

The image shows the interior of a highly ornate church. The ceiling is a complex, multi-tiered structure with dark wood and gold leaf, featuring intricate carvings and a central dark panel. The walls are white with gold accents, including pilasters and decorative panels. The floor is a checkered tile pattern. In the foreground, rows of wooden pews are visible. In the background, the altar area is highly decorated with a large crucifix, a tabernacle, and various religious symbols. The overall atmosphere is one of grandeur and historical significance.

Ordination:  
Ellen G. White's Concept

Jackson M. Doggette Jr.



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by

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## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

### Statement of the Problem

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has not settled on a doctrine of ordination based upon a Scriptural theology of ordination. Consequently, this church is engaged in a debate as to whether or not women should become ordained Seventh-day Adventist ministers. Until a doctrine of ordination is formed, this debate cannot be fully settled.

### Purpose of the Study

This study is being conducted in order to ascertain Ellen G. White's concept of ordination. The outcome of this study can give some direction to the formation of a theological doctrine of ordination for the Seventh-day Adventist Church because Ellen White's writings are accepted as a guide to the understanding of Scripture in the Adventist Church.

### Limitations

The writings of Ellen White will be the only source of information for this study. Therefore, it is not assumed that the task of forming a theology of ordination for the Adventist Church will be completed with this study. This study is to be viewed as only a first step. The source of the "lesser light," Ellen White's writings, is to be a springboard to the study of the "greater light," the Holy Scriptures, which is the ultimate authority for all doctrine.

There are many aspects of ordination that Ellen White comments upon that will not be discussed in this paper. She speaks of the ordination of deacons, elders, and even medical doctors. This study will be confined to her concepts surrounding the ordination of individuals to the gospel ministry.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PURPOSE AND NECESSITY OF ORDINATION

Ellen G. White seems to understand ordination for ministers to have several specific purposes. Choosing men to take leadership responsibilities within the Church organization is one purpose. Other purposes include giving evidence of the Church's authority, placing the Church's sanction of ministers above challenge in regard to their position as representatives of the Church, and setting persons apart for the full-time function of preaching the Gospel for the salvation of souls.

Questions arise from the weight of statements made in regard to the responsibility of all believers to teach the Gospel of Jesus whether they be ordained or not. Is it really necessary for a person to be ordained in order to preach the Gospel? Does God reserve special blessings for doing evangelism, as commanded in Matthew 28:19-20, for only those who have had the hands of ordination laid upon them? These are some of the issues that will be explored in this chapter.

#### Church Leadership

At least as early as in the days of Moses, ordination seems to have been the accepted way of indicating that a person had been chosen for the role of being a leader of God's people.

In his charge to these elders at the time of their ordination, he [Moses] outlined some of the qualifications that fit a man to be a wise ruler in the church.

Later, the apostles were given the task of supervising the work in the newly-formed Christian Church. As a part of their responsibilities they had to be sure that every church had adequate leadership. Taking the example of Moses, they made selections and ordained them for the specific purpose of taking leadership positions within the church. Ellen White comments:

In the work of setting things in order in all the churches, and ordaining suitable men to act as officers, the apostles held to the high standards of leadership outlined in the Old Testament Scriptures.

Today, ordained ministers are held responsible for the leadership of God's Church. According to White, this is as it should be for the Church. She states:

We have their [apostle's] example, and should follow it. . . . I saw that God had laid upon his chosen ministers the duty of deciding who is fit for the holy work; and in union with the church and the manifest tokens of the Holy Spirit, they were to decide who should go and who were unfit.

Her general tone in this regard seems to indicate that the ordination of persons in the Church sets them apart as leaders of the Church.

#### The Authority of the Church

When Paul and Barnabas were separated for special service, the Holy Spirit chose to use the vehicle of the organized church as the means through which He called them. By this act, the Church received another evidence that there is special authority given to her. This point is accentuated in the following statement.

The circumstances connected with the separation of Paul and Barnabas by the Holy Spirit to a definite line of service, show clearly that the Lord works through appointed agencies in his organized church, as well as through individuals.

Throughout the ages there have been those who feel that only God can give them direction. These individuals despise the counsel of God's chosen leaders in His Church at great peril.

In his [God's] providence, he places his servants in close connection with his church, in order that they may have less confidence in themselves, and greater confidence in others whom he is leading out to advance his work. There have ever been in the church those who are constantly inclined toward individual independence... God has invested his church with special authority and power that no one can be justified in disregarding and despising; for he who does this despises the voice of God

Because of a tendency toward individualism among those chosen to work for the saving of souls, God has given the Church a unifying power of authority. Self-sufficiency and pride can be held in check as a result of this God-given authority. The message of White clearly sounds a warning for those who believe that only God can give them direction in the work of winning souls.

#### Church Sanction

In the past, the authority of some ministers to preach the Gospel was challenged. One reason for this was that false teachers entered the work preaching the Gospel with false doctrine to lead the people away from the truth of God. The sanction of the Church was given to an individual through the rite of ordination in order that the person's work would be above challenge.

God foresaw the difficulties that his servants would be called upon to meet; and in order that their work should be above challenge, he caused them to be invested with unquestionable authority from his established church. Their ordination was a public recognition of their divine appointment to bear to the Gentiles the glad tidings of the gospel.... This act should show the sanction of the church to their going forth as messengers to carry the most solemn message ever given to men.

Every advantage that God's workers receive from the Church is needed for the advancement of the Gospel mission.

W.W. Prescott, an individual who was employed by the Church as an educator, asked White for some counsel concerning a decision as to whether or not he should accept ordination. Her counsel is consistent with her apparent thoughts regarding ordination as a possible advantage in advancing the Gospel mission.

I was visited by Brother Prescott [W.W. Prescott]. His brethren wish him to be ordained, but he is undecided what is best to do in this matter. I could only say I could see nothing to hinder this move being made if he in his judgment considered it best. .

