

Ministry, Mission and Ordination

Tom de Bruin

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	3
Foreword	7
Introduction	9
Ordination in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church	10
1. Principles of Biblical Interpretation	13
Principle 1: The Bible is Our Only Creed	14
Principle 2: Dealing With Issues Not Clearly Stated in Scripture	15
Principle 3: Protestant Reformation	16
Principle 4: The Nature of the Interpreter	19
Principle 5: Human Language	20
Principle 6: Original and Universal Meaning	21
Principle 7: The New Testament Follows the Old	22
Principle 8: Levels of Interpretation	22
Principle 9: Ellen G. White	23
Principle 10: Plain Reading is Not Always Enough	23
Onwards	24
2. The Origins of God’s Mission	25
God’s Mission in Eden	26
The Second Creation Account	27
The Fall	29
A New Mediatorial Role	33
Eden in Biblical Theology	34

3. The Fall of Humanity	37
Patriarchy	38
The Flood	38
4. Israel: Judges, Priests, Elders and Kings	41
Elders and Judges	42
Priests and Levites	46
Moses' successor	48
Kings	50
Ordination and Women in the Nation of Israel	51
Israel in Biblical Theology	52
5. The Importance of Christ in God's Mission	55
The Ministry of Christ	55
Mark	56
Luke	57
John	58
The Mission of Christ	59
6. Ministers in the New Testament Church	63
The Commissioning of Matthias	63
The First Laying-On of Hands	66
Paul Only Accepts God's Authority	70
Barnabas and Saul Are Commissioned to Represent Antioch	73
Later Developments in the New-Testament Church	75
Conclusion	77
7. Themes in the New Testament	79
New Testament Offices	79
The Roles of Women	82
Male Headship	84
The Church in Biblical Theology	94

8. Ministers and Ordination in the Christian Tradition	99
Post-Biblical Church	99
Roman Catholic Ordination	101
The Reformation and the Protestant Church	102
Seventh-day Adventism	104
9. Ellen G. White’s Views on Ordination	107
The Mission of God	107
The Church	108
Ordination and Ministry	109
Freeing All Hands	110
Extending Ordination	112
Ordination of Women	113
Women’s Ministry in the Home and in Public	114
God’s Way and Our Way	117
10. Conclusions	119
Appendix A Recommendations of the Trans-European Theology of Ordination Study Committee	123
Implementing a Biblical Priesthood of All Believers	123
Reducing the Ceremonial Emphasis	125
Other Recommendations	127
Appendix B The Research Task Defined by the GC-BRI on May 1, 2012	129

FOREWORD

At the 2010 General Conference Session, a commitment was made to study the theology of ordination. Each Division was requested to study the question and submit a report to the Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC), appointed by the General Conference. Between June 2012 and November 2013 the Trans-European Division's Biblical Research Committee (TED BRC), carried out a thorough study of the subject.

The initial work was delegated to a subcommittee of the TED BRC, consisting of Audrey Andersson, Jan Barna, Daniel Duda, Raafat Kamal, Janos Kovacs-Biro, Laurence Turner, Cedric Vine and Bertil Wiklander. Their draft report was sent to the full TED BRC, which was given time to comment on and discuss the contents. The final version of the report was a very substantive work, consisting of some 863 pages and more than 350,000 words.

On 18 November 2013, the TED Executive Committee unanimously voted in a secret ballot to approve and recommend the report to the TOSC. The report's findings and rationale were presented to the TOSC by Bertil Wiklander, then President of the TED and chair of the TED BRC. We extend our thanks and appreciation to him for his commitment, leadership and significant contribution to the study.

Recognising the importance of this study, and the fact that many members simply do not have the time to read the full report, the TED Executive Committee voted to publish a condensed version. The purpose of the condensed version is to make the contents of this massive study accessible to as many church members as possible. This shorter, easier-to-read summary aims to make the

content available while preserving the theological depth of the original. We would like to offer our deepest appreciation to Tom de Bruin for accepting this task, and delivering the manuscript within a very tight timeframe.

We thank God for his blessings in our work, and pray that both this book and the study on which it is based will prove a valuable tool for the Seventh-day Adventist Church as it addresses the important issue of ordination.

Raafat Kamal
President, Trans-European Division
St Albans, 20 April 2015

INTRODUCTION

You have in your hands a book on the theology of ordination. This is a complicated subject. Ordination is a process of selection, of training and of induction to leadership, and has been practiced in the Christian church for 1900 years or more. The theology and practice of ordination has changed a great deal in those years, and even within a single denomination like the Seventh-day Adventist Church, many different assumptions and understandings of ordination exist. This potentially confuses and distorts the conversation.

In this book we will set out to examine our Adventist theology of ordination. We have tried to write in a way that is easy to read, but that still contains as much theological depth as possible. Nevertheless, do remember that this book only represents about 15% of the original study, so there is always more to know and discover. By all means, after reading this book, get your hands on the Trans-European Division's full 863-page report!

The theology of ordination is currently a hot topic in the Adventist church. In all aspects of church life, from Facebook groups to Sabbath school, from websites to the General Conference, Adventists are discussing this subject. Some support the ordination of women, claiming that God is a God of equality. Others see the use of female ministers, but would prefer them to serve under the leadership of a male pastor. There are even those that suggest that any form of ordination is unbiblical. The book you are holding attempts to reply to this ongoing, worldwide Adventist discussion. We hope it will contribute in a positive and uplifting way.

As far as this study is concerned, there is neither clarity nor unanimity among the inspired authors of the Bible on the topic of ordination. No biblical writer describes the theological significance of 'ordination'. No writer says anything about the process of selecting candidates for 'ordination'. Nothing said about the ceremony of 'ordination'.

We will be the first to admit that this idea sounds strange. Almost every Adventist has some idea of ordination, and can easily name a couple of passages where ministers are ordained. You might be thinking 'What about the seven?' or 'What about Timothy?'

Good questions! We hope your interest is piqued. Read on: we will answer these questions, and more.

ORDINATION IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Before we jump into the history and theology of ordination, let's quickly look at the current practice of ordination in the Adventist church. In our church we hold ordination ceremonies, where we ordain people for a specific office. We acknowledge that God has called them, and they are set apart by the laying-on of hands for a specific ministry or service. This means our ordination process has three parts: a divine call and formal approval from the church, the setting-apart by prayer and the laying-on of hands, and the associated ministry the ordained individual will perform.

Ordination applies to various offices and roles in the Christian church. As Adventists, we ordain for three classes of church functions: gospel ministers, local elders and deacons or deaconesses. According to our current world-church policies, the first of these positions is currently only open to male members. The others, if so desired, are open to all genders. In the Adventist church we have linked ordination to a number of administrative roles, but it should be underlined that the decision to ordain someone and the decision to elect someone for leadership are two

different acts, taken by different bodies on different occasions for different reasons.

Ordained ministers are not the only ministerial offices. The Adventist church recognises both the licensed minister, for those on the path to ordination, and the commissioned minister, for those who cannot be ordained for reasons of gender or ministry position. A host of pastoral ministries in the church are thus carried out by both men and women who are not ordained. These ministries also include church administration, institutional work, departmental work at General Conference, Division, Union and Conference levels, financial auditing and naturally the various functions in the local churches.

It is vital to our church structure and ecclesiology that we understand the reasons for ordaining some members and not ordaining others. We must understand the biblical and theological context of our ordination practices. These too will be discussed in detail in this book.

This book's structure should be easy to follow. We will begin with some principles of biblical interpretation, which form the foundation on which the rest of the study stands. We will then trace the theme of ministry and ordination through the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. To help us understand the origins of our current practices, we will also briefly examine ordination in post-biblical Christian tradition. Finally, because of the high esteem we give to Ellen G. White, we will also examine her views on the subject of ordination.

1. PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

The subject of ordination in the Bible can be approached from many angles, and a book discussing theological interpretation would be incomplete without an examination of the principles of biblical interpretation. Anyone delving deeper into the word of God should pause to ponder their methods of biblical interpretation. Although this chapter is likely the most difficult part of the book to read and understand, it is a vital foundation for the other chapters. When reading, remember that Paul says ‘endurance produces character’ (Rom 5:4). Do persevere: you will be justly rewarded.

Imagine, if you will, a study of the Sabbath by someone who does not believe that the Old Testament has any authority on that subject. Such a person might very well come to very different conclusions about the Sabbath and its role in a contemporary Christian’s life. Clearly, in such a study there would be no references to the Ten Commandments, or to the Sabbath at creation. From this example it becomes natural that a biblical study should take the whole of Scripture into account, not just a part. This is a principle of biblical interpretation that you might take for granted, but if it is not clearly defined, how will anyone else know?

For this reason we will begin this study by laying out ten principles for our theological interpretation of ordination in the Bible. As you read them, you might realise that you already apply many of these principles in your own Bible study. These principles are not new, but they do need to be put down clearly on paper so that we know the basis from which we argue.

PRINCIPLE 1: THE BIBLE IS OUR ONLY CREED

The first and most important principle for biblical interpretation is part of Adventist DNA. Since the time of the earliest Adventist pioneers, Adventists have been reluctant to speak about doctrines and have always maintained that the Bible is our only creed. Even today, the Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists are prefaced by a statement emphasising that we put our faith in the Bible alone.

Generally this principle is referred to by its Latin name *Sola Scriptura*, 'Only Scripture'. This principle emphasises that only the Bible can reveal God and the teachings of God. In other words, the Bible is the only normative authority for Christian belief and practice.

This principle represents a greater challenge than many see, because it means that anything believed or practiced should continually be held up to the Bible. Even ordination, a two-thousand-year-old practice, needs to constantly be weighed against the biblical evidence. If it is found wanting, changes must be made.

As Seventh-day Adventists we base our analysis of the biblical presuppositions, principles and methods of interpretation on a document entitled *Methods of Bible Study: Presuppositions, Principles, and Methods*. This document was voted in 1986, at the Annual Council of the General Conference in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Insofar as it is applicable to the current study, these *Methods of Bible Study* will also be incorporated into the other ten principles outlined in this introductory chapter.

PRINCIPLE 2: DEALING WITH ISSUES NOT CLEARLY STATED IN SCRIPTURE

If the Bible is our only creed, and we accept that the Bible is the only authority over Christian beliefs and practice, this automatically

leads to the question of how we deal with topics not explicitly discussed in the Bible. You may wonder why we would want to discuss a topic not clearly defined in the Bible, but unfortunately, as you will see, this study shows that ordination is just such a topic. If the Bible does not clearly or explicitly discuss ordination, we need a principle for how to deal with that fact.

It is clear that James White, one of the Adventist pioneers, dealt with a similar issue. George Knight describes White's struggle and solution wonderfully in his July 2014 article in *Ministry*, entitled 'Ecclesiastical Deadlock: James White Solves a Problem That Had No Answer'. White was struggling to organise the church in a proper, biblical manner. Unfortunately, there was very little biblical evidence on topics like church order, church ownership of property, the payment of preachers, the placement of pastors, the transfer of members between congregations and the overlying structure that binds individual congregations together. Eventually, after much discussion among the leaders of the church, it was generally accepted that any method that meets the following conditions could be applied: (a) the method will advance the gospel, insofar as we can judge, and (b) the method is not explicitly disallowed in the Bible.

In order to maintain a strong biblical foundation, this second principle, which offers an accepted Adventist way of dealing with issues not discussed in the Bible, will not be used directly in this study. Nor will any of this study's conclusions be based on it. But, as will become clear, this principle will ultimately be an essential part of the church's decision on how to deal with the issue of ordination.

PRINCIPLE 3: PROTESTANT REFORMATION

The Protestant Reformation was a turning point in the history of the church. Five principles of interpretation were introduced during the Reformation, each of which addresses the nature of the

Bible. These five principles are still the foundation of Protestant theology and biblical interpretation, and they will also impact our current study.

The Bible and the Bible Only

This first principle is so vital that we have separately discussed it as the first principle of this study. The discussion above was extensive, but we need to add one idea, called the 'Sufficiency of Scripture'. This idea is part and parcel of *Sola Scriptura*, and assumes that the Bible is a fully sufficient guide to salvation. In other words, everything that a believer needs to know to be saved can be found in the Bible. There are no deficiencies that need to be filled with tradition, additional revelations or announcements from church leadership.

The Totality of Scripture

The second principle from the Protestant Reformation is the 'Totality of Scripture', *Tota Scriptura*. This principle emphasises the need to read the entire Bible when studying a topic. Theology and biblical studies cannot simply be based on a portion of the Bible, ignoring the rest. They must remain firmly grounded in the entirety of Scripture. When assuming the totality of the Bible, there are two consequences that need to be taken into account. Firstly we see that the Bible is an inseparable union of the divine and the human, and secondly we see that it is the word of God.

Scripture is divinely inspired, although the authors kept their God-given free will. The Holy Spirit filled the authors with the divine message, and the human authors put that message into words. In this way the Bible's nature is similar to that of Jesus. It is a complete and inseparable mixture of the divine and the human: fully trustworthy, yet brought forth by human hands.

The second consequence of *Tota Scriptura* is that the Bible must be seen as the word of God. If every part of Scripture should be read on equal footing, this leads us to the conclusion that the

Bible as a whole is also God's word. To drive this point home, the Bible does not simply *contain* the word of God, it *is* the actual written word of God.

The Analogy of Scripture

The third interpretative principle of the Protestant Reformation is the 'Analogy of Scripture', or *Analogia Scripturae*. This principle follows from the previous argument for the totality of Scripture. If the entire Bible is the word of God, and the entire Bible is divinely inspired, then there must be fundamental unity and harmony throughout. Every part of the Bible must be analogous with the other parts. Practically this means that we can claim three things: Scripture interprets Scripture, Scripture is consistent and Scripture is clear.

Firstly, the divine nature of Scripture allows us to understand that there is a unity among the various human voices represented in the Bible. When a single voice is unclear, the rest of the Bible will be useful in the further and correct interpretation of that voice. In this way one part of Scripture interprets another part.

Secondly, given that it has a single divine inspiration, the Bible must necessarily be consistent. When discussing a theme, one part of the Bible cannot stand opposite another part. Interpretations must harmonise all the teachings on a particular topic.

Finally, given that the Bible interprets itself and its message is consistent, it follows that Scripture must also be clear. The various authors each build on the writings and understanding that came before. Diligent students can also consistently gain more understanding of each of the different parts of the Bible, making other parts clearer. In this way, through time and study, the later writings elucidate the earlier ones, and the earlier writings illuminate the later ones.

Spiritual Things Spiritually Discerned

The fourth fundamental interpretative principle of the Protestant Reformation is what is often called ‘Spiritual Things Spiritually Discerned’, or *Spiritualia Spiritualiter Examinatur*. This penultimate principle builds on the previous three, and takes the divine/human nature of the Bible into account. Just as the author of the Bible was a divinely inspired human writer, so a proper interpreter of the Bible needs to be spiritually inspired. This means that any accurate interpretation of the Bible must be aided by the Holy Spirit, and the interpreter must have an active spiritual life.

Christ is Lord

There is a fifth and final principle from the Protestant Reformation that is not always included in lists like this one. This principle can be summarised as ‘Christ is the Content and Lord of the Bible’. In the history of biblical interpretation this principle has not always been properly applied. This does not invalidate the principle, only certain applications.

Christ is integral to the fulfilment of the law, to the fulfilment of prophecy and to the fulfilment of God’s plan for creation. He is central to God’s mission and is central in the Bible. In the overarching theme of God’s mission, the intertwined narratives of the Great Controversy and the plan of redemption, ‘Christ as Lord’ is the overarching theological framework of the Bible as a whole.

There are two sides to the idea that Christ is Lord. Firstly, through the cross we see that Christ revealed the nature and essence of God. Christ’s death – the death of the divine – showed the extent of God’s love for mankind. Christ’s death also made it absolutely clear that God’s primary aim is to have an eternal, loving communion with humankind on the new earth. This revelation of the true nature of God is the truth that Christ proclaimed throughout the Bible.

The second part of the message that Christ is Lord is that Christ’s incarnation began a new phase of God’s plan of redemption. Christ

became the head of the church, calling his followers to serve him and work with him to carry the gospel to all nations. The church continues Christ's work until God's mission of communion has been completed.

When we understand these two things, the role of Christ in God's mission becomes an authoritative principle in the interpretation of the Bible. Christ and the mission of God need to be fundamental, especially in our interpretation of the current topic: the ordination of ministers. Ordination must be seen in the context of Christ's call to (and institution of) believers as ministers of God, acting as his agents in his mission.

PRINCIPLE 4: THE NATURE OF THE INTERPRETER

As outlined above, the Bible is a divine and human book, and to interpret it the reader needs to be a spiritual person led by the Holy Spirit. The human interpreter will remain human, however, meaning that human reasoning is a necessary part of interpretation. This is a natural tension that cannot be resolved, and must be carefully considered.

It is human nature to seek support and evidence for our own opinions. Serious biblical interpretation should always acknowledge the existence of these initial opinions, and should attempt to put aside preconceptions and honestly seek out the message God instilled in Scripture. Practically, this means that readers need to evaluate their own ideas and then put them aside, or risk being misled. An honest reader must strive to understand the nature of human language, as well as the mental processes involved in reading and understanding texts. In this way the often-subconscious influence of human nature can be taken into account, so that the reader can more fully submit to the Spirit's guidance. Additionally, the role of the Bible's historical and contemporary contexts needs to be taken into consideration when studying God's word. Understanding both the original context of

the Bible and the current context of the reader is vital in clarifying the universal message from God to mankind. And this universal message needs to be accepted and obeyed.

