




South Pacific
Perspectives on

ORDINATION

Biblical, Theological and
Historical Studies
In an Adventist Context

EDITED BY
Graeme J Humble
and Robert K McIver

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Introduction

This book is about aspects of ordination to gospel ministry and it provides both academic and missional insights from a Seventh-day Adventist perspective in the South Pacific region. Most of the chapters were commissioned by the Biblical Research Committee of the South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists (SPD) and were written by Adventist academics. They will be of keen interest to Seventh-day Adventist readers, but others also may well be interested in what is said. All Christians revere the Bible and share in common the history of the early church. Thus the papers dealing with the biblical data regarding ordination and the history of the development of the concept are of general applicability. Furthermore, those chapters that deal with the issue of whether the Seventh-day Adventist Church should make it possible to ordain women into the Gospel Ministry will find resonance in the internal dialogues of many other Christian denominations.

The predominantly ex-Millerites who eventually formed themselves into the Seventh-day Adventist Church came from a wide variety of backgrounds, including Methodism and the Christian Connection. Almost all of them had experienced rejection by their own denominations because they, along with other Millerites, had been forecasting and actively looking for the return of Jesus in 1844. As a result, they carried within their ranks a deep distrust of denominational organization. But the sheer practicalities of managing a growing religious movement led to the gradual adoption of organizational practices of one kind or another, including the ordination of ministers. It was a very practical response to the problem of identifying those itinerant ministers and evangelists who could be trusted by local churches associated with the “Third Angel’s Message,” and those who could not.

From time to time the leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church have given consideration to the meaning and purpose of Gospel Ministry. Indeed, the last quinquennium has seen a concerted effort by the world Church to study the practice of ordination. Consistent with other developments around the issue of ordination in the Adventist Church, this period of study has been brought about by a very practical issue—whether the Adventist Church should allow women to be ordained into gospel ministry. Each of the Biblical Research Committees in the world-wide Divisions of the

Church were invited to produce papers which addressed: (a) the biblical and theological foundations for ordination to ministry; and (b) the question whether the Adventist Church should allow women to be ordained as ministers of the gospel. The chapters in this book, with the exception of those by Geoffrey Madigan and Peter Marks, were commissioned by the Biblical Research Committee of the South Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to assist it in its study of the two questions it had been given to investigate. The report from the Biblical Research Committee of the South Pacific Division to the Theology of Ordination Study Committee set up by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists to make a recommendation on the matter of ordaining women is included in the Appendix. The chapter by Peter Marks had been submitted to the BRC for consideration, and it was decided to include it because of its relevance to the wider topic of ordination, and to indicate some of the breadth of perspectives that were considered by the BRC in their investigation of the topic of ordination. The edited version of a sermon delivered by Geoffrey Madigan was recommended to the editors by Barry Oliver as a helpful way to frame the concrete proposals and recommendations found in the section, "Moving Forward."

The editors would like to thank the contributors for the seriousness with which they had addressed the questions they had been allocated, to the academic referees for their willingness to take on the extra burden of refereeing the chapters they had been allocated (all of the chapters, except that by Geoffrey Madigan, were refereed), and the officers of the SPD for underwriting the costs of publication of this book.

This book goes to print just weeks before the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church meets in session to discuss amongst other things the idea that each Division be given the prerogative to determine and make provisions as it may deem appropriate within its territory for the ordination of men and women to the gospel ministry. Our prayers are with the delegates to this session as they consider this and other important matters of church policy.

Graeme J. Humble and Robert K. McIver
18 June 2015

Part 1
May Women be Ordained
as Gospel Ministers?

Chapter 1: “Women’s Ordination: Why Not!?”

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The Context of the Current Debate

The issue of the ordination of women to ministry has been the cause of fierce debate within many Christian communions. For instance, the Anglican Church has struggled to come to terms with the issue, accepting female ordinands in some regions, but not in others. While Roman Catholicism officially holds to the view that it is inappropriate to ordain women to the priesthood, many within that faith communion would accept female priests. The US-based Southern Baptist Convention allowed ordination of women for a period, and then reversed its decision, thereby creating a continuing chaotic situation.