. . If he could serve the cause of God any better in receiving ordination and credentials, it would be best. But it must fall back upon himself to decide the matter according to circumstances and the dictates of his own conscience.

From these statements it can be seen that ordination brings to the recipient an authority from the Church and a helpful advantage in carrying out the mission of the Church.

### Set Apart to Preach

Jesus conducted an ordination service for the twelve apostles before He sent them out to preach the Gospel in order that souls might be saved.

Of this ordination [the Twelve], 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.

There was special significance placed upon the fact that they were preachers. In fact, White claims that this office, of being a preacher, is the most important office that any human being could be called to fill. It is second only to the office that Christ fills.

After choosing His disciples, Christ appointed them as His representatives, and gave them their ordination charge, their commission. They were to go forth as His witnesses, to declare what they had seen and heard of Him. Their office was the most important to which human beings had ever been called, and was second only to that of Christ Himself. They were to be workers together with God for the saving of the world.

The preceding statement elevates the office of a person who is ordained to the most important in the realm of human possibility. The question then of whether or not an unordained person can fill this most important office must be discussed.

### Responsibility of the Unordained

In the preceding section, the importance of the office held by a person ordained to preach is mentioned. There are many people who preach the Word of God and bear witness to His power to save who have never been ordained. Does this mean that they somehow do not occupy the "most important" office as preachers of the Word or that they cannot be successful? Are they overstepping their bounds by performing a function of an ordained individual?

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.

The example of Paul is used to show that success in seeing souls saved as a result of preaching the Word is not dependent upon whether a person is ordained. Paul set an example against the sentiment, then gaining influence in the church, that the gospel could be proclaimed successfully only by those who were wholly freed from the necessity of physical toil. . . . The Lord employs various instrumentalities for the accomplishment of His purpose, and while some with special talents are chosen to devote all their energies to the work of teaching and preaching the gospel, many others, upon whom human hands have never been laid in ordination, are called to act an important part in soulsaving [sic].

White is specific about what unordained persons are to do as those who name the name of Christ.

Not upon the ordained minister only rests the responsibility of going forth to fulfill this commission. Everyone who has received Christ is called to work for the salvation of his fellow men....

It is a fatal mistake to suppose that the work of soulsaving [sic] depends alone upon the ministry.



She makes it clear that ordination is not a prerequisite for doing the work of saving souls. "To every converted soul the Lord of the vineyard is now saying, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel'. . . "

Ellen White seems to be directing the following message to those who work for the saving of souls in order to receive an earthly reward. Some apparently spend years of service working in these lines in order to become ordained or to enjoy some of the benefits of the ordained. This is condemned.

Would that to-day men might be found with faith to do as Paul did, men who would preach the gospel, not looking to men for their reward, but willing to receive their reward in souls.

There will be some, according to White, who will work for God and never be ordained. She states:

Today men will go straight from our churches to work in the harvest field. They may never have laid on them the hands of ordination, but they will do a work for God, and none are to forbid them.

They are to remember that their work is just as important in the saving of souls as is the work of one who is ordained.

Dear young friends, remember that it is not necessary to be an ordained minister in order to serve the Lord. There are many ways of working for Christ. Human hands may never have been laid on you in ordination, but God can give you fitness for His service. He can work through you to the saving of souls.... Ask and receive the Holy Spirit.

### Called and Chosen

In the previous section it has been shown that "everyone who has received Christ is called to work for the salvation of his fellow men." Only "some with special talents are chosen to devote all their energies to the work of teaching and preaching the gospel."

The difference between the called, the unordained, and the chosen, the ordained, has little to do with whether a person is qualified to preach the gospel or not. It has nothing to do with whether or not a person will be successful as he works for God in the saving of souls. Success does not depend upon ordination, rather, "the success of our work depends upon our love to God, and our love to our fellow men." The question that must be answered is, "What is the difference between those who are not ordained, the called, and those who are ordained, the chosen?"

There are at least three points of difference that Ellen White articulates between the unordained and the ordained. The first point has to do with the sanction of the Church. As previously illustrated, Paul and Barnabas needed the sanction of the Church in order that their work would be above challenge. Ordination provided this Church sanction at that time, and it provides the same today.

Second, those who receive ordination are freed from the "necessity of physical toil" in order that they may devote their full energy to the work of soul-saving. Paul chose to deviate from this accepted practice for particular reasons that were mentioned in a previous section.

Third, receiving the rite of ordination gives a person certain privileges that unordained individuals do not enjoy. Ellen White, when speaking of the ordination of Paul and Barnabas, explains what these privileges are.

Thus they were authorized by the church not only to teach the truth [as before ordination], but to perform the rite of baptism, and to organize churches, being invested with full ecclesiastical authority.

An ordained person is thus granted the right to exercise the full range of ecclesiastical authority as he ministers as a representative of the Church.

In the Seventh-day Adventist Church today unordained Licensed Ministers are invested with all of the aforementioned powers. White's statement must be understood in light of the times of which she was speaking. It must also be understood that Licensed Ministers in the Adventist Church are expected to be ordained by the Church at some point in time and to continue to function as church representatives and leaders.

These three points show the fundamental nature of the difference between the called and the chosen. They do not show the reason for the difference or the method for deciding who should be chosen. This paper is not concerned with these important points. Therefore, another paper is needed in order to address them.

## CHAPTER III

### Qualifications For Ordination

Ellen G. White speaks concerning the qualifications for those who are to be ordained. She covers the questions of who should decide who is qualified, what the qualifications are, and who has the authority to grant ordination. It is White's belief that only God can decide who is qualified for ordination. Only God can set the criteria for qualifications, which He has set on a spiritual level, and only God has the authority to grant ordination. Certain men are entrusted with the responsibility of carrying out the visible rite of ordaining individuals, but this is only symbolic of the ordination already granted by God, Himself.

### Only God Can Choose

In an earlier section of this book it was shown that those who are ordained are set apart for specific purposes and functions, the most important of which is seeking and saving souls for the Kingdom of God. The question arises, "Who should decide who is fit for ordination?" White answers this question.