In other words, then, for proper interpretation of the Bible the reader needs to submit to three requirements: a desire to discover God's will, an awareness of their own preconceptions and the way their context influences how they read, and a need to obey God's word and make changes to their understanding where necessary.

PRINCIPLE 5: HUMAN LANGUAGE

Closely related to the previous principle is the principle of human language. Clearly, the Bible is the perfect word of God expressed in the imperfect words of humankind. This means that any interpretation of this perfect word in imperfect words needs to take both perfection and imperfection into account.

Biblical interpretation needs to be informed by an extensive knowledge of human language, texts and communication, and an awareness of the multitude of possible ways meaning is conveyed. It is important to understand the imperfection of human expression. The distance between modern-day readers and the original writers and audience of the Bible needs to be studied. We must attempt to bridge that distance, always reminding ourselves that it exists.

Any statement in the Bible is a dynamic entity. It interacts with its literary and social context, and is inseparable from the rest of the chapter, book, Bible and language. A serious student of the Bible needs to take these literary and social contexts into account, so that the meaning of any statement is fully informed, to the extent of human reason. Furthermore, Biblical interpretation must do its utmost best to understand the perfect word of God, embedded within the imperfect expressions of humans. Understanding must be led by the themes of the Bible as whole, and must always be steered by the same Holy Spirit that inspired the biblical authors.

PRINCIPLE 6: ORIGINAL AND UNIVERSAL MEANING

Building on the principle of human language is the idea of original and universal meaning. Every book in the Bible was written for an original audience, and modern-day audiences read over the shoulders of these original audiences. The original meaning, in its original, historical context, is always the primary meaning of the text. This original meaning can be discovered through honest, Spirit-led exegesis.

Many ethical commands transcend culture and time, and in many cases the original meaning is the same as the meaning current audiences receive. In other cases the original meaning is so steeped in the historical location, situation and culture that the distance is too large to allow us to apply it directly to a contemporary audience. The original meaning remains valid, but the interpretation of that meaning for contemporary audiences requires further study. This type of study is referred to as 'exposition', which distils the universal principles embedded in the biblical text. These principles are timeless, span cultures and are truly universal.

PRINCIPLE 7: THE NEW TESTAMENT FOLLOWS THE OLD

While the Bible should be seen as a whole, the variation in the Bible should also be taken into account. Sixty-six books written over a period spanning 1500 years will naturally contain richly diverse material. Another thing that must always be in the mind of a biblical interpreter is the diversity between the Old and the New Testament.

On the one hand there is great unity between these two testaments: the same God, the same grand narrative of cosmic conflict and God's redemptive plan, strong interrelations through both prophecy-fulfilment and quotations, and the acknowledgement of the eternal validity of the Old Testament

writings by the New Testament authors. On the other hand, there is also variance. The New Testament is truly a 'new testament'. It teaches us of a new covenant between God and mankind, sealed with the blood of Jesus Christ. Many Old Testament institutions – such as the nation Israel, the temple, sacrifices, the kingdom, the priesthood and the ceremonial law – have been improved, replaced or done away with.

Biblical interpretation needs to take this role of the New Testament into account. The era of the church under the headship of Christ always replaces the era of Israel, along with many institutions, practices and laws.

PRINCIPLE 8: LEVELS OF INTERPRETATION

Generally speaking, there are three levels of biblical interpretation: exegesis, exposition and application. These three levels rely and build upon each other.

Exegesis attempts to discover the original meaning of a text. It involves a close reading of the original languages, leading to an extensive study of the meaning of texts. Exegesis begins with the smallest building blocks, the individual words themselves, and ends with the largest construction, the entire Bible. This analysis takes the original meanings in the original literary, social and situational contexts into account.

Exposition builds on exegesis. It distils the universal, eternal principles from texts. The goal of exposition is not to discover the original meaning, but to nurture the faith of the contemporary reader and extract the biblical teachings of God for the present-day church.

Application transfers the principles and teachings of exegesis and exposition into practice and doctrine. Application steers the life of the individual believer and the church as whole, guiding both the day-to-day choices of the individual and the organisational structure and doctrinal expression of the church.

PRINCIPLE 9: ELLEN G. WHITE

Adventists recognise a special place for Ellen G. White in the interpretation of the Bible. The Seventh-day Adventist church acknowledges that her writings speak with prophetic authority, providing comfort, guidance, instruction and correction. Fundamentally, however, the church remains strong in its belief that the Bible is the standard of all teaching and experience, and that it is the only trustworthy record of God's acts. Through her spiritual gift Ellen White's writings can fundamentally contribute to the application of biblical principles in practice and doctrine, casting additional light on the biblical teachings.

PRINCIPLE 10: PLAIN READING IS NOT ALWAYS ENOUGH

Often the easiest and simplest method is the best. The Bible is fundamentally clear, and a plain reading of Scripture is useful in many cases, especially devotional reading. There are other cases where further study yields deeper results. In *Education*, Ellen White herself suggested that behind the plain words of the Bible is 'a deeper significance than appears on the surface' (p 123), and that the patient and careful reader will be richly rewarded. Complicated theological topics in particular require extensive, diligent research.

ONWARDS

These ten principles are the foundation of this study into the topic of ordination. Some of them may be new to you, others you may already be familiar with. Many of them you might already apply in your own study of Scripture. The following theology of ordination will be built on the ideas outlined in these principles. As you continue in this book, you will notice that this study follows biblical history, and builds a biblical theology of ordination. We need to place ordination into the theological framework of God's

mission, constantly keeping Christ as Lord and content of the Bible.

As you read on, you will see how we take the various books and authors of the Bible into account, and through exegesis of key passages, how we expose the fundamental, universal principles of ordination. After we examine the role and theology of ordination in the church and in biblical tradition, the principles of ordination will be applied to our present-day Adventist church. We will eventually apply these biblical principles and teachings to the organisation and practice of our church through a series of recommendations.

Now we turn to the very beginning, to the book of Genesis.

2. THE ORIGINS OF GOD'S MISSION

As we study the topic of ordination, we will keep the core theme of the Bible – God's plan for humanity – in the back of our minds. Every passage from the Bible, and every writing from the traditions of the church, will be examined from the position that it plays within this central theme. There are many terms that we could associate with this theme, but we have chosen 'the mission of God' or 'God's mission', which we will use interchangeably. This name is the hook on which we will hang a very over-defined and complicated idea.

One side of the mission of God is the revelation of God's nature, will and purpose. The whole of creation and human history shows God's plan, and his loving nature, to the universe. The Bible may refer to this topic with different words: God's love, God's kingdom or the new earth.

There is also another side to God's mission: an opposing force. This force of darkness and evil stands opposite God's mission of love. The opposition to God is most clearly present in the Bible when it teaches of the cosmic conflict between God and Satan, but we also see evidence of judgement and vengeance throughout the Bible.

God's mission can perhaps best be summarised as a plan of redemption. As God takes part in the Great Controversy, his ultimate goal is the salvation of mankind, i.e. the restoration of the broken relationship between himself and humans. With this plan God shows his faithfulness, love and care for humanity.

Together, all these aspects of God's mission are essential to the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the Bible as a whole. They are part of how we read biblical narrative, and part of the history of creation.

GOD'S MISSION IN EDEN

In the beginning God created heaven and earth. On the sixth day God created humans, and on the seventh day he celebrated the Sabbath with them. This act of creation was the first step in God's mission. God created a meeting place between himself and humans, a place where there was cooperation and communion, where humankind could worship God. God made himself a home among mortals; this was his purpose in creation.

This first step, the creation of humanity, was a vital part of God's mission:

Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'

(Gen 1:26–28)

This passage narrates God's creation of humankind, and also his commission to them. God created humans in his image, meaning there is something that God and humans have in common. One of these things is specifically mentioned in this passage: humanity has 'dominion'.

God clearly has dominion over all creation. He made it all. When he created humans, he gave them dominion over all creatures as well. In this way humans took on the image of God. This idea can be strengthened if we take the cultures of biblical times into account. It was quite common to use this same language of being 'in the image of' something to define delegated authority. You would see the same language used with sons, representatives and governors.

In the creation narrative, humankind received dominion over the creatures, and thus came to represent God to creation. In other words, humans – living in communion with God – became mediators between God and creation. Here the first man and woman can be seen as servants or ministers of God on earth. They were the first in the long line of the royal priesthood, which would pass on to Israel, the church and the end-time remnant, all the way to the new creation. Through their communion with God, their nourishment from God's creation and their care for it, and their relationship and procreation with each other, they mediated God in the world: they reflected God's kingship and presence to creation.

According to the creation narrative in Genesis 1:1–2:4a, humans, both male and female, were created as God's servants, ministers and mediators. This was God's ideal for humanity, but sadly it was an ideal that, due to human actions, would quickly fall apart.

THE SECOND CREATION ACCOUNT

The first two chapters of Genesis contain two accounts of creation. The first, which we just discussed, describes the general creation of the world. The second account specifically discusses the creation of humans. Naturally these two accounts belong together and influence each other. The first account creates a context in which we should read the second. In the first account it is of particular interest for this study that humans (both man and woman) were made to minister for God through their dominion over creation.

From this ideal of equality between man and woman, the second account of creation begins with an earth that is barren, because ‘the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground’ (Gen 2:5). God created the first man from the dust, breathing into his nose and making him a living being (Gen 2:7). God planted a garden for man, from which point man must presumably fulfil God’s charge from the first creation account. Man must ‘be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it’ (Gen 1:28), but clearly man could not fulfil this charge alone.

At this point we read the following:

Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.’ So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,

‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.’

Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

(Gen 2:28–25)

In this second account of creation God creates the man first, and then the animals. He saw that the man could not fulfil his

commission alone, and so created the woman. One might assume that because the woman was created after the man, she must be inferior to him. Then we would have to assume that the woman is also inferior to the animals, which cannot be the case because both man and woman were given dominion over creation.

This narrative, therefore, does not set out a creation order or list of importance, but defines the original tasks of man and woman. The man was made of the ground and his original task was to till the ground. The woman, on the other hand, was made from the man. Her original task was to be the man's partner. When the man saw the woman derived from his own flesh, he acknowledged their fundamental unity. They were both created by, subordinate to and commissioned by God, and although their origins differed, they were both made of the same flesh and bone.

An argument can even be made that the creation of the woman was the climax of the creation narrative. The woman was created by God from another human, which was also the manner in which humankind would ultimately fulfil their commission to be fruitful and multiply: procreation. The woman's origins, therefore, underlined her perfection in God's ideal for mankind.

THE FALL

Sadly, the perfect state of humanity in Eden was not eternal. The actions of the first humans introduced guilt and shame into creation:

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.

(Gen 3:6)

God told the first humans not to eat of a specific tree (Gen 2:16-17), but the woman saw and desired that tree's fruit. She took and ate some, sharing with her husband. The man, as aware of God's prohibition as the woman, ate the fruit as well. Later the man blamed the woman, and even implicated God (Gen 3:12). Both man and woman were to blame, and eating the fruit immediately brought shame into the world:

Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

(Gen 3:7)

Using the plants that they had at their disposal, the man and the woman made clothing for themselves to cover their nakedness. When the Lord came looking for them, they remained hidden, ashamed and guilty (Gen 3:8). Then God called them, and began what could be seen as a legal process. God interrogated the defendants and pronounced his sentence. He cursed the serpent and the ground (Gen 3:14, 17), and judged first the woman, then the man:

To the woman he said,
'I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children,
yet your desire shall be for your husband,
and he shall rule over you.'
And to the man he said,
'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife,
and have eaten of the tree
about which I commanded you,
"You shall not eat of it",
cursed is the ground because of you;
in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life;
thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;
and you shall eat the plants of the field.
By the sweat of your face

you shall eat bread
 until you return to the ground,
 for out of it you were taken;
 you are dust,
 and to dust you shall return.'

(Gen 3:16–19)

Upon reading these two judgements, we immediately notice that the woman's judgement is much shorter, consisting of only four lines. There is a neat logic to these four verses of poetry. The first two lines belong together, as do the second two. Furthermore, the first two lines introduce the second two.

According to God's judgement, the woman would have pain during childbirth. This could stand in the way of God's commission to be fruitful, and meant that the woman would need support during pregnancy and childbirth. This is where the second part of the judgement comes in. Because of the woman's longing for her husband, procreation would be safeguarded. This longing is intended as a good thing, indicated by the conjunction 'yet' (or 'but'). While the woman is in pain, the man could care for and protect her. In this way the man would 'rule' over her.

The verb that is translated as 'rule over' in the NRSV should be viewed in a nuanced manner. As a basis for this assertion we can turn to three contexts where Genesis uses the exact same verb in the exact same way. In Genesis 1:16–18 the sun and moon are said to 'rule over' the day and night. In this case, we naturally understand that the sun and moon delimit and organise the day and night. It is hard to imagine the sun and moon literally ruling over the day and night, but one can easily see how they are responsible for them or take care of them. Abraham's servant in Genesis 24:2 is said to 'have charge' over all that Abraham had. Clearly this servant did not rule over or have dominion over all Abraham's possessions. He only took care of it or was responsible for it. Similarly, Joseph is said to have been 'ruler of all of Egypt' (Gen 45:8, 26). Joseph, while holding an esteemed position, by no

means ruled over Egypt. This position belonged to the pharaoh. Joseph instead took care of and was responsible for Egypt.

So we can clearly see that the 'rule' the man had over the women was not one of dominion. The man was responsible for the woman and took care of her. Genesis makes no attempt to create a hierarchy between man and woman, but rather attempts to show the necessary interdependence between the two. The man had the woman's help to fulfil God's commission, and the woman had the man to protect and take care of her.

The judgement of the man in Genesis 3:16-19 is less applicable to this study than the judgement of the woman. The man's much longer judgement promises hard work and death, a fate that awaits all humans.

A NEW MEDIATORY ROLE

Following the judgement of the man and the woman there was no more place for them in the garden of Eden, but God did not throw them out without a care:

And the Lord God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and clothed them.

(Gen 3:21)

In an act that showed the changes of sin, God covered the shame of mankind. While the man and woman attempted to do this with plants, God transcended that boundary and used animal skins. This is a unique usage of words in the Bible, and denotes a unique happening. It is also an action that indirectly implies death and the shedding of blood.

This definitive act, the first shedding of blood, should be taken as a prefiguring of the new need for mediation that humans now had. In Eden mankind was continuously in the presence of the Lord. They could mediate for creation, without the need for mediation themselves. But now, after being thrown out of Eden,

they would need mediation and atonement as well. The shedding of blood – first by animals, later by Jesus – was necessary to achieve atonement once again.

Following this final act of care, God concluded that mankind must leave Eden:

Then the Lord God said, 'See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever' – therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken.

(Gen 3:22–24)

Mankind, now having knowledge of good and evil, were no longer suited for the priestly role that they were originally given. As they had knowledge that transcended their very nature, they could not continue as mediators in Eden. Humans were ejected from Eden, and continued their commission of mediation on earth itself, with one major difference: as prefigured by the clothing of animal skins, they themselves now also needed atonement and mediation.

Regardless of what changed after the fall, God and his mission remained the same. God does not change his mission on account of human activity, only the method in which he will achieve it. Because humans could no longer serve as mediators between God and creation after the fall, a new method for God's mission was called for.

EDEN IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

As we trace the theme of ordination through the Bible and history, we will constantly return to God's mission. We will do this through what we would like to call 'biblical theology.' That is a theology that takes the overarching theme of the Bible into account. As discussed previously, we could call this theme the 'Great Controversy' or the

‘story of redemption’, but we prefer to use the term ‘mission of God’.

In the first three chapters of Genesis we have seen the beginning and the core of God’s mission. In Eden humankind, man and woman, lived in harmony with God and performed the function of priests and rulers. As priests they functioned as mediators between God and his creation, as rulers they ministered to creation and took care of it. This is the blueprint of God’s ultimate plan: a sanctuary where humans live in communion with God. In this plan humans mediate God’s kingship and presence in creation through their lives, work, nourishment, Sabbath rest, relationship, and procreation. Unfortunately, through the actions of the first humans, this ideal was narrowed down. As we will see in future chapters, after the fall it was narrowed still further before finally widening through Christ.

Through the introduction of guilt and shame, humankind was no longer able to function as God intended. The serpent drove a wedge between God and humanity, and convinced the man and woman that they were not intended to do what God created them for. Desiring to become equal to God rather than mediating, the first humans stepped outside the blueprint of God’s mission.

After the fall the method of God’s mission changed. The focus now needed to be on undoing the disunity between humankind and the divine. God took some measures to care for the humans, but his ultimate purpose was to address the power of evil, as introduced into the world through the serpent.

As a foretaste of his purpose, God hinted towards his future solution in his cursing of the serpent:

I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will strike your head,
and you will strike his heel.’

(Gen 3:15)

The offspring of the woman would be enemies with the serpent. The offspring would destroy the serpent, and the serpent would impede the offspring. The 'offspring' of the woman naturally represents the whole of mankind, but it can also be read as the specific individuals in history who represented humanity as a whole. As we will see, first the offspring was thought to be the patriarch Israel and his people, and later it is acknowledged that this offspring is in fact Christ and his followers.

Through procreation the ultimate offspring would arise and bring back the much-needed harmony between God and humanity. God would once again be present in the world. To reiterate, human procreation, having now become so vital to God's mission, was safeguarded by the woman's longing for the man, and the man's care of the woman.

In Genesis we see that God's mission found fulfilment in the broken human nature of the first humans. The Bible follows this idea through the ages, showing how the method of God's mission adapted to changing human situations. The goal is always clear: reuniting God and humanity so they can live in communion.