Within Seventh-day Adventism, the debate over the ordination of women has raged fiercely over several decades. At the 1990 General Conference Session in Indianapolis, the world Church voted against the ordination of women to the gospel ministry. Again, at the 1995 General Conference Session in Utrecht, Netherlands, the Church voted down the possibility of ordaining women in regions of the Church that were amenable to the concept. At the same time the Church has allowed women to be ordained as elders¹ and as deacons.² In addition to the female elders ministering in local churches in multiple countries, there are now many female pastors employed in full-time ministry, many of whom have been “commissioned” while a few have been ordained within regions (or union conferences) that have gone ahead without General Conference approval. In 2015 the issue is again on the General Conference Session agenda for vote; again from the perspective of whether it would be permissible to ordain women in areas of

1 The General Conference Annual Council voted in favour of the ordination of female elders in 1975, and re-affirmed that action at the 1984 Annual Council. See <http://www.nadwm.org/article/159/resources/official-statements-by-the-seventh-day-adventist-church-pertaining-to-women/seventh-day-adventist-church-s-position-on-women-elders-deaconesses> (accessed 14 June 2015).

2 At the 2010 Atlanta General Conference Session.

the world church that wish to do so. The urgency of the issue is underlined by the fact that hundreds of women are undertaking theological training within the church's universities, colleges, and seminaries.

In addition to my pastoral and theological education, my own background and experience have had an influence in the formation of my views regarding ordination, and, in particular, ordination of women. My early spirituality was nurtured in a small country church in Western Australia, and while my layperson father was the regular preacher, there were several outstanding women who were on the preaching roster. Then, when I left my home-state in 1966 to begin nurse training at what is now Sydney Adventist Hospital, I found myself in a female-dominated profession and realised that I was comfortable with women "having authority" over men! However, probably the largest paradigm shift in my thinking came when my wife and I were appointed to work for the Adventist Church in Papua New Guinea. Almost overnight, I came to realise in practical terms that the Bible that I had always considered (and still consider) a divine book was also a human book³ that could be best interpreted and understood within its own historical context/s and then intentionally applied into our own particular life situations and contexts.⁴

Of course, there are other factors that have impacted my view of the issue. Not least among these is the fact that I've spent many years training pastors for ministry—both women and men—and I have seen the way that the Spirit of God has called and gifted many outstanding women for ministry and has nurtured them as they have engaged courageously in ministry, sometimes amid what I can only describe as unchristian opposition.

In this chapter I propose first to outline the major arguments against the ordination of women to ministry—that is, Ordination: Why NOT! Then I shall outline what I see as the significant arguments in favour of women's

3 Ellen White's comment (written in 1886) continues to be instructive in this regard: "The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God's mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. Men will often say such an expression is not like God. But God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God's penmen, not His pen. Look at the different writers" (*Selected Messages from the Writings of Ellen G. White*, book 1 [Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958], 21).

4 Details of this paradigm shift can be found in Ray C. W. Roennfeldt, "How Melanesia Shaped My Hermeneutics," in B. D. Oliver, A. S. Currie, and D. E. Robertson, eds, *Avondale and the South Pacific: 100 Years of Mission* (Cooberong, NSW: Avondale Academic Press, 1997), 93–105.

ordination—that is, Ordination: WHY Not? In both cases I do not plan to provide a rebuttal (on the one hand) or fully-fledged support (on the other hand). Rather, I wish the arguments to speak for themselves and readers are encouraged to come to their own conclusions. I shall conclude the chapter with a discussion that outlines a practical, hermeneutical resolution.

Women's Ordination: Why NOT!

What are the major arguments mounted against women's ordination? First and foremost, women's ordination is so clearly against a "plain" reading of Scripture that one really needs no further proof. In his first Epistle to Timothy, Paul argues that "a woman should learn in quietness and full submission" (1 Tim. 2:11).⁵ Although this passage says nothing explicitly about the ordination of women to ministry (or even ordination *per se*), when read at face value it would appear to reserve a couple of the major pastoral functions to men—those of teaching and preaching. After all, Paul goes on to say: "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent" (vs. 12).⁶ Paul's reasons for this injunction are based transparently in Scripture—in fact in the Genesis narratives of creation and the fall. Women must maintain silent in the worship arena⁷ because "Adam was formed first, then Eve" and "it was the woman [Eve] who was deceived and became a sinner" (vss. 13–14).