Every one has an influence, and that influence should tell for God; but the question whether this one or that one should devote his time to labor for souls, is of the deepest importance, and none but God can decide who shall engage in the solemn work.

The fact that only God can decide who is fit does not exclude human participation.

I saw that God had laid upon his chosen ministers the duty of deciding who was fit for the holy work; and in union with the church and the manifest tokens of the Holy Spirit, they were to decide who should go and who were unfit to go.

From White's statement it seems that both God and certain men are in the position to decide who is fit for service. This apparent paradox could be misunderstood by some to mean that either God or man can decide who is fit for service. This is not the case. Human participation is confined to public sanction based upon evidence that God has already chosen the individual for sacred service. God's choice is first and man's sanction is secondary.

There is a definite prerequisite that must be satisfied before a person is set apart by ordination for special service for God. That prerequisite is proof of God's calling.

There were good men in the apostle's days, men who could pray with power and talk to the point; yet the apostles, who had power over unclean spirits and could heal the sick, dared not with merely their wisdom set one apart for the holy work of being mouth-piece for God. They waited unmistakable evidence of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit.... We have their [apostles] example, and should follow it. Brethren of experience..., 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.

Notice that the commission comes from God and the public sanction comes from man after seeing the "full proof."

### Spiritual Qualifications

A person who is commissioned by God to be ordained must give evidence of spiritual qualifications.

God has repeatedly shown that persons should not be encouraged into the field without unmistakable evidence that he has called them. The Lord will not entrust the burden for his flock to unqualified individuals.

This evidence must be apparent to those who are responsible for giving their public sanction. Among the qualities to be observed are the ability to win souls, a Christlike character, and sound mind and judgment.

#### Soul-Winner

The greatest evidence that God has chosen a person to labor for souls is the success of the individual to win souls.

It is by bearing much fruit that God's workers testify to the power of his word. The tame, spiritless efforts that produce no fruit are an evidence that there is no living connection with God.

White points out that in order to bear much fruit there must be dedication and hard labor on the part of the worker.

In order to labor successfully for God, there must be in the heart an all-absorbing love for him. Heart religion must rule the life. . . The Lord calls for workers, not sermonizers [sic], for men who will do real work. . . And I have been instructed that not a few, but many souls will be saved through the labors of men who have looked to Jesus for their ordination and order. Such men have taken up work in the hardest parts of the field, and have labored successfully for the Master.

#### Christlike

In recent years a premium has been placed upon academic preparation for ministry in the Adventist Church. This type of preparation has proven to be a great blessing to the worker and the cause of God; however, academic preparation alone is not enough to qualify a person for the work of saving souls.

It is not learned men, not eloquent men, who are to be depended upon to do the work now needed, but humble men, who are learned in the school of Christ, who are meek and lowly in heart; who will give the invitation to the supper, "Come, for all things are now ready." Those who beg at midnight for loaves to feed the hungry souls, will be successful. The law of God is that as we receive we are to impart.

To learn in the school of Christ is to become Christlike and this takes personal effort.

Press to the side of Christ. But this spirit can only be received by those who are consecrated, who will deny self, lifting the cross and follow the Lord. . . . God takes men as they are. . . and trains them for His service, if they will be disciplined and learn of Him. They are not chosen because they are perfect, but notwithstanding their imperfections, that through the knowledge and practice of the truth, through the grace of Christ, they may become transformed into His image.

#### Sound Mind and Judgment

White describes the kind of worker God is looking for to carry forward the task of winning souls. In her description she repeatedly mentions the quality of good judgment.

Those whom God calls must be men of deep experience, tried and proved, men of sound judgment, men who will dare to reprove sin in the spirit of meekness, men

who understand how to feed the flock. God knows the heart and he knows whom to select.... The servants of God who teach the truth should be men of judgment.... I saw that we must be prepared for objections, and with patience, judgment, and meekness, let them have the weight they deserve,... Thus a good impression will be made, and honest opposers will acknowledge that they have been deceived and that the commandment keepers are not what they have been represented to be. It seems that nothing can bring reproach to the cause of truth like men representing the truth who do not have sound minds and good judgment. Even when White speaks of reproving sin the element of sound judgment is included with the method.

There are some individuals who disqualify themselves for the full-time service of winning souls and representing the Church as ministers by cherishing certain errors. God will not entrust the care of His precious flock to men whose mind and judgment have been weakened by former errors that they have cherished, such as so-called perfectionism, and Spiritualism, and who, by their course while in these errors, have disgraced themselves and brought reproach upon the cause of truth.

In the spirit of fairness it would seem that if a person held these certain errors ignorantly and chose to repent of these sins, that he could once again be entrusted with the sacred obligations of an ordained minister. White states that this is not the case.

Although they may now feel free from error and competent to go forth and to teach this last message, God will not accept them. He will not entrust precious souls to their care; for their judgment was perverted while in error, and is now weakened. The great and holy One is a jealous God, and He will have holy men to carry His truth. The holy law spoken by God from Sinai is part of Himself, and holy men who are its strict observers will *alone* [italics mine] honor Him by teaching it to others.

It is a solemn and holy privilege indeed to carry the message of God to a doomed and dying world. Those who are selected for this privilege must daily depend on Christ in order to carry out this work as those worthy of the calling.

#### Only God Can Ordain

In order for men to properly ordain a person there must be unmistakable evidence that God has already given His commission, or ordination, to the individual. White states that ministers of sound minds should assemble and "lay hands upon those who have given full proof that they have received their commission of God, . . ." Moses is an example of the fact that God is the one who does the ordaining of individuals to do His service.

Before Moses went forth, he received his high commission, his ordination to his grand work, in a way that filled him with awe, and gave him a deep sense of his own weakness and unworthiness.

Paul is another who illustrates the fact that all true ordination originates with God. Paul did not depend upon man for his ordination. He had received from the Lord his commission and ordination. He regarded his ministerial labor as a privilege. To him it was not a duty performed in return for money. He labored for the souls of men.