3. THE FALL OF HUMANITY

Before we can move to the core of our discussion of the Old Testament, it's worth briefly examining the effect of the fall of humanity in Genesis. After the fall, mankind continued to live on earth, separated from God. As we continue reading through Genesis, we can see that the mediatory, priestly role of mankind remained in the foreground. In fact, the first passage after humans were thrown from Eden revolves around priestly activities:

Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a tiller of the ground. In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel for his part brought of the firstlings of his flock, their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

(Gen 4:2b-5)

According to Genesis, Cain and Abel were the two first humans born. As mediators between God and the world, they worked the earth and cared for the rest of creation, but because of their fallen nature they needed mediation between themselves and God just like their parents. To foster this mediation, both Cain and Abel brought sacrifices to the Lord.

Ultimately, only Abel's animal sacrifice was accepted by God. Plants could not cover the shame, guilt and nakedness of the first two humans, and plant sacrifices could not sufficiently mediate the distance between God and humanity caused by the fall. The shedding of blood was now necessary.

PATRIARCHY

Abel and Cain were the first fruits of human procreation, but before long the world would be full of humans. Genesis tells us of this procreation – and furthering of God’s commission – through genealogical lists. In these lists and in the narratives surrounding them, we see that the role of women is rather different than it was before the fall. In Eden the woman was with the man as his companion and helper. Man and woman were created in God’s image, and were commissioned to function together as mediators. After the fall, the woman, now called Eve, had almost no role. Besides the two accounts in which she bears Cain, Abel and Seth, she is never mentioned again.

Logically, Eve must have borne more children, and at the very least one daughter, but of that there is no mention. In the rest of Genesis women play a minor role, and not a single woman is mentioned by name in any of the genealogical lists, which focus solely on the males. It seems that almost immediately after the fall, the role of woman was curtailed. As a result of human sin, patriarchy was introduced, corrupting God’s creation of gender equality.

THE FLOOD

The corruption of mankind grew through the years, and its evil eventually became too widespread. On account of mankind’s violent and terrible deeds, God resolved to destroy all of his earthly creations. Without any just humans to mediate between God and mankind, God is saddened by the evil caused by humans.

Eventually, one man did find favour in the eyes of the Lord, however: Noah. Once again, God adapted his methods to match the current situation of mankind. Noah was charged with saving the rest of creation. God notified Noah that he would send a worldwide flood, and that he should build a boat big enough for specimens of

all plant and animal life. In the meantime Noah should preach to the people, so that as many as possible could be saved. In this way, Noah mediated for creation on God's behalf. Sadly, none besides Noah's family repented, and God destroyed all humans save for that small remnant.

Noah's mediating priesthood was surely a prefiguring of the Israelite priests. Immediately after exiting the ark, Noah acted in a very priestly fashion:

Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar.

(Gen 8:20)

This sacrifice pointed forward to the sacrifices of the priests in the sanctuary. In the same way, Noah's saving role also pointed forward to the role of both Israel and the church: Israel, serving as a nation of priests to the other nations, and the church, where all members are called to be priests in the body of Christ.

So while we have examples in Genesis of male and female priesthood before the fall, and further examples of male priesthood after the fall, we see that the role of women after the fall was fundamentally changed. The once-equal partner to man would receive little mention in the rest of Genesis. Instead we see that a patriarchal lineage developed, and mankind became more and more evil. Finally there was only one man who could mediate on behalf of God. Noah saved the earth's animals and plants, and brought priestly sacrifices to the Lord in mediation between creation and God.

The next stopping point on our journey through accounts of ordination in the Bible is with the people of Israel, in the narration of their travels through the desert towards the Promised Land.

4. ISRAEL: JUDGES, PRIESTS, ELDERS AND KINGS

We can see role of humanity as a priesthood most explicitly in Exodus, when the Israelites were in the desert. Having just fled Egypt, the people of God came to mount Sinai. While his people were camped around it, Moses approached the mountain and heard the voice of the Lord:

‘Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. 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, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites.’

(Exod 19:3b-6)

God declared the Israelites a priestly kingdom and a holy nation, which followed from his wish to live in communion with humankind. In his statement it is implied that all the Israelites were priests and servants to the other nations. Just as in Eden, no particular distinction between male and female was made as far as this priesthood was concerned.

This holy nation of Israel was ruled over by God, but necessity demanded human leaders as well. Various offices and institutions were set up to govern and minister to the nation. In the Israelite nation of the Old Testament there were four major offices, all of

which are important for our study into ordination. We will discuss each office in turn. Firstly, we will look at the judges and elders to whom Moses delegated various authorities. Secondly, we will examine the priests, who were closely associated with the sanctuary and mediated between God and the Israelites. The third office we will examine deals with the special circumstances under which Moses appointed his successor, Joshua. Finally, we will look at the institution of kings.

ELDERS AND JUDGES

Quite soon after the Exodus from Egypt it became apparent that there were too many Israelites for Moses to lead without help. Moses was both the Israelites' leader and their judge on all matters. Practically, this meant that he would do nothing but sit and judge all day, from the morning to the evening (Exod 18:21-23). This time-consuming situation clearly needed a solution.

Moses' father-in-law Jethro was the first to voice an opinion on Moses' stress levels. 'You will surely wear yourself out,' he says to Moses in Exodus 18:18, 'both you and these people with you. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone'. For the sake of everyone's sanity, Jethro helped Moses to set up a management structure that would make leading the nation more efficient:

'You should also look for able men among all the people, men who fear God, are trustworthy, and hate dishonest gain; set such men over them as officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. Let them sit as judges for the people at all times; let them bring every important case to you, but decide every minor case themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. If you do this, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people will go to their home in peace.'

(Exod 18:12-23)

Jethro suggested the creation of a hierarchy of judges and elders, a procedure that bears some resemblance to our current practice of ordination. Firstly, the applicants would be selected based on specific qualifications: they would need to be able, trustworthy and hate dishonest gain. Most importantly, they should fear God. These officials, then, were chosen on the basis of their character and spiritual walk. Secondly, the judges and elders were commissioned to specific tasks. They would serve as leaders to the people, and would judge on behalf of Moses and ultimately God (Exod 18:25). Thirdly, the judges and elders were given their tasks according to God's command. Although Jethro suggested the solution of delegation, he only advised implementing it if God also agreed.

God's support of the plan to appoint elders becomes quite apparent later in the narrative. After a while the Israelites complained about the monotony of their diet. They tired of manna, and wished to eat meat. Moses became quite desperate and seemed unable to take the stress of leading the people alone. He complained to the Lord about the difficulty of his task, and begged for a solution.

God heard his plea, and answered:

'Gather for me seventy of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; bring them to the tent of meeting, and have them take their place there with you. I will come down and talk with you there; and I will take some of the spirit that is on you and put it on them; and they shall bear the burden of the people along with you so that you will not bear it all by yourself.'

(Num 11:16-17)

Moses listened to the Lord:

So Moses went out and told the people the words of the Lord; and he gathered seventy elders of the people, and placed them all around the tent. 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 on the seventy elders; and when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did not do so again.

(Num 11:24–25)

This event could be seen as a sort of ordination. Clearly, the elders received the spirit and were commissioned for their leadership task. Logically the elders had been selected on the basis of their character and spiritual walk, as these were some of the elders chosen by Moses according to Exodus 18. There are three major differences between this event and the way the Adventist church practices and views ordination today, however. These differences lie in the task, the uniqueness and the ritual of ordination.

The most emphatic difference between these two instances of ordination is the lack of ritual. Moses was asked to invite the elders to stand around the tent and wait. At a time of his own choosing, the Lord would then come down and endow them with his spirit. There is no ritual here that symbolises their commissioning. There is no laying-on of hands, and no human agent has any role in it (except, if you will, the fact that the elders had to gather around the tent). This account in Numbers shows us a charismatic induction to office, which was divinely conferred and absent of human agency.

The other two differences between the ordination in Numbers 11 and current Adventist practices are simpler, but still very important. In Numbers the elders were commissioned to a leadership role. They were elders and judges: civil leaders. They were not ordained for any religious position. Their ordination was also a one-time event. These seventy elders were endowed with the spirit, but although their successors were likely similarly endowed, they did not receive a similar ceremony. This was a unique event, at a unique time in history.

Jethro spoke specifically of men in Exodus 18, and there is no explicit mention of women being among these earliest elders and judges. This follows from the patriarchal system, introduced soon after the fall. In the system of the time, it seems wholly logical that the leaders would be predominantly male. Some exceptions did exist, however. It is very apparent that Miriam, Moses' sister, had a position of leadership among the Israelites. God explicitly addressed Moses, Aaron and Miriam as the three leaders of the Israelites when he talked about the institution of prophets in Numbers 12:4-8. Later, to the prophet Micah, God again refers to Miriam as one of the three leaders that led the Israelites out of slavery (Mic 6:4). Miriam was by no means the only female leader of the Israelites. Deborah, for example, was simultaneously a prophetess, a judge that held court and even a military leader (Judg 4:4-23). Huldah was another prophetess in this context (2 Kgs 22:11-14, 2 Chr 34:22).

Even in this strongly patriarchal society, God called women to roles of leadership and ministry. While most leaders are clearly men, the fact that there are women – despite the cultural norms of the time – shows that the Old Testament in no way excludes women from leadership roles. Culturally, women were more readily accepted in prophecy and wisdom roles (see Joel 2:28-32), but even in positions of leadership and battle, women called by God could not be ignored.

In the Old Testament, then, elders and judges were civil leaders, and while they were predominantly men, they were also sometimes women. Additionally, the original seventy elders received the spirit at a unique event in which no human had a part. That occurrence, which had no attached ritual, did not repeat itself in the same way again. For this reason, this ordination of the elders in Numbers 11 cannot logically be applied to the ordination of ministers in the Adventist church today.

PRIESTS AND LEVITES

While the entire nation of Israel was a holy people of priests, God also set apart certain Israelites for priestly functions. The need for this role goes back to the fall. Humankind mediated between God and creation, but at the same time they required mediation between God and themselves. The Israelites mediated God to the world, and the priests, through the sanctuary services, mediated God to the Israelites.

The Lord singled out the tribe of the Levites to fulfil the priestly functions within the Israelite nation (Num 8:5). Their investiture as priests began with a ritual washing and shaving (Num 8:7). After preparing two bulls and a grain offering, Moses was to do the following:

You shall bring the Levites before the tent of meeting, and assemble the whole congregation of the Israelites. When you bring the Levites before the Lord, the Israelites shall lay their hands on the Levites, and Aaron shall present the Levites before the Lord as an elevation-offering from the Israelites, that they may perform the service of the Lord. The Levites shall lay their hands on the heads of the bulls, and he shall offer one for a sin-offering and the other for a burnt-offering to the Lord, to make atonement for the Levites. Then you shall have the Levites stand before Aaron and his sons, and you shall present them as an elevation-offering to the Lord.

(Num 8:9–13)

This ceremony details the consecration of the Levites, who were ritually cleansed and commissioned for service in the sanctuary, and later in the temple. The entire nation of Israel laid their hands on the Levites. At that moment, Aaron performed a sacrificial offering, and the Levites assumed their role. Note that prayer plays no role in the ceremony, and the spirit of God is not mentioned. While this practice may be compared to the current

laying-on of hands at the ordination of ministers in the Adventist church, without prayer it is fundamentally different.

The Levites were the ritual representatives of the Israelites before God. God claimed the Levites as a replacement for the firstborn of Israel (Num 8:16–18), so in this way they were a substitute for every Israelite. Through the ceremony of the laying-on of hands, the Israelites accepted that the Levites were their representatives, and the Levites accepted that they were the substitutes for the rest of Israel in the sacrificial system.

Like the commissioning of the elders and judges in Numbers 11, the consecration of the Levites was a unique event that focussed on the role of the Levite tribe as a whole, and not on the individual Levites themselves. Levites inherited their office by birth, and any further ordination of individual Levites was unnecessary. So although new priests and Levites throughout the ages still needed to ritually purify themselves, the laying-on of hands never needed to be repeated. The ceremony described in Numbers 8 only had to occur once, and from that moment on the tribe of the Levites were the firstborn of Israel.

It goes without saying that there were women among the Levites. The women in the Levite tribe could perform two of the three duties of the priests. Female Levites took part in the teaching and administration ministry of the tribe, and also the prophetic ministry. The only role in which women could not take part was in the cultic ministry: that is, the sacrificial system of the sanctuary.

There are four main reasons why Levite women were excluded from service in the sanctuary. Firstly, in the cultic situation women were frequently ritually impure due to their menstrual cycle. Secondly, much of the legislation given to the Israelites was geared towards them being different from the pagans around them, and in many pagan cultures women were very much part of cultic temple practices. These practices included sacred marriage and temple prostitution. Thirdly, the patriarchal inheritance system (where the eldest male relative had an intercessory role) was also

traditionally applied to the priesthood. Finally, women held the role of giving and bearing life through childbirth. For the Israelites, including women in a function that required frequent killing and death would have gone against the reverence they held for that role.

For our study on ordination, it should be clear that the Levite priests are not a model for ministers in the current Adventist church. The idea of substitution, especially in the ritualistic and sacramental point of view, plays no role in the functioning of Adventist ministers. This is by no means the case in some other Christian denominations, where the sacramental role of the clergy is still very much in play. In any case, the one-time laying-on of hands used to consecrate the Levites is clearly not a model for ordination in the Adventist church. Additionally, considering the role of women in ministry, among the Levites the ministries of the priests mirrored in current Adventist ministry – teaching and administration – were open to both genders.

MOSES' SUCCESSOR

Though the consecration of the Levite tribe does not serve as a model for the contemporary practice of ordaining ministers, there is another unique event that is sometimes considered one. After many years of leading the Israelites, Moses heard from the Lord that he would soon die. Moses replied to the Lord, requesting that a successor be appointed. As we read in Numbers 27, God saw the wisdom in Moses' request:

So the Lord said to Moses, "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand upon him; have him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and commission him in their sight. You shall give him some of your authority, so that all the congregation of the Israelites may obey. But he shall stand before 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.' So Moses did as the Lord commanded him. He took Joshua and had him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole congregation; he laid his hands on him and commissioned him – as the Lord had directed through Moses.

(Num 27:18–23)

God instructed Moses to lay his hand on Joshua in front of all the Israelites. Specifically, Eleazar the high priest needed to affirm God's choice of Joshua in front of the entire nation. This ordination of Joshua bears many similarities with the current practice of ordaining ministers in the Adventist church, but we still doubt whether the two rituals should be compared. For one thing, it is quite clear from the narrative that this was another one-time act in the history of Israel. Moses' role was unique, and once the Israelites reached the Promised Land there was no more need for such a leader. Joshua certainly didn't ordain his successor in a comparable way.

Again, we see that the task for which Joshua was ordained is political and civil but not religious. This difference was very clearly illustrated by Moses having Joshua stand in front of Eleazar. Eleazar was the religious leader of the Israelites, and Joshua's divine call as a political leader had to be confirmed by Eleazar. Moses' laying-on of hands conveyed some of his authority as a leader of the Israelites, but not as a minister or a servant (see also Deut 34:9).

Finally, we read that Joshua was already full of the spirit before the ritual. This means that Joshua did not receive the spirit on account of the laying-on of hands. Prayer again plays no role in this ceremony, unless we wish to understand the lot ('Urim') as a form of prayer.

Like the consecration of the Levite tribe, this event cannot stand as a model for the practice or theology of ordination. It can only be understood as a unique occurrence in a unique situation.

KINGS

Originally the Israelites were ruled by God, first under the guidance of Moses, then Joshua, and then under various judges and prophets. After many years the Israelites began to yearn for a king (1 Sam 8:5). The Bible makes clear that this was never part of God's plan, but once again he adapted the method of his mission to meet the current situation of humankind.

The great prophet Samuel warned against appointing a king from the beginning (1 Sam 8:11–18), but the people persevered and Samuel was tasked with carrying out the appointment (1 Sam 8:19–22). The Lord chose Saul – a handsome, tall and humble Benjaminite – for the role. Samuel then anointed him as ruler:

Samuel took a phial of oil and poured it on his head, and kissed him; he said, 'The Lord has anointed you ruler over his people Israel. You shall reign over the people of the Lord and you will save them from the hand of their enemies all around. [...] Then the spirit of the Lord will possess you, and you will be in a prophetic frenzy along with them and be turned into a different person.'

(1 Sam 10:1a, 6)

After Saul was anointed, he received the spirit. He prophesied and became a new person. Unlike the previous examples from the Old Testament that we have discussed, this anointing ceremony was not a unique event. Many different people were anointed in ancient Israel, including priests (Exod 28:41, Num 3:3), high priests (Lev 21:10), prophets (1 Kgs 19:16), the patriarchs (1 Chr 16:22) and now kings. This ritual of anointing kings was followed through the centuries, first with David, then Solomon, and then

for generations and generations. It is interesting to note that even this exalted anointed position was open to women. Athaliah, for example, ruled Judah for six years (1 Kgs 11:3).

Sadly this anointing ceremony, while possibly the most similar example to what we practice today, cannot be seen as a model for ordination either. Within the context of the Adventist church there is only one anointed king: Christ. Ministers cannot and should not be placed in line with this model.

ORDINATION AND WOMEN IN THE NATION OF ISRAEL

Having looked in all possible places for source materials for a theology of ordination, we must conclude that there is no ceremony to be found for the ordination of ministers among the Israelite nation. We did see a number of cases where people served as leaders and ministers, and in each of these we found a role for women, though it was often limited.

