not so much the case that God has a mission for his church in the world but that God has a church for his mission in the world. Mission was not made for the church, the church was made for mission – mission of God.¹⁷¹¹

However, before the church, the mission of God was already in operation. The church with its functions, ministries and gifts are *new* means of advancing it.

¹⁷⁰⁹ For Greek *kyrios*, 'lord', as a royal and divine title, see, for example, G. Quell & W. Foerster, Article '*kyrios*', in: *ThDNT*, vol. 3, pp. 1039-1095.

¹⁷¹⁰ Cf. J. Barna, 'Towards a Biblical-Systematic Theology of Ordination', 2013, p. 12.

¹⁷¹¹ C. J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, 2006, p. 52.

'Mission, then, in biblical terms, while it inescapably involves us in planning and action, is not *primarily* a matter of our activity or our initiative.'¹⁷¹² Consequently, *any minister or ministry in the church is functioning because God wants them, needs them, and calls them.* (This understanding is emphatically maintained by Ellen White.) When the church objects to this or raises obstacles against it, it is acting against God and loses his blessing in its work.

There is an explicit biblical-theological link between the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost by which the *mission* of the church began according to Acts 2 and by which Jesus was inaugurated as King according to Revelation 5. Significantly, the text of Revelation 5 speaks about Jesus' inauguration as King with all power, while it also mentions the 'sending out' of the Holy Spirit (Rev. 5:6). Thus, the visible reality of Jesus' inauguration at his resurrection and the sending of the Spirit was the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost and the beginning of the Christian mission. The text in Acts 2, which describes the church's experience, also mentions explicitly the inauguration of Jesus as the vindication of what is going on:

Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear (Acts 2:33; *NRSV*).

This crucial link is confirmed several times in the following speeches by Peter (Acts 5:31-2) and Stephen (Acts 7:55-6).¹⁷¹³

The theology of the mission and ministry of the church is consequently deeply rooted in Christ. Peter says that 'Jesus as King' is the cornerstone that makes the church into what it is. In the biblical-theological context of Acts 2 and Revelation 5, however, even the Spirit is subordinate to Christ. The Spirit does not operate on his own will or authority. He does not constitute the mission of the church. The Spirit is in the *service* of the new Lord and King. He mediates the presence and the power of Christ to the church and its mission.

Understanding the mission of the church as part of the mission of Christ has vital implications. The church's authority (*exousia*) is rooted in Christ's authority as the head of the church, and Christ's authority is from God. Any exercise of church authority, therefore, must be according to God's will. The authority of the church is consequently an authority to correctly understand and wisely apply God's will as

¹⁷¹² *Ibid.*, pp, 62, 67.

¹⁷¹³ J. Barna, 'Towards a Biblical-Systematic Theology of Ordination', 2013, p. 13.

revealed in Scripture, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.¹⁷¹⁴ This is a corporate authority under God in Christ and may be delegated by the church to trusted members of the body but with accountability to Christ and the full church (e.g. Mark 13:34; Acts 6:1-6; 8:19; 13:1-3; 2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10; Rev. 2:26-28). ‘Ordination’, therefore, must be defined from Scripture, applied according to Scriptural principles, according to what ‘builds up the church’ (2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10; Eph. 4:1-11), and in order to promote the mission of God (Acts 26:15-18; 1 Tim. 2:1-7; 2 Tim. 1:8-12).

The authority of the church also includes a freedom in Christ to change and grow, and to expand the kingdom in the hearts of the believers and among the unbelievers in the world.¹⁷¹⁵ The vision of Christ as King moulds the church into a community of kingdom-bringers. The kingdom of God, where Jesus is Lord and King, is based on justice, true love, acceptance, forgiveness, and healing both spiritual and physical dimensions of man. All this springs from the true knowledge of God as revealed in Christ. Founded on such ‘Kingdom Christology’, the church will promote the same foundational kingdom values and message – and in this way it will be extending God’s good rule and his presence in the fallen world. This is where the church engages in God’s mission to defeat evil. The fallen world is founded on power, injustice and false knowledge of God (cf. the symbol of ‘Babylon’ in Revelation). In opposition to this, the kingdom-oriented church ministry will model a different way of being a community and indeed humanity (Eph. 2:15). It will actively advocate justice and equality – socially, economically, and with regard to race or gender; it will challenge political and other power players by pointing out that the current leaders, prime ministers, presidents or monarchs are not in charge of the affairs of the world but that Jesus is the ultimate ‘president’ or ‘prime minister’ – that ‘Jesus Christ is Lord’.¹⁷¹⁶

In this context, the ‘ordination’ passages in Acts 6:1-6 and 13:1-3 mean more than setting aside servants of God for a specific task. They mark decisive strategic steps in God’s mission through the church. In Acts 6, the appointment of the seven means that the centre of governance of the church moves beyond the twelve apostles and the family of Jesus located in Jerusalem, which was seen as the throne and dwelling of God. Members of the diaspora with connections in the wider Graeco-

¹⁷¹⁴ For a review of this biblical principle, see R. M. Davidson, ‘The Role of the Church in the Interpretation of Scripture’, 2013, pp. 322-343.

¹⁷¹⁵ See W. Foerster, Article ‘*exousia*’, in: *ThDNT*, vol. 2, pp. 571-573.

¹⁷¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

Roman world are now invited in to serve as leaders in God's church (3.3.7.1; 3.5.3.1). The kingdom of God is moving out to the world through the church and its representatives. Thus, the 'ordination' of the seven is an important step in the mission of God and his salvation history, not just an appointment for an office – that may be why it is a unique action by the church in the New Testament. It confirms that God's kingdom in Christ, through the Holy Spirit, is dwelling also in the seven, although they were not appointed by Jesus like the twelve apostles, and that the borders of this kingdom are being extended to the world.

In the same way, Acts 13:1-3 describes another crucial moment in God's mission, when Barnabas and Saul are authorised by the Holy Spirit and 'extended' from the church body in Antioch into congregations in Asia Minor. They are to bring the kingdom of God to the Gentiles by the preaching of the Word and organising the work by establishing elders in each church (Acts 14:23).

In these vital texts for biblical 'ordination', it is God's mission and the ministry to which a person is called that is central, not the ceremony itself. These 'ordinations' signify vital transitions, as God's mission through Israel moves across to the church, whose high priest is Christ, and is now being extended to the world of the Gentiles. To confirm this, the apostle Paul, who plays a central role as Christ's agent of mission in the New Testament church, is called and 'ordained' directly by Christ, without a ceremony of 'ordination' by the imposition of hands.¹⁷¹⁷ Thus, 'ordination' in the New Testament is not just a matter of authorising a church member to a special ministry in the church organisation, but it is above all *God's way of confirming a vital change in his mission to save the world and dwell with his people everywhere.*

In the context of the New Testament theme of the mission of the church, Ephesians 2:19-22 becomes a key passage:¹⁷¹⁸

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens [language of kingdom] with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ [read: king] Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone [note the specific king/kingdom Christology being the foundation for the church]. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord [a sanctuary]. And in him you [plural] too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit [echoes of Ex. 25:8].

¹⁷¹⁷ Acts 9; 26:12-18; Gal. 1-2.

¹⁷¹⁸ As pointed out by Barna (ibid., p. 15).

Paul presents here the church as the new humanity. Being built on Christ's mission and now having Christ's glory among them, the members are, symbolically speaking, 'God's sanctuary'. And as the church is growing, so is God's presence among his people. In this way, the church is at the centre of God's original mission for the world – which is what God wanted from the beginning for Adam and Eve to be and to do.¹⁷¹⁹

The specific theme of the church's mission operates under the larger umbrella of God's mission theme of Genesis 1 and 2 and the key that made this possible is Jesus the King, whose kingship has been based on his submission to God and the resurrection (Phil. 2:1-11). The church now spreads not just the *truth* about the kingdom, but the actual *presence* of the kingdom. The church is a different humanity where Gentiles and Jews are together, where slaves and masters, and men and women, are equal and where there is essential unity, not just doctrinal or policy unity. The citizenship is multi-dimensional, and importantly, it begins now, not in the future. Thus, the mission and the ministry the church is called to be part of and must reflect this new reality.¹⁷²⁰ It is therefore essential that servants and leaders in the church reflect this unity and equality in Christ. *Consequently, men and women, where this is culturally possible, should be equal in ordination and in service to God, Christ, the corporate church community, for the sake of the mission to the world.*

Within the theme of the mission of God and its sub-theme the mission of Christ, we understand both the mission of the church and what the church is. The many images of the church in the New Testament all find their meaning within the mission of God: 'the salt of the earth, a letter from Christ, branches of the vine, the bride of Christ, ambassadors, a chosen race, a holy temple, the body of Christ, a new creation, citizens of heaven, the household of God, and a spiritual body'.¹⁷²¹

Within the mission of God, both Christology and Eschatology are fundamental for the mission of the church. Christ as Lord and King is the foundation and head of the church,¹⁷²² and his death and resurrection have opened up an eschatological perspective for the mission of the church, both among the nations on earth and in time (Matt. 28:18-20). Thus, Russell Staples has appropriately called attention to the importance of keeping the Kingdom-Christology and Eschatology in balance in our

¹⁷¹⁹ Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁷²⁰ Ibid., pp. 15-16.

¹⁷²¹ R. L. Staples, 'A Theological Understanding of Ordination', 1998, p. 136.

¹⁷²² Acts 4:10-12; 1 Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:20; Col. 1:18.

understanding of the church. He rejects (a) *the conflation of the two*, as happened in the medieval Roman Catholicism: 'The church was so closely identified with kingdom that traditional understandings of eschatology were displaced. This resulted in a view of the church as the intermediary between God and human beings, and of priests as performing sacraments that confer divine grace. Ordination came to be understood as the sacramental conferral of an indelible grace'.¹⁷²³

Staples also rejects (b) *the exclusive emphasis on the Christological focus*, which assigns to the church 'a deep personal faith and devout and joyous celebration of the sacraments *without any serious sense of mission*', while reducing Eschatology to a sense of personal salvation ... but divorced from the wider sweep of God's concern for all peoples of earth'. Just as the church is viewed 'as the body of Christ instituted by the power God', so also ordination is thought of as a 'downward flowing of grace from God'.¹⁷²⁴ Staples concludes that the missing point here is that the people of God is called to set apart men and women for service in order to build up the church *for its divine mission to the world in an eschatological perspective*. Hence, we conclude, the Seventh-day Adventist Church must not exclude the eschatological mission perspective in the theology of ordination. We suggest that this is captured by connecting the dots of the threefold reference to men and women in the church as 'priests and rulers' in Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:3.

Staple's rejection of a third misconception is however also worthy of notice, particularly within the Seventh-day Adventist Church: (c) *the exclusive emphasis on the eschatological focus*. Eschatology defines the church as a community of faith which seeks to implement the principles of the kingdom in the present life, while working to hasten the day of Christ's second coming. The *danger* is, however, in Staples' words: 'It is possible for an eschatological commitment to so preoccupy the church that the essence of its being as the corporate body of Christ is lost from sight. The church may be regarded primarily as an institution to be organised and directed in ways that enhance efficiency in spreading the good news. On this view, ministry is thought of in *pragmatic terms*, and ordination as a setting apart for a vocation of service. There is little that differentiates clergy from lay members other than clerical vocation and office.'¹⁷²⁵

¹⁷²³ R. L. Staples, *ibid.*, pp. 136-137.

¹⁷²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 137 (emphasis supplied).

¹⁷²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

Instead of such a pragmatic view of ordination, Staples advocates (d) *holding both foci in balance*, i.e. balancing Christology and Eschatology, which brings the following situation: ‘Both the essential nature of the church as a divinely constituted community of faith [where the kingdom of God is present] and its responsibility to proclaim the coming [visible, complete and glorious] kingdom are affirmed’. In this concept ‘there is a balance between what the church is and what it does. Ministers are not simply human agents selected because of personal capability, and ordination is more than the act of a social community.’¹⁷²⁶

Accepting Staples’ view, we may say that the Lord and King Jesus Christ has established the kingdom of God and the church is part of it with its mission of being kingdom-builders in the world. God’s kingdom in Christ has inaugurated the end of time in an ‘already but not yet dimension of time’, so the mission of the church to the world takes place with an eschatological awareness which is heightened as signs of the times remind the faithful of the approach of the consummation of the kingdom of God. ‘Ordination’ in this context is an appointment for service that builds up the church and reaches out to the world with the kingdom of God. It is ‘gospel ministry’ both within and through the church to the world, and its ultimate goal is the fulfilment of the mission of God in a reconciled humanity on the new earth.

The mission of God brings a complete perspective to ordination and overcomes the limitations of an exclusive emphasis on the doctrine of the church. Seen from the perspective of the believer, the church is the body of people who have been reconciled to God and their fellow men – according to the purpose of the mission of God – by accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.¹⁷²⁷ Joining the body of Christ by baptism, the members of his body have partaken of Christ’s death. They died with him (Rom. 6:2-11), and they now belong to Christ who incorporates them into his work of mission to the world. They are called to live ‘no longer for themselves but for him who died and was raised for them’ (2 Cor. 5:15, NRSV; cf. Rom. 6:13).¹⁷²⁸ This life in Christ is a service or ministry to Christ (Eph. 6:7; Rom. 15:15-16), which aims at the fulfilment of the mission of Christ. Christ’s mission is to bring all peoples of the world back to communion with God and thus fulfil God’s mission (Rev. 15:1-4; 21:1-5, 24-27; 22:1-5). Thus, ultimately, ‘no longer will there be

¹⁷²⁶ Ibid., pp. 137-138.

¹⁷²⁷ R. Dederen, ‘A Theology of Ordination’, 1984, p. 146.

¹⁷²⁸ Cf. *ibid.*

any curse' (Rev. 22:3) and God's kingdom will be restored where 'his servants will serve him' (22:3-5), and the redeemed humanity will 'reign for ever and ever' with God (22:5), fulfilling the intention of the Creator in Genesis 1-2. *In this perspective, an inclusive ministry for men and women in the church is a fulfilment of God's will.*

In view of the considerations presented here, we may summarise the identity and role of the church as follows:

The church is constituted by those who were reconciled to God and to each other through the saving work of Christ. They were united to Him through baptism (Matt. 28:19), thus becoming citizens of God's kingdom and a royal priesthood whose mission is 'to declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light' (1 Pet. 2:9). Consequently, all believers are ministers of reconciliation (Luke 1:2; 2 Cor. 3:6; 5:18, 20), enabled, through the power of the Spirit and the gifts he bestows on them, to carry on the Gospel Commission to bring humanity back to communion with God, their Creator.