The fact that ordination comes from God does not lessen the importance of earthly recognition of this heavenly fact being formalized by authorized men. It was very special in the mind of Paul that the proper human authorities sanctioned his Apostolic claim.



Paul regarded the occasion of his formal ordination as marking the beginning of a new and important epoch in his lifework. It was from the time of this solemn ceremony, when, just before he was to depart on his first missionary journey, he was "separated unto the gospel of God," that he afterward dated the beginning of his apostleship in the Christian Church.

Paul shows that although God is the only One who can truly call and ordain a person to His work, He has given a grave responsibility to men to observe the life of one who claims this ordination and ratify on earth the decision of heaven following the instructions of God.

### Some Never Ordained By Man

White points out the fact that many people who have been called of God and labor successfully in His work will never be ordained by man. This fact may be true because not everyone is called of God to function in a capacity that would need the advantages of ordination. It may be true because man may depend too much on his own judgment and miss the unmistakable evidence of the worker.

I saw that if it should be left to a few individuals here and there to decide who was sufficient for this great work, confusion and distraction everywhere would be the fruit.... Your judgment is imperfect, and can be no evidence in this matter.

Because of the possible oversight of man there are those who will never have their ordination ratified on earth through formal ceremony. They are as truly ordained as those who are blessed with this privilege and just as successful in carrying forward the work of saving souls.

There are many who are laborers together with God whom we do not discern; the hands of ministers have never been laid upon them in ordination for the work; but nevertheless they are wearing the yoke of Christ, and exert a saving influence in working in different lines to win souls to Christ. . . . And I have been instructed that not a few, but many souls will be saved through the labors of men who have looked to Jesus for their ordination and orders.

It must be discouraging for an individual to know that God has ordained him for a particular work that could be blessed by the advantages of being formally ordained but who has not received this rite. White gives a word of encouragement to this soul from the lips of Jesus.

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."

What a blessing to know that Jesus cares for and understands a person laboring under these circumstances.

## CHAPTER IV

### METHOD AND MEANING OF ORDINATION

There is a definite method that Ellen White advocates as the correct process for ordaining an individual. White indicates that there are certain definite individuals who are responsible for selecting ordination candidates. These individuals are exclusively ordained ministers. As part of the process the candidates are to give tangible evidence during an unspecified period of time that God has ordained them to their work. Ministers of experience are to examine the candidates to check certain aspects of their ministry, fast and pray for the Holy Spirit's approval of their choices, lay hands on the candidates, and give a sacred charge.

The question of what happens to an individual when he is ordained has been raised. White indicates that God and the angels are summoned to witness the event but no new virtue, spiritual or otherwise, is imparted to the candidate at ordination. Much of the formal ceremony is symbolic but very significant. Some feel that it is not important for the church to ratify the claims of a ministerial calling, but White indicates that this is an error and a mistake.

#### Only Ministers Choose Candidates

The burden of choosing who is fit for the gospel ministry has been laid exclusively upon the faithful gospel minister of experience. No other person is granted this privilege according to White.

I saw that God had laid upon his chosen ministers the duty of deciding who is fit for the holy work; and in union with the church and the manifest tokens of the Holy Spirit, they were to decide who should go and who were unfit.

It would seem from this statement that persons other than ministers should take part in this phase of the process, but White becomes more clear in other statements. We have their [apostles'] example, and should follow it. Brethren of experience and of sound minds should assemble, and following the Word of God and the sanction of the Holy Spirit, should, . . . set them apart to devote themselves entirely to His work.

Again, there seems to be room for other persons to be involved in the choice of candidates for ordination, but the fact that the apostles' example is being cited removes this room.

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 mouth-piece for God. They selected 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.

Notice that it is the minister of God that is being highlighted as the one who has this responsibility in the days of the apostles. No less should be done today according to White.

#### Evidence Needed

Before a person is considered for ordination he must give positive evidence that he has been selected by God to serve as His shepherd of His flock. White says that individuals should give ". . . full proof that they have received their commission of God." Part of this evidence has to do with dedication to the work of the Lord. "There

must be evidence on the part of those who take the solemn position of shepherds that they have, without reservation, dedicated themselves to the work."

White describes further what the apostles looked for in a potential candidate for ordination. "They wanted unmistakable evidence of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit." These manifestations are described in terms of being able to maintain good Christian interpersonal relationships.

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 house and preserving order in their own families and who could enlighten those who were in darkness.

In the mind of White it is vital that a minister show this unmistakable evidence of a heavenly calling in his life. Even if the person is successful in his endeavors the cause of God will suffer because of the lack of the qualifications needed to be a true representative of Christ. If he does not show the essential qualifications, White instructs that the church not sanction him as a representative of God's truth.

Again the danger of those traveling whom God has not called, was shown me. If they do have some success, the qualifications that are lacking will be felt. Injudicious moves will be made, and by a lack of wisdom some precious souls may be driven where they can never be reached. I saw that the church should feel their responsibility and should look carefully and attentively at the lives, qualifications, and general course of those who profess to be teachers. If unmistakable evidence is not given that God has called them, and that the "woe" is upon them if they heed not this call, it is the duty of the church to act and let it be known that these persons are not acknowledged as teachers by the church. This is the only course the church can take in order to be clear in this matter, for the burden lies upon them.

White does not give as much credence to the occasional success as she does to the trend of the life when it comes to making proof of one's calling.

#### Time Needed

In order for a person to give proof of his calling by God, there must be the passing of time. How long should a person be given in order to prove that God has called him to His work?

White advocates giving every individual a period of time to prove himself, but she does not specify any particular time frame. This lack of specificity on the part of White has left the Adventist Church in the position of devising somewhat arbitrary policies in this regard; however, White does give a hint concerning what is to be accomplished during this time in a comment she makes regarding the training of certain men for the ministry.