In all of these cases, while there may be limitations for women in ministry, none of them were instituted or commanded by God. God never discriminated on account of gender. Any differentiation was ultimately part of the ancient Near-Eastern culture of the Israelites. God worked through that culture, and occasionally broke through it by calling some women to leadership roles and ministry. Whatever the example or explanation, it *is* very clear that the Old Testament does not prohibit women from fulfilling leadership roles.

ISRAEL IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

We are now quite a bit further in our exploration of ordination in the Bible, and this seems like an opportune moment to return to biblical theology. The last time we visited the subject of theology we discussed how God had to adapt the method of his mission after the fall. In the passages discussed up to this point, God readapted

his plan twice, first with the new nation of Israel and again when the kingdom of Israel was founded.

The Nation of Israel

In Genesis, God promised offspring that would strike the serpent's head. Through the ages, the offspring multiplied and the children of Israel came to embody this promise. The relationship of Israel to the offspring from Genesis is explicitly shown in the blessing that Abraham received when he showed his willingness to sacrifice his son, Isaac:

'By myself I have sworn, says the Lord: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice.'

(Gen 22:16–18)

Abraham was promised a great amount of offspring, but most importantly he was informed that his offspring would be the means of blessing the nations of the earth. His offspring became the Israelites, and acting on a global scale, as a collective and as a nation, the Israelites mediated God to the other nations.

The Israelites were tasked with discrediting lies about God, telling God's true story, and sharing his presence with other nations. This was the reason that God addressed the Israelites with the same titles as he used for the two first humans. They formed a royal priesthood (Exod 19:6). In this context, it is not surprising that God wished for the Israelites to build a sanctuary: a place where God could once again live amongst humankind. In fact, if you compare the seven stages of the construction of the sanctuary you will see many similarities to the seven days of

creation. It seems as if the Bible is trying to say that God wanted communion with humans once again:

I will dwell among the Israelites, and I will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them; I am the Lord their God.

(Exod 29:45–46)

God did indeed live among humans in the sanctuary, but not in constant communion. Sin, guilt and shame stood in the way of that. The construction of the sanctuary was just another step on the way to the fulfilment of God's ultimate mission. Many institutions were a part of this step, but did not remain a part of the continued plan (animal sacrifices, cultic laws, the leadership structure, the priestly order, the religious festivals, etc.). All of these institutions were meant to guide and teach the Israelites to be a holy nation, and outside of that role they have no purpose here and now.

Before we move on, a final point should be made about the Levite priests. Often it is imagined that they had a superior role to the rest of the Israelites, but it was clearly the *nation* of Israel that took part in God's mission: each individual Israelite working together. The role of all the leaders, including the priests, was simply to empower the Israelites in furthering this mission.

The Kingdom of Israel

The theocratic nation of Israel was a temporary solution, and very soon led to complications. An Israelite king was by no means God's original preference, but he conceded to the will of the people. From this we learn that God is willing to accept human and cultural concepts, as long as they work as a means to advance his mission. In fact, God's commitment to the new method was so fundamental that from 1 Samuel onwards the kingship became the central focus of God's mission in the Old Testament. A king named David rose from the tribe of Judah, and he and his descendants became the primary method of God's mission. From the descendants of David

came the true offspring of the first woman, the anointed one who crushed the serpent's head. David's identity as king and his rule became the signs by which Israel would recognise the true King.

While the mission of Israel remained the same – a holy nation among the nations – we also see new themes emerge as part of the kingdom of Israel. The original cornerstones of the kingdom were social justice and knowledge of the Lord. Over the years these cornerstones were forgotten, but throughout the Old Testament the prophets called out for social justice and the fear of God.

Even through the kingdom of Israel God could not achieve his ultimate goal: communion with humans in the sanctuary. In the Bible it quickly becomes apparent that the kingdom of Israel was not God's ultimate solution, but merely a step along the way. The true King would be born from the house of David. He would also champion justice and love for the Lord, and he would usher in the true kingdom of God, where humans would once again live in harmony with God as mediators to creation.

This true King is naturally Jesus Christ. In our exploration of the theology of ordination, let us now turn to the next and most pivotal step in God's mission: the life and death of Jesus.

5. THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRIST IN GOD'S MISSION

The birth, life and death of Jesus Christ are fundamental to the Christian faith, yet when we look for a theology of ordination there is strangely little to be found in Jesus's ministry on earth. There are only three passages in the gospels for us to examine and discuss, and all of them relate to the appointment of the apostles. To provide some useful context, we will first look at a few of the fundamental changes brought about by Jesus's ministry, and will then proceed to a direct discussion of these three gospel passages.

THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST

With the New Testament, God brought about fundamental changes to his mission of salvation. Jesus Christ's sacrifice and ministry replaced the age-old sanctuary. Likewise, the holy Israelite nation of priests was replaced by a new Israel: the Christian church. If we accept the biblical principle that the New Testament follows the Old, we must also accept that many Old Testament passages are no longer directly authoritative or applicable to the Christian world.

As interpreters we do not have the right to freely apply texts outside of their context to make them say something different to their original meaning. The consecration of the priests and the anointing of priests, prophets and kings, the election of judges and appointment of Joshua – all are fundamentally changed in the Christian world. These rituals can only be applied to our contemporary Christian situation after careful examination of

their universal validity, if indeed they are meant to be repeated at all.

We will need to search the New Testament carefully to find examples of ordination for our contemporary church and our Christian mission. In this chapter and the two that follow it, we will look first at Jesus's own example, and then at the New Testament church.

The clearest accounts of Jesus's life and work can be found in the four gospels.

MARK

Mark is commonly considered to be the oldest gospel, and is consequently the first target of our search. In the third chapter, Jesus sets out to officially appoint his twelve disciples:

He went up the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, and to have authority to cast out demons. So he appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); James son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

(Mark 3:13–19)

Mark seems to make a distinction between the disciples that followed Jesus (Mark 3:7), and these apostles who were 'with him'. Jesus called twelve men whom he wanted, and took them up a mountain. The symbolism of this unnamed mountain as a reflection of Sinai should be apparent. The twelve specially chosen men in this passage were 'appointed' – literally 'made' or 'done' in

the Greek – and were named as apostles. The twelve apostles were called to be with Jesus, but would also be sent out to the people, specifically to proclaim the message and cast out demons.

Unlike the Old Testament examples we discussed in previous chapters, these twelve men were divinely appointed rather than selected by the people. Jesus himself chose them for the task. During the ceremony of their appointment, however, they received no laying-on of hands according to the biblical text, nor is there any mention of the spirit. Mark does not show prayer playing any role in this event. The tasks the apostles received could be associated with ministry in the contemporary Adventist church, but it still seems impossible to apply this event to the current practice of ordination.

LUKE

Chronologically speaking, the second gospel that narrates the commissioning of the apostles is Luke. In the chapter before Jesus called the apostles in Mark 3, he had both healed a man with a withered hand and met a multitude on the shore of Galilee. Luke leaves out the story of the multitude at the lake, but does give us additional information about Jesus's experience on the mountaintop:

Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles: Simon, whom he named Peter, and his brother Andrew, and James, and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Simon, who was called the Zealot, and Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

(Luke 6:12-16)

Unlike Mark, Luke does tell us the role that prayer played in the appointment of the apostles. He tells us that before Jesus chose the twelve men, he first spent the night in prayer. Luke also tells us that many more disciples were present on the mountain, and that Jesus chose twelve from their midst. No mention is made of the tasks associated with their naming as apostles.

Neither Mark nor Luke have anything to say about a laying-on of hands, or about receiving the spirit. As with Mark, then, Luke's account of this event does not seem applicable to ordination in the Adventist church.

JOHN

John was the last of the four gospels to be written. This gospel differs from the others by focussing more on a very specific part of Jesus's ministry. It is also more theological in nature. John does not specifically record the appointment of the twelve apostles, but he does discuss their appointment in one of Jesus's teachings to the disciples.

John recounts how Jesus described himself as the true vine (John 15:1). In this teaching, Jesus pointed out that vines need to bear fruit, and that the disciples should also remain in him to bear fruit (John 15:4–5). After introducing the great commandment to love one another (John 15:12), Jesus gave the disciples a new title: 'friends'. He then reflected on this relationship:

You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name.

(John 15:14–16)

Here Jesus once again emphasises how he chose the apostles, and why. He appointed them to go and 'bear fruit', something Jesus surely called more people to do. In fact, it seems quite logical that all Christians are appointed to bear fruit. That means that bearing

fruit was not a unique part of the apostolic position to which they were appointed.

Matthew, who wrote his gospel at roughly the same time as Luke, did not comment on the subject of commissioning or appointment of the apostles. In conclusion, there is no evidence of ordination in the gospels that we can apply to our present context. Clearly the apostles were chosen, appointed and given the name 'apostle'. Prayer played a role in their selection, and they were commissioned to evangelise and to combat the forces of evil. Beyond that there is little we can add, other than to say that Jesus clearly taught servanthood, not hierarchy. There is no evidence of the laying-on of hands in the gospels, nor is there a similar ceremony that could be applicable to the ordination of ministers in the contemporary Adventist church.

THE MISSION OF CHRIST

As we discussed earlier, the New Testament marks the beginning of a totally different phase in God's mission. We see that the theme of the kingdom and the king plays a large role in the New Testament, just as it did in the later part of the Old Testament. Instead of a fallible human king, however, Jesus Christ serves as the human/divine king who will bring about the true kingdom of God.

The New Testament teaches us that the true kingdom of God is defined by servanthood. Jesus frequently took on the role of a servant, most clearly when he washed the feet of the disciples (John 13:1-7) and submitted to death on the cross (Phil 3:5-11). Service is the role that God's new community, the Christian church, must share with the world. The church's task is to minister to the world as God's servant.

Another important part of the true kingdom of God is the role of its new high priest, Jesus. Just as the first humans were commissioned to rule and mediate, so Jesus Christ became ruler and mediator for all. He is both king and high priest. In fact, Paul

often compares Christ to Adam in the New Testament, calling him a 'last Adam' and demonstrating how Christ fulfils Adam's original role in a better and 'more perfect' way (Rom 5:14, 1 Cor 15:21, 45-49).

The kingdom of God was re-established by Christ on earth through his victory over evil and death. Through this direct heavenly mediation, Christ the high priest keeps his followers in constant communion with God. In this sense all of Christ's followers are appointed and authorised to minister as priests. Under the headship of Christ, the church will continue to carry out God's mission to all nations until he chooses to complete it, creating a new heaven and a new earth (Rev 14:6, 21:1-4).

Practically speaking, this means that every minister and member in the church, regardless of race, social status or gender, is equal in their submission to Christ (Gal 3:28). While Christ is the head of the church, careful exegesis of the applicable texts reveals that we should not understand 'head' to mean 'boss' or 'leader'. As Jesus teaches us, assuming headship means becoming a servant and provider of life, growth and development. The head is not a top-down figure of authority, but a bottom-up supporter and nurturer.

It should be apparent that even though the terms king, high priest and head are used, the context has changed. The theme of servanthood remains fundamental throughout the New Testament. Even if they hold a leadership position, members should see themselves as servants or ministers of God, Christ and the Church's mission. Each Christian should be submissive to all others, but this is particularly true of those in positions of leadership.

When God set the final stage of his mission into motion, he created a new Israel to replace the old. Under the leadership of Christ, this new Christian community will lead to the fulfilment of God's original mission to live in communion with humans. This church of servants will minister to the world, mediating much

more effectively between God and humans, thanks to Jesus Christ. Ultimately, this church will sound the re-creation of creation itself. There will be a new heaven and new earth, a sanctuary where God and humans can truly live in communion.

6. MINISTERS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

Having considered the revolutionary role of Jesus Christ in God's mission, we can now turn to the practices of the early Christian church. Soon after Jesus's death, the need for organised leadership led to the creation of many offices and structures in the early church. Consequently, this section of the Bible should be the most fruitful one on which to build a theology of ordination.

THE COMMISSIONING OF MATTHIAS

After Jesus's departure, Peter raised the issue of replacing Judas. Apparently it was important for the apostles to maintain the number twelve. It stands to reason that there was an association between the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles Jesus chose from among all his disciples (Mark 3:14). In choosing exactly twelve, Jesus indicated that he was training a group of youngsters who would represent the entire nation. This group would be the first of the new Israel, and would be fundamental in God's mission through the church.

Nowhere did Jesus himself specify that there must be twelve, but Peter, as one of the apostles, was led by the Spirit to bring this suggestion to the table. Facing a changing situation for which there was no explicit guidance, this early church followed the promptings of the Spirit and decided to choose a replacement for Judas. This method of dealing with change by following the

work of the Spirit to call and equip new workers should stand as a continuous model for the church.

After Peter suggested that the church replace Judas, he stood up to speak among the one hundred and twenty believers gathered, including ‘certain women’ (Acts 1:14, 15). Peter proposed the following:

‘So one of the men who have accompanied us throughout the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us – one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection.’ So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias.

(Acts 1:21–23)

In other words, Peter suggested choosing one of the men who was with them from the day Jesus was baptised. This person would become ‘a witness with us to his resurrection’. The idea of the apostles as witnesses is strongly emphasised in the early chapters of Acts. The book’s very first verses explain how Jesus gave instructions to his chosen apostles, and ‘presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over the course of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God’ (Acts 1:3). The first apostles were witnesses both to the resurrection of Jesus and to God’s ultimate mission.

When Jesus promised the gift of the Holy Spirit a few verses later, he once again commissioned the apostles to be witnesses: ‘you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth’ (Acts 1:8). In the Bible it is abundantly clear that an apostle is ‘sent’ (which is what the verb associated with ‘apostle’ literally means in Greek) to the entire world as a witness of Jesus’s resurrection. The apostles were chosen by Jesus for this mission, and authorised by God through the Holy Spirit.

Peter specifically calls for a man in Acts 1, despite the fact that the first witnesses of Jesus’s resurrection were women. The

choice of a man to serve as a witness rather than a woman was likely a practical one, based on the role of women in this ancient Mediterranean society. We could also argue that because the twelve disciples reflected the twelve patriarchs, the fathers of the twelve tribes, it would be logical for the apostles to be men. The real reason is more likely that in the culture of the day, women were seen as less reliable witnesses than men. From a Christian perspective this is quite strange, considering that both Jesus and an angel called women to bear witness to Jesus's resurrection (Matt 28:6–10, Mark 16:7, Luke 24:6–7). The influence of culture on Christianity becomes very apparent in how Luke retells the witness of the women to the apostles: 'these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them' (Luke 24:11). As the Bible demonstrates, such human prejudices should not be seen as universal truths.

Whatever the reasoning behind the commissioning of a man as the first new apostle, Peter's suggestion to do so is accepted without any discussion. Two people are nominated, and the one hundred and twenty believers set about making a decision. The believers leave the final calling up to God:

Then they prayed and said, 'Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.' And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

(Acts 1:24–26)

The disciples prayed to God, asking him to let them know his will, and then cast lots, believing that God would guide the result. The final call was thus placed wholly in God's hands. This is similar to the way Eleazar determined God's election of Joshua (Num 27:18–23).

Once Matthias was chosen, he was automatically added to the ranks of the apostles. Just as there was no ordination or laying-on

of hands for the original twelve, there was also none for Matthias. Following the appointment of Matthias, we see that the twelve apostles became the leaders of the new community of believers. Their position was based on three things: their appointment by God, the instructions they received from Jesus after his resurrection and their role as eyewitnesses. The twelve apostles were surely not the only people who fit these three requirements, but these twelve became the leaders.

THE FIRST LAYING-ON OF HANDS

As the work of the church progressed, the work of the apostles increased. In a situation similar to what Moses faced, the growing number of disciples caused the practical task of leadership to outgrow what the apostles could manage. We read of at least one instance where this caused strife in the church: apparently the apostles had overlooked the Greek widows in the daily distribution of food. The apostles decided to solve this issue by delegating some of their tasks:

And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, 'It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait at tables. Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word.' What they said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

(Acts 6:2-6)

From this point on, the apostles would focus on teaching the word of God – that is, they would continue to witness about Jesus's

resurrection. Seven others would be responsible for serving the community in their stead. There was a clear process that led to the appointment of these seven. Firstly, the congregation recognised and approved of the need for such an office. Secondly, the congregation selected seven people for the office and their nominations were presented to the apostles. Finally, the apostles conducted a prayer and a laying-on of hands for these seven individuals.

This is the first time that we see any real form of ministerial ordination in the Christian church. Now we must ask ourselves what this passage means. We see a ceremony described, but there is no explanation for why this particular ceremony was chosen, nor do we receive any extra information about the ceremony's significance. The selection of the seven was quite different to the selection of Matthias. Specifically, the people chose, not God, and there was a ceremony with prayer and the laying-on of hands. Despite certain questions and differences, the ceremony in which these seven men of good standing were ordained stands as a model for all future ordination of members for church offices. It therefore demands some careful examination.

By way of initial observation, it seems quite clear that this ordination ceremony was based on two related traditions. On the one hand it recalled the 'ordinations' from the time of Moses. On the other it followed some of the trends found in the Jewish practice of commissioning scribes at that time. It is also no coincidence that there is overlap between the Mosaic ceremonies and those in the scribal tradition. When Judaism needed a ceremony to commission scribes, they would have looked back to the same three 'ordination' events in Israel's history.