5.6 The Ministry: The Priesthood of All Believers

God's elected people Israel, as a whole, was declared to be for him 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' (Ex. 19:5-6). This defined the role of Israel in the world. Israel is seen as a symbolic 'sanctuary' in the world, the place where God lives with man. In a sanctuary, priests normally function as *mediators* and typically represent (a) God to the worshipping community, and (b) the worshipping community to God. In the same way, Israel as 'a kingdom of priests' represents (a) God to the peoples of the world, and (b) the peoples of the world before God. Israel is the collective 'servant of the Lord' (Isa. 41:8-20; 42:1-9; 43:1-55:13) and 'a light to the nations' (Isa. 42:6; 49:6). Thus, the prophetic vision was clear that one day the nations would come and worship the God of Jacob on Mount Zion (e.g. Isa. 2:2-4/Mic. 4:1-3), and this vision is included also in John's vision of the new heaven and earth in Revelation 21:22-22:5.

In the Old Testament order of things, however, not only was a *sacramental* view of 'priests' the common standard (linked with the holiness and ritual purity of God and all that belonged to him), but also a *patriarchal* view of 'people' (any part of the people was represented by males, particularly the first-born). However, by God's will, this old order is abandoned in the new and 'more excellent ministry' of Christ

(Heb. 8:6; cf. 8:1-10:39). This change is marked particularly by the following divine acts:

Firstly, Christ has 'by a single offering perfected for all time those who are sanctified' (10:14). Consequently, he has now abolished the *sacramental* view of priests which prompted the ritual ordination/cleansing of the priests in the Old Testament sanctuary.

Secondly, Christ is 'the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted through better promises' (8:6; cf. 8:1-10:39). This new covenant with the house of Israel – which was prophesied by Jeremiah (Jer. 31:31-34) and explicitly replaces the old (Heb. 8:8-9, 13) – places the kingdom of God in the minds and hearts of all people: 'I will put my laws in their *minds*, and write them on their *hearts*, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people' (8:10), and God adds: 'And they shall not teach one another or say to each other, "Know the Lord", for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.' (8:11). Consequently, Christ has abolished also the *patriarchal* view of 'people', for in the new covenant God's laws are put in all the minds of the people and are written on all the hearts of the people, and that is what determines the covenant relationship by which 'I will be their God, and they shall be my people'. The emphasis on 'all' is carried out emphatically: 'all shall know me, from the least of them to the greatest'. This means that men and women are the people of God on *equal* terms and that the ministry of his people is an *inclusive* ministry.

As time passed and Israel failed to serve as God's agent of mission to the world, God took initiatives for a new phase in his plan of salvation. According to Isaiah 61:6, which is linked to the promised Messiah (Isa. 61:1-2; Luke 4:14-30), all God's people would again be called 'priests of the Lord' and 'ministers of our God' (Isa. 61:6), and their ministry continues for the sake of the fallen world of the nations. Isaiah 61 teaches that, in 'his faithfulness', God will make an everlasting covenant with his people (61:8), so that 'their descendants will be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples', and 'all who see them will acknowledge that *they are a people whom the Lord has blessed*' (61:9). In this setting, once accomplished, the people of God will say:

Isaiah 61:10-11 I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed (*hilbish*) me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. **11** For as the

earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations. (NRSV)

This prophecy is then fulfilled in the Christian Church, where all members are a 'chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light' (1 Peter 2:9-10; NRSV). In duplication of the role of old Israel (Ex. 19:5-6) and in fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy (Isa. 61:6), men and women in the Christian church are 'priests' of God in this sense and their primary function is mission to the world on behalf of God.

As the Church moves towards God's accomplishment of his mission, defined and summarised in Revelation 21:1-4, God intensifies the role of men and women as *his servants and priests*. Three examples may be given:

1. Revelation 1:6: John wrote the book of Revelation for seven churches in the province of Asia, and his readers included men and women. He says in Revelation 1:6 that '[Christ] has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father'. In other words, Christ has made men and women in the church *ministers* or *servants* of God. Following this declaration, John describes the Second Advent of the Lord (1:7), underlining that the priesthood of all, men and women, is a *characteristic of the end-time church, the remnant church*.

2. Revelation 5:9-10: John sees in vision the throne of God in heaven and the Lamb who alone is 'worthy' of taking the scroll and open its seven seals (Rev. 4-5). The worthiness of the Lamb is defined in a song by the four creatures and the twenty-four elders: 'For you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God from every tribe and language and people and nation' (5:9).¹⁷²⁹ All men and women in the persecuted end-time church are declared to have been made by Christ 'a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth' (5:9-10). The function of ministering as 'priests' has *already* been given to men and women in the church, and the function as rulers *will* be given them by Christ in the world God will create. This order of things is endorsed by God, for it is stated in a song to the Lamb at the feet of God's throne in heaven. This order of an inclusive priestly ministry in

¹⁷²⁹ The object of the Greek word for 'ransomed', which is often inserted by the translations ('men' in NIV; 'saints' in NRSV; 'us' in NKJV), is not found in the text: R. Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 2009, pp. 199-200, 204, 212.

the church is expressed and implied across the book of Revelation as a whole. For example, (a) Jesus urges the church to be faithful and promises to 'give [to the one who conquers] a place with me on my throne, just as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne' (Rev. 3:21; NRSV). (b) Christ has saved men and women and called them to minister and proclaim the kingdom of God until he comes (Rev. 14:6-13), and then they will rule the world with him as priestly rulers (Rev. 20:4-6).

3. Revelation 20:6: The gender-inclusive ministry of the end-time church is finally confirmed in the end-time events:

Revelation 20:6 Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. Over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.' (NRSV)

The priesthood of man and woman in creation, of men and women in Israel, of men and women in the church, will be an eternal institution, as intended by God at the creation. As the new Jerusalem, the sanctuary-city of God descends upon the new earth, 'God will dwell with his people and be their God' (21:3; cf. 21:9-22:5), and they will serve him as priests and rulers. They will have access to the water of life and the tree of life and the expulsion from Eden will be reversed. 'The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; [like God's servant Moses] they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads' (22:3-4, NRSV).

There is a special message here for the Seventh-day Adventist Church: *Go back to Creation by bringing men and women into the ministry on equal terms, and free the hands of all to take part in the gospel ministry to the world! God's mission is soon to be fulfilled, when he 'dwells with human beings and lives with them, and they will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God' (Rev. 21:3-4).*

Before the second coming of the Lord, the kingdom of God is present within the Christian community of faith, and kingdom terminology characterises the role of those involved. Christ is the King under God and the Head of the body. The members 'serve' or 'minister' in obedience to Christ, for the sake of each other and the world. Thus, all believers in the church are 'priestly servants' and 'ministers' who mediate God, his nature and will, to the world, and this ministry is the *primary* and *supreme* ministry in the church under Christ. It is *inclusive*:

Galatians 3:26-28: ... for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. **27** As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves

with Christ. **28** There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (NRSV)

This passage of Scripture confirms the accomplishment of God's mission to bring man and woman back to their original calling at the creation. Each of the terms 'Jew or Greek', 'slave or free', 'male and female' refers to the *reversal* of the consequences of the Fall:

(a) 'Jew or Greek' restores the falling apart of the peoples and nations according to Genesis 10-11 (caused by sinful humans), and confirms the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham in 12:1-3.

(b) 'Slave or free' restores the introduction of slavery in Genesis 9:18-27 (caused by sinful humans), and confirms the fulfilment of God's delivery of Israel from slavery in Egypt according to the book of Exodus.

(c) 'Male and female' (note the use only here of the Greek *kai*, 'and') restores the introduction of a patriarchal form of life in Genesis 4-11 (caused by sinful humans), and confirms the fulfilment of God's original intentions for man and woman, as priests and rulers in Genesis 1-2.

This means that the curse in Genesis 3 is reversed: (a) the enmity between 'the serpent's seed' and 'the woman's seed' (Gen. 3:15) is reversed by 'Jew and Greek' now being one in Christ; (b) the curse of the ground (Gen. 3:17-19) which requires painful toil and hard work to obtain the means of sustenance, and which has caused the division among men into slave and free, is overcome in Christ; and (c) the dependence of the woman-wife upon her husband-man and his duty of being 'in charge' of her, due to his dependence on the ground (3:16-19), has been abolished and both of them together are now dependent on Christ (God) as equals.

All this is a fulfilment of God's promise that 'the woman's seed' (Jesus Christ) in Genesis 3:15 would bring salvation from the distortion of the creation that the serpent brought into the world.

Thus, the new *inclusive* order for man and woman in Christ is the order of the kingdom of God established at creation. While the church lives and works in the world, it is at the same time 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation'. God's kingdom order, which is the true and real order of things for the church, contains an inclusive ministry between man and woman in the church. Since the church is situated in the sinful world, however, it may be inclined to adapt its external, human order to the

surrounding culture in which it operates, for practical reasons, such as removing disrespect for the gospel among outsiders. But it must be made absolutely clear that any concession by the church to patriarchal customs in the surrounding world is a *concession* to that which is not God's will. Therefore, rather than seeing women's ordination as a concession to 'egalitarian' ideas in the world, the true nature of things is that *preventing* women's ordination is a concession to the sinful world.

Another vital aspect concerns the high-priestly aspect of Christ's kingship. Implied in Christ being King is the concept of also being the High-Priest of his people. This function of Christ as head of the church embraces several aspects of the work of Christ:

(a) The atoning sacrifice brought by Christ who gave himself on the cross.

(b) The mediating ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary by which the benefits of his sacrifice are being kept active and recognised in God's kingdom.

(c) The calling of the people of Christ to 'let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ' (1 Peter 2:5; *NRSV*). Note that the 'building up' is not by the people themselves, but by God, through Christ and the Spirit.

In 1 Peter 2, this *priestly* aspect of the church, of Christ and his servants, is joined with the *royal* aspect of the kingdom of God. The passage says:

1 Peter 2:9-10 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. **10** Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.' (*NRSV*)

The church's role of being 'a royal priesthood' and 'a holy nation' is here connected with the *external* ministry of *proclamation of God's mighty acts* in the world. It stands side by side with the *internal* ministry (primarily accomplished by God), which was mentioned in 2:5: 'to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ'. Thus, the old sacrificial ministry to achieve atonement has disappeared, for it is completed once and for all in Christ. The church is rather called to let itself (internally) be built up as a holy priesthood and offer spiritual sacrifices to God, while (externally) 'proclaiming the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light'. In other words, both the *royal* and *priestly* aspects are held together as one. As God once set Israel as a light to the nations (Isa. 42:1-7; 49:6; 51:4; 60:3), he is now setting the Christ and his church as a light to the nations (Luke

4:16-21; John 1:1-9; Acts 13:47; 26:22-23; Eph. 5:8; 1 Pet. 2:9) – this is the *royal* service or ministry to God in the world. At the same time the church is built up spiritually by its *priestly* ministry of offering spiritual sacrifices to God. However, these roles of the church are one: ‘Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy’ (1 Peter 2:10), and the church as a whole is referred to as ‘servants of God’ (2:16). All along, this is inclusive language.¹⁷³⁰

The church is described as a ‘royal priesthood’ in 1 Peter 2:9-10. However, ‘while the priesthood of the entire community of faith is thus affirmed, no church officer of any kind is designated as a priest in the New Testament’.¹⁷³¹ This is because the church has only one King-Priest, namely, Christ. Thus, as pointed out by Staples, ‘the writer of Hebrews, in referring to the “better sacrifice” of Christ, which was offered “once and for all” (Heb. 10:10-14), makes it clear that the priesthood of the Old Testament has been fulfilled and brought to an end. Christ, the new priest (Heb. 7:15, 17), has taken up his office and is now the “one mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5).’¹⁷³²

The significance of this is that ‘while there remains a continuity in God’s purposes for Israel and the church, *priests of the Old Testament and ministers of the Christian church perform widely different roles*. Neither the church nor any priest/minister stands in the position of a mediator between God and human beings. Christ is the unique priest and mediator, and all who believe have “access to God with freedom” through him (Eph. 3:12). This is the basis for the Protestant doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. All Christians, therefore, are priests in the sense that they have direct access to God.’¹⁷³³ And it is this access to God that enables all believers to *serve* him and each other, and to proclaim the gospel to the world. Here, the Bible makes no distinction between man and woman.

In the light of the overarching biblical theme of the Mission of God, the *priesthood of all believers* in 1 Peter 2:4-10 has an important role. Peter mentions

¹⁷³⁰ Cf. R. Dederen, ‘The Priesthood of All Believers’, 1998, pp. 17-20; the author interprets 1 Peter 2:4-10 as (a) a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices’, (b) the missionary obligation of ‘proclaiming the mighty acts of God’, and (c) the corporate priesthood, i.e. a priesthood of the whole Christian church: ‘This is particularly plain in 1 Peter 2:5 and 9 where the apostle uses “a body of priests (*hierateuma*)”, in parallel with “a spiritual house”, “a chosen race”, and “God’s people” (p. 20).

¹⁷³¹ R. L. Staples, ‘A Theological Understanding of Ordination’, 1998, p. 138.

¹⁷³² *Ibid.* (emphasis supplied). Cf. R. Dederen, ‘The Priesthood of All Believers’, 1998, pp. 10-16.

¹⁷³³ *Ibid.*

that the Gentiles are now living stones (just like the Jews), being part of God's sanctuary. Hence the converted Gentiles are also part of the church as a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices in life and worship (2:5). All this is possible because of Jesus Christ who became the cornerstone of God's sanctuary of which they are now part (2:6-8). Right after this follows the endorsement of their new status and mission in the form of a direct quote of Exodus 19:6 – the very text on which the status and mission of Israel hang. Now, the same status of being God's people and having the same mission as Israel – being priests and royals, spreading God's presence and advancing God's good rule in the world – applies to the Gentiles (2:9-10). The membership of God's people is no longer hereditary, but depends on the Spirit, by which the believer is born again and enters a new life in Christ. Rather than a belonging to a hereditary office (like the priests in Israel), it is now the Spirit that equips the ministers in the church, men and women, for their ministry.