Paul's instruction to the Corinthian believers in regard to propriety in worship is also cited as biblical evidence against the ordination of women. Again, while in 1 Corinthians 11:2–16 Paul does not expressly refer to the ordination of women to gospel ministry, it is argued that the "headship" of man over woman would prohibit ordination to women. The critical verses in this passage appear to be verses 3 and 7–9. Paul explains that "the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God" (vs. 3). Furthermore, "A man...is the image and glory of God, but the woman is the glory of man. For, man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman,

5 All biblical references cited are from the *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973, 1978).

6 A similar statement can be found in 1 Cor 14:34–35.

7 That Paul is speaking in a worship setting is clear from the early verses of 1 Tim. 2 (e.g., see vs. 1).

but woman for man”⁸(vss. 7–9).⁹ Some have argued from these passages that the “headship principle” in the church (i.e. men having priority over women) is in some way analogous and reflective of an eternal subordination within the Trinity.¹⁰

While the foregoing argument against the ordination of women is found in some explicit statements of Scripture, the second argument is based on Scripture’s silence. Briefly put, the Bible contains no positive command or even a hint of admonition to ordain women to ministry and if the church is to base its doctrine and practice on the Word of God, it must resist the impulse to incorporate ideas or practices that are not biblical.¹¹

8 For a discussion for male headship from the contra- position, see Edwin Reynolds, “Biblical Hermeneutics and Headship in First Corinthians,” available among the papers presented at the General Conference Theology of Ordination Study Committee (2013–2014) at www.adventistarchives.org/gc-tosc (accessed 16 June 2015).

9 I should be noted here that Paul’s purpose in 1 Cor. 11 does not appear to be the forbidding of women to speak in a worship setting (cf., vss. 4 and 5). In fact, the discussion seems to be centred on the covering of the head, cutting or shaving of the hair, or wearing of long hair (see especially vss. 4–7 and 13–16).

10 See, for instance, the discussion in Michael P. Jensen, *Sydney Anglicanism: An Apology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012). For a convenient entry into the discussion from an Anglican perspective, see Kevin Giles’ “Response to ‘Sydney Anglicanism: An Apology,’” available at: https://www.cbe.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=126:response-to-sydney-anglicanism-an-apology&catid=34:book-review&Itemid=99 (accessed 29 May 2015). A more complete (and scholarly) version of Giles’ arguments can be found in Kevin Giles, *The Trinity and Subordinationism: The Doctrine of God and the Contemporary Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2002), especially pp. 141–268. For an Adventist perspective that approaches this subordinationist standpoint, see John W. Peters, “Restoration of the Image of God: Headship and Submission,” available among the papers presented at the General Conference Theology of Ordination Study Committee (2013–2014) at www.adventistarchives.org/gc-tosc (accessed 16 June 2015).

11 This perspective is sometimes termed “primitivism” which means that contemporary Christian communities will look particularly to the earliest Christian period (ie. to “primitive” Christianity) for their models of practice. Adventism has its roots firmly planted in “primitivism” with its emphasis on Sabbath, believers’ baptism, tithing, foot-washing, etc. It should be observed that while the New Testament contains no clear injunction to ordain women to ministry, neither does it contain any specific instruction to ordain men. A recent example of the call to Christian “primitivism,” although it does not deal with the women’s

An important plank in the platform for the contra-ordination case is the fact that both the Aaronic priests of Old Testament times and the twelve disciples (or apostles) appointed by Jesus in New Testament times were exclusively male. While strong analogies might be constructed between the priests and apostles and their contemporary counterparts in Christian ministry, again it should be recognised that this is an argument from the silence of Scripture, for Scripture itself does not make those explicit connections.¹²

In Exodus 28 and 29 the ceremony of consecration or “ordination” of Aaron and his sons is described (Exod 28:1–3; 29:1–46). This ceremony is complex, to say the least. It involved sacrifices and offerings, cleansing with water, dressing in sacred garments, and anointing with oil—a ritual that is summed up by the words: “In this way you shall ordain Aaron and his sons” (29:9). On the other hand, Jesus’ appointment of the twelve, “whom he also designated apostles” appears to be simple in the extreme. Jesus merely called his disciples together and the “chose twelve of them”; indicating that he chose the twelve from a larger group (Luke 6:12–16). Again, when Jesus sent them out on their first missionary journey “He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness” (Matt 10:1).¹³

Third, women obviously cannot meet one of the key qualifications for ministry as outlined by Paul in his First Epistle to Timothy. While church “leaders”¹⁴—and one might assume that pastors are included among such leaders—are to be “temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money” (1 Tim. 3:2–3), the first (and maybe primary) characteristic addressed by Paul is: “the overseer must be above reproach, the

ordination issue, is Frank Viola and George Barna, *Pagan Christianity?: Exploring the Roots of Our Church Practices* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2012). Ellen G. White appears also to point to a need to return to a “primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times” (White, *The Great Controversy* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1888, 1950], 464).