In an earlier chapter we discussed how the three ceremonies for calling leaders in the nation of Israel were one-time events, and therefore could not stand as a model for ordination in the contemporary church. It seems that this is exactly what happened in Acts 6, however. Seeking an authoritative ceremony for the

commissioning of the seven servants, the apostles apparently chose to copy from the Old Testament. They were following Moses in delegating tasks (Exod 18), and they presented the new leaders before the entire community, just as Moses did with Joshua (Num 27:12–23). They also laid hands on these leaders, following either the example of Moses and Joshua or that of the Levites (Num 27:12–23 or Num 8:5–22). Significantly, they also did things differently to the Old Testament narratives. Firstly, they let the people choose, rather than choosing themselves or leaving the decision wholly up to God. Secondly, they included prayer in the ceremony.

Now while it may seem logical that the apostles fell back on these Old Testament models, we must not necessarily assume that they intended to set up a universal model of ordination. This assumption is tested when we consider two problems with the passage in Acts, each of which makes it more difficult to use this ceremony as a model for ordination in the contemporary Adventist church.

The first problem with the passage has to do with the Greek. Acts 6:6 is ambiguous in Greek, making it tricky to translate. We can avoid delving into the Greek by considering this verse in Young's Literal Translation (1862) as compared to the NRSV:

Whom they did set before the apostles, and they, having prayed, laid on them [their] hands.

(Acts 6:6 YLT)

They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

(Acts 6:6: NRSV)

When we read this literal translation, it's clear that the first 'they' refers to the congregation. The disciples brought the seven before the apostles. The next instance is not as clear. When 'they' laid 'their' hands on the seven after praying, to whom is the text referring? Technically, the grammar of Greek would dictate that

this 'they' is the same as the first: the disciples, not the twelve apostles. As modern readers we find this idea strange, even though it would be more in line with the consecration of Levites, where the entire people of Israel participated in the laying-on of hands.

Many scribes and theologians have picked up on this ambiguity. In fact, in one of the oldest surviving copies of the Bible – the *Codex Bezae* from around 400 CE – the copyist added 'who' after the apostles, so that it was clearly the apostles who prayed and laid their hands on the seven. It is quite likely that this 'correction' was made due to the ordination traditions in the Roman Catholic Church, rather than any clear sense of who actually laid hands on the seven in the text. The Bible does not choose to clarify who prayed and who laid hands on the seven, and any conclusions we could draw on the topic would be pure conjecture.

The second problem with this ordination passage is that it does not clearly specify any church office to which the seven were ordained. The practical reason for the whole ceremony is the need for people to distribute meals and wait on tables (Acts 6:1–2). The verb 'to serve' and the noun 'servant' are both used, which have the same root as the word 'deacon', a recognised church office. But whether that office is the topic of this ceremony is rather doubtful. Traditionally, beginning with the Church Father Irenaeus (130–202), the office of these seven has been defined as that of a deacon. This was in the context of the three main offices of the early church, which we will discuss further in the next chapter. These three offices were overseer/bishop, elder/presbyter/priest and deacon. The seven servants in Acts 6 did not function in the same way as the deacons in the letters of Paul, however. This is also the only passage that specifies the laying-on of hands for deacons, making it even more doubtful that these seven are deacons. Furthermore, the tasks of the seven went far beyond those associated with a deacon, as evidenced by their teaching and preaching ministries (Acts 6:10, 8:4–8).

It seems quite likely that this ordination of the seven was an *ad hoc* office, instituted due to special circumstances. This could very

well be a unique ceremony for a unique office and occasion, just as the events from the Old Testament on which it was modelled. In summary, there are complications with the ceremony and the office described in this passage. Furthermore, the special circumstances under which it occurred make it difficult for us to take this passage as a model for the contemporary ordination of ministers in the Adventist church. There are clearly quite a number of complicating factors involved in the interpretation of Acts 6. Seeing as these issues and questions remain unresolved, it would be unwise to base too much theology on this passage.

Let us instead move on to another unique occasion in the history of the church: the conversion of Paul.

PAUL ONLY ACCEPTS GOD'S AUTHORITY

So far in Acts, both examples we have of the election of leaders were ideas suggested by the current leadership. Peter suggested finding an apostle to replace Judas, and the apostles suggested instating the seven. In Acts 9 we find a counter-example in the narrative of Saul, who later became Paul. In this example Saul was divinely called, and for quite some time he was not officially acknowledged by the church establishment.

Saul actively persecuted Christ's disciples. One day, as he was travelling to Damascus, a miraculous event occurred. Saul met Jesus in a vision:

Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' He asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' The reply came, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.

(Acts 9:3-5)

After this event Saul's life was changed, and he became Paul, a disciple of Jesus. Paul himself retold his experience as follows:

I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' The Lord answered, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But get up and stand on your feet; for 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 to those in which I will appear to you.

(Acts 26:15–16)

Jesus came to Paul, and appointed him as a servant and a witness. As you will no doubt remember, these are the same two functions that the twelve apostles had. Indeed, Paul closely associated his own calling with that of the apostles (see 1 Tim 2:7 and 2 Tim 1:11), and went so far as to self-identify as an apostle:

Paul an apostle – sent neither by human commission nor from human authorities, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.

(Gal 1:1)

Not only did he name himself an apostle, but because his call was divine Paul also seems to have valued it more highly than the call made to others. Paul saw spiritual authority as vastly more important than any ecclesiastical one:

But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me, but I went away at once into Arabia, and afterwards I returned to Damascus.

(Gal 1:15–17)

Paul saw no reason to have his call recognised by the leadership in Jerusalem or anywhere else. He ministered from his divine call, and apparently had no need for any ceremony in which he was commissioned or ordained to ministry. In fact, it was fourteen years before he visited the leadership in Jerusalem:

Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. I went up in response to a revelation. Then I laid before them (though only in a private meeting with the acknowledged leaders) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure that I was not running, or had not run, in vain.

(Gal 2:1–2)

Spurred on by a revelation rather than a need, Paul went down to Jerusalem together with Barnabas and Titus. There he met with the ‘acknowledged leaders’, quite probably the apostles, and confirmed that the gospel he was teaching was in accordance with their understanding. Clearly Paul was primarily interested in a uniform gospel, and not in any acknowledgement of his call to ministry.

Paul’s description of his visit to Jerusalem continues. Not only was he unconcerned about the human acknowledgement of his call, he even brought such human acknowledgement into doubt:

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. On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel for the circumcised [...], and when James and Cephas and John, who were acknowledged pillars, recognized the grace that had been given to me, they gave to Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

(Gal 2:6–7, 9)

Paul wrote that these apostles ‘were supposed to be’ leaders, implying that this status was ultimately inaccurate or irrelevant. Here Paul drives home his preference for divine acknowledgement. God, from whom true calling and commissioning proceeds, ‘shows no partiality’.

An interesting side note here is that James, the brother of Jesus, is now suddenly a pillar of the church as well. Clearly, the Jerusalem church was run by more than the twelve apostles and the seven. Jesus's family also played role in the leadership there.

In summary, there was clearly no centrally organised authorisation, commissioning or ordination of workers in the early church. Upon receiving a divine call, Paul worked without feeling the need for human acknowledgement or ceremony. In fact, Paul assigned no authority to the church leaders in this matter. For Paul, it was only the divine call that counted.

BARNABAS AND SAUL ARE COMMISSIONED TO REPRESENT ANTIOCH

An interesting development in the history of church leadership occurred in Antioch. The church in Antioch was one of the first outside of Israel, and it had a well-developed set of leaders:

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.

(Acts 13:1)

Here we read that the church in Antioch had prophets and teachers. It had members in high political positions and, looking at the last name, it even had an apostle. One day as the members were worshipping, the following happened:

While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

(Acts 13:2-3)

In a divine command, the church was told to set apart two of their members, Barnabas and Paul. These two received no

church office, but were instead sent out as itinerant preachers. In more contemporary terms, they became missionaries. As the church sent Paul and Barnabas off, they fasted, prayed and laid their hands on the two members. In this situation Paul and Barnabas were clearly selected by the Holy Spirit, and the church in Antioch acknowledged God's calling. Significantly, as a sign of this acknowledgement the whole church laid hands on Paul and Barnabas and prayed. If we take this event into consideration, it seems even more likely that the entire congregation in Acts 6 also laid their hands on the seven they chose to serve.

We know that at this time Paul had already identified himself as an apostle. Why, then, was there any need for the laying-on of hands? Surely it was not only for Barnabas's benefit? In all probability, the answer lies with the consecration of the Levites (Num 8:11, 15). The Levites were set apart for their work, and received the laying-on of hands so that they could represent their community before God. Paul and Barnabas were also set apart for a new task: to represent the Antioch congregation to the wider world.

If only for this reason, the event in Antioch does not seem to be a model for ordination in the contemporary Adventist church. Paul (and possibly Barnabas) already had an office for which he was commissioned. In Acts 13 Paul and Barnabas simply received a blessing from the church as they went out to share the gospel. This was no ordination to a church office, but rather the public acknowledgement that Paul and Barnabas were entitled to represent the church in Antioch.

LATER DEVELOPMENTS IN THE NEW-TESTAMENT CHURCH

After the events in Acts, the next time we see any case study for offices and ceremonies resembling ordination is in Paul's letters to Timothy. These epistles were among the last that Paul wrote, and they contain personal advice to a close friend or even 'son'

(1 Tim 1:2). In a few places these letters touch on the selection of members for various offices, as well as the laying-on of hands. We will discuss these examples in more depth in the next chapter, which will focus on the precise role of the various leaders in the early Christian church.

More generally, Paul wrote some words of encouragement regarding Timothy's call to ministry:

These are the things you must insist on and teach. Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I arrive, give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhorting, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders. Put these things into practice, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers.

(1 Tim 4:11–16)

This passage offers Timothy some general advice on his teaching and ministry, but then Paul mentions something that is very interesting for our study. Paul refers to a gift that was 'in' Timothy, given through prophecy. This prophecy was accompanied by a laying-on of hands by the council of elders. Before we examine what this means, it is useful to consider the one other time Paul refers to a laying of hands upon Timothy:

For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.

(2 Tim 1:6–7)

It is unclear from the text what office Timothy received through this laying-on of hands. In fact, there is no way of knowing that

these two references are even to the same event. Just as Paul was commissioned by Jesus and then had hands laid on him in Antioch, Timothy could also have received the laying-on of hands twice: once by the elders, once by Paul.

Now it is apparent that Paul discussed the laying-on of hands in 1 Timothy because he wanted to emphasise Timothy's gift. There is clearly an association between the gift, prophecy and the laying-on of hands, but it is not clear what that association actually was. In fact, Paul does not even directly say that the elders' hands were placed on *Timothy* in this first reference. The term used for elders in this passage could also be translated as 'presbytery', which is a technical term for the members of the Sanhedrin. This is the clear meaning of the word in the other two places where it is used (Luke 22:66; Acts 22:5). The ambiguity of this word leads to all manner of questions about what Paul was referring to, and how we should interpret this passage today.

In any case, it is apparent that Paul laid his hands on Timothy at some point. In 1 Timothy 4, we see that there is an association between 'the gift' and the spirit. Paul may refer here to the gift of the Spirit, which Timothy would have received at his baptism. The first reference to the gift may well concern that same event. Reading any office into this passage is purely conjecture. It is, however, also clear that Timothy was divinely called to ministry. Inspired by the spirit and the gift of prophecy, he excelled in his calling, ministering first together with Paul and later on his own. There is little evidence that any 'ordination' took place for this call, and considering his mentor's preference for divine calling over human acknowledgement, it seems likely that Paul is referring to what was given to Timothy by prophecy: a divine call to ministry.

CONCLUSION

Our examination of the various people in the New Testament church who were commissioned in some way or form is now

complete. Naturally there is still much more to discover in the New Testament, but for the moment we can already draw a number of conclusions from these examples. First and foremost, we notice that commissioning was often *ad hoc*, or based on very practical needs. Judas needed to be replaced, or the church was too large for the apostles to manage alone, and the early Christians turned to the only examples they had, from the Old Testament. They rearranged and adapted these traditions as they saw fit, especially in their inclusion of prayer, which is absent from the Old Testament ceremonies.

There are no narratives that show how these *ad hoc* events became formal patterns, or how they were followed throughout the New Testament church. In fact, the only place that we see any evidence that these events might have been the first of many is in Paul's letters. Writing to Timothy near the end of his life, Paul referred to Timothy's gift and prophetic calling, and made an ambiguous reference to a laying-on of hands.

While there are some references to commissioning ceremonies in the New Testament, there is nothing that describes the actual offices entailed. Matthias became an apostle, an office strongly associated with knowing Jesus during his lifetime, and thus no longer possible in the contemporary church. The seven were commissioned to an ambiguous role of service, Saul and Barnabas most likely became missionaries, and Timothy – if he was ordained – was some sort of minister, evangelist or church planter. No clear structure of ministerial leadership offices is outlined in the New Testament, and all members of the church were seen as spirit-filled servants.

Throughout the New Testament, spiritual or divine appointment seems to outweigh any formal, ecclesiastical appointment. Paul ranked his divine call above any sort of institutionalised acknowledgement. In the New Testament narratives, the selection and appointment of an individual for a leadership role was a spiritual event, directly initiated by God, Jesus Christ or the Holy

Spirit. Naturally, some acknowledgement from the congregation was desirable, but this did not always take the form of a public ceremony.

While we might expect the New Testament to be the most fruitful location for a biblical foundation of ordination, the examples we find are far from clear. Ultimately, we cannot explicitly locate the role of ordination in the narratives of the New Testament through biblical case studies. The only other biblical possibility for such a task is through a theological discussion that unifies the voices of the various New Testament authors. This is a concept we will explore in the following chapter.

7. THEMES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The previous chapter focussed on specific examples and stories in the New Testament that showed evidence of ordination. This chapter will broaden that focus to a number of themes and ideas in the New Testament as a whole. Rather than sticking to just one passage at a time, we will try to combine the voices of the various authors to present a unified answer to the question of ministerial ordination. First we will look at the various offices that are mentioned in the New Testament, and specifically the role of women with regards to these offices. We will also explore the theme of 'male headship' as it relates to this topic. Finally, we will once again link these New Testament issues back to the biblical theology of the church, which revolves around God's ultimate mission.

NEW TESTAMENT OFFICES

As we saw in the previous chapter, when the New Testament church began it only had the office of apostle. These twelve men were divinely appointed, and were automatically the leaders of the early church. Later in the New Testament we can see some additional functions emerging, and in the post-biblical tradition of the church various offices soon became fixed. This process was far from complete in the New Testament itself, however.

From our studies to this point we know that the leadership of the church quickly grew from the original twelve apostles to

include the seven servants. Additionally, it is apparent that the family of Jesus also played a role in the early church leadership (Acts 15:19, Gal 2:9). Together these apostles, elders and family members represented the first and only original church office in the New Testament – but things quickly changed.

Some of these changes were a result of new churches being planted in faraway places. Disciples were sent as itinerant preachers, as we saw with Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13:1–3. These preaching disciples were soon also seen as apostles (Acts 14:4, 14). In the new churches, new leaders were appointed by the Holy Spirit, and also became apostles (or ‘messengers’ in the NRSV) of the churches (2 Cor 8:23). Another reason for changing church offices was the expansion of the word ‘apostle’ to include those with a personal sense of calling by God, and not just those who had known Jesus personally while he was on earth. Paul, as we saw in the previous chapter, was one example of a leader in this expanded category.

Soon the church reached the situation where there were various types and classes of leaders, all called by Christ. These servants worked together to build up the early church. This system is best seen in the words of Paul to Ephesians:

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.

(Eph 4:11–12)

In this Ephesian church far from Jerusalem, there were apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teaching pastors who together equipped their members to serve and minister.

As we get closer to the final books in the New Testament we see two or three offices gaining dominance. This is a sign of some early organisation within the church, but things were still not very well defined. We see ‘overseers’ (bishops), ‘elders’ (presbyters or ministers), and ‘servants’ (deacons). In Philippians we already

see evidence of overseers and deacons (Phil 1:1), but only in the Pastoral Epistles do we get any idea of what these offices entailed.

There seems to be some overlap between an overseer and an elder, and it is not clear if there was any real distinction between the two in the New Testament. In 1 Timothy Paul talks about the overseer in much detail, explaining that an overseer must be an apt teacher and a good manager of the church (1 Tim 3:2-5). Later he refers to the elders, saying let those 'who rule well be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in preaching and teaching' (1 Tim 5:17). Clearly, there was some functional overlap between these two offices. Both were responsible for teaching and guidance, and at this particular time the two titles were probably just synonyms for the same leadership position.

In Paul's letter to Titus we also see overlap between the offices of overseer and elder. Paul reminds Titus that he was left behind to appoint elders, but soon Paul starts referring to the elders as 'bishops' (overseers):

I left you behind in Crete for this reason, that you should put in order what remained to be done, and should appoint elders in every town, as I directed you: someone who is blameless, married only once, whose children are believers, not accused of debauchery and not rebellious. For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain; but he must be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled. He must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it.

(Titus 1:5-9)

Though we do see evidence of these offices in the New Testament church, there are no recorded ceremonies that talk about the actual appointment of these elders, overseers or

deacons. There is no text that discusses the laying-on of hands or an ordination to any of these offices, even though two texts do talk about appointing elders (Titus 1:5, Acts 14:23).

In the New Testament we find little set in stone regarding which offices should exist in the church. Furthermore, there does not appear to have been a fixed ritual or ceremony for induction into these offices. It is, however, very clear that the New Testament has a view of ministry that is strongly focussed on the divine call.

THE ROLES OF WOMEN

Up to this point we have discussed the roles and offices in the early church without focussing specifically on gender. Often the male gender pronoun is used when general roles are discussed, but we find many examples of women being called to ministry in both the gospels and the New Testament church. Throughout the New Testament women play important and even fundamental roles in the mission of Christ and the church.