The theme of *spiritual gifts* is surprisingly often overlooked in discussions about ordination theology. While being directly relevant for the subject of ordination, the spiritual *gifts, ministries* and *operations* (see 1 Cor. 12:4-13; cf. Rom. 12:4-8; Eph. 4:11-13) also receive their theological significance from the broader biblical perspective. Within the broader context of the Old Testament, spiritual gifts appear to have the same significant functions as the various institutions which God had put in place to build up and edify Israel for its mission. Equally, in the New Testament, while there is (a) no formal organisation comparable to that of the Old Testament, (b) no leadership structure or sacrificial system, (c) no priestly order or functions, (d) no religious festivals or tabernacle functions, which were all used to provide edification and nurture of Israel, there is now the provision of *gifts, ministries* and *operations* to provide edification for God's new people in Christ. The 'gifts' become *the means* which support the mission and the ministry of the church. Just as in the Old Testament the priesthood had not replaced Israel's 'royal priesthood' mission, so in the New Testament the spiritual *gifts, ministries* and *operations* do not replace the mission of the 'priesthood of all believers'.¹⁷³⁴

(We must insert here the comment that, traditionally in the church, however, the gifts that have been treated as being relevant have been those exclusively held by those appointed for ordination and the rest of the body of Christ was left

¹⁷³⁴ J. Barna, 'Towards a Biblical-Systematic Theology of Ordination', 2013, p. 18.

unrecognised. This has distorted the unity of the church and an originally Roman-Catholic concept of clergy and laity has been allowed to take over. A new, biblical theology of ordination should put this right.)

What is this then saying to the church? It suggests that not only specific ministries and gifts like those of a pastor, elder, or deacon/deaconess need official recognition, but the church as a body needs to confirm and affirm each member's particular function within the 'royal priesthood', so that it is clear to all that each individual member acts on behalf of the body of Christ. The *form* of this recognition is not stipulated in the New Testament, but some formal practice of 'ordination' would belong here.

When it comes to *laying on of hands* as the immediate theological context for ordination, it has been pointed out that only about five New Testament texts out of twenty-five, where the phrase appears, technically refer to some kind of 'ordination' in the sense of initiation to a task or office.¹⁷³⁵ In most of these passages, the context for the act of ordination by imposition of hands is that the ordinand is known for 'fullness of the spirit'.¹⁷³⁶ The New Testament thus contains a formal recognition of individuals who were seen by the community as 'full of the spirit'.¹⁷³⁷

In the Old Testament, laying on of hands was widely practiced in different contexts and with different significance; it was certainly not limited to inductions to office but was a general symbolic sign of conferring or transmitting something (3.2; 3.3). Given this background, what is transmitted in ordination is merely the church's *recognition* and *confirmation* of the gift of the Spirit and the *commissioning* or *appointment* to a church function. However, this is where the church has failed in the past, for it neglected the priesthood of all Christ's servants who are members of the body, and ordination by the imposition of hands became an exclusive limiting of the recognition or commissioning to a few uniquely gifted individuals, while the rest were spectators. This may be remedied by applying the biblical thematic context of God's mission to the practice of the imposition of hands, which we must understand on the basis of examples in a few New Testament passages. All are priests and ministers in the church of Christ. All are ordained by the Holy Spirit and are recognised and commissioned by Christ. The church needs to find a way to acknowledge this,

¹⁷³⁵ Acts 6:6, 13:3, 1 Tim. 4:14, 5:22 [?] and 2 Tim. 1:6. Cf. 3.3.7 and 3.5.3. See also R. Bruinsma, *The Body of Christ: An Adventist Understanding of the Church*, 2009, pp. 111-112.

¹⁷³⁶ Acts 6:3, 5; 13:2; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6; cf. Num. 27:16, 18, 20; Deut. 34:9.

¹⁷³⁷ J. Barna, *ibid.*, p. 17.

maybe at baptism, at holy communion and foot-washing, or in some other permanent event in its life. If prayer for God's blessing and the imposition of hands is used for one kind of function as servant/minister, it can and should be used for all. If it is used for all believers/servants in their general priesthood/servanthood, it can also be used for particular functions without this bringing a setting aside of an elite class from the body. The Spirit is the same behind the calling to various services in the church, and the ceremonies of recognition and appointment in the church should reflect that.

In the Old Testament, Joshua (Num. 27:12-23) and the Levites (Num. 8: 5-26) are mentioned as being involved in 'ordination' ceremonies with imposition of hands, but they were not the only ones who received the commission for God's mission. Similarly, we must see the specific New Testament commissioning ceremonies in light of the larger theme of the mission of the church. The New Testament mission is given to all who make up the church, all who are given the 'royal priesthood' title and the resulting (co)mmission.¹⁷³⁸ All are responsible for God's mission, and the church must beware not to lose that pervasive sense of responsibility and calling by limiting the work of mission to a few ministers just because they are formally 'ordained' (this was Ellen White's ardent message – 4.6.2.4). History shows that ordination has threatened and sometimes destroyed the Christians' sense of ownership of God's mission (4.1–4.4). The gap between clergy and laity has not only separated ministers from members in terms of status, but it has also made the members passive onlookers, while the 'ministers', not being able to do all the work of mission themselves, have retreated to the pulpits with sermonising or to the chairmanship of the church committee and becoming entangled in administration. A new biblical theology of ordination can and will change this. This will no doubt revitalise the church and allow us to live up to what God has revealed in his Word regarding the *inclusive* ministry of men and women in the remnant, end-time church.

5.7 The Church Offices: Particular Ministries and Ordination

In order to perform the mission of God (i.e. the mission of Christ), the church has a body of believers, men and women, who are priests and servants/ministers. Since they are many, since mission is challenging and requires training and organisation,

¹⁷³⁸ Ibid., pp. 17-18.

the church has a *practical* need to *delegate* to gifted members some specific aspects of its functions.

The New Testament is filled with examples of the dual calling to particular ministries within the church – God’s personal call and its subsequent confirmation by the church. ‘The call to the ministry is only partly a call from the church. It is also, and first of all, an inward call, an inner assurance on the part of the individual that it is God’s will that he/she should make him/herself useful in the role to which the church has summoned him/her.’¹⁷³⁹ Such ministry is bestowed and sanctioned by the process which is sometimes included in the term ‘ordination’. It involves divine call, church selection and examination, training, approval by the church body, public ceremony that confirms the appointment and the issuing of written credentials. Let us note, however, and make no mistake about it, that only the divine call is clearly taught in the Bible. The rest of these steps we apply are practical measures that are not plainly taught by Scripture. In some cases even an element of Christian tradition is involved, as we believe our study has demonstrated (chapter 4).

Behind the notion of a ‘special call’ to ministry lie three considerations:

(a) The basic calling of God to all men and women effected by Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:1-14).

(b) The special divine calling of some of the body of Christ to perform a particular ministry (Gal. 1:15-16; Eph. 4:11-16).

(c) The recognition by the people of God that some have received a special calling, and the commissioning of these to their task (Acts 6:2-6; 13:1-3).

However, ‘there is no formal description of an ordination service given in the New Testament’.¹⁷⁴⁰ The ordination service, therefore, is based on *our own construction* of the procedure from principles found in the Bible. Thus, while many ask for a biblical text that states that women may be ordained for the gospel ministry, the fact is that there is no biblical text that explicitly states that men should be ordained for the gospel ministry. What the Bible does say, rather, is that both men and women were ‘ordained’ by God or Christ or the Spirit. And this is, incidentally, how Ellen White understood her own ordination. Let this be clear, therefore: *The ordination ceremony fills a practical need of recognition and appointment to a*

¹⁷³⁹ R. Dederen, ‘A Theology of Ordination’, 1984, pp. 147-148.

¹⁷⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

function, but its form is based on a secondary, interpretative reconstruction from the biblical material.

We have seen in great detail in chapter 3 that ordination has its historical roots in the Old Testament. We have also seen that laying on of hands combined with prayer is cautiously used by the New Testament church for some unique and occasional needs, perhaps being mediated by certain contemporary Jewish practices (although this is very uncertain) and then adapted to the theology and practical needs of the Christian church. Raoul Dederen says:

... in the Old Testament ... the concept of God's selectivity already clearly emerges. God calls particular people for particular tasks and sets them apart to serve Him. Israel's history, the selection of prophets, priests, and kings – usually accompanied by an anointing ceremony – the very decision regarding the Incarnation itself, witness to selectivity and election. God commonly called and employed individuals and groups of people to serve Him in a unique fashion. The appointing of the twelve apostles continued this tradition (Mark 3:14). In Jesus' own words, they "did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you" (John 15:16, RSV). Paul used this word of himself as having been "appointed a preacher" (1 Tim. 2:7, RSV). Paul's call to the ministry was a calling and an appointment by the Lord Jesus Christ, an appointment and a "[setting] apart for the gospel of God" (Rom. 1:1, RSV) ...¹⁷⁴¹

In view of the repeated involvement of God in the mission of the church (because it is ultimately God's own mission), it is possible to speak of ordination as 'the church's setting apart a person whom it believes God has called'.¹⁷⁴² The church cannot call the minister into being, but the church is the authoritative body that can *confirm* the fact that an individual has been called, and give official *recognition* to the gifts God has bestowed upon him/her. This 'setting apart' is not providing the ordinand with a superior status, above the rest of the church, but rather to service *within* the church, to God (i.e. Christ), the members, and, like all members, to proclaim God's mighty acts in the world. Dederen remarks appropriately:

Ordination is not intended to create categories of Christians or levels of discipleship. The call to membership in Christ's body is not based in any way on merit; it is simply an undeserved gift of God's grace. So it is also with the task to serve or to minister. The ministry conferred upon ministers is *diakonia* (service), not privilege or right as such. Arising and functioning within the corporate priesthood of all believers, it reveals the same cruciform pattern as Christ's own ministry in which it is rooted.¹⁷⁴³

¹⁷⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴² Ibid.

¹⁷⁴³ Ibid., pp. 148-149.

This raises an important question, however: To which functions in the church is ordination needed? There is no explicit guidance in the New Testament that settles this matter.

The New Testament reveals a multitude of functions of church leadership (e.g. 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4). In the local church setting, there seems to have been two offices, following the Jewish synagogue practice, namely overseer/elder and servant. None of these were ordained by the imposition of hands, however, judging from the plain teaching of the biblical text. Not even the apostles, servants/ministers, prophets, evangelists, etc., whether itinerant or locally settled, were ordained, except by God or Christ or the Holy Spirit. The examples of ordination with the imposition of hands in Acts 6:1-6 and 13:1-3 were *ad hoc* events; they were not repeated as far as we can see. They did not induct the appointee to a known office in the church but to functional, temporary tasks. The church therefore needs to decide here if it wants to follow the expressed teaching of the Bible or, perhaps, follow James White's principle of accepting any practice for the promotion of the *mission of the church* that does *not contradict the Bible and sound sense*.

5.8 Summary Statement

The Bible reveals God as Creator and Sustainer of the world. The breach of the peace in God's Kingdom that was caused by human beings as they walked away from Him has been remedied through His saving mission, which is to restore everything into harmony with His will.

Christ has established the kingdom of God on earth, building it afresh, in a better way, namely, upon his victory over evil and death as demonstrated by His life, death and resurrection, and he has been set apart by God as the royal Son of God and High-Priest of his people. While Christ is keeping His faithful people in close communion with God through his heavenly ministry of intercession, he appoints and authorises all to minister as priests in God's Kingdom. As the church (*ekklesia*) that he has called out from the world, its mission is the mission of Christ within the mission of God. Until God completes his mission by the creation of a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21:1-5), the church is God's agent under the headship of Christ to complete his mission of salvation to 'every nation, tribe, language and people' (Rev. 14:6).

In a world alienated from God, the Church consists of those whom God has reconciled to Himself and to each other. Through the saving work of Christ they are united to Him by faith through baptism (Eph. 4:4-6), thus becoming a royal priesthood whose mission is to 'proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light' (1 Peter 2:9, *NKJV*). Believers are given the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-20), called and enabled through the power of the Spirit and the gifts He bestows on them to carry out the Gospel Commission (Matt. 28:18-20).

While all believers are called to use their spiritual gifts for ministry, the Scriptures identify certain specific responsibilities or leadership positions that were accompanied by the Church's public endorsement for persons who meet particularly the biblical qualification of 'being filled with the Spirit' (Acts 6:1-6; 13:1-3; 14:23; 2 Tim. 1:6). Such endorsements were done in various ways; some of them involved 'the laying on of hands' (Acts 6:1-6; 13:1-3; 2 Tim. 1:6). Over time, English versions of the Scriptures have used the word *ordain* to translate many different Greek and Hebrew words, but in modern times these terms have been translated from the basic idea of *select* or *appoint* that describes the selection and placement of these persons in their respective functions and responsibilities. Over the course of Christian history the term *ordination* has acquired meanings beyond what these words originally implied. Against such a backdrop, Seventh-day Adventists understand ordination, in a biblical sense, as the action of the Church in publicly recognizing those whom the Lord has called and equipped for local and global Church ministry.

Aside from the unique role of the twelve apostles, the New Testament identifies the following categories of ordained leaders: the elder/overseer (Acts 14:23; Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Tim. 3:2-7; 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:1-5; 1 Peter 5:1) and the deacon (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8-10). While most elders/overseers and deacons ministered in local settings, some leaders, initially called 'servants', 'prophets and teachers', or 'apostles', were itinerant and supervised greater territory with multiple congregations, which may reflect the ministry of individuals such as Timothy and Titus (1 Tim 1:3-4; Titus 1:5). The New Testament also mentions a body of elders, a 'presbyterate' as being in charge of the affairs of the local church (1 Tim. 4:14) and this concept is similar to the body of 'apostles and elders' that led out in the council at Jerusalem where central issues relating to all the churches were addressed (15:2, 4, 6, 12, 22, 23). The act of laying on of hands was practised by the presbyterate (1 Tim. 4:14;

5:22; Heb. 6:2; Jam. 5:14), but it is not clear if this act was an ordination to appoint new elders or for blessing, healing, forgiveness, or the laying on of hands at baptism

Based on hints in the New Testament (Acts 6:1-3; 13:1-3; 1 Tim 5:17; Titus 2:15), a practice of ordination has been developed in the Church, by which the Church publicly delegates a representative authority to divinely called individuals for the specific work of ministry to which they are appointed. The New Testament is not consistent in defining the duties of these appointees, but teaching and preaching was involved (Acts 6:3; 1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17; Titus 1:9), as well as anointing, imposition of hands and prayer for the sick (Heb. 6:2); further, leadership (1 Tim. 3:4-5), proclaiming the gospel (2 Tim. 2:11), evangelism (2 Tim. 4:5), planting and organizing churches (Titus 1:5), and looking after the flock and opposing false teaching (Acts 20:28-29). While ordination contributes to Church order, it neither conveys special qualities to the persons ordained nor introduces a kingly hierarchy within the faith community. While there are no New Testament examples of an ordination service, the variety of examples in the Bible of appointments for office include features such as the giving of a charge, the laying on of hands, fasting and prayer, and committing those set apart to the grace of God (Deut. 3:28; Acts 6:6; 14:26; 15:40; 2 Tim. 1:5-12).