The Vaudios ministers were trained as missionaries, everyone who expected to enter the ministry being required first to gain an experience as an evangelist. Each was to serve three years in some mission field before taking charge of a church at home. This service, requiring at the outset self—denial and sacrifice, was a fitting introduction to the pastor's life in those times that tried men's souls. The youth who received ordination to the sacred office saw before them, not the prospect of earthly wealth and glory, but a life of toil and danger, and possibly a martyr's fate.

In the Adventist Church today the average time a person is given to prove his calling to the ministry is four years. White does not advocate any specific amount

of time, but she does speak concerning the type of experience that should be had by a minister before he is ordained. The most important aspect of this experience seems to be the recognition of the type of life the person has been called to live in terms of dedication and sacrifice for the cause of God.

With this thought in view it would seem that there would be unique time frames for each individual being considered for ordination rather than one generally accepted time for all persons to "wait" before ordination. Length of time does not seem to be an important issue for White. Quality of time spent in preparation and essential experience does seem to be her burden in this regard.

#### Examination Needed

Another step in the process of preparing for an ordination of a minister has to do with examination. White speaks of two areas that must be heeded in the process of examination. First, there must be examination made by certain types of ministers. "... Those who are about to enter upon the sacred work of teaching the Bible truth to the world, should be carefully examined by faithful, experienced persons."

Second, there is a particular line of examination that should be followed. Ministers should be examined especially to see if they have an intelligent understanding of the truth for this time, so that they can give a connected discourse upon the prophecies or upon practical subjects. If they cannot clearly present Bible subjects, they need to be hearers and learners still. They should earnestly and prayerfully search the Scriptures, and become conversant with them, in order to be teachers of Bible truth to others. All these things should be carefully and prayerfully considered before men are hurried into the field of labor.

Because this type of examination does not always take place before a person is ordained, the work of God is hindered and marked with the mistakes of men. Hands are laid upon men to ordain them for the ministry before they are thoroughly examined as to their qualifications for the sacred work; but how much better would it be to make thorough work before accepting them as ministers, than to have to go through this rigid examination after they have become established in their position and have put their mold up on the work.

It seems that if these ministers were kept from prematurely entering the work, they would make a better contribution when they did enter and be a greater blessing to the people of God and His cause.

#### Prayer Needed

White indicates that after the ordination candidate has been chosen by ministers, time has been given to make full proof of God's calling, and the examination has been successfully passed, there should be a special time of prayer. Ministers are to pray in behalf of the candidate for two reasons. First, to see if the choice they have made is accepted by the Holy Spirit and second, to dedicate the accepted candidate to God's service.

#### Prayer for Direction

Jesus set an example for ministers to follow in His ordination of the twelve apostles.

Jesus, when preparing for some great trial or some important work, would resort to the solitude of the mountains, and spend the night in prayer to His Father. A night of

prayer preceded the ordination of the apostles and the sermon on the mount, the transfiguration, the agony of the judgment hall and the cross, and the resurrection glory.

Notice that the ordination of the apostles was so important that White placed it in the same category as the sermon on the mount, the transfiguration, the crucifixion, and the resurrection of Christ. How important it must be then to make certain that God has sanctioned the ordination of every minister to the work of the gospel. The neglect of this vital and spiritual step in the process of ordination can lead to the selection of those whom God has never called.

No consideration beyond that which God has established should be involved in the choice of candidates for ordination. Evidence of skills and talents deemed by man to be vital to the work of God are not of themselves proof that God has called a person to His work. If these be the factors used as criteria for the selection of a candidate great harm can be done to the cause of God.

While Jesus was preparing the disciples for their ordination, one who had not been summoned urged his presence among them. It was Judas Iscariot, a man who professed to be a follower of Christ.... Judas believed Jesus to be the Messiah; and by joining the apostles, he hoped to secure a high position in the new kingdom....

The disciples were anxious that Judas should become one of their number. He was of commanding appearance, a man of keen discernment and executive ability, and they commended him to Jesus as one who would greatly assist Him in His work.... The after history of Judas would show them the danger of allowing any worldly consideration to have weight in deciding the fitness of men for the work of God.

After ministers, who are responsible for selecting candidates for ordination, are convinced that a person has given evidence that God has called him to the gospel ministry, they are to select the candidate based upon their own judgment. Still, before the person is actually ordained, there is another task that must be done.

After those 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. . . . They [apostles] selected 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.

Man's judgment is totally inadequate as the measure of whether this one or that is called of God to do His work.

#### Prayer of Dedication

At the actual ordination service White indicates that another special prayer should be offered to God in behalf of those being set apart for the gospel ministry. This is a prayer of dedication that should be accompanied with fasting. When speaking of the ordination of some apostles White states that "...before being sent forth as missionaries to the heathen world, these apostles were solemnly dedicated to God by fasting and prayer and the laying on of hands." White states that this not only was done but that it should be done.

We have their [apostles] example, and should follow it. 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.

### The Laying On of Hands

One of the final steps in the process of ordination is the laying on of hands. Jesus followed this practice.

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.

The apostles followed the practice of laying on of hands at ordination.

I saw that in the apostles' day... brethren chose men who had given good evidence.... Inquiry was made of God concerning these, and then, according to the mind of the church and the Holy Ghost, they were set apart by the laying on of hands.

The act of laying on of hands had only one significance then, and it has the same significance today. The significance of this act is to show the world that the church has sanctioned the ministry of the person ordained.

As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. These apostles were therefore dedicated to God in a most solemn manner by fasting and prayer and the laying on of hands; and they were sent forth to their field of labor among the Gentiles. They were now invested by the church with full ecclesiastical authority.

The act of laying on of hands was, and is, wholly symbolic. White says that this act ... was merely setting the seal of the church upon the work of God—an acknowledged form of designation to an appointed office. . . . , and recognition of one's authority in that office. To the Jews, this form was a significant one.