Many women were numbered among the disciples (Luke 8:1–3, Acts 1:14). Women in the New Testament were also servants or ministers of the Gospel, including Mary the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:47), the prophetess Anna (Luke 2:36–38), Mary of Magdala (Luke 8:2, Mark 16:9, John 20:10–18), Martha and Mary of Bethany (John 11:25–27), the Samaritan woman (John 4) and the disabled woman, also called ‘daughter of Abraham’ (Luke 13:10–17).

The most significant ministry of female disciples in the New Testament seems to have been their role as eyewitnesses of Jesus’s death, burial, empty tomb and resurrection. These disciples were the only witnesses to these events, as their male counterparts 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). Considering the importance of such witness in the early church, these female disciples were fundamental to the Christian faith. These disciples

were also the first to meet the risen Lord, and the first to be ordained to proclaim the resurrection to the other disciples and the apostles (Matt 28:7, John 20:17).

Women remained fundamental to the early church. There were female disciples present at the Great Commission (Mark 16:1–19), and they were also part of the one hundred and twenty who constantly prayed after Jesus’s departure (Acts 1:12–14). Women took part in the nomination and appointment of Matthias (Acts 1:21–26), and also received the spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:1–47). Peter’s quote from the Old Testament book of Joel to explain the Pentecost events specifically includes women: ‘in the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy [...] Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy’ (Acts 2:17–18).

In the gospel of John we also find significant material about women in ministry. Many women played large and unconventional roles in this gospel, including Mary in Cana (John 2:1–12), the Samaritan woman (John 4), Martha and Mary (John 11:1–44, 12:1–8), the four women at the cross (John 19:25–27), and Mary Magdalene (John 20:1–2, 11–18). It is also important to note that on one very significant occasion a woman in John plays the exact same role as Peter does in the other gospels: in John 11 we see that Martha was the confessor of faith in Jesus as the Son of God (John 11:27, compare to Matt 16:16). These women were not one-dimensional stereotypes. In each of these examples women are shown positively, and in intimate relation to Jesus. More importantly, these women clearly filled unconventional roles, outside of their society’s bounds.

Due to the cultural and societal norms of the time, in the New Testament women had a restricted role in society. Regardless of this fact, we see women throughout the New Testament playing a much larger role in the church than one might expect even today. We know there was a female apostle in Rome named Junia

(Rom 16:7), and a servant/deacon in Cenchræe named Phoebe (Rom 16:2). Peter is very inclusive in his language when he discusses ministry and servitude (1 Pet 3:1–7, 4:10–11), and Paul often mentions female names in his letters to church leaders (Rom 16, Phil 4:2–3, 2 Tim 4:19). In one passage Paul also makes a point of arguing that female prophets should veil their heads, indicating that it was already very natural to him that women should fill this eminent role (1 Cor 11:5).

It is quite clear that the New Testament church highly valued the ministry of women, despite very misogynist socio-cultural norms. Women were apostles, deacons and prophets, and in the gospels and the early Christian church there is ample evidence that they had a large role to play as servants of God's mission.

MALE HEADSHIP

When we talk about the ordination of ministers in the Adventist church, a theological issue that often gets dragged into the discussion is so-called 'male headship'. This term is most frequently used when discussing the ordination of female ministers. There are a number of New Testament passages that discuss the husband-wife relationship using such terms, and these are sometimes taken out of context and applied to the role of women outside of marriage as well.

But first, let it be clear: there is not a single passage in the New Testament that forbids women from being servants or leaders in church.

There are three major issues in applying these passages on husband-wife relationships to a discussion of ordination. The first is the obvious fact that not all women are (or will be) wives, just as not all men are husbands. The second issue is that the goal of these husband-wife passages is only to *suggest* roles that might foster a harmonious and happy marriage. The relationship and roles that will actually lead to a fruitful marriage ultimately

depend on many other factors, including individual personalities and needs. The final issue with a comparison between ordination and the husband-wife relationship is that the two roles have very different purposes. The purpose of the husband-wife relationship is to foster a life together in love, and to create a loving home for any other members of the family. The purpose of ministry, while possibly similar in some areas, is quite different. It is to teach, equip, and pastor the members in fulfilling God's ultimate mission: communion with mankind (Eph 4:11–12).

Although this difference should be clear, because the question of male headship in ministry has been mentioned so often in recent years it is worth a brief reiteration. There are at least seven of these headship passages in the New Testament (1 Cor 11:2–16, 14:32–35, Eph 5:21–33, Col 3:18–19, 1 Tim 2:8–15, Titus 2:5, 1 Pet 3:1–7). We will only discuss three of these passages in detail: Ephesians 5, 1 Corinthians, and 1 Timothy 2. This should be more than sufficient to highlight the problems with applying the headship analogy to ministry.

Ephesians 5

The first frequently-cited 'headship passage' can be found in Ephesians 5. It reads as follows:

Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Saviour. Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, 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. In the same way,

husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, because we are members of his body. 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church. Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband.

(Eph 5:21-33)

The first sentence contains the fundamental message of this passage: all Christians are called to be subject to one another. Christ submitted himself to God, to safeguard the salvation of mankind, and he subjected himself to his apostles and to others in servitude. Servanthood is a key element of Christian behaviour.

In the second part of the passage wives are called to 'be subject' to their husbands, who are referred to as 'the head', and in the third paragraph we read that husbands should also subject themselves to their wives, or 'give themselves up'. Here subjection clearly does not mean giving up one's individuality or self-worth. The husband is compared to Christ, and Christ's headship of the church is one of loving service, not authoritative human leadership. Ultimately, this passage shows us that the goal of the marriage relationship is the same as it was in Eden, which Paul refers to by quoting Genesis 2:24. Marriage should be a loving relationship between equals.

When we take the rest of Ephesians into account, we also see that this passage is immediately followed by advice for children and parents (Eph 6:1-4), and then by advice for servants and masters (6:5-9). Here Paul is clearly providing counsel on proper relationships between the members of domestic households. In this context it becomes immediately obvious that Paul is specifically talking about a husband-wife relationship, and not the role of men or women in church leadership or society as a whole.

1 Corinthians 14

A second passage that is often referenced in this discussion is 1 Corinthians 14. In this chapter Paul concludes a long section on the topic of spiritual gifts and their use and function in the church. In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul begins the discussion on the spiritual gifts and the role they play in the church as a whole. In chapter 13 he emphasizes how important the gift of love is to the church, and in chapter 14 he discusses the gifts of prophecy and tongues in this same context. Paul's fundamental concern when writing this letter to the Corinthians was to counter a specific idea that had arisen in Corinth. The Corinthians began to believe that certain spiritual gifts were more important than others, and consequently that some members were more important than other members. In his discussion of unity and equality, Paul specifically points to the role of prophets and tongues in the Corinthian church.

Paul's problem in chapter 14 has to do with its church order. In this church, men and women were speaking in tongues during the service, while others were translating. At the same time there were prophets prophesying, and others weighing what was said. Still other members received revelations during the service, and shared these with all those around. It is easy to imagine this situation getting out of hand, and the church becoming a place of disorder.

To address this potential problem, Paul makes some suggestions. Firstly, only two or three should speak in tongues during a service, and each should take their turn (1 Cor 14:27). Secondly, someone should always be on hand to interpret them, and if there are no interpreters they should be quiet (1 Cor 14:27). In the same vein, only two or three prophets should speak, and they should also take turns (1 Cor 14:29). In this way 'all may learn and all be encouraged' (1 Cor 14:31). Following this advice, Paul writes:

And the spirits of prophets are subject to the prophets, for God is a God not of disorder but of peace.

(As in all the churches of the saints, women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only ones it has reached?)

Anyone who claims to be a prophet, or to have spiritual powers, must acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord. Anyone who does not recognize this is not to be recognized. So, my friends, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues; but all things should be done decently and in order. (1 Cor 14:32-40)

Just three chapters earlier Paul said that women *could* speak in church, through prayer and prophecy (1 Cor 11:5). Now here, in the context of a discussion of prophecy, Paul states that women should be silent. Paul would not contradict himself, so this prohibition must apply specifically to the noisy, disorderly service in Corinth. This is very clear from the fact that Paul tells three groups to be silent three times in just a few verses. First he addresses those speaking in tongues (1 Cor 14:28), then the prophets (1 Cor 14:30), and then the women (1 Cor 14:33-34). The first two groups consist of both men and women, and the last solely of women, but Paul wants everyone to more silent in church, as decorum dictates.

Paul's call for the silence of women in church is of particular interest to our discussion. Here it is very important to note that Greek makes no distinction between the words 'woman' and 'wife' (as many other languages don't). The women Paul is talking to in 1 Corinthians 14 are clearly wives, as he tells them they should 'ask their husbands at home'. In the original language, Paul says that these *wives* are subordinate to their husbands, and refers

to the Torah. No mention is made of the conduct of unmarried women. Now the real question is, what does that mean?

In 1 Corinthians 14 we have read Paul's message to a group of people who were speaking in disorder and out of turn. Paul wishes for the service to be orderly, and for the members to give each other space to speak and be heard. Those speaking in tongues should be followed by a translator, and a prophecy should be followed by a careful weighing. In the culture of the time, it would have been very disrespectful for a woman to weigh the words of a man, especially if he were her husband. The same applies to the translation of tongues. The Corinthian church, focussed as it was on mission, would not have wanted to function in a way that would seem inappropriate to visitors. Thus Paul called the women in this specific instance to remain silent, even though they *may* normally prophesy and pray (1 Cor 11:5). Then the gospel would not be ridiculed in Corinth, but believed.

1 Timothy 2

The final headship passage we will discuss comes from 1 Timothy 2. Paul sent this letter to Timothy to offer some advice. Timothy is struggling with false teachings and teachers, as Paul often did as well (1 Tim 1:3-7, 3:14-15). The false teachers in this specific instance 'forbid marriage and demand abstinence from foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth' (1 Tim 4:3). All the members of the church, male and female, are negatively influenced by these teachings. In order to restore order and truthful teaching, Paul gives Timothy a collection of advice. For us his advice on worship and prayer is of particular interest:

I desire, then, that in every place the men should pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or argument; also that the women should dress themselves modestly and decently in suitable clothing, not with their hair braided, or with gold, pearls, or expensive clothes, but with good

works, as is proper for women who profess reverence for God. Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.

(1 Tim 2:8-15)

Paul focusses on the men first. He states that they should assume an appropriate posture, specifically the traditional Jewish posture of raised hands. We certainly no longer prescribe this practice for men, making the application the rest of Paul's advice in this passage tenuous at best. Additionally, this advice does not only concern the church service. The phrase 'in every place the men should pray' suggests Paul is speaking about worship both at home and in public. Turning to women, Paul first discusses their dress, which he feels should be modest and decent. Then he shifts topic again, speaking of 'a woman' rather than women. The best way to understand this shift from the perspective of the original Greek is that Paul is now referring to a specific subgroup of women: wives.

The first thing Paul says is that wives should learn. By doing so he affirms the necessity of discipleship among wives, something that was unheard of in the Jewish tradition of the time. Paul welcomes wives as disciples, and argues that they should learn, like all disciples, in silence. This word for 'silence' is only used four times in the Bible, and the associated adverb 'silently' only appears twice (2 Thess 3:12, 1 Tim 2:2, 11, 12, and 1 Pet 3:4). In all of these cases the word does not mean silence, but rather peace, harmony and tranquillity. Just as the men are to pray without anger or argument, so the wives are to learn in peaceful harmony. Paul is trying to foster a harmonious learning environment, without the dissention and strife that is part of Timothy's church.

Paul also suggests that the wives should learn in full submission, though he does not say what they should submit to. It might entail submission to God or to the gospel. In the case of wives, it likely meant submission to their husbands, as was culturally appropriate.

Following this call to peace, Paul then says that while women should learn, he permits 'no woman to teach or to have authority over a man' (1 Tim 2:12). It is apparent that there is a shift in Paul's argument at this point. Initially he is clearly talking about how wives should behave in worship services, as learners. Now in the following verses he is talking about how they should behave as teachers: they should not teach, nor have authority, they should be silent. We know that the role of certain teachers was in question in this church (1 Tim 1:3-7, 3:14-15), so it seems quite logical that Paul would also mention them specifically.

This topical shift from learners to teachers in 1 Timothy 2:12 means that we need to understand this verse in the context of the following verses, not the preceding ones. The following verses discuss the relationship between Adam and Eve. Paul states that Eve was deceived first, and that Adam followed her. Eve did not in any way 'have authority' over Adam, however (1 Tim 2:12). Considering this application to Adam and Eve, the phrase 'to have authority over' should, more correctly be translated with 'wield influence over'. Paul is referring to the false teachers here, who wield influence over the members and lead them astray, just as it happened in Eden.

In this passage Paul certainly does not attempt to propose a new theology, in which the woman alone brought sin into the world. It was the actions of both the man and the woman, as a couple, which introduced shame and guilt (Gen 3). Elsewhere, when he says that 'sin came into the world through one man' (Rom 5:12), Paul only associates Adam with the introduction of sin. Clearly Paul utilises the example of Adam and Eve to show what can happen when false teachings are given and these teachings are accepted, as was the

case with Eve and the snake. Paul uses this example often, with exactly the same purpose (see 2 Cor 11:3). In 1 Timothy 2:12 Paul advises Timothy not to let the women teach (wielding influence) in a manner that disturbs the peace.

The final verse in 1 Timothy 2 discusses the culturally accepted role of women. It seems likely that Paul is speaking out against heresy here. He says that women are saved through childbirth, but if this is a universal statement about the salvation of women, then childless women (including those with infertile husbands) would never be saved. This is obviously not the case. Paul is responding to pagan and gnostic teachings of some of these women, which go against established biblical views on childbirth, motherhood and the gospel. Paul is once again standing up for propriety and decency in general. The mission of the church is the most important factor, and members should behave in a way that ensures a proper position for the church.

Conclusions on Male Headship

From these and the other four passages that mention headship, we can draw a number of broader conclusions about the concept. Firstly, socio-cultural norms clearly played a large role in its conception. The culture at the time restricted the role of women in society, and these restrictions were unfortunately also present in the church. Humans naturally find change difficult and frightening, even when it is sanctioned by God. The New Testament church had already caused a great deal of social distress with its message of equality, and it would not have been prudent to overtly challenge all of the established norms at once. This idea also seems to be at the heart of Paul's advice to slaves: 'Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as you obey Christ' (Eph 6:5). The mission of the church to the unbelievers was considered more important than immediate social change.

Another conclusion we can draw about the headship theme is that all of the passages about female submission in the life of

the church concern husband-wife relationships. Some of them were clearly inspired or driven by occurrences in church services (such as women covering their heads while prophesying, 1 Cor 11:5), but they always pertain specifically to the role of a woman in marriage. In a culture steeped in ideas of honour and shame, the actions of a wife could deeply disgrace a husband, causing him dishonour and loss of social status. While at first glance some of these passages seem to discuss the role of women in church, upon closer reading we see that they are actually concerned with wives and the social role of the family, as well as the implications that dishonour would have on the church's mission.

A third conclusion to be drawn from the headship passages concerns those that discuss the actions of specific women in church services. If we read the rest of the letters and books in which these passages can be found, we see that these women taught and behaved according pagan or gnostic customs. The issue here was not the fact that the women were teaching or held leadership positions, but rather the content of their teachings and the direction of their leadership. There is not a single passage in the New Testament that forbids women from being servants or leaders in church. This is made all the more obvious by the list of female servants and leaders discussed above.

THE CHURCH IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

In the previous chapter we looked at several case studies on church offices and ordination in the New Testament. In this chapter we discussed various themes that relate to the topic of ordination in the New Testament. At this point it is worth returning to an analysis of God's mission. Every verse of the Bible speaks from the perspective of this mission. It is a vital part of God's plan for humanity, and we must do our best not to lose sight of it.

As we have seen throughout the Old and New Testaments, the church plays an important, final role in God's mission. The

first disciples saw Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, become the resurrected Lord. From its foundation in the risen Christ, the kingdom of God at last took hold in the world. Because of Jesus's sacrifice, the mission of God now included the church. The disciples – that is, the people who made up the church – were sent forth to all nations to invite them to accept God's kingship (Matt 28:18–20). From then until today, the church exists solely to carry out this mission. All functions, ministries and gifts within the church are a means to this end. They are all intended to advance God's mission, which is already in operation.

The Mission of the Church

'Ordination' in the New Testament is not the authorisation of a member for a specific human ministry. It is much more revolutionary than that. Ordination is God's way of confirming a vital change in his mission to save the world, and to live in communion with his people (Rev 15:1–4, 21:1–5, 24–27, 22:1–5).

The earthly sign of Jesus's exaltation before God's throne was the Pentecost event. There is a very strong link between the pouring out of the spirit in Acts 2, where the mission of the church truly began, and Jesus's inauguration in Revelation 5:6, which relays how the Spirit was sent out to all the earth. Peter explicitly mentions Jesus's inauguration when he says: '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).

The Spirit was sent to the church to help it further its mission, but even the Spirit is subordinate to Christ in this context. Christ is the cornerstone of the church and its mission. The Spirit is in the service of the new Lord, mediating the presence and power of the risen Christ to the church.

Through the church, the kingdom of God moves out into the world. The church must therefore strive to be a reflection of that kingdom. The kingdom is based on justice, love, acceptance,

forgiveness and healing, all springing forth from true communion with God. The true church should reflect this basis in its message, structure and being. The church and its ministry model a different, Godly way of forming community and even humanity (Eph 2:15). This means that the church should advocate justice and equality, regardless of social or economic status, race or gender, challenging the powers of the earth to realise that Jesus is Lord.