Being a servant of God according to the Bible implies dedicating oneself to the Lord and to His Church for a lifetime of service. This comes across in the foundational model of appointment for ministry, namely, Jesus appointment of the twelve apostles (Matt. 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16). The ultimate model of Christian ministry is the life and work of our Lord, who came not to be served but to serve (Mark 10:45; Luke 22:25-27; John 13:1-17). This model is the same for all believers, since all are servants/ministers of Christ. However, for anyone who takes on a leadership function in the Church, this is even more important, since it involves setting an example and leading others to be faithful to the Lord.

CHAPTER 6: AN INCLUSIVE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

In the following, we summarise our conclusions regarding the biblical teaching of an inclusive ministry and ordination without gender distinctions.

6.1 The Biblical Teaching on ‘Ordination’

A consequence of the Church’s acceptance of the Bible as our only creed is that the Church must decide its practice on women’s ordination, not on the basis of what is culturally accepted in various parts of the world, but on the basis of *God’s purpose in the Bible as a whole*. This was the principle applied by James and Ellen White in the early 1850’s when ordination of ministers was introduced and accepted by Adventists (4.6.1). They referred to ‘gospel order’ and ‘ordination according to Scripture’.

We have demonstrated in this study that, according to Scripture, it is not the *gender* of the servant/minister or the *ordination* of a servant/minister that matters. What matters is the full integration of the person in God’s mission through Christ and with the approval of the church.

This point, too, is emphasised by Ellen White. She said that men and women, who have the Spirit of Christ and act as his helping hand will be named ‘priests of the Lord’ and will be called ‘ministers of our God’ (Isa. 61:6), in fulfilment of God’s commissioning of man and woman at creation and of his covenant with Israel in Exodus 19:5-6. Thus, in Ellen White’s letter ‘To the Brethren’ in 1901, which we have analysed earlier (4.6.2.4), she defines the faithful performance of the mission of God (Christ) as *the very core of what the church is*. She states that an *unordained* minister (man or woman) that fulfils the ministry of Christ, who, like Christ, is ‘ordained’ by God through the Holy Spirit and ‘anointed’ to preach good tidings, and who is ‘consecrated’ by the presence of ‘doing works of love and mercy’, is not only of *greater* value to God and his church than an *ordained* minister that fails to represent Christ, but he/she is of *exclusive* value to the mission of God, being his helping hand. Thus, it is not the *gender* of the servant/minister or the formal *ordination* of a servant/minister that matters. What matters is the full integration of the person in God’s mission through Christ.

The same teaching is expressed by the prophecy of Joel 2:28-29, which the apostle Peter announced was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost: ‘on my “ministers”, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy’ (Acts 2:17-18). The prophesying by the power of the Holy Spirit, in which men and women took part (Acts 1:14; 2:1), led to the conversion of three thousand new disciples, and God’s mission had begun through the church of Christ.

In our study of the New Testament, we saw that named women were central in Christ’s ministry and that they were the first eyewitnesses to his resurrection and the first to be called by Christ to share the good news (3.1.3.4; 3.1.3.5). Women continued to serve in the apostolic era in the church not only in ministry, but also in leadership positions (3.1.3.8; 3.1.3.9), and there are biblical and historical data demonstrating that women had a vital role in the expansion of early Christianity (3.1.3.12).

There is no ‘ordination’ of a woman recorded in the New Testament. However, this may not be particularly significant as we recognise how little the Bible actually says about ‘ordination’:

1. The New Testament has no technical term (3.2.7; 3.5.5.1) for the concept of a process of induction to an office of leadership. ‘Ordination’ is an English term with roots in the Roman Catholic concept of *ordinatio* or ‘orders’ (4.1; 4.2), and its origin is in the pagan Roman empirical administration (4.1.5). The New Testament uses several different common verbs meaning ‘appoint’, which suggests that there is not yet a recognised practice of ‘ordination’.

2. There is no general command in the New Testament directed to the Christian church to ‘ordain’ anybody for a function as leader or servant/minister.

3. Jesus was born and called by God and anointed by the Holy Spirit as God appointed him as his servant (Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; cf. John 1:29-34). No ‘ordination’ or imposition of hands was involved, only God’s words and acts, although Jesus made a point out of ‘fulfilling all righteousness’ by being baptised.

4. Judging from the Gospels, Jesus did not ordain his disciples, but merely ‘made’ or ‘appointed’ them as twelve (Mark 3:14), so they could be with him, proclaim the gospel of the kingdom, and cast out demons. Thus, neither the apostles were formally ‘ordained’, nor Matthias who replaced Judas, although the process of his appointment to leadership is described in some detail, even with some technical

language (Acts 1:15-26). Jesus expressed himself on 'taking office' and using titles in ways that implicitly but strongly opposed the Jewish practice of the imposition of hands for a scribal office (3.5.1).

5. No 'ordination' for the role as apostle is recorded for the apostle Paul, only his personal call and commissioning as a 'minister' by Jesus Christ (Acts 26:15-18; Gal. 1:1; 1:15-2:10; 1 Tim. 2:6; 2 Tim. 1:11) – besides being 'set apart' before he was born and called through God's grace (Gal. 1:15), this is the only divine 'appointment' Paul refers to in his writings. The act performed in Antioch on him and Barnabas was not an 'ordination' for a church office, but a special sending, prompted directly by the Holy Spirit, on a missionary journey by which the church in Antioch extended the kingdom of God. It is not repeatable, but unique.

6. The only appointments with imposition of hands in the book of Acts are:

(a) The selection of the seven in Acts 6:1-6, and
 (b) The sending of Barnabas and Saul from Antioch on their first missionary journey to Asia Minor in Acts 1:1-3.

(c) The 'appointments' of elders in the local churches in Asia Minor are not explicitly accompanied by prayer and imposition of hands, but the Greek term used (*cheirotoneo*) may literally mean 'raising' or 'stretching out the hand' (Acts 14:23), but there is no way to determine which is intended in the text.

Looking more closely at the first two instances, the appointment of the seven was a unique act that dealt with a special need and is not recorded as a model to follow in the church. The office of the seven is not named. They seem to have been *ad hoc* assistants to the twelve in Jerusalem. We have seen that there were special circumstances relating to the Jewish community that led to this act, and resemblances with Jewish practices of ordaining scribes or elders (3.4). It is possible but not certain that the 'ordination' of the seven imitated Moses' ordination of Joshua, or the people's 'ordination' of the Levites, but this is not plainly stated. In light of the mission of God in the Bible as a whole, the appointment of the seven implies a vital *change* which may in itself explain the formal extension to the seven of the authority of the Jerusalem congregation and the apostles (5.5).

The appointment of Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:1-3) was undertaken in answer to an *ad hoc* calling from the Holy Spirit and is not an 'ordination' for an office but a commissioning for a missionary task. Nowhere does the passage indicate that it is a model of 'ordination' for the church to follow. Again, a strategic extension of the

kingdom of God can be discerned in that it now moves out from the church in Antioch to the Gentiles in Asia Minor.

7. In 1 and 2 Timothy, references are made to plausible 'ordinations' but none can be understood with any certainty:

(a) For the imposition of hands by the presbytery in Ephesus (1 Tim. 4:14), it is not possible to establish its exact function (3.5.3.4). If we say it was an 'ordination' of Timothy to be an elder, this is hypothetical, because there are other options, the Greek text being ambiguous, and Timothy never being referred to as 'elder'.

(b) For the imposition of Timothy's hands on an elder (1 Tim. 5:22), it seems most likely from the context that it has to do with the forgiveness and restoration of an erring elder after his suspension (3.3.7.7).

(c) For Paul's laying on of hands on Timothy (2 Tim. 1:6), it seems most likely that this refers to Paul's appointment of Timothy as his 'son' or apostolic servant (3.5.3.4).

In none of these cases is there any command for the church to 'ordain'. No office is defined in the context for which 'ordination' is needed – except for 1 Timothy 5:22, but, as demonstrated in our exegesis above, this passage does not seem to describe an 'ordination'. In none of these cases, we find a consistent procedure with prayer and imposition of hands, or a charge in a congregational environment.

8. The New Testament speaks only of two offices in the church, the 'overseer' (*episkopos*), who overlaps with the 'elder' (*presbyteros*), and the 'servant' (*diakonos*) (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit; 1:5-8). However, no 'ordination' with the imposition of hands is described or commanded in connection with the qualifications for these offices.

9. The New Testament is very clear, however, that anyone who is to preach the gospel and serve as servant/minister or leader must have a divine call and be filled with the Holy Spirit. The church must find practical ways of examining the candidate and endorsing him/her, but the Bible does not tell us how that is to be done. Perhaps this is an area where James White's rule may work: 'all means which, according to sound judgment, will advance the cause of truth, and are not forbidden by plain scripture declarations, should be employed' (2.1).

Thus, we conclude that ordination, as traditionally practised, is not commanded by the Bible and is not based on plain biblical teaching.

The appeal to 'gospel order' by James and Ellen White in the early 1850's, which led to the practice of ordination in our church, was an appeal to order in the

church based on what the Bible teaches about God, the order and functionality of Christian worship, and how the church can protect its unity and ensure that its preachers, teachers, and administrative leaders have a divine call, a personal commitment to serve, and the trust of the church.

It seems obvious that the church has a practical need for recognising its ministers, their education, Christian character and skills, their spiritual gifts, divine call and personal commitment, and to do so in a public way to demonstrate to the Church that these men and women have confidence and authority from the Church. But this is a practical matter, and deciding *how to do so* is a decision that is to be made by the Church on the basis of biblical principles and practical needs, because there is no explicit biblical instruction on this practical aspect. It is a matter of interpretation.

The Church issues written 'credentials' to an ordained minister, serving as evidence that the minister has the authority of an ordained minister. The act of ordination is a ceremony by which the candidate is encouraged, the Church is publicly announcing its decision, and prayers for the Lord's blessing are offered. However, the Bible does not explicitly clarify what the imposition of hands means. Using common sense, it is possible to assume that it *points out* the ordinand to the congregation and *shows unity* between the ordainers and the ordinand and *expresses support*. In reading the Bible on imposition of hands, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has not taken it as a sacrament, or a ritual-magical act which prompts God to act, or which confers divine gifts upon the ordinand. It is entirely symbolic, like all the other ordinances that we practice, such as baptism, holy communion and foot-washing.

Thus, it is *not the ceremony of ordination* with the imposition of hands that is the issue when we consider women's ordination in the Church. The Bible gives many examples of the laying on of hands being used for women for all kinds of purposes (blessing, healing, baptism, etc.), and Ellen White literally proposed that prayer and imposition of hands should be used to appoint women to work in service/ministry (4.6.2.3).

The issue is, rather, if a woman's gender prevents her from having a position of authority and serving as 'head' in some way in the church family. This makes the issue of male headship and female submission a central point.

6.2 Men and Women as Servants of God in the Bible

We analysed the main biblical passages relating to the issue of male headship and female submission (3.1). These are: Genesis 1-3; 4-11; Ephesians 5:17-33; 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; 14:33-35; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Timothy 2:8-15; 3:1-13; Titus 2:3-5; and 1 Peter 3:1-7. The main points in our summary (3.1.3) will be presented here.

1. According to Genesis 1:1-2:4a (3.1.1.1), God commissions and 'ordains' man and woman as his representatives to have authority over the created world in cooperation with him. Being created 'in the image of God', men and women are equals in serving God. Implicitly, man and woman function as priestly mediators between the world and God. They are expected to follow God's instructions, regulate life as work and rest, and guard the ownership of God over the world which is blessed and holy. This calls for a priestly and governing mediation. An explicit aspect of their service is being fruitful, increasing, and filling the earth with human descendants. For this purpose, God also commissions and blesses man and woman.

2. The equal responsibility of man and woman as ministers of God is part of the world order intended in God's creation. In Genesis 2:4b-25, therefore, the fundamental parity between the genders established in chapter 1 is not changed or contradicted. Genesis 2 deepens the unity of man and woman by the relational and intimate aspects of marriage implied in the blessing and charge to be fruitful and increase in 1:28.

In no part of Genesis 2:4b-25 (3.1.1.2) did we find evidence to suggest any inferiority of woman to man. A point by point study of arguments that have been adduced in favour of an alleged divinely-ordained hierarchical view of the genders shows that there is no support in Genesis 2 for such a view. Man and woman before the Fall are presented as fully equal, as related in a cooperative interdependence and with not the slightest hint of headship of one over the other.

3. The Fall recorded in Genesis 3 (3.1.1.3) changes the conditions of the humans but God remains the same. The human guilt and shame change their relationship to God and each other; they now know good and evil and are therefore expelled from the Garden of Eden; the woman will experience pain in childbearing

and childbirth; the ground is cursed and will yield its food only by man's painful toil; man will live only a limited time and will return to dust from where he came.

God is still committed to uphold his blessing upon male and female (Gen. 1:28). He demonstrates not only justice in dealing with the transgression of the man and the woman but also care and provision to reduce their misery, but above all in order to accomplish his mission through the woman's seed (Gen. 3:15).

Genesis 3:16 is a crucial passage. It needs to be read in the context of Genesis 1-3, in the context of both God's judgment and his caring provision, and with close attention to the nuances of meaning in each Hebrew term. A preferable translation is:

- (a) I will greatly increase your pain in childbearing;
- (b) with pain you will give birth to children;
- (c) yet your longing will be for your husband;
- (d) and he will be responsible for you.

In 3:16a-b God gives the sentence for the woman's crime, acting as judge. In 3:16c-d, however, he acts as a caring provider for the humans and balances the consequences for human procreation, which he had commissioned in Genesis 1:26-28. Acting as provider and carefully administering the new conditions of human life in order to pursue his mission of salvation, God is being true to his creation of man and woman in 'the image of God', to his commission of male and female as governors of the world, and to his blessing of them both. Another reason for safeguarding the woman's childbearing and childbirth is the promise of 'the woman's seed' in the sentence of the serpent in 3:15, which envisages the coming of the people of Israel, Jesus Christ, and the church.

Consequently, there is no hierarchic ordering of the status of man and woman in Genesis 3:16, and the relationship defined there concerns only husband and wife in the marriage relationship, not man and woman in general. In all the Old Testament, there is no indication that Genesis 3:16 was understood and applied as a divine injunction that man was to 'rule over' woman or as a divine prohibition against a woman being the 'head of men' in public or communal life. The examples of women in leadership roles in the Old Testament are recorded without any criticism or disapproval whatsoever.