The Jews placed this symbol in the same category as when a person laid hands on a child to bless him or when they laid hands on a sacrifice for sin. It was a way of showing the extreme importance of the act it represented.

### Ordination Charge

White seems to indicate that there was a special charge given to the candidates as part of the ceremony of ordination. "After choosing His disciples, Christ appointed them as His representatives, and gave them their ordination charge, their commission." There is no indication of the specific content of this charge other than that it impressed upon the disciples their mission.

They were to go forth as His witnesses, to declare what they had seen and heard of Him. Their office was the most important to which human beings had ever been called, and was second only to that of Christ Himself. They were to be workers together with God for the saving of the world.

This is the type of charge that should be given to every person ordained into the gospel ministry today.

### Meaning of the Ordination Ceremony

It has already been established that White viewed the ordination of individuals to the gospel ministry to be of very great importance. She again underscores this thought by indicating that God attends every ordination ceremony.

[When] men have taken upon themselves the vows of consecration, to devote all their powers to the sacred service of God; . . . they occupy the position of expositors of Bible truth, and have received the solemn charge;... God and angels are summoned as witnesses to the solemn dedication of soul, body, spirit to God's service. . . . These men . . . minister in a most holy office.

At the ordination ceremony there are certain things that do take place and certain things that are sometimes believed to take place but do not. Things that do take place include the person being dedicated to God for His sacred work and receiving special authorization from the church to do it. Something that does not take place is the blessing of new and special virtues that enable a person to do the work of God in a way he could not do it before ordination.

#### Dedication

In speaking of the ordination of some of the apostles White states that part of the meaning of the ceremony is to show that a person has been dedicated by the church for the sacred office that only God can truly appoint a person to fulfill.

They [Barnabas and others] had now reached a point [before ordination] in their Christian experience where God was about to entrust them with the carrying forward of a difficult missionary enterprise, in the prosecution of which they would need every advantage that could be obtained through the agency of the church. Therefore, before being sent forth as missionaries to the heathen world, these apostles were solemnly dedicated to God by fasting and prayer and the laying on of hands.

#### Authorization

As a result of being dedicated to God for the purpose of doing His sacred work ordained individuals received authorization from the church to represent it as leaders and ministers. This was the case for the apostles whose example White admonishes us to follow. "Thus they were authorized by the church not only to teach the truth, but to perform the rite of baptism, and to organize churches, being invested with full ecclesiastical authority."

Evidently some have believed that they do not need this authorization from the church because White speaks directly to persons with this type of attitude.

For any worker in the Lord's cause to pass these by, and to think that his light must come through no other channel than directly from God, is to place himself in a position where he is liable to be deceived by the enemy, and overthrown.

#### No New Grace or Virtue Given

After the time of the apostles there arose an abuse of the symbolic act of laying on of hands during ordination to the gospel ministry. There was wrongfully placed upon this act more significance than it warranted.

The ordination by the laying on of hands, was, at a later date, greatly abused; unwarrantable importance was attached to the act, as though a power came at once upon those who received such ordination, which immediately qualified them for any and all ministerial work, as though virtue lay in the act of laying on of hands. We have, in the history of these two apostles, only a simple record of the laying on of hands, and its bearing upon their work. Both Paul and Barnabas had already received their

commission from God himself; and the ceremony of laying on of hands added no new grace or virtual qualification. It was merely setting the seal of the church upon the work of God— an acknowledged form of designation to an appointed office.

In another comment regarding the ordination of these same two individuals White says that

... 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.

What bearing would ordination have on their future work? In the article just cited there is the indication that they received the advantage of legitimacy as a result of being sanctioned by the church. This made it easier to perform their tasks with less suspicion. White also speaks of how a chosen and ordained minister of God has so dedicated himself to the cause of God that when hardships and trials come with Satan's fiercest attacks he is able to ". . . stand faithful at his post, in the fear of God and in the power of His might." This type of grace and virtue must belong to the person before he is ordained if he is to have it afterward.

If the counsel of Ellen White were strictly followed by the Adventist Church, there would never be the threat of hindrance to the work of God as a result of unfit persons entering the ministry.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

Ellen White cites several purposes for ordaining persons to the Gospel Ministry. She also comments on the thought that a person needs to be ordained in order to be engaged in the work of soul-winning.

#### Purposes for Ordination

##### Church Leadership

The most fundamental purpose for which a person is ordained for the Gospel Ministry is to place him in a position of leadership. The apostles followed the example of the Old Testament prophets, such as Moses, when they were placed in charge of the early Christian Church by God. The qualifications that were sought in a prospective candidate for ordination were mostly concerned with leadership ability.

Another reason that persons were ordained for leadership within the Church was to free them from having to earn a livelihood. Thus, these leaders could spend their full time and energy in the work of the Gospel without much concern for the provision of their daily bread. Today, this is the plan that would be advocated by Ellen White. She wrote that, "The ministers are paid for their work, and this is well."

Paul, the Apostle, agreed with the thought that "they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (1 Cor 9:14). He, however, made a choice not to take advantage of this right because he did not want anyone to make his "glorying void" (1 Cor 9:15). He did not set a new precedence in regard to whether or not an ordained preacher should support himself as opposed to being relieved from the necessity of providing his own daily bread.

Paul made a contribution to the church by taking his stance as a self-supporting worker in the church. "His course inspired many humble toilers with a desire to do what they could to advance the cause of God, while at the same time they supported themselves in daily labor."

##### Church Authority

The Holy Spirit chose to use the Church as the vehicle for ordaining Paul and Barnabas. The reason for this was to show that Lord does work through His appointed agencies in the organized Church, even in the matter of choosing persons to be ordained. Because there are those who would despise the counsel of God's chosen leaders, the Holy Spirit gave evidence of the authority of His Church.

This Church authority has a unifying influence. Rather than having to live with the effects of uncontrolled individualism, the Church can move as a harmonious unit in performing its God-given mission.