In Acts it becomes clear exactly how the kingdom of God began moving out to the world. The centralised church structure was replaced, first by extension through the choosing of the seven, then through the apostleship of Paul, and then by the ordination of the 'missionaries' Barnabas and Saul. These texts show that the Spirit was the instigator of the expanding church, and that people were called to ministry and mission without the need for ceremonies or ecclesiastical authority.

The Priesthood of All Believers

In the Old Testament God called Israel a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation (Exod 19:6). They were the mediators between God and the world. Through Christ, the Christian church was able to assume this task. Peter underlined this connection when he said: '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' (1 Pet 2:9). All Christians, men and women, are priests and mediators of God to the world.

The priestly role of the Christian church continues to the very end of this world (Rev 1:6–7, 5:9–10, 14:6–13). John even foretells that the righteous resurrected at Jesus's second coming 'will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years' (Rev 20:6b). Clearly the priesthood of man and woman, instigated at creation, is an eternal institution.

Equality is a vital part of the priestly nation. Paul discusses this equality in Christ in his letter to the Galatians:

As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves 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. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

(Gal 3:27–29)

As Adventist Christians who identify ourselves as the end-time church, we should see this as a special message. The Bible is telling us to go back to creation, to bring men and women into ministry on equal terms, and to free the hands of all disciples to take part in the gospel ministry to the world.

Christians, baptised into Christ and belonging to Christ, are the heirs of the Abrahamic promise. In this promise the consequences of the fall will be reversed. By not recognising 'Jew or Greek', the collapse of humanity into nations, peoples and languages is undone (Gen 10–11). By not recognising 'slave or free', the introduction of slavery is undone (Gen 9:18–21). By not recognising 'male and female', the introduction of gender inequality and patriarchy is undone (Gen 4–11). It confirms the fulfilment of God's original intentions for humans as priests and rulers (Gen 1–2). By becoming one in Christ, we are helping to move God's heavenly kingdom out into the world.

Through Christ, all believers have access to God. This empowers them to minister to one another and to proclaim the gospel to the world. It must be noted, however, that while the church is called a priesthood, according to any Old Testament model there is only one true priest: Jesus Christ. The Israelite priesthood of the Old Testament has been fulfilled and brought to an end (Heb 7:15–16, 10:10–14). Christ is now the ultimate mediator between God and Christians (1 Tim 2:5). This is significant because ministers of the Christian church then clearly fill roles that are wildly different than those of the Israelite priests. The two models cannot be compared.

In the New Testament church there is no leadership structure as there was in the Old Testament. Instead, Christ's gift of the Spirit empowers his believers, and there are gifts, ministries and activities to edify God's people and minister to the world (1 Cor 12:4–6). Unfortunately, in much of church life only the gifts that are applicable to the ordained have been emphasised in the church, while the rest of Christ's body was left unrecognised. This is a challenge for us. It means that the church needs to recognise each member's specific function within the royal priesthood. The New Testament does not stipulate any specific form for this recognition, but ordination could certainly play a role.

If we decide that a prayer for God's blessing and the laying-on of hands is the way we as believers wish to recognise certain functions, this ceremony could just as easily be used for all. There is no New Testament evidence that these two actions should be reserved for some kind of elite class within the church. The same Spirit that calls all members to various ministries in the church, and the ceremonies that recognise each calling should reflect that fact.

Looking at the contemporary church, we see that the choice to only ordain clergy has created a gap between ministers and members. This is fundamentally wrong, not only because it creates a false sense of status that has no place in the church, but also because it actively goes against the church's mission. Christ ordained *all* members as priests, and by only ordaining certain members we make others passive onlookers.

This new biblical view on the theology of ordination is absolutely vital to the continued mission of the church. We wholeheartedly believe that this inclusive ordination can and will revitalise the Adventist church in its end-time mission.

8. MINISTERS AND ORDINATION IN THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION

In the New Testament we noted several records of ceremonies for the commissioning of leaders to specific offices. These offices were not clearly defined, however, and it was only very late in the New Testament that hints of well-defined offices began to emerge. This process of definition continued in the church through the ages, up to the point where the offices as we recognise them today finally became fixed. As we will see in this chapter, today's system of church offices has its roots in Roman culture. As the Christian faith expanded across the Roman Empire, far-reaching institutionalisation also took shape. The church attempted to keep order, maintain orthodoxy, and appeal to a pagan society. The pagan cultural influences that consequently crept into this institution were not tackled by sixteenth-century reformers, or by early Adventists.

POST-BIBLICAL CHURCH

In the post-biblical church – that is, the church that continued after the biblical accounts end – we can initially trace many similarities with the New Testament church. As the years passed, however, noticeable differences developed. Unfortunately we have neither the time nor the space to discuss what every post-biblical Christian author had to say about the church, so we will only touch on the most defining ones here.

The first major church leader we need to mention here is Ignatius, a bishop ('overseer') of Antioch who was martyred around 110 CE. Ignatius is the oldest author we know of who firmly saw three distinct offices within the church, each with its own separate function. When he came to office there were no more living apostles, so that position had become obsolete. In the place of apostles the church now had the bishop, the presbyters, and the deacons. These three offices were the institutionalised functions associated with the three biblical terms 'overseer', 'elder', and 'servant'. This means that in the writings of Ignatius we find the oldest evidence that overseer and elder had become different positions. He also indicated that there was a hierarchy between these three offices: the presbyters and deacons were subject to the bishop. Ignatius had a special place in his writings for the bishop, whom he described as a representative of God and Christ. The bishop seems to have had a key role in the early church, and was in charge of the important ceremonies of baptism, communion, meals and marriage. In one place Ignatius even called the bishop 'the image of the Father' (Ign. *Trall.* 3.1).

Because the apostles appointed by Jesus were no longer living, it seems quite logical that the early church was under the constant threat of division and heresy. In order to maintain orthodoxy, the office of bishop was instituted to represent this direct authority before God and Christ. Contrary to the New Testament model, then, a bishop had the sole right to administer various ceremonies, which soon came to be called ordinances. By the middle of the second century all centres of Christian activity would have had bishops, and ultimately the elevation of the bishop to such a powerful position was the first step towards the establishment of the papal office. The pope was originally simply the bishop of the most influential church: Rome.

In addition to the institution of powerful bishops, another innovation in the fight against heresy was the idea of apostolic succession. As the early church turned to both Judaism and Gnosticism for wisdom, some adopted the idea that bishops were

specifically suited for maintaining orthodoxy. Bishops, the theory ran, had direct access to the secret teachings that Jesus passed on to his apostles. These teachings were then transmitted from one bishop to the next. Later, the understanding of apostolic succession changed from simple teachings to a kind of mystical status, rank or 'holy order'.

Finally, as the church spread across the Roman Empire, Latin became more and more important as a common language. The biblical Greek word 'appointment' was soon replaced by the Latin word 'ordination'. As with all words, the ideas behind 'ordination' were heavily influenced by culture. Through this word, many parts of the culture also seeped into the church, and over the years 'appointment' to an everyday office slowly transformed into a high-priestly 'ordination'. This included the idea that ordination was a kind of sacrament, and slowly the bishop or priest (presbyter/elder) came to be seen as a sacrificial priest of the Old Testament persuasion, performing Christ's sacrifice and distributing Christ's mediation to the believers.

ROMAN CATHOLIC ORDINATION

As the Catholic Church became more institutionalised around fourth-century Rome, the theology of ordination grew and became more complex. Appointments to church office in this Roman Catholic Church had changed completely, moving from recognition of a divine calling to the institutional conferring of status, power and authority. The theology arose that when a priest was ordained he received a permanent seal on his soul. In this way any sacramental action performed by that priest, such as baptism or communion, was assured to be valid. This validity was not only part of church authority. It also became a key part of the church's message of salvation and grace. Only with the permanent seal of ordination would the priest be able to properly channel God's grace and salvation to the community. He functioned as a priest instead of Christ the high priest.

The function of apostolic succession changed as well. Because priests now received a permanent seal on their soul at ordination, people came to believe that this seal was what the bishop transferred at ordination. It was no longer the private teachings of Jesus, but a 'mystical' mark that had been passed down through the generations. For this reason a bishop, who needed to receive the power to pass on his mark, was always ordained by three other bishops.

More and more Old Testament reasoning was added back into to the early Christian theology of ordination. The role of the bishops, deacons, and priests became closely associated with the Old Testament roles of the Levites in the sanctuary. As we saw before, this is reasoning is theologically incorrect. Christ replaced the Old Testament sanctuary with his own body and sacrifice, and so there is only one priest in the Christian church: Jesus Christ. In the early Roman Catholic Church, however, the separation between clergy and laity had become complete. While the New Testament talks of the priesthood of all believers, ordination rituals and apostolic succession meant that only a select elite represented the priesthood of the church. A lay member in this church was substantially, fundamentally different from the clergy. Needless to say, this separation did great harm to the mission of the church.

THE REFORMATION AND THE PROTESTANT CHURCH

In the sixteenth-century Reformation, a great reaction to certain parts of Roman Catholic theology took place. The sacramental status of ordination was put aside, and the Protestants no longer gave ordination quite the same authority. The original reason for appointing a bishop remained valid, however. Someone had to regulate authority and orthodoxy throughout the church. The ordination of clergy was also necessary to maintain the church-state coalitions that had developed. Churches, dependent as they were on civil authorities, kept ordination so that it could be used to govern the people. Thus the gap between clergy and

laity was preserved, all because of the wish for doctrinal and organisational uniformity.

Although they preserved ordination as a practice, Protestant reformers no longer believed that it caused a fundamental inner change. Instead they focussed on the minister's authority to interpret the Bible. This meant that the education of ministers became very important, because it was how their ordination was validated. The reformers did review the theology of ordination as a whole, and Martin Luther himself recognised that it was appointment, not ordination, that was important for church offices. Unfortunately, the reformers never fully followed through with this review.

All in all, while the theology of ordination changed slightly during the Reformation, ordination as a visible ceremony did not. The theology of ordination and its link to the Bible was neither understood nor sought, and the church kept to the status quo. The practical needs for order, uniformity and orthodoxy, combined with the desire to safeguard the members' respect for ministry, outweighed any desire to go back to the Bible. The church continued in its traditions of ordination, including the sacramental parts of the ritual – like the laying-on of hands.

These sacramentally tinted traditions of ordination also crossed the Atlantic with Christian immigrants. The biblically unfounded practice of ordination continued in the imported Presbyterianism, Anglicanism and Methodism, as well as in the Baptist movement. It was even included in the first home-grown American religious denomination, the Christian Connexion, of which many Adventist pioneers were members.

The tradition of ordination was further reinforced by the influence of the King James Bible in the English-speaking world. This version of the Bible, which was completed in 1611, was translated specifically for the Anglican tradition in England. As such it naturally defended the doctrine of the episcopal structure of the Church of England, and the ordination of its clergy. In the

King James translation all verbs that could be associated with ordination (such as ‘make’, ‘choose’, ‘become’, ‘appoint’, ‘place’, and ‘set’), were translated as ‘ordain’. Similarly, biblical offices were also translated to fit the Anglican model, meaning that ‘overseer’ was consistently translated as ‘bishop’. As the most influential translation of all time, the King James Bible impacted Protestant theology worldwide for centuries, leading to unfounded theologies of ordination in nearly all protestant churches.

As Adventists we have always maintained that the Reformation was incomplete, and we have placed ourselves as continuing reformers of the Christian church. Since our formation we have replaced non-biblical doctrines on the Sabbath and the state of the dead with reformed, biblical ones. Clearly we should add the theology of ordination to this list, as it is in dire need of a thorough reformation.

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM

Adventists live by the creed ‘the Bible and the Bible alone’, yet in the case of ordination our practice is defined more by Christian tradition than by biblical evidence. Considering the important role that all God’s workers have in the mission of the church, as well as the decisive end-time conclusion that we await, it is urgent that we re-evaluate this practice. We can only truly bring the gospel to the world if we acknowledge that all members are Christ’s mediators.

Under influence from Christian Connexion practices, the early Adventists used the term ‘ordain’ as based on the King James translation of the Bible. James White was an ordained minister in the Christian Connexion. He and the other Millerites from that church brought certain practices into the Sabbatarian movement. These, combined with other ideas from other churches, led to the introduction of ordination to the Sabbatarian Adventists in the 1850s. This was done predominantly to bring order and uniformity, and to maintain orthodoxy in the teachings of the

Word. The early Adventists admitted, as we too have argued, that the New Testament was to be seen as the sole source of biblical guidance for ordination. The consecrations of the Levites in the Old Testament were wholly ignored.

The early Adventists had no formal discussion of ministerial gender, nor any statements that ministers needed to be male. Though pioneers often indirectly implied that ministers *were* typically male, it is fundamental that neither male headship nor the 'husband of one wife' phrase from 1 Timothy 3 were ever mentioned.

Adventist pioneers were very firm in their belief that God calls ministers to his service. The church could not call members to ministry, and no ceremony or title could necessarily make someone a minister. All the church could do was recognise God's call. As an outward sign of this recognition of calling and qualification, Adventist churches formally laid their hands on the minister. In practice this was often done by the elders and ministers on behalf of the congregation. Such a person was then 'set apart' for the work of the ministry and could function as a representative of the church. The congregation obliged itself to sympathise with the ministers and pray for their ministry.

Despite this belief in a divine and independent calling, order was also very important to the early Adventists. They understood that there was a biblical 'gospel order', which God had established. They felt that following this order would bring blessings, fellowship and love to the church. Most importantly, it would protect the church from false and divisive teachings. This seems similar to the reasons why bishops were originally given so much authority in the early Christian church.

From this discussion it should be clear that the Adventist understanding of ordination developed very quickly, and was wholly in place by the 1850s. It then remained stable for more than a hundred years. Early Adventists did not often theorise about ordination. Naturally, they were not impervious to the prejudices

of the time, and did not always realise how much Christian tradition they incorporated in their practice. It would appear that in this case the Adventist pioneers followed the practices they were accustomed to, without subjecting them to biblical scrutiny.

Seventh-day Adventists thus base a number of elements of their practice of ordination on Christian tradition, rather than subjecting the entire ceremony to deep theological scrutiny. The Adventist pioneers clearly saw ordination as a practical issue, not a theological one. As Adventists now are considering the theology of ordination, we need to reform ordination to bring it closer to the biblical teachings on the subject.

9. ELLEN G. WHITE'S VIEWS ON ORDINATION

Ellen G. White has played a key role in the life of the Adventist church. Considering her position of leadership and prophecy, it goes without saying that her support would have been important for the introduction of ordination practices in the 1850s. Her views on the matter of ordination were quite complex, and we will discuss them in some detail in this chapter, as well as their implications for our current path.

THE MISSION OF GOD

God's nature and mission were fundamental to Ellen White's understanding of the Bible, and to her theology. She called God's plan of redemption 'the central theme of the Bible, the theme about which every other in the whole book clusters', and further argued that 'the unfolding of this wondrous theme' is 'the burden of every book and every passage of the Bible' (*Education*, 125). For Ellen White God's plan of redemption has one goal: 'by love's self-sacrifice, the inhabitants of earth and heaven are bound to their Creator in bonds of indissoluble union' (*The Desire of Ages*, 26).

This essentially means that Ellen White's theology shared the same foundation as this study. In her view every passage should revolve around God's mission, and that mission has only one goal: God and mankind in indissoluble communion. By basing our

theology of ordination on the desire to further God's mission, we are very much in harmony with Ellen White's beliefs and teachings.

THE CHURCH

As well as being fundamental to Ellen White's understanding of the Bible, God's nature and mission determined her view of the church. In her writings we read that the church is 'God's representative and agent of mission in the world' (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 9). As God's agent of mission, the church has an important task. We must make every effort to fulfil that task as well as possible. The primacy of service and mission is quite obvious in Ellen White's thinking. She writes:

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 Acts of the Apostles, 9)

For Ellen White, the church is the penultimate step in God's plan of salvation. It is the final phase before Jesus's second coming.

The role of the church in God's plan is also inherently connected to the idea of the priesthood of all believers. When Ellen White discusses 1 Peter 2:9, which we also quoted in an earlier chapter, she calls 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' (*Testimonies for the Church*, 2: 168-169).

Ellen White saw all Christians working together as a holy nation of priests, each through his or her own devotion to God. She writes that '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' (*Evangelism*, 1946, p 473). Every follower of Christ is, intrinsically, a priest for God. In this evangelistic work Ellen White emphasises each person's mission, and does not see the role of women as less than that of men. In fact, she seems to argue that women are especially capable of representing Christ:

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?

(*Welfare Ministry*, 164–165)

Ultimately, gender was a non-issue for Ellen White in the gospel ministry. Her emphasis was on personal consecration and commitment, and she warned quite strongly against the assumption that only ordained ministers work for the gospel: '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' (*Acts of the Apostles*, 110).

ORDINATION AND MINISTRY

As we see, Ellen White's general view of ministry included all believers. For her, all Christians were ordained to ministry, not by the laying-on of hands, but by God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Though spiritual ordination was the most important kind of ordination, Ellen White also recognised a formal, ecclesial kind. In discussing Paul and Barnabas's laying-on of hands in Acts 13, she writes: 'Paul and Barnabas had already received their commission from God Himself' but 'neither of them had as yet been formally ordained to the gospel ministry' (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 160–161).