4. The first activity of the humans after the expulsion from Eden is to offer priestly sacrifices (Gen. 4:1-5). This *continues* Adam's and Eve's priestly investiture

with tunics of animal skin in 3:21 which we have analysed in some detail (3.1.1.3). It is later on *confirmed* by Noah on behalf of all humanity after the Flood. It *prefigures* the mediating ministry of the male priests in the Israelite sanctuary, and *explains* the basis for God's election of all men and women in Israel as a kingdom of 'priests', and Christ's calling his believers to be his 'priests' in God's great mission to save the world. God's corrective action of replacing the clothing of leaves with clothing of skin, the latter presuming the shedding of blood of an animal, is in 9:4-6 directly linked to the explanation of animal sacrifices as a replacement for the death of man which he merits on account of his transgression (2:17). The offering of sacrifices of the firstborn humans leads to a discussion about right and wrong offerings and how humans deal with sin (4:6-7). Thus, initially, there is no difference in the priestly roles between male and female.

5. In Genesis 4-11 (3.1.1.4) human life after the Fall is outlined in broad strokes. While genealogical lists mention 'sons and daughters' being born, not one single woman is mentioned by name, but the generations are named after the father. In all the book of Genesis, and in the Bible as a whole, there is however no instruction preserved from God to do so. The conclusion is that this is therefore a result of human sin, a part of the corruption of man described in 6:5: 'The Lord saw ... that every inclination of the thoughts of [man's] heart was only evil all the time'.

6. The patriarchal line is another consequence of sin which was incorporated over long time in the traditions that Moses and his assistants used in creating the Genesis text before us. Only with the story of Terah and Abram in 12:27-32, do we have wives named together with their husbands, which puts the focus on family relationships and procreation in fulfilment of God's promises.

7. In our study of the relationship between men and women as servants of God in the Old Testament (see 3.1.2), we found that, while the wife is submitting in practice to her husband's 'headship among equals' in the home, and the same principle is implied in laws and precepts, this does not bar women from positions of influence, leadership, and authority over men in the covenant community. Thus, the predominant patriarchal structure of Israelite society limited but did not exclude women from positions of influence, leadership, and even headship over men.

The leadership roles of Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and others, which are found in the Old Testament, are much fewer than those of men, but the fact that they are

evidenced in the Bible shows that *the Bible does not prohibit women from being given leadership roles*. Three observations may be relevant here:

(a) When Israel is *in transition* and not settled with the central city of Jerusalem and its temple, women come to the foreground in leadership roles. When Israel was institutionalised with a temple and a complex organisation involving priests and Levites, women tended to be excluded from leadership involvement.

(b) Women's leadership roles become *more prominent and acceptable in the prophetic movement and in the wisdom circles*. Women serve as spiritually endowed prophetesses, wise women, and spirit-filled 'servants of the Lord ... whom the Lord calls' (Joel 2:28-32). Thus, the resistance against women in leadership comes rather from men in the human patriarchal setting than from God in his divine and spiritual setting. (This point would of course also apply to Ellen White's ministry among Seventh-day Adventists, confirming that God's call to men and women transcends the human social customs and structures.)

(c) The selection of canonical writings in the Old Testament Bible was clearly not made with the purpose of highlighting the role of women in the Israelite society. Yet, the Old Testament contains books with female names (Ruth; Esther), books where women have a central role (Judg. 4-5; Song 1-8), and portions of Scripture written by women (e.g. Ex. 15; Judg. 5; 1 Sam. 2). In addition, recent studies suggest that in biblical times more women held positions of power and authority than a mere surface reading of the texts may suggest.

8. In our review of the New Testament texts on the relationship between men and women as servants of God (3.1.3), we examined in detail all the passages that might say something about female submission and male headship: 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; 14:33-35; Ephesians 5:17-33; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Timothy 2:8-15; Titus 2:5; and 1 Peter 3:1-7. Our conclusions were consistent and clear:

(a) All passages were written in a socio-cultural setting where women were – in the interest of propriety – not allowed to hold public offices or even speak at assemblies. This was the case both in specifically Jewish settings and in the wider Hellenistic environment. However, at least in the Hellenistic environment, this was not a compact prohibition and there were openings for women in public life. These openings were filled by the early Christian church who functioned as God's servants and ministers, and even apostles. The apostolic authors, however, were concerned not to cause scandal which could prevent the gospel from being accepted. The same

principle applies today in egalitarian countries, where scandal is caused for the church and the gospel if women are not treated as equals to men.

(b) All passages referring to female submission in the life of the church explicitly concern the wife-husband relationship in marriage. Some of them, therefore, are driven by the concern for order in church services (particularly in Corinth due to the issue of speaking in tongues) and female propriety in their relationship to 'their own' husbands who were – by culturally determined rules – dishonoured if a wife behaved inappropriately according to the accepted codes of conduct.

(c) Some passages address particular issues in the local church, where women were teaching and behaving according to pagan or Gnostic ideas that contradicted the Scriptures in regard to childbirth and motherhood, the truth of the gospel, and the accepted rules of male/female propriety.

(d) No passage explicitly states, as God's command, that a woman may not function as a church leader.

(e) With particular reference to 1 Corinthians 11:3, Christ is not head for or of the church, which is his body, but he is the head of every man. This text is made of three carefully sequenced and related clauses: the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. The question must be raised as to whether the meaning of 'head' in this text is consistent with its use in the other references referring to Christ as the head of the church, or whether it has suddenly changed to mean something different in this one passage. Sometimes, the word 'head' in this text is carelessly infused with its meaning in the English language to obtain the following hierarchical order: God head over Christ – Christ head over man – man head over woman. This top-down vertical chain of command then goes as follows: God – Christ – man – woman.

However, this interpretation is obtained by manipulating the biblical text. In order to make the text say what the Scripture does not teach in this passage, its three clauses must be taken out of their original sequence and rearranged. The apostle Paul knows exactly how to structure hierarchies in perfect descending order (see e.g. 1 Cor. 12:28). In 1 Corinthians 11:3, he is not structuring a hierarchy. In keeping with the theme developed in the immediate context, Paul is discussing the traditional significance of origination, and the sequence that links the three clauses is not hierarchy but chronology. At creation, Christ was the giver of life to men as the

source of the life of Adam ('by him all things were created. Col. 1:16). In turn, man 'gave life' to the woman as she was taken from him. Then, God gave life to the Son as he came into the world for the incarnation. When the biblical sequence of the three clauses is not tampered with, the consistent meaning of 'head' in this verse is that of a servant function as provider of life. And this is consistent with the meaning of 'head' in the other five passages that refer to Christ as head of the church.

9. The passage in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 outlines certain qualifications of an overseer and a servant in a local church setting. It is probable that this followed the practice of the Jewish synagogue where there was an 'overseer' and a 'servant'. In our study of this passage (3.1.3.11), we noted that the gender of the overseer is male. Does that mean that the Bible is allowing only males to be overseers? The following points may be made:

(a) In 1 Timothy 3, the listed qualifications are *subordinate* to the overarching *purpose* of ensuring trust among outsiders, both in the overseer and the servant as church representatives, and of safeguarding an acceptance of the gospel of Christ among outsiders. The lists of qualifications both for the overseer and the servant conclude emphatically with references to their reputation among outsiders and warnings against 'falling into disgrace' and exhortations to 'gain a good standing for themselves' (3:7, 13). We demonstrated that being 'the husband of one wife' was a Jewish set phrase in the Ephesian environment which was associated with decent behaviour. It had roots in Old Testament priestly regulations to safeguard the priest's holiness and purity. The phrase could not be used about a female overseer, because a woman could legally not have several husbands and was not entitled to initiate a sequence of marriages if her husband died or divorced her. Consequently, the phrase is irrelevant for determining the gender of an 'overseer'.

(b) The fact that 'being the husband of one wife' is used about *both* the 'overseer' (*episkopos*) and the 'servant' (*diakonos*), while the same author, Paul, also uses 'servant' (*diakonos*) in the masculine form and in a formal office title ('servant of the church in Cenchreae') with reference to a woman (Rom. 16:1), shows that 'husband of one wife' is not an indication that an overseer and a servant *must be males*. If they nevertheless were males in Ephesus ca. 65 A.D., this may well be explained by language conventions and/or local and time-limited circumstances.

(c) The general rule in Hebrew and biblical Greek (influenced by Jewish social conveniences) is that the masculine gender is inclusive of both genders, while the feminine is only referring to a female. This is seen, for example, in the Ten Commandments, where the masculine gender includes females, and in the story of Jephthah (Judg. 11:1-12:7), where his vow to sacrifice 'whoever (masculine) comes out of the doors of my house to meet me shall be offered as a burnt-offering' is followed by his daughter coming out of the house. If there was ever a time when the literal masculine gender would be applied literally, it was in Jephthah's case, but he offered his daughter because the masculine form included male and female.

(d) A respectful and balanced approach to the passage is therefore to say that it provides a model for any overseer, man or woman, provided that the environment of mission is such that either of the two genders is considered 'decent' by the church and the people it seeks to reach with the gospel. A list of the overseer's qualifications in a matriarchal society in India, for example, would not say 'husband of one wife', but 'wife of one husband'. And in egalitarian modern societies where it is an offence to prohibit a woman from leadership, the gospel will be best served by both men and women serving as overseers. The application of the passage needs to be consistent with how we use the Bible as a whole to guide our church procedures. When confronted with a culturally bound practice, it is the underlying biblical principle that matters, as in the case of women covering their heads, the church having offices for driving out demons, or the acceptance of slavery.

In conclusion, there is no biblical warrant for saying that, in general, women are to be submitted to men, and therefore a woman cannot be ordained for the gospel ministry in our church. The passages that do speak of female submission are all related to man's and woman's roles in *marriage*, and, even there, an egalitarian marriage partnership is closest to God's ideal in creation.

The specific female submission in marriage can according to our understanding be attributed to a patriarchal culture which has not been instituted by God. The passage in Genesis 3:16 records divine measures in order to safeguard human life through the woman, so that, although she is punished by an increased pain in childbearing and childbirth, she will still long for her husband and he will care for her. We do not see in this passage any warrant for male headship, but for responsibility, love and care, as beautifully taught in the New Testament in a language appropriate for those times.

Thus, there is no warrant for excluding duly called women from being accepted by the church for a special ministry such as the gospel ministry and for leadership. Since there is no formal description of ordination of servants/ministers in the New Testament church, since there are many examples of women being ‘filled with the Spirit’ in the New Testament, and many who filled functions in specific ministries, since the mission of God (i.e. Christ) is what the church’s mission is all about, since God has not in his Word revealed any prohibitions against women being ordained but rather has endorsed woman from the time of creation, instituting Eve as priest in the sanctuary of Eden besides Adam, and since Christ has made all believers priests and ministers for him, it is a decision the Church has to make, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to grant women equal rights to ministry.

6.3 An Inclusive Ministry in the Biblical Theology of Ordination

The theme of the Bible as a whole is God’s mission to *save* humans from evil and death, to *restore* his harmonious relationship with them, to *eradicate evil* from the universe, and *create* a new heaven and a new earth where he has communion with humans as their God (Rev. 21:1-4). Christ’s mission was to lay the foundation for God’s mission, by his life, work and teaching, by his death and resurrection, by his appointment of the church and his commissioning of the church to serve God, each other, and the world.

Thus, Christ has founded his church as an agent of the mission of God. The members of the church can do nothing without Christ. He is their High Priest and they serve him (and God) as priests, or *mediators* between God and the world, in teaching and preaching the gospel, in administration, leadership, and various forms of services. Christ made no distinction between men and women as his servants. This can be traced back to the origin, when God made no distinction between men and women in their capacity to minister in his mission. Man and woman were both serving him as equals in Eden, as priests of God, and God endorsed them in this role even after the Fall by dressing them in skins, which is a symbol of priesthood.

At Sinai when God called Israel as his people, he made them ‘a kingdom of priests and a holy nation’ (Ex. 19:5-6), and they were all consecrated to meet the Lord (Ex. 19:14-15, 17). Men and women are ‘priests’ of the God based on their belonging to the people of Israel.

However, the sanctuary priesthood became reserved for men, for various reasons:

(a) Israel was steeped in the patriarchal culture of their time and place, and God accepted to work out his mission through Israel of that time;

(b) a hereditary priesthood was instituted in the tribe of Levi because of the disobedience of the people and the Levite's faithfulness;

(c) the central function of blood to maintain ritual purity in the sanctuary service disadvantaged women (menstrual blood and blood connected with childbearing and childbirth were considered unclean); and

(d) it was important to avoid associations with 'holy women' that were prominent in the widespread temple prostitution surrounding and invading Israel.

However, God continued his mission through Israel, the sanctuary, the kingdom, and his prophets. And all along, he used men and women as his servants. Through Isaiah he announced that one day, through Messiah (Isa. 61:1-2), God would again call men and women 'priests of the Lord and ministers of our God' (61:6; note Ellen White's use of this passage in 4.6.2.4 above). This fulfilled in the church of Christ, which is a kingdom of priests.

The priesthood of man and woman established at Creation (Genesis 1-2) and confirmed in Eden after the Fall (3:21) is essential according to the book of Revelation for the end-time church – in the service to God of the church on earth (Rev. 1:6), in the ministry of Christ (Rev. 5:9-10), and in the new heaven and earth (Rev. 5:10; 20:6).¹⁷⁴⁴ The passages in Revelation 5:20 and 20:6 explicitly resume the theme of man and woman as *priests* and *rulers* of the earth in Genesis 1-3. Revelation does so in the context of the sacrifice and blood of Christ, which fulfils God's promise of salvation by 'the seed of the woman' (Gen. 3:15). The sacrifice for redemption is also continued in the priestly mediation instituted in Eden for men and women and in humanity by Cain/Abel and Noah (Gen. 3:21; 4:1-7; 8:20-8:17). It is then resumed by Abraham and the patriarchs, and by Israel, until the final sacrifice is offered by Christ.

The New Testament gives the impression that men were generally chosen for special ministry as leaders, teachers and preachers. This is in keeping with the patriarchal customs of the time and was often necessary in order to meet the

¹⁷⁴⁴ Cf. B. Wiklander, 'The Mission of God', 2009, pp. 284-285.

culturally conditioned expectations of propriety and normal behaviour. However, it is clear that Christian women were filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesied and prayed, and held many different roles in the expansion and growth of the church. The church had not formalised its offices, its induction or ordination procedures, and many leaders were simply serving on account of their divine call and spiritual gifts.