##### Church Sanction

During the time of the Early Church, men who claimed to preach the Word of God were subject to suspicion, prejudice, jealousy, and the charge of heresy. This was true because many false teachers were leading the people astray with false doctrine. In order to show that a person was an authentic representative of the

Church, he was ordained. This rite gave the teachers of the truth a much-needed advantage as they went forward with the preaching of the Gospel.

#### Preachers

Jesus ordained the Twelve in order that they would carry on His ministry. They were ordained to continue His witness. The primary method of accomplishing their mission was to preach. Thus, their ordination was to a preaching ministry.

Today, it is customary for ministers of the Gospel to become ordained. The crowning purpose for this rite is to set persons apart for a preaching ministry. Ellen White calls this office the most important to which any human being could be called, and it is second only to that of Christ's.

#### Unnecessary for All to Be Ordained

Many have harbored the thought that only the ordained minister is responsible for winning souls to Christ. Ellen White makes statements in order to clear this misconception from the mind.

Let them [believers] understand that there is a large work to be done outside the pulpit, by thousands who may never be set apart to the ministry by the laying on of hands. God calls upon all who have been drinking of the water of life, to lead others to the fountain.

Others have believed that only the minister can experience success in leading souls to Christ. They have felt the need to wait for ordained ministers to do this work. Again, Ellen White speaks in order to wipe away this notion.

Let not the work that needs to be done wait for the ordination of ministers. If there are not ministers to take up the work, let men of intelligence, with no thought of how they can accumulate the most property, establish themselves in these cities and towns, using the knowledge they have gained in winning souls to the truth.

The Holy Spirit is promised to all who will dedicate themselves to the task of serving the Lord through soul-winning.

#### Necessity of Ordination

Some persons possess certain advantages, rights, and privileges, granted by the Church through the rite of ordination, that other persons do not enjoy unless they are ordained. This is the necessity of ordination. These advantages, rights, and privileges can be summed up in three points made by White. First, ordained individuals receive the advantage of having their soul-winning work placed above challenge because they have the sanction of the Church.

Second, ordained persons are released from the necessity of physical toil to gain their daily bread in order that they may devote all of their energies to the task of soul-winning. It has been pointed out in the body of this paper that Paul the Apostle made the choice to do physical labor for his sustenance for certain reasons. His example has been of benefit to the Church.

Third, there are certain privileges that only ordained persons enjoy. White states: Having received their [apostles] commission from God and having the approbation of the church, they went forth baptizing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and administering the ordinances of the Lord's house, often waiting upon the saints. . . being invested with full ecclesiastical authority.



The Seventh-day Adventist Church grants Ministerial License to certain unordained individuals-They function with full ecclesiastical authority. The reason for this is that those holding Ministerial License are expected to be ordained at some point in time and to continue to function as Church representatives and leaders.

#### God Makes the Choice

White points out that the only person who should be ordained is the person that God, Himself, has set apart for the work of the ministry. In order for the world to know who that person is God has chosen to reveal the information to only certain individuals whose job it is to reveal it to the world. These individuals are exclusively ordained ministers. Persons who are not ministers have no part in this decision.

After ordained ministers are certain that their candidate for ordination is accepted of the Holy Spirit, they reveal this fact to the world by performing the rite of ordination upon the candidate. In this way there is Divine and human participation in the ceremony of ordination. God makes the choice by Himself, and man gives the individual the sanction of the church to represent the church.

#### Qualifications Are Spiritual

Unmistakable evidence is required before any person is to be ordained. Although there are skills that must be displayed that would tend to show executive leadership, there are other considerations that are much more important as proof that God has called an individual for His work.

#### Soul-Winner

Bearing much fruit, souls for the Kingdom of God, is the most important evidence that God has ordained an individual to the gospel ministry. It is God who is able to give success in the most trying circumstances, and He has promised to grant success to all who are wholly dedicated to the work He has chosen for them to do.

#### Christlike

There are many considerations that appear to be of prime importance when one is being considered for ordination. Financial accountability, leadership skills, academic qualifications, and other important criteria are often viewed as being paramount in the decision whether or not a person should be ordained. However, White points out that the character of the person who is about to enter this sacred work is more important than all of these.

In order to be like Christ earnest effort must be exerted on the part of the person. Self-denial and steadfast commitment to Christ is needed in order to obtain this goal. Christ does not choose individuals because they are perfect, but He does expect that they cooperate in being transformed into His perfect image.

#### Sound Mind and Judgment

Having a sound mind and good judgment is not in itself a spiritual matter. When it comes to using these qualities in the work of God, it becomes a spiritual matter. White speaks of the effect of persons laboring for souls who do not use these qualities correctly and the damage that can be done. She also speaks of the blessings

that flow from the use of the same. Souls can be won or irretrievably lost in accordance with how these qualities are used by the worker.

There are special circumstances that disqualify a person from being a minister of God. These include the sin of cherishing error such as Spiritualism or so-called perfectionism. Even if a person realizes his error and repents of these sins, God will not accept him as His servant. The reason given for this fact is because the mind and judgment have been weakened by these errors and the individual has brought reproach upon the cause of God and himself.

#### Ordination Is From God Alone

Man has a part in the ordination of individuals. This part is limited to giving earthly sanction to what God has already done; namely, ordained a person for His sacred work.

Moses and Paul are cited as examples of the fact that the act of ordaining a person is God's exclusive right. The part that man plays in the act is entirely secondary but very important to the worker and the world.

#### Man Can Make Mistakes

Because man is involved in the matter of ordination, human error can occur. White states that there will be some who are called of God for His service who will not be formally ordained by man. She offers encouraging remarks to the effect that God will still honor His choice in them by granting them success to do His bidding.

#### Ministers Are To Choose Candidates

It is the exclusive privilege of faithful ordained ministers to make the determination whether or not God has called an individual to the gospel ministry. Persons other than ministers are not given this privilege even if they are selected for duties on a conference committee. Certain responsibilities of the church are reserved for only certain people, and the handling of ministerial personnel is reserved exclusively for ministers.