This was also apparently the way Ellen White understood her own ministry. She was never formally ordained as a minister in the Adventist church, but she whole-heartedly believed that God had ordained her to her prophetic ministry. In 1909, she reflected back on the events of 1844, saying, ‘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’ (*Letter 138*, 1909). Ellen White saw ecclesial ordination as ‘a public recognition of divine appointment and an acknowledged form of designation to an appointed office’ (*Testimonies to the Church*, 5: 549). The church gives a minister the authority to preach the gospel, to represent the church, and to minister rites in that church. In this way, ordination is a ceremony that also serves the church.

Ultimately, as Ellen white repeats again and again throughout her writings, ‘the authority of an ordained minister is derived from God and conferred by the church’ (*Testimonies to the Church*, 5: 549). God gives people the authority to minister the gospel, and the church gives people the authority to act on behalf of the church. A minister thus has the ecclesial authority to perform duties for the church through their formal ordination, and the divine authority to preach the gospel and serve as God’s ambassador through their spiritual ordination.

FREEING ALL HANDS

Ellen White felt that the church should ordain far more than simply the pastoral gospel ministers. After deciding to ordain pastors, the Adventist church has also decided to ordain local church elders and deacons, but she would have gone much further than that. Ellen White felt very strongly that no hands should be tied in the mission of the church (‘The Duty of the Minister and the People’, 434).

At the beginning of her ministry, Ellen White worked closely with her husband to introduce formal ordination in the Adventist

church, but as the years went by she became steadily less vocal on the matter. In a society where women did not yet have the right to vote, she accepted ordination for what it was, including any gender inequality. As the years passed, however, she became ever more vocal in the argument for mobilising all church members. Ellen White felt very urgently about the church's mission, and was adamant that no hands be tied in its fulfilment. She advocated the vital role of all members in the gospel ministry, with or without formal ordination. For her the practical implications were the same: all members needed to work as much as possible to reach as many as possible.

Besides mobilising all members, Ellen White felt that the church needed to be adaptable. Its structure in particular should be at the service of the mission. Discussing the selection of the seven in Acts 6, she writes: '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' (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 89). The theme of 'perfecting the gospel order' returns over and over in Ellen White's writings. Here the apostles only receive their chance to perfect the gospel order when they are led by the Holy Spirit. They 'outline a plan for the better organisation of all the working forces of the church' (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 89).

Still led by the Holy Spirit, the gospel order is perfected by the apostles again a few pages later. Here we see that Ellen White actively advocated making changes to the organisation of the church as the need for such change was recognised:

[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.

(The Acts of the Apostles, 91–92)

The church structure, the gospel order, is not a static entity. It is a constantly ‘perfecting’ organisational guide that allows us to better carry out God’s mission. Under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the church can and should reorganise itself whenever the need for modification arises. From this point of view it is clearly advantageous for the church to constantly determine, under guidance of the Holy Spirit, which ministries are still beneficial for God’s mission and which offices we continue to acknowledge. In this context, ordination needs to once again become a function of the church and its mission, rather than impeding it.

EXTENDING ORDINATION

Seeing that every member is a priest, and church structure should be constantly perfecting itself, Ellen White recommended that people should be ordained by the laying-on of hands for more than just pastoral ministry. Drawing from her passion for God’s mission, and feeling that the church could be more efficient in reaching the lost, she suggested that the church should have more ministries:

The ordained ministers alone are not equal to the task. God is calling not only upon the ministers, but also upon physicians, nurses, canvassers, Bible workers, and other consecrated laymen of varied talent who have a knowledge of present truth, to consider the needs of the unwarned cities.

(Medical Ministries, 248–249)

While calling for many additional ministries, Ellen White left it for the church to decide which people should be ordained, though she did have some suggestions on the matter. For example, when

discussing the work of doctors, she writes: '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' (*Evangelism*, 546). In this Ellen White clearly compares a gospel minister's task to that of a medical missionary, and calls for comparable recognition of their gifts.

ORDINATION OF WOMEN

Though like many writers of her time Ellen White commonly used the male pronoun when referring to pastors and other working professionals, she also explicitly advocated the ordination of women. Whilst living in Australia in 1895, Ellen White felt the lack of involvement of the church members there as a heavy burden. She wrote an article for *The Review and Herald* entitled 'The Duty of the Minister and the People'. In this article she argued that the ministers needed to actively involve the congregation in both the planning and execution of outreach in large cities. She then suggested ordaining some women for ministry as a solution:

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.

('The Duty of the Minister and the People', 434)

The women Ellen White mentions here were clearly lay members willing to devote some of their time to God, not full-time employees of the church. All the same, Ellen White suggests the laying-on of hands for female gospel workers. Some have countered this idea by suggesting that the work described in this passage is solely that of the deaconess. Looking at the context of this article, however, as well as the ones that followed it in *The Review and Herald*, it is clear that Ellen White considered true pastoral ministry to consist of helping the poor, crippled, lame and blind; exactly the task for which she suggests ordaining these women.

Alongside her lack of reservations about ordaining women, we must also reinforce Ellen White's understanding that ordination by God is far more important than any ecclesial ceremony. Formal ordination is an external sign of public appointment, where a congregation recognises and confirms God's call. Practically, this means that whether the church formally ordains women or not, Christ has already called and equipped them. What is missing is not the ordination, but the church's formal recognition of what God has already done.

WOMEN'S MINISTRY IN THE HOME AND IN PUBLIC

Ellen White had a clear understanding of the qualifications needed for ministry. First and foremost, ministers should be called by God and spiritually ordained by Christ. As we have discussed, Ellen White saw no difference between genders in this qualification. In fact, in some places she places women above men in ministry. In addition to his or her divine calling, Ellen White felt that the minister should have some personal abilities. 'They must be thinking men,' she writes, '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' (*Testimonies to the Church*, 5: 549). All of these capacities are also present in women. What held women back from ministry in Ellen

White's time were the social norms, in society and the church, that women should not be in positions of authority. Again, this was in a time when women could not even vote. While Ellen White accepted these socio-cultural norms publicly, she almost never taught them as the will of God. The few exceptions to this rule concern certain situations in the home and marriage.

Following the New Testament passages on headship, Ellen White had two views on women in ministry. In the home, Ellen White felt that a married woman should be subjected to her husband. The husband was the head of the home, and mutual humility was important. This is very different to Ellen White's view of a woman's role in church. In church all members, woman and men alike, are subjected to Christ. He is the head of the church, and women should work side-by-side with their male colleagues, husbands, brothers and sisters, on equal grounds. For Ellen White, unmarried women should have a task in ministry, and married women, despite their highly respected role in the home, should combine ministry with homemaking.

Building on her call for more diverse ministries, and for setting apart many Christian workers in various ministries through ordination, Ellen White specifically calls for more women in the gospel ministry. In the following passage Ellen White discusses the adoption of orphans. She argues strongly that if the Lord has not chosen to give the family children, the woman should work in the gospel ministry:

There are women who should labor in the gospel ministry. In many respects they would do more good than the ministers who neglect to visit the flock of God. Husband and wife may unite in this work, and when it is possible, they should. The way is open for consecrated women. But the enemy would be pleased to have the women whom God could use to help hundreds, binding up their time and strength on one helpless little mortal, that requires constant care and attention.

(Manuscript Releases, 5: 325–326)

Here Ellen White goes so far as to associate the sacrifice of public ministry for home ministry as the work of Satan. Clearly she felt that while women might often choose home and family, there was also a great deal that ‘consecrated women’ could do for God and the church.

Generally Ellen White was more cautious when she discussed the subject of women’s ordination. She never encouraged church officials to step outside of the generally accepted cultural norms for gender roles:

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.

(*Testimonies*, 1: 420)

Ellen White knew very well what influence public opinion could have on the mission of the church, and always did her best to remain as socially acceptable as possible. As far as we know, she never explicitly stated that female ministers should be ordained in the Adventist church. It should, however, be abundantly clear that she *wished* to include women in ministry. In fact, she felt that women would be vital if the church was to effectively carry out its mission.

GOD’S WAY AND OUR WAY

Ellen White was herself a powerful example of such a woman. She was always positive about the roles of women in the church. She also spoke very strongly on the urgent and legitimate need for women in ministry, and associated that need with a divine institution. Ellen White even described fitting roles for women in ministry in the culture of the time, arguing that woman should work in team ministry, as teachers, and even as gospel ministers.

By way of conclusion it seems fitting to discuss a letter written by Ellen White in 1901 (*Letter 7*). In this letter she discusses the value of an un-ordained member (male or female) who ministers on behalf of Christ. This member is spiritually ordained by God, and consecrated by works of love and mercy. She writes that such a member is of greater value to God and his church than an ordained minister who does not represent Christ. In fact, such a member has the utmost value in God's mission. This letter shows that Ellen White valued full integration with the mission of God and in the presence of Christ far more highly than the valued earthly concerns like gender or ordination.

Ellen White concludes *Letter 7* by applying God's promise in Isaiah 61 to all the members who battle for God's mission: '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"' (*Letter 7*). Ellen White unites clergy and laity, men and women, showing us that they are all one in ministry. Guided as we are by her ministry and vision, the Adventist church must decide. Will we continue to issue credentials for the gospel ministry based on our own cultural bias and the dubious foundations of ecclesial tradition? Or will we follow Ellen White's guidance in accomplishing God's mission, and leave no hand bound? Ultimately, the question is whether we will decide to follow what the Bible reveals as the will of God, and do everything in our power to accomplish his mission for us here on earth.

10. CONCLUSIONS

God's mission forms the overriding theme of the Bible as a whole. God wishes to return to a harmonious relationship with humankind, and to save humans from sin, shame, and guilt. He wants to eradicate evil, and ultimately to create a new heaven and earth where he will live in communion with humans. God's mission has taken many forms, but Christ was fundamental to its fulfilment. Christ established the church – which was built on his life, work, teaching and resurrection – to serve God, humanity and all of creation.

While Christ is the foundation of the church, he is also its head and its High Priest. All members of the Christian church serve Christ and God, as mediators between God and creation. Christ made no distinction between women and men as his servants, just as God made no distinction at creation. In Eden, the man and the woman served God as priestly mediators; as equals. After the fall, God endorsed them in this role through the sacrificial clothing with animal skins.

Later, at Sinai, God called Israel to be his people, making them a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. All Israelites were the priests of God, ministering to the nations. Within this nation of priests was another priesthood: the Levites, who mediated between God and the Israelites themselves. Though female Levites did not serve in the sanctuary for a number of practical and cultural reasons, women did serve in the other important functions within the Israelite nation – as judges, prophets and elders.

The Old Testament Levitical priesthood was a necessary result of human sin. Shame and guilt introduced the need for mediation

between God and humans. The Levitical priesthood was an adaptation to the fallen state of humanity, and was also a temporary solution, rendered ultimately unnecessary by the sacrifice, blood and priesthood of Jesus Christ. The priesthood, like that of Adam and Eve and the Israelites, was God's true purpose for humans. This priesthood is an essential part of the end-time church, which is in service to God and the ministry of Christ. It will also remain an essential part of our role in the new heaven and earth.

In the New Testament, often only men were chosen for special ministry as leaders, teachers and preachers. This choice was heavily influenced by the patriarchal customs and socio-cultural norms of the time. The church needed to remain as culturally appropriate as possible for the purpose of its mission. There is no doubt that many Christian women were also filled with the Spirit in these times, prophesying and praying, and holding various positions and ministries fundamental to the expansion of the church. In any case, the New Testament church had no formal office or structure, and the call of the spirit outweighed any ecclesial authorisation.

There was serious tension between the teachings of the Bible and the predominant, patriarchal norms in ancient societies. The Bible spoke up for the place of women in God's mission, while throughout the biblical era culture always limited their roles. God chose many women, against all cultural expectations, as judges, elders, prophets, apostles, disciples, priests and witnesses. God tried time and time again to bring his people back to their original position: united and equal in ministry as mediators for him.

In many cultures nowadays there is no reason to limit the role of women, restricting it beyond God's plan. In fact, in many societies gender equality is so fundamental that restricting the role of women actually casts a negative light on the church and hurts our mission. Naturally this is not the case in some other cultures, which are still as patriarchal as those in biblical times. As Ellen G. White would argue, there is no immediate need to force these cultures to accept female ministers, unless of course God chooses

to call women in specific cases. For many countries however, it is *absolutely essential* for the Adventist church to allow women to function as ministers, on equal footing with their male colleagues.

APPENDIX A

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TRANS-EUROPEAN THEOLOGY OF ORDINATION STUDY COMMITTEE

In an attempt to practically implement divinely instituted equality in ministry, we have come to twelve recommendations, listed in order of priority and grouped into three categories. These recommendations are outlined below. For ease of reference, the titles of these recommendations are taken verbatim from the full TOSC report.

IMPLEMENTING A BIBLICAL PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

We strongly affirm the biblical model of the priesthood of all believers. Through various ministries, gifts and actions, all members minister on God's behalf. All members of the church should thus be seen as priests, mediating between God and mankind. This needs to be recognised and emphasised.

1. Focus on the mission of God and all being servants for the salvation of the world

The church should refocus its theology and terminology from the perspective of God's purpose for the world, as seen in Eden (Gen 1–2) and the new heaven and earth (Rev 21–22). By refocusing we can revive the inspired biblical teachings on mission, the church and ministry/service. This would serve as a theological foundation for the activation of all members for mission.

2. Remove the current distance between clergy-laity and the levels of ordination

Our current theology and practices have created distance between the clergy and the laity. In our research we have shown how this distance was originally introduced through developments in the Catholic and Roman Catholic Church. We recommend that the Adventist church embrace the biblical priesthood of all believers by visibly including lay members in ordination ceremonies, by rejecting any idea of (apostolic) succession, by discarding the idea that the ordained clergy form a separate class of members, by removing the different levels of ordination, commissioning and licensing for 'servants' who work in the church, by doing away with the intricate differences between the various levels of ministry and, finally, by admitting that there is no biblical command to ordain ministers, and that the laying-on of hands is not a biblical formula for such a ceremony.

3. Create an inclusive ministry

The Adventist church should embrace God's original equality and allow for an inclusive, gender-neutral ministry. Credentials should be given to men and women on equal terms for all offices in the church. If this cannot be implemented worldwide, the church should make allowances for individual unions and divisions to create such an inclusive ministry.

4. Recommendation to the GC Session in 2015 to allow inclusive ministry

In accordance with recommendation 3, we propose that a recommendation should be brought to the General Conference Session in 2015 to approve a policy change that allows unions, at their own request and after approval from their division, to maintain an inclusive pastoral ministry, removing all gender distinctions within that union's territory.

5. Theology and practice of ordination – education of members

The Adventist church should continue to research the theology of ordination. We urge the church to proceed in considerably more detail than the brief consensus statement voted by the Theology of Ordination Study Committee achieved. The church must also attempt to educate all its members on the biblical teachings regarding ordination, and on the mission of God and the nature of the church. New members who come from Roman Catholic or Orthodox backgrounds may need additional support and education to understand Adventist views on the priesthood of all believers and the role of ordination. We believe that the lack of such an education has led to many false biases regarding ordination.

REDUCING THE CEREMONIAL EMPHASIS

The Bible has very little to say about the use of a ceremony to formally recognise a person's divine call. We feel that many of the issues the church currently faces are due to the emphasis we place on this ceremony.

6. Consider the best terminology

The Adventist church should reconsider its use of the term 'ordination'. This term is ambiguous, and is steeped in unbiblical

meanings derived from both the Roman Catholic Church and various Protestant denominations. This is confusing for members – especially those converting from other churches. We suggest using biblical terms like ‘appoint’, ‘commission’ or ‘dedicate’ instead. If the worldwide church will not adapt its usage of the term ‘ordination’, space must be created for individual unions to choose the term in their own language, without feeling obliged to remain near the Latin *ordinatio*.

7. Remove ritualistic and consecrational flavour

We recommend that the ceremony of ordination be radically changed to remove its current ritualistic and consecrational undertones. The current ceremony is too focussed on both the granting of the Holy Spirit and/or spiritual gifts for ministry, and the giving of ecclesiastical authority. We suggest returning to a more biblical basis for such ceremonies.

8. Make the imposition of hands optional

Practically, we see the need for a ceremony celebrating the church’s recognition of a minister’s call. We do recommend that the laying-on of hands become an optional part of that ceremony, however. The New Testament does not clearly show us that the laying-on of hands was part of the appointment of any apostles, servants, ministers, overseers, or elders.

9. Emphasis on God’s blessing and practical aspects

We feel that the current ordination ceremony should place more emphasis on the public recognition of the person’s call. The ceremony should focus on confirming that call, and the person’s commitment to serve Christ and the church. The most important part of ordination should be the request of God’s blessing.

10. Review who is to be ordained in the church

We recommend that the church conduct a thorough theological study into the biblical reasons behind why some offices are

ordained and others are not. As we have shown, there is no biblical basis for only ordaining pastors, elders, deacons and deaconesses. We see the need for a ceremony in general, but this should be for all church offices, not just the current three.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

11. Separate ordination from election to an organisational office of leadership

We strongly feel the need to distinguish more clearly between ministerial ordination and election for church leadership. The ordination ceremony should be reserved for the gospel ministry, that is, for the ministry of the Word. Administrative positions at missions, conferences, unions, divisions and the General Conference represent a different kind of ministry. Being an ordained gospel minister may certainly be a merit for those elected as leaders, but in policy and theology these two ministries should be clearly separated.

12. Improve ministerial training, education, preparation for ordination, and clarify processes, requirements, and qualifications

We recommend strengthening the processes and requirements for the education and training of future ministers. The church should develop better means to examine, evaluate and develop the qualifications of a minister before ordination.

APPENDIX B

THE RESEARCH TASK DEFINED BY THE GENERAL CONFERENCE BIBLICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE 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?