The central principle behind the patriarchal concessions in the Bible is the concern for internal unity in the church, which brings respect among outsiders for Christ, the gospel, and the church as his agent. Given the culturally bound ideas of the role of women in society at the time, the role of women in ministry had to be limited depending on the setting. This is a temporary, historical influence on the wording of the biblical texts, but the Bible as a whole, through Genesis 1-3, Exodus 19:5-6, Isaiah 61:6, 1 Peter 2:9-10, and Revelation 1:6; 5:9-10; 20:3; 21:1-22:5 provides repeated corrections, in order to bring his people back to where he wanted men and women to be from the beginning and in eternity: united and equal in his inclusive service for his mission in the great controversy and the plan of redemption.

Applying the biblical teaching on God' inclusive ministry in the modern context of egalitarian societies means that women and men are to serve on equal terms as overseers in the church. The temporary concessions to patriarchy, however, reveal a principle that is still valid, but in many places in the world today it must be applied in the opposite way. Gender discrimination is considered a great evil and injustice in these egalitarian societies, and by preventing women from serving as overseers, even ordained gospel ministers, the church is putting up a hindrance for the acceptance of the gospel and discrediting the mission of God. A way must therefore be found that allows the Seventh-day Adventist Church to permit a woman to hold an ordained minister's credential, while the church in other parts of the world, where this may not now be appropriate, may choose to restrict such credentials.

CHAPTER 7: RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of this study in its entirety, we make the following recommendations:

A. TOWARDS A BIBLICAL PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

1. Focus on the Mission of God and All Being Servants for the Salvation of the World. The entire matter of ordination should be seen and our terminology should be defined in the context of God's purpose for the world as the Creator in Genesis 1-2 and the end-time vision of Revelation 21-22. This will revive the doctrine of the Priesthood of All Believers and the inspired biblical theology of mission, church, and service. It will give a theological foundation for activating all members in mission.

2. Remove the Current Distance between Clergy – Laity and the Levels of Ordination. We recommend that the Church embraces truly biblical principles and frees itself from the continuing dependence on 'Roman' practices, for example by:

(a) finding ways to visibly include the role of lay people in the ordination ceremony (lay people are theologically included in the idea of the church delegating authority to ordained pastors, and lay people participate in the conference/union committee decisions to ordain a pastor);

(b) removing any idea of '(apostolic) succession',

(c) removing the existing distance between clergy and laity, and the idea that the ordained clergy forms a separate class of members who are elevated to a higher status than others;

(d) removing the levels of ordination between all the different 'servants' who work in the church (globally and locally) and applying, rather, one concept of servanthood but with distinctions of duties and responsibilities which are documented in written credentials;

(e) removing the intricate differences between various levels of ministry, such as the licensed and ordained minister, the licensed minister and the ordained local church elder, the pastor and the local church elder, etc.

(f) admitting that there is no biblical command to ordain anyone by the imposition of hands and that there is no consistent biblical formula for how a leader is inducted to office in the Christian church.

3. *An Inclusive Ministry.* The Church should allow for an inclusive and gender-neutral ministry, which means that credentials will be granted to men and women on equal terms for all offices which require ordination, presently the gospel minister, the elder, and the deacon/deaconess. This means that the Church removes all gender distinctions in its *Working Policy* related to the ministry and thus fulfils the biblical intent of the *Working Policy* BA 55 on 'Human Relations'.

If this cannot be implemented across the world at the same time, the Church should allow it where unions/divisions request permission to do so. This may mean that the world-wide recognition of an ordination in one country may have to be reworded in the *Working Policy* to the effect that an ordained minister's credentials are subject to the acceptance of a receiving division/union/conference.

4. *Recommendation to the GC Session in 2015.* We propose that a recommendation be brought to the General Conference Session in 2015, that it approves a revised policy in which unions, whose constituency meetings in session have voted approval and whose division committee has voted approval, be allowed to maintain an inclusive pastoral ministry which removes all gender distinctions within the work of the church in that union territory.

5. *Theology and Practice of Ordination – Education of Members.* The Church should continue its development of the biblical theology of ordination. Based on our study, we urge the Church to proceed in considerably more detail than in the brief consensus statement now considered by the Theology of Ordination Study Committee. This should be accompanied by an organised and intentional attempt to educate members regarding the biblical rationale for ordination and what Seventh-day Adventists believe about it in view of the teaching of the Bible, our only authority for life and practice.

There should be an on-going teaching of church members regarding the mission of God, the nature of the Church and ordination. This is especially important for new members who come from Roman Catholic or Orthodox backgrounds. The

Roman Catholic Church has extensive catechetical teachings about ‘Orders’, which is one of seven sacraments and lays the foundation for the priesthood and the right to determine a person’s salvation or condemnation. ‘Orders’ are part of even brief and popular Catholic Catechisms, but in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we say almost nothing about ordination. This deficit has generated bias and unwarranted traditions that have determined members’ opinion on both ordination in general and women’s ordination. The text of the *Working Policy* is hardly known by members and is even insufficient as it now stands.

B. A REDUCED CEREMONIAL EMPHASIS

6. Consider the Best Terminology. The Church should carefully consider the wisdom of using the term ‘ordination’, which is ambiguous and loaded with meanings from the Roman Catholic Church and various Protestant denominations that are not biblical and that are confusing our members who have come to us from other churches. Its origins in the pagan Roman empirical administration, its laws and idol worship, and in the false Christian theology introduced by Tertullian and Cyprian and others after them, make a Seventh-day Adventist hesitant and uncomfortable about this term. We recommend therefore that terms that are closer to the biblical terminology are introduced, such as ‘appoint’, ‘commission’, ‘dedicate’. If for traditional reasons, it is decided to keep ‘ordination’ as a technical term in denominational language, it should be acknowledged that each language in the world has ways of referring to the concept of ‘ordination’ that does not reflect the English ‘ordination’ or Latin *ordinatio*. For example, Greek Adventists use the common Greek term of *cheirotoneo*, which is found in Acts 14:23. Other options abound in various languages and the Church should acknowledge the wish of a union to choose better terms in the local language than ‘ordination’ or ‘ordain’.

7. Remove Ritualistic and Consecrational Flavour. Seeing how ‘ordination’ is treated in the New Testament – which is where we must find our guidance on Christian ministry – we recommend that the ritualistic and consecrational flavour of the act of ordination, its vague mixture of granting the Holy Spirit or gifts for ministry and ecclesiastical authority be radically toned down and removed from policy and practice.

8. Make the Imposition of Hands Optional. While an installation ceremony is a positive and needed feature in church life, we recommend that the imposition of hands be an optional part of the ceremony. In the New Testament, the apostle, servants/ministers, overseers/elders are nowhere ordained by imposition of hands in clear terms. For these functions, however, there is a clear biblical ground for talking about being ‘appointed’.

9. Emphasis on God’s Blessing and Practical Aspects. We recommend that the emphasis in the ceremony be placed on the *public recognition* of the ordinand, the *church’s confirmation* of the ordinand’s call from God and commitment to serve Christ and the Church, the *Church’s approval of the ordinand* as teacher, preacher and spiritual leader, and the invocation of *God’s blessing*.

10. Review Who Is To Be Ordained in the Church. A special study should be conducted regarding the biblical basis for applying ‘ordaining’ to some offices and not others in the Church. All office holders in the Church are servants of God, and the Bible is not clear on who is ‘ordained’ and who is not. All officials at local church level and in conferences, unions, and the General Conference can be introduced to their functions when they start. This is practical and encouraging, but the biblical basis for ordaining only the pastor, elder, deacon/deaconess is very scant.

C. SOME OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

11. Separate Ordination from Election to an Organisational Office of Leadership. A clearer distinction should be made between the *ordination* (i.e. the ordained minister’s credentials) and the *election* of leaders for regular church offices in missions, conferences, unions, divisions, and the General Conference. Ordination for the gospel ministry should be for the ministry of the word (Acts 6:2) and not for administrative positions. If an ordained pastor is elected for a church office of organisational leadership, this is a different task from being a pastor (although some functions may overlap). Holding ministerial credentials may certainly be a merit of one who is elected as a leader, but in its theology and policy, the Church should

ensure that the two are clearly distinguished, so that ordination does not automatically imply administrative or organisational leadership.

12. Improve Ministerial Training, Education, Preparation for Ordination, and Clarify Processes, Requirements, and Qualifications. We recommend that, based on the study we submit, the Church sharpens its processes and requirements for pastoral education and training, and develops better means by which the qualifications of an ordinand are examined, evaluated, and developed.

CHAPTER 8:
**CONCLUDING REMARKS:
 INTERPRETATION, UNITY, CULTURES,
 AND THE MISSION OF GOD**

It has been said that the current debate on women's ordination in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is focused on 'whether or not the Bible *permits* women to be appointed and commissioned as *elders or pastors*'.¹⁷⁴⁵ If it was that simple, then the issue is not 'ordination' as such, but rather what function or office in the church a woman is permitted *by the Bible* to hold, in other words, the issue is the granting of credentials by the conference and what ecclesiastical authority this bestows on the woman. However, we do not agree that it is that simple.

We believe the current debate is symptomatic of four major needs which the Church cannot afford to ignore and which are a threat to the spiritual well-being of the Church and our end-time mission from God. *We recommend that these areas be studied intensely by the whole Church and that a process of revival and reformation is put in place based on prayer, Bible study, conversation, and mission work, in order to bring us together and on safer ground than today.*

1. The Interpretation of the Bible. Behind the current debate lies, firstly, the fundamental question of how Adventists interpret the Bible concerning ordination. As pointed out here (chapter 2), Jan Barna's investigation of the methods of biblical interpretation displayed by both opponents and proponents (2012) shows that there is an overall weakness on both sides in doing justice to the biblical text. He points out that 'the disagreements about the meaning of texts spring not only from exegetical or theological conclusions but also from prior disagreements about the nature of interpretation'.¹⁷⁴⁶ And 'unless both sides make conscious attempts to address the lack of epistemological and critical clarification of their hermeneutical positions, there is every chance that the theological differences between the two camps will remain unresolved'.¹⁷⁴⁷ The proposition of Barna's research is, therefore, that 'fuller awareness of the problems of hermeneutics may provide a defence against interpretations that may be largely echoes of one's own attitudes or pre-

¹⁷⁴⁵ M. H. Dyer, 'Prologue', *Prove All Things: A Response to Women in Ministry*, 2000, p. 9.

¹⁷⁴⁶ J. Barna, *Ordination of Women*, 2013, p. 308.

¹⁷⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 309.

judgements'.¹⁷⁴⁸ There is in some camps of the Church an 'awareness' of hermeneutics, but it needs to be 'fuller' and based on a wider and deeper understanding of the key elements involved. Old presuppositions are no longer enough. New light is needed for the Church to come out of its current dilemma.

An example of how the Church may ignore new light is the study published by Viggo Norskov-Olsen: *Myth and Truth about Church, Priesthood and Ordination* (1990) – one of the most comprehensive Adventist books on ordination and its theology in the Bible and in history. With rigorous scholarship, the author presents ordination in the Bible in the context of (a) the Church, (b) the Priesthood of Believers, and (c) the Ministry in the Bible and in history, and along the way he highlights how ordination has been applied by the Roman Catholic Church and the churches building on the Protestant Reformation.¹⁷⁴⁹ This work would have provided an excellent basis for a Seventh-day Adventist theology of ordination, but, regrettably, the well-documented and factual findings received very little attention in the world church and in the public debate.¹⁷⁵⁰

We therefore humbly request that the General Conference does not quickly bury the research that is reported here and by other divisions, in order to have a quick fix of an uncomfortable issue. The challenge the Church faces on women's ordination will not go away, because it is symptomatic of deeper issues. The challenge will come back in other shapes and forms, until the Church deals with the fundamental issues. And we believe that the nature of biblical interpretation is one of them.

2. The Unity of the Church. Many contributions in the current debate concern the Church and the society in which it lives and works. Gordon Hyde in his article in 1976 called attention to 'the major reason given for [the elected leadership of the church not feeling that ordination of women to the ministry is advisable at this time]', namely, 'that the whole world field should be united in approving such a step before it is implemented in any part of the world field'.¹⁷⁵¹

¹⁷⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴⁹ Cf. V. Norskov Olsen, 'Ministry: A Place for Men and Women', 1995, pp. 237-250; id., 'Called to be a minister', 1995, pp. 11-17, 28, 31.

¹⁷⁵⁰ In regard to the facts presented and the general outline, V. Norskov Olsen's book reveals a fruitful influence from the comprehensive study by Marjorie Warkentin (*Ordination: A Biblical-Historical View*, 1982).

¹⁷⁵¹ G. Hyde, 'The Ordination of Women', 1976, p. 12.

However, arguments from church unity that favour further delay in permitting women's ordination may have functioned up to 1990 and 1995, but today they have lost their validity. The Church now faces a situation where several unions have already, or are planning to, go their own way regarding women's ordination. The situation now, therefore, is that disunity is already a fact and whether or not the General Conference Session in 2015 permits some form of women's ordination in divisions where it is deemed appropriate, disunity will remain a fact.

Therefore, the Church needs to find other means of building unity concerning ordination than what has been done up to now. We suggest that only a spiritual way which includes balanced education will work. We therefore recommend that the Church stimulates open dialogue about the reasons for the current disunity and shows a way towards how we can live and work together while accepting each other's differences, as the early Christian church was able to do according to Acts 15. This chapter sets before us an outstanding example of how Christians, led by Christ and the Holy Spirit, but also wise leaders, were able to create unity in diversity. And it resulted in blessing and strong growth.

3. *The Cultures of the Members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.*

One aspect of the issue of church unity is the fact that Adventists read the Bible through a looking glass determined by their culture.¹⁷⁵² By 'culture' is meant in this context 'background, history, language, education, social class, ethnicity, etc.'¹⁷⁵³ Thus, at times, 'theological conflicts are also cross-cultural conflicts'.¹⁷⁵⁴

That there is a cultural divide within the Seventh-day Adventist Church regarding ordination of women is clear by the debates and votes taking place at Annual Councils and General Conference Sessions. In general terms, many Adventists from egalitarian cultures in North America, Western Europe, and Australia tend to support women's ordination – notably seen by the fact that the North American (2004), Trans-European (2010), and South Pacific (2009) Divisions have all voted to request permission to ordain women for the gospel ministry. Many Adventists from Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe tend to be opposed.