#### Evidence Needed

There must be more to consider in making the decision whether or not to ordain an individual than the claim of the individual. "Unmistakable evidence" is the term White uses to convey what should be seen before this solemn event takes place.

The kind of evidence that is to be sought in the life of the individual has to do with Christian attributes in interpersonal relationships. The ability to rule one's own house and preserve order in one's own family along with the ability to enlighten those in darkness are attributes that must not be lacking in any potential candidate for ordination.

The church and ministers in particular are responsible to ensure that no person is allowed to enter this sacred work who does not possess a character and a trend of life that is becoming to a worker for God. If a person somehow is admitted without this evidence of God's calling, he is to be expelled from the gospel ministry and it be made clear that he is not acknowledged as a teacher of the church. This is a grave matter.

### Time Needed

In order to make full proof of one's calling there must be the passage of time. White does not specify a particular length of time a person should be observed for proof of God's calling. She does, however, state that sufficient time should pass so that the individual may gain experience in the reality of the life he has been called to lead. This reality includes a realistic experience in the type of sacrifice and devotion necessary to be a good soldier for Christ.

White seems to indicate that when the evidence of God's call is recognized by the trend of the life and success in soul-winning the person is ready for the next step in the process of ordination. There is no specific time period attached to this observation, which would tend to suggest that different persons will be ready for ordination at different times.

If this analysis is correct, the Adventist Church seems to place too high a premium on the passage of time before a person is ordained. The church policy is that a person should work for the church for at least four years before he is ordained. This seems to be arbitrary in light of the counsels of Ellen White. Because the Adventist minister's salary and his political standing among his peers are directly affected by whether or not he is formally ordained, there seems to be too great a premium placed upon these realities as well. Holiness of life and ability to win souls are of greater importance in the mind of White concerning whether or not a person is ready for ordination than any other consideration.

### Examination Needed

Again, ministers of experience are given the responsibility of examining potential ordination candidates. The type of examination that should be pursued is to see if the individual has an intelligent understanding of the truth for this time and to see if he is able to present connected discourses on prophecies and practical subjects. If he cannot, then he should not be allowed to teach until he can do this.

The neglect of ministers to carefully monitor the progress of those preparing for ordination can cause untold harm to the cause of God. Men may lend their influence to destroy the truth rather than to defend its sacred claims because of a lack of understanding and the opportunity to pervert the truth.

### Prayer Needed

There are two types of prayers White associates with the rite of ordination.

#### Prayer for Direction

The prayer for direction comes from the examples of Jesus and the apostles. They both enquired of God as to who should be chosen for the solemn rite. The Holy Spirit is given that this direction may be seen.

#### Prayer of Dedication

The prayer of dedication is for the candidate for ordination himself. He is presented before God during the ceremony as one who will devote himself entirely to God's work for the rest of his life.

### Laying On of Hands

Jesus and the apostles led in this practice as a part of the ceremony of ordination. White indicates that this was a very important but merely symbolic act. It showed the world that the ordained individuals now held full ecclesiastical authority and church sanction as representatives of the church.

### Ordination Charge

The purpose of the ordination charge seems to be to impress upon the worker the mission that he has been called to carry on. White does not give the specific content of the charge Christ gave to His disciples, but she indicates that the content embraced the mission.

### Meaning of the Ceremony

God and the holy angels are summoned to witness the ordination workers. There is great significance to this holy ceremony.

### Dedication

The major meaning of the ceremony has to do with the fact that another person has been set apart for the office that only God can appoint a person to fill. This Divine choice is ratified by this sacred public ceremony that the church and the world may recognize God's choice for His work.

Part of the meaning of ordination includes the fact that this sacred ceremony is an acknowledgment by the church that the one ordained is an official representative of the truths it teaches. For the Adventist minister this means that anywhere in the world the one ordained is an official ambassador and leader of the church. Responsibility to live by the truth is paramount as a result of such an authorization.

### No New Grace or Virtue

Some have believed that there is a mystical blessing that accompanies the act of laying on of hands at ordination. After the time of the apostles there was abuse of this rite and the myth that new grace and virtue accompanied the act. White directly states that there is no evidence for such a theory. If the person does not have grace and virtue at the time this act is performed, he will not have it afterward.

### Women and Ordination

This paper does not deal directly with the subject of whether or not women should be ordained to the gospel ministry in the Adventist Church. Based upon the insights presented there does not seem to be any prohibition against ordaining women. The qualifications for ordination have nothing to do with gender. White speaks about women being paid for doing the same work men do in carrying the gospel. This question is not for men to settle [paying minister's wives]. The Lord has settled it. You are to do your duty to the women who labor in the gospel, whose work testifies that they are essential to carry the truth into families. Their work is just the work that must be done. In many respects a woman can impart knowledge to her sisters that a man cannot. The cause would suffer great loss without this kind of labor. Again and again the Lord has shown me that women teachers are just as greatly needed to do

the work to which he has appointed them as are men. They should not be compelled by sentiments and rules of others to depend upon donations for their payment, any more than should the ministers. . . .

This statement is primarily concerned with paying minister's wives for doing essential work in teaching the truth. The principle of duty to women who labor in the gospel is suggested here by White. Duty is a term that cannot be lightly esteemed.

The principle of duty includes the principle of fairness. Authority to perform certain ecclesiastical functions seems to be the most pragmatic reason for ordination in the Adventist Church. Men enjoy the advantage of having their work above reproach as a result of being ordained. Women are now being hired to do the same ecclesiastical work that men do as leaders and ministers in the Adventist Church. If women are being hired to do the same work as men, it seems only fair that they be given the same advantages that the men possess.

An important question is whether or not women should be hired in the Adventist Church to take on the responsibilities traditionally reserved for men as pastors in the ministerial ranks. This researcher believes that White would advocate the ordination of women in the Adventist Church today. Because the reasons for this belief deserve a more exhaustive explanation than is appropriate in this writing they will be held for future consideration.



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