While many opponents to women's ordination everywhere refer to their reading of the Bible as the reason for their view, they may also be influenced in their

¹⁷⁵² See J. L. Dybdal, 'Culture and Biblical Understanding in a World Church', 1998, pp. 417-436. Cf. B. Wiklander, 'The Boundaries of Contextualization in Mission', 2006, pp. 91-129.

¹⁷⁵³ J. L. Dybdal, 'Culture and Biblical Understanding', 1998, p. 422.

¹⁷⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 426.

reading from particularly two directions: one is the general view of women's roles in their society – where women are still expected to be in submission to men and in some cases the entire social fabric is based on this 'patriarchal' social value. Another is the particular view that women cannot serve as 'priests or pastors' because this is what they have been taught as truth in their Roman Catholic or Orthodox church background. In some cases, a female pastor in these environments may not be accepted with respect by outsiders whom the Church seeks to reach with the gospel.

Proponents of women's ordination may be influenced by egalitarian values permeating their societies and being incorporated in anti-discrimination laws as well as laws that stipulate equal opportunities for men and women in all areas of life. They may also come from societies where the public system provides ample access to child-care and nurseries, enabling women to work in the same way as their male counterparts, while the taxation laws and pension systems are based on the common rule that men as well as women must have an income. In some cases, not having female pastors in this environment will be unacceptable and ridiculed by the outsiders whom the Church seeks to reach with the gospel.

Thus, the Church is divided along cultural divisions – all claim to be faithful to the Bible and to be committed to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but, still, the outcome is cultural diversity. This issue will not go away. And the Church now needs to find ways of building bridges across cultures. The issue of women's ordination is one that preoccupies us now. Other issues are waiting around the corner.

One of the aims of the Church since 2010 has been to 'reach across'. Very little progress has been reported, and probably world church divisions were not sure of how to implement the concept, because it was not carefully explained and little guidance was given. In the recent proposal for 2015-2020, the 'reach across' seems to fall away. However, this shows, we think, that *the Church must be more serious, active, and committed to making its members across the world truly cross-cultural and truly tolerant towards cultural diversity*. This is our third recommendation.

When a local church faces cultural differences, it is necessary to sit down together, pray and talk. The same thing needs to be organised by the General Conference in the relationship between divisions and different cultural regions in the world. Dybdal suggests some simple steps:

(a) Honestly look at ourselves: We must follow Jesus' teaching according to Matthew 7:3: 'Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye and pay no

attention to the plank in your own eye?’ We need to discover the truth that ‘our position on ordination is influenced by all we are’.¹⁷⁵⁵ This discovery should make us less prone to condemn others, because their belief has come from circumstances that have one thing in common with my circumstances: we are both influenced by all that we are. Therefore, tolerance and acceptance is the only Christian way.

(b) *Tell our story and listen to each other’s findings:* Hearing each other’s experiences and feelings may create empathy and this binds us together as a church family, bound together by the love of Christ. Dybdal provides the following two scenarios:¹⁷⁵⁶

Those who believe in women’s ordination need to tell about their daughter who in tears shares how she desires to minister for God but feels discriminated against. They need to discuss the pain of the mature woman who has the same education and experience as her male counterpart but never has received the same recognition. They need to share the agony of the college religion teacher who struggles before a hostile class to defend his church when students feel the government is fairer to women than his beloved community of faith.

Opponents of women’s ordination need to express their stories as well. They must share the painful results in their church and society that come from a breakdown of order. They must tell how they feel about threats to the full authority of Scripture. They should reveal their agony about the family break-up they see taking place in America [and elsewhere] and explain how they fear women’s ordination may increase or spread it. They should share how in an uncertain world they want the church to stand for meaningful traditions and say no to liberal secular culture.

(c) *Seriously study material that does not support our own view:* Read rational arguments of those who disagree with you. The biblical image of ourselves as a church being one body though we are made up of many parts must be believed, and the word of Scripture experienced: ‘If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.’ (1 Cor. 12:12-31).

(d) *We must accept the fact that differences need not separate us:* If the issue of women’s ordination, and other issues too, could be approached with a humility of spirit that truly listens to others and is willing to evaluate its own understanding; if serious prayer and a dependence on the Holy Spirit were as much in evidence as theological debate, then resolution and unity now only dreamed about

¹⁷⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 430.

¹⁷⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 431.

could take place in our midst.¹⁷⁵⁷ This is the counsel by Ellen White who said that ‘nothing can perfect unity in the church but the spirit of Christlike forbearance’.¹⁷⁵⁸

The biblical example *par excellence* of such an outcome is the Council in Jerusalem according to Acts 15. The Church and the Holy Spirit decided that there would be two ways of being ‘Christian’ – one Jewish Christian that implied adherence to the Mosaic Law, and one Gentile Christian that did not. Thus, ‘on a church-wide, mission-driven issue that was shaped by culture and geography, forced to a head by changing circumstances and the passage of time, where the powerful were advocates for the powerless, where the solution was argued on the basis of equality, not exegesis, where ‘it seemed good to the Spirit and us’, there unity in diversity was the outcome, even afterwards’.¹⁷⁵⁹

In the short term, the world church needs to find a way to defuse the current tensions that are resulting in unions going their own way. Ordination in the sense of setting someone apart for ministry by prayer and imposition of hands and accompanied by a formal recognition by the church of the granted authority and responsibilities is already done in the church for various leadership functions – for pastors, local church elders, deacons and deaconesses. The church may therefore introduce an order by which ordination to the gospel ministry for women is valid in a union, or unions, or a division. The issue in doing so is not the ceremony of ordination, which Ellen White approved for women in principle, but the issue is for what function or office in the church that such ordination is made. Thus, the real issue is the credential or authority issued by the employing church organisation. A credential for a woman to serve as an ordained minister in a union, unions, or a division, would not need to have automatic world church approval. It is sufficient for the work of ministry if it is issued in the local union or division. The authority of a locally ordained woman to work in another division would then be determined by that division who would have a choice of either endorsing the credential from the home division or not endorsing it. This would only be a temporary solution, however. In time, and if the Church as a whole is led by the Holy Spirit a more complete unity may be achieved in due course, but as it seems now, it may take some time.

¹⁷⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 431-432.

¹⁷⁵⁸ E. G. White, Letter 29, 1889.

¹⁷⁵⁹ A. Bates (pseudonym), ‘The Jerusalem Council: A Model for Utrecht?’, 1995, pp. 18-23.

4. The Mission of God. The ordination issue needs to be approached in the context of the mission of God. Thus, we have proposed a theology of ordination that is based on the mission of God. This helps us see that ordination does not primarily have to do with our authority or status, but with *God's* authority to call men and women all over the world and in the whole church to serve him in his mission of salvation. If we recognise (a) God's authority to *be God*, (b) God's authority to *create* human beings of both genders to serve him as priests and rulers in order to call the world to worship him and have communion with him, and (c) God's authority to *call* men and women as servants or ministers to build his kingdom in the world, then we will *cooperate* with God to fulfil the end-time prophecy of the book of Revelation:

Revelation 1:5 To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Revelation 5:9-10 You were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; **10** you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth.

Revelation 20:3 Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. Over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him a thousand years.

Like James, the leader of the early Christians, we need to say: 'We should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God' (Acts 15:19). If for the sake of mission, the first church could accept two ways of being 'Christian' with different rules, we, the end-time church, for the sake of mission, should be able to accept two ways of applying the ordained minister's credentials. We believe that, by making this request, we seek to become the church that John saw in his vision: a kingdom of priests and servants of God who have their eyes on the fulfilment of God's mission when he will dwell with them and they will be his people.

APPENDIX A:

The Research Task Defined by the GC-BRI on May 1, 2012

We divided the tasks listed into the following seven main groups:

1. Principles of Biblical Interpretation

a. What view of the Bible, exegesis, and interpretation should the Church agree on, as it studies the theology of ordination and the gender issue?

b. What does 'plain reading' mean in the light of Ellen White's counsel that 'The word of God is infallible; accept it as it reads; look with confidence to God; trust him to qualify you for his service' (*R&H*, February 11, 1896)?

2. The Biblical View of Church Leaders, their Selection and Induction to Office

a. How is biblical ordination to be understood? How are we to understand the origin, basis, and significance in the Bible of concepts like ordination, anointing, consecration, commissioning, and the laying on of hands?

b. What is the relationship between authority and ordination from a biblical perspective?

c. Why do we have ordination at three levels: deacons, elders, and pastors? What are the biblical distinctions?

d. What is the nature of pastoral ministry? What are the similarities and differences between priests and pastors, and their leadership?

e. What does it mean to be a leader in the church? How were leaders chosen in the Bible and how are they chosen today?

f. Terms for study should include *doulos*, *diakonos*, *presbuteros*, and *episkopos*.

g. Does the Bible teach leadership role distinctions in the gospel ministry between male and female and are they still valid today?

h. What are the roles or functions God assigned to males and females in the Bible? Study the functions of man and woman at creation, and the changes that happened at the fall. Does Paul's interpretation of events before the fall and at the fall, as stated in 1 Timothy 2:12-13, justify only male leadership in the church? And is this text still valid for leadership qualifications in the church today?

i. Why were priests in Israel always male? Was it cultural?

j. Why were all the apostles male? Would the selection of the apostles not have been the best occasion to introduce a change and choose women in that role?

k. How does a study of biblical patriarchy relate to biblical leadership in the home and in the church today? Does the Bible present an over-arching patriarchy for both the home and church?

l. Does the biblical headship role of man in the family have any influence on the headship position in the church, 'the family of God', or are the two completely separate? And if so, on what basis can we maintain that? (Study 1 Tim. 2:12-14; 3:1-7; Eph. 5:17-33; Titus 1:5-9.)

3. Seventh-day Adventist Understandings of Ordination – Past and Present

- a. Review the historical background of the concept of ordination in the SDA Church and of the current position of the Church with a view to issues therein.
- b. Is the church currently employing the biblical understanding of ordination correctly?
- c. What was Ellen White's understanding of ordination itself and is the church currently employing this practice correctly?
- d. How does Ellen White see the relationship between authority and ordination?
- e. Ellen White refers to women being set apart by the laying on of hands for work like literature evangelism. Does this mean ordination is merely the setting apart of someone to some specific work?
- f. Study Ellen White's clear and succinct statements on what ordination is and what it is not in the book *The Acts of the Apostles*. In addition, she stated that 'the inspired apostle' Paul's qualifications for local church leadership need to be followed.
- g. She mentioned that in some churches the ordination of 'elders have been premature, the Bible rule has been disregarded, and consequently grievous trouble has been brought upon the church' (5 T 617). What does that refer to?
- h. She quoted Titus 1:5-7 and 1 Timothy 5:22 as the context of the Bible rule that upholds ordination of only male elders and ministers. Is this rule still valid today?
- i. Does Ellen White confirm the existence of leadership role distinctions between male and female in ministry?
- j. Does Ellen White present an over-arching patriarchy for both the home and church?

4. Review of the Development of Ordination in Post-Biblical Times and in Some Major Christian Denominations

Review the history of ordination within the Christian church through the centuries, including the theology, history, practice, antecedents, cultural aspects, rites, and so on.

5. Theology of Ordination

- a. Make an analysis of the biblical material and a synthesis of its theological teaching on ordination.
- b. In view of the fact that the priesthood of all believers does not do away with the clergy in the church but only refers to the change that now all believers have direct access to God, what is the relationship between the priesthood of all believers, the elected leadership of elders and deacons (1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1), and the gifts of the Spirit?

6. Women's Ordination

Make an application of the theology of ordination to men and women in the SDA Church.

7. Hermeneutics of Change

Are there biblical examples of how change happens? Do changes always constitute a new norm, or are they at times God's accommodation to less than ideal circumstances?

APPENDIX B:

Bible Study: Presuppositions, Principles, and Methods (The Rio de Janeiro Document)

Voted by the GC Annual Council, October 12, 1986.

Published in *Adventist Review*, January 22, 1987.

(<https://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/materials/bible-interpretation-hermeneutics/methods-bible-study>)

Bible Study: Presuppositions, Principles, and Methods

1. Preamble

This statement is addressed to all members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with the purpose of providing guidelines on how to study the Bible, both the trained biblical scholar and others.

Seventh-day Adventists recognize and appreciate the contributions of those biblical scholars throughout history who have developed useful and reliable methods of Bible study consistent with the claims and teachings of Scripture. Adventists are committed to the acceptance of biblical truth and are willing to follow it, using all methods of interpretation consistent with what Scripture says of itself. These are outlined in the presuppositions detailed below.

In recent decades the most prominent method in biblical studies has been known as the historical-critical method. Scholars who use this method, as classically formulated, operate on the basis of presuppositions which, prior to studying the biblical text, reject the reliability of accounts of miracles and other supernatural events narrated in the Bible. Even a modified use of this method that retains the principle of criticism which subordinates the Bible to human reason is unacceptable to Adventists.

The historical-critical method minimizes the need for faith in God and obedience to His commandments. In addition, because such a method de-emphasizes the divine element in the Bible as an inspired book (including its resultant unity) and depreciates or misunderstands apocalyptic prophecy and the eschatological portions of the Bible, we urge Adventist Bible students to avoid relying on the use of the presuppositions and the resultant deductions associated with the historical-critical method.

In contrast with the historical-critical method and presuppositions, we believe it to be helpful to set forth the principles of Bible study that are consistent with the teachings of the Scriptures themselves, that preserve their unity, and are based upon the premise that the Bible is the Word of God. Such an approach will lead us into a satisfying and rewarding experience with God.

2. Presuppositions Arising From the Claims of Scripture

a. Origin

(1) The Bible is the Word of God and is the primary and authoritative means by which He reveals Himself to human beings.

(2) The Holy Spirit inspired the Bible writers with thoughts, ideas, and objective information; in turn they expressed these in their own words. Therefore the Scriptures are an indivisible union of human and divine elements, neither of which should be emphasized to the neglect of the other (2 Peter 1:21; cf. *The Great Controversy*, v, vi).

(3) All Scripture is inspired by God and came through the work of the Holy Spirit. However, it did not come in a continuous chain of unbroken revelations. As the Holy Spirit communicated truth to the Bible writer, each wrote as he was moved by the Holy Spirit, emphasizing the aspect of the truth which he was led to stress. For this reason the student of the Bible will gain a rounded comprehension on any subject by recognizing that the Bible is its own best interpreter and when studied as a whole it depicts a consistent, harmonious truth (2 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:1, 2; cf. *Selected Messages*, Book 1, 19, 20; *The Great Controversy*, v, vi).

(4) Although it was given to those who lived in an ancient Near Eastern/Mediterranean context, the Bible transcends its cultural backgrounds to serve as God's Word for all cultural, racial, and situational contexts in all ages.

b. Authority

(1) The sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments are the clear, infallible revelation of God's will and His salvation. The Bible is the Word of God, and it alone is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested (2 Tim. 3:15, 17; Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 2 Thess. 3:14; Heb. 4:12).

(2) Scripture is an authentic, reliable record of history and God's acts in history. It provides the normative theological interpretation of those acts. The supernatural acts revealed in Scripture are historically true. For example, chapters 1-11 of Genesis are a factual account of historical events.

(3) The Bible is not like other books. It is an indivisible blend of the divine and the human. Its record of many details of secular history is integral to its overall purpose to convey salvation history. While at times there may be parallel procedures employed by Bible students to determine historical data, the usual techniques of historical research, based as they are on human presuppositions and focused on the human element, are inadequate for interpreting the Scriptures, which are a blend of the divine and human. Only a method that fully recognizes the indivisible nature of the Scriptures can avoid a distortion of its message.

(4) Human reason is subject to the Bible, not equal to or above it. Presuppositions regarding the Scriptures must be in harmony with the claims of the Scriptures and subject to correction by them (1 Cor. 2:1-6). God intends that human reason be used to its fullest extent, but within the context and under the authority of His Word rather than independent of it.

(5) The revelation of God in all nature, when properly understood, is in harmony with the written Word, and is to be interpreted in the light of Scripture.

3. Principles for Approaching the Interpretation of Scripture

a. The Spirit enables the believer to accept, understand, and apply the Bible to one's own life as he seeks divine power to render obedience to all scriptural requirements and to appropriate personally all Bible promises. Only those following the light

already received can hope to receive further illumination of the Spirit (John 16:13, 14; 1 Cor. 2:10-14).

b. Scripture cannot be correctly interpreted without the aid of the Holy Spirit, for it is the Spirit who enables the believer to understand and apply Scripture. Therefore, any study of the Word should commence with a request for the Spirit's guidance and illumination.

c. Those who come to the study of the Word must do so with faith, in the humble spirit of a learner who seeks to hear what the Bible is saying. They must be willing to submit all presuppositions, opinions, and the conclusions of reason to the judgment and correction of the Word itself. With this attitude the Bible student may come directly to the Word, and with careful study may come to an understanding of the essentials of salvation apart from any human explanations, however helpful. The biblical message becomes meaningful to such a person.

d. The investigation of Scripture must be characterized by a sincere desire to discover and obey God's will and word rather than to seek support or evidence for preconceived ideas.

4. Methods of Bible Study

a. Select a Bible version for study that is faithful to the meaning contained in languages in which the Bible originally was written, giving preference to translations done by a broad group of scholars and published by a general publisher above translations sponsored by a particular denomination or narrowly focused group.

Exercise care not to build major doctrinal points on one Bible translation or version. Trained biblical scholars will use the Greek and Hebrew texts, enabling them to examine variant readings of ancient Bible manuscripts as well.

b. Choose a definite plan of study, avoiding haphazard and aimless approaches. Study plans such as the following are suggested:

(1) Book-by-book analysis of the message

(2) Verse-by-verse method

(3) Study that seeks a biblical solution to a specific life problem, biblical satisfaction for a specific need, or a biblical answer to a specific question

(4) Topical study (faith, love, second coming, and others)

(5) Word study

(6) Biographical study

c. Seek to grasp the simple, most obvious meaning of the biblical passage being studied.

d. Seek to discover the underlying major themes of Scripture as found in individual texts, passages, and books. Two basic, related themes run throughout Scripture: (1) The person and work of Jesus Christ; and (2) the great controversy perspective involving the authority of God's Word, the fall of man, the first and second advents of Christ, the exoneration of God and His law, and the restoration of the divine plan for the universe. These themes are to be drawn from the totality of Scripture and not imposed on it.

e. Recognize that the Bible is its own interpreter and that the meaning of words, texts, and passages is best determined by diligently comparing scripture with scripture.

f. Study the context of the passage under consideration by relating it to the sentences and paragraphs immediately preceding and following it. Try to relate the ideas of the passage to the line of thought of the entire Bible book.

g. As far as possible ascertain the historical circumstances in which the passage was written by the biblical writers under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

h. Determine the literary type the author is using. Some biblical material is composed of parables, proverbs, allegories, psalms, and apocalyptic prophecies. Since many biblical writers presented much of their material as poetry, it is helpful to use a version of the Bible that presents this material in poetic style, for passages employing imagery are not to be interpreted in the same manner as prose.

i. Recognize that a given biblical text may not conform in every detail to present-day literary categories. Be cautious not to force these categories in interpreting the meaning of the biblical text. It is a human tendency to find what one is looking for, even when the author did not intend such.

j. Take note of grammar and sentence construction in order to discover the author's meaning. Study the key words of the passage by comparing their use in other parts of the Bible by means of a concordance and with the help of biblical lexicons and dictionaries.

k. In connection with the study of the biblical text, explore the historical and cultural factors. Archaeology, anthropology, and history may contribute to understanding the meaning of the text.

l. Seventh-day Adventists believe that God inspired Ellen G. White. Therefore, her expositions on any given Bible passage offer an inspired guide to the meaning of texts without exhausting their meaning or preempting the task of exegesis (for example, see *Evangelism*, 256; *The Great Controversy*, 193, 595; *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 665, 682, 707-708; *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, 33-35).

m. After studying as outlined above, turn to various commentaries and secondary helps such as scholarly works to see how others have dealt with the passage. Then carefully evaluate the different viewpoints expressed from the standpoint of Scripture as a whole.

n. In interpreting prophecy keep in mind that:

(1) The Bible claims God's power to predict the future (Isa 46:10).

(2) Prophecy has a moral purpose. It was not written merely to satisfy curiosity about the future. Some of the purposes of prophecy are to strengthen faith (John 14:29) and to promote holy living and readiness for the Advent (Matt 24:44; Rev 22:7, 10, 11).

(3) The focus of much prophecy is on Christ (both His first and second advents), the church, and the end-time.

(4) The norms for interpreting prophecy are found within the Bible itself: The Bible notes time prophecies and their historical fulfillments; the New Testament cites

specific fulfillments of Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah; and the Old Testament itself presents individuals and events as types of the Messiah.

(5) In the New Testament application of Old Testament prophecies, some literal names become spiritual: for example, Israel represents the church, Babylon apostate religion, etc.

(6) There are two general types of prophetic writings: nonapocalyptic prophecy as found in Isaiah and Jeremiah, and apocalyptic prophecy as found in Daniel and the Revelation. These differing types have different characteristics:

(a) Nonapocalyptic prophecy addresses God's people; apocalyptic is more universal in scope.

(b) Nonapocalyptic prophecy often is conditional in nature, setting forth to God's people the alternatives of blessing for obedience and curses for disobedience; apocalyptic emphasizes the sovereignty of God and His control over history.

(c) Nonapocalyptic prophecy often leaps from the local crisis to the end-time day of the Lord; apocalyptic prophecy presents the course of history from the time of the prophet to the end of the world.

(d) Time prophecies in nonapocalyptic prophecy generally are long, for example, 400 years of Israel's servitude (Gen. 15:13) and 70 years of Babylonian captivity (Jer. 25:12). Time prophecies in apocalyptic prophecy generally are phrased in short terms, for example, 10 days (Rev. 2:10) or 42 months (Rev. 13:5). Apocalyptic time periods stand symbolically for longer periods of actual time.

(7) Apocalyptic prophecy is highly symbolic and should be interpreted accordingly. In interpreting symbols, the following methods may be used:

(a) Look for interpretations (explicit or implicit) within the passage itself (for example, Dan. 8:20, 21; Rev. 1:20).

(b) Look for interpretations elsewhere in the book or in other writings by the same author.

(c) Using a concordance, study the use of symbols in other parts of Scripture.

(d) A study of ancient Near Eastern documents may throw light on the meaning of symbols, although scriptural use may alter those meanings.

(8) The literary structure of a book often is an aid to interpreting it. The parallel nature of Daniel's prophecies is an example.

o. Parallel accounts in Scripture sometimes present differences in detail and emphasis (for example, cf. Matt 21:33, 34; Mark 12:1-11; and Luke 20:9-18; or 2 Kings 18-20 with 2 Chron. 32). When studying such passages, first examine them carefully to be sure that the parallels actually are referring to the same historical event. For example, many of Jesus' parables may have been given on different occasions to different audiences and with different wording.

In cases where there appear to be differences in parallel accounts, one should recognize that the total message of the Bible is the synthesis of all of its parts. Each book or writer communicates that which the Spirit has led him to write. Each makes his own special contribution to the richness, diversity, and variety of Scripture (*The*

Great Controversy, v, vi). The reader must allow each Bible writer to emerge and be heard while at the same time recognizing the basic unity of the divine self-disclosure.

When parallel passages seem to indicate discrepancy or contradiction, look for the underlying harmony. Keep in mind that dissimilarities may be due to minor errors of copyists (*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 16), or may be the result of differing emphases and choice of materials of various authors who wrote under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit for different audiences under different circumstances (*Selected Messages*, Book 1, pp. 21, 22; *The Great Controversy*, vi).

It may prove impossible to reconcile minor dissimilarities in detail which may be irrelevant to the main and clear message of the passage. In some cases judgment may have to be suspended until more information and better evidence are available to resolve a seeming discrepancy.

p. The Scriptures were written for the practical purpose of revealing the will of God to the human family. However, in order not to misconstrue certain kinds of statements, it is important to recognize that they were addressed to peoples of Eastern cultures and expressed in their thought patterns.

Expressions such as "the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh" (Ex. 9:12) or "an evil spirit from God . . ." (1 Sam 16:15), the imprecatory psalms, or the "three days and three nights" of Jonah as compared with Christ's death (Matt. 12:40), commonly are misunderstood because they are interpreted today from a different viewpoint.

A background knowledge of Near Eastern culture is indispensable for understanding such expressions. For example, Hebrew culture attributed responsibility to an individual for acts he did not commit but that he allowed to happen. Therefore the inspired writers of the Scriptures commonly credit God with doing actively that which in Western thought we would say He permits or does not prevent from happening, for example, the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.

Another aspect of Scripture that troubles the modern mind is the divine command to Israel to engage in war and execute entire nations. Israel originally was organized as a theocracy, a civil government through which God ruled directly (Gen. 18:25). Such a theocratic state was unique. It no longer exists and cannot be regarded as a direct model for Christian practice.

The Scriptures record that God accepted persons whose experiences and statements were not in harmony with the spiritual principles of the Bible as a whole. For example, we may cite incidents relating to the use of alcohol, polygamy, divorce, and slavery. Although condemnation of such deeply ingrained social customs is not explicit, God did not necessarily endorse or approve all that He permitted and bore with in the lives of the patriarchs and in Israel. Jesus made this clear in His statement with regard to divorce (Matt 19:4-6, 8).

The spirit of the Scriptures is one of restoration. God works patiently to elevate fallen humanity from the depths of sin to the divine ideal. Consequently, we must not accept as models the actions of sinful men as recorded in the Bible.

The Scriptures represent the unfolding of God's revelation to man. Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, for example, enlarges and expands certain Old Testament concepts. Christ Himself is the ultimate revelation of God's character to humanity (Heb. 1:1-3).

While there is an overarching unity in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and while all Scripture is equally inspired, God chose to reveal Himself to and through human individuals and to meet them where they were in terms of spiritual and intellectual endowments. God Himself does not change, but He progressively unfolded His revelation to men as they were able to grasp it (John 16:12; *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 945; *Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 21). Every experience or statement of Scripture is a divinely inspired record, but not every statement or experience is necessarily normative for Christian behavior today. Both the spirit and the letter of Scripture must be understood (1 Cor. 10:6-13; *The Desire of Ages*, 150; *Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 10-12).

q. As the final goal, make application of the text. Ask such questions as, "What is the message and purpose God intends to convey through Scripture?" "What meaning does this text have for me?" "How does it apply to my situation and circumstances today?" In doing so, recognize that although many biblical passages had local significance, nonetheless they contain timeless principles applicable to every age and culture.

5. Conclusion

In the "Introduction" to *The Great Controversy* Ellen G. White wrote:

The Bible, with its God-given truths expressed in the language of men, presents a union of the divine and the human. Such a union existed in the nature of Christ, who was the Son of God and the Son of man. Thus it is true of the Bible, as it was of Christ, that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." John 1:14. (p. vi)

As it is impossible for those who do not accept Christ's divinity to understand the purpose of His incarnation, it is also impossible for those who see the Bible merely as a human book to understand its message, however careful and rigorous their methods.

Even Christian scholars who accept the divine-human nature of Scripture, but whose methodological approaches cause them to dwell largely on its human aspects, risk emptying the biblical message of its power by relegating it to the background while concentrating on the medium. They forget that medium and message are inseparable and that the medium without the message is as an empty shell that cannot address the vital spiritual needs of humankind.

A committed Christian will use only those methods that are able to do full justice to the dual, inseparable nature of Scripture, enhance his ability to understand and apply its message, and strengthen faith.

October 12, 1986
General Conference Committee
Annual Council

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Note: For books by Ellen White, only the year of the first edition is noted and bibliographical information for later reprints have been left out.

Abbreviations:

<i>ANF</i>	<i>The Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>
AV	Authorized Version (KJV)
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
<i>CBET</i>	<i>Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology</i> (Leuven)
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>The Evangelical Quarterly</i>
GC	The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
GC-BRI	The Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>IDB</i>	<i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
<i>Institutes</i>	<i>Institutes of Christian Religion</i> (J. Calvin)
<i>JAM</i>	<i>Journal of American Studies</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JEH</i>	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KJV	King James Version (AV)
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
<i>LW</i>	<i>Luther's Works</i>
NASB	<i>The New American Standard Bible</i>
NCBC	The New Century Bible Commentary
NIV	New International Version

NKJV	New King James Version
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>R&H</i>	<i>The (Advent) Review and (Sabbath) Herald</i>
<i>RQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly (Abilene Christian University)</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version
RV	Revised Version
<i>SBU</i>	<i>Svenskt bibliskt uppslagsverk</i>
SDA	Seventh-day Adventist
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
<i>SU</i>	<i>Svensk uppslagsbok</i>
TED-BRC	The Biblical Research Committee of the Trans-European Division
<i>THAT</i>	<i>Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i>
<i>ThDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
<i>ThDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
<i>ThWOT</i>	<i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i>
TOSC	The Theology of Ordination Study Committee
<i>TS</i>	<i>Theological Studies</i>
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

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