12 See, for example, “Answers to Questions about Women’s Ordination: Some Fundamental Questions,” available on the *Adventists Affirm* website: www.adventistsaffirm.org/article/25/women-s-ordination-faqs/1-answers-to-questions-about-women-s-ordination (accessed 16 June 2015). Note that *Adventists Affirm* claims to be “A Publication Affirming Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs.”

13 Note that Matthew’s account the most comprehensive of this incident (cf. Mark 6:7–13 and Luke 9:1–6).

14 Referred to variously in English translations as bishops, overseers, elders, and leaders.

husband of but one wife” (vs. 2). Proponents of the contra-position take this statement at face-value; that is the pastor/leader must be male, and married to one wife.¹⁵ And it goes without saying that a woman cannot possibly fulfil this qualification.¹⁶

Fourth, a common concern among those who oppose the ordination of women is the fear of the “slippery slope.” The push for the equality of women with men in ministry is seen as part of the feminist phenomenon, and the question is asked: what will be the next challenge to biblical authority by cultural forces? There is an expectation that if the church gives way on its attitude to women in ministry, it will be a “short step” to the acceptance of practising homosexual persons into church membership, and even to their possible ordination as pastors.¹⁷ The danger of the “slippery slope” has always been a genuine concern for evangelical Christians. How are they to be closely connected with their surrounding culture/s without losing their distinctiveness as followers of Jesus Christ?¹⁸

Women’s Ordination: WHY Not?

I have described what I see as the key arguments *against* the ordination of women; and now I shall turn to the case *for* equality in ministry for women and men in the Adventist communion. While it may appear to be a strange place to start, the first point I wish to make is that the New Testament actually knows nothing about ordination to pastoral ministry for either men or women! The best that can be said is that as an ordained pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I have been set aside by my Church twice as an elder; once as an elder by my local church, and then as an “elder” by the institutional church (ie. by a local conference or local mission, after receiving approval by the union mission or conference). However, there is no explicit directive in the New Testament to ordain pastors by the laying on of

15 Of course, the “husband of one wife” injunction should also disqualify male pastors who are not married as well.

16 For a forthright presentation of this perspective, see Clinton and Gina Wahlen, *Women’s Ordination: Does it Matter?* (Silver Spring, MD: Bright Shores Publishing, 2015) 39–48.

17 A succinct portrayal of the “slippery Slope” argument may be found in C. Raymond Holmes, “Women in Ministry: What Should we do Now?” (p. 8) available among the papers presented at the General Conference Theology of Ordination Study Committee (2013–2014) at www.adventistarchives.org/gc-tosc (accessed 16 June 2015).

18 See John 17:15–16 and Jesus’ discussion regarding salt and light (Matt 5:13–16).

hands or by the vote of a church committee. At, the same time, there is no command not to do so.¹⁹

Theologically, I do not see a problem with this, unless one begins from a position of extreme primitivism; that is, that every organisational detail of church polity must find a warrant in Scripture. In fact, the apostolic church seems to have been quite flexible in regard to its leadership structures. Perhaps it can be articulated best as Spirit-led as the church faced new challenges. For example, consider the choosing of the seven deacons to a role of practical ministry in the Jerusalem church, described in Acts 6. Their setting-apart is outlined in this way: "They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them" (vs. 6). It should be observed that this was done without a direct command from Jesus or even a prophetic instruction, although prophetic utterances were held in high esteem in the earliest church.²⁰

Second, it seems to me that Scripture is clear in its presentation of women and men having equality in both creation and salvation. For instance humankind—both male and female—is created in the "image of God" (Gen 1:26–27; 5:1–2). While there have been many and various explanations as to what the image of God means, probably the simplest (and maybe the most obvious) is that humans are to act as God's representatives in the earthly sphere.²¹ It may then be argued that there is something about the maleness and femaleness of humankind that is revelatory of God himself. Although there are obvious differences between the Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 accounts of creation, they are probably best seen as complementary. In Genesis chapter 2 God is revealed as creating Eve from a rib of the first created Adam (Gen 2:21–24). The focus of this creation narrative is on the oneness of the created pair, not on an inherent inequality between man and woman (Gen

19 Certainly this is implied by the tentative nature of the wording of the "Consensus Statement on a Seventh-day Adventist Theology of Ordination": "While most elders and deacons ministered in local settings, some elders were itinerant and supervised greater territory with multiple congregations, which *may* reflect the ministry of individuals such as Timothy and Titus (1 Tim 1:3–4; Titus 1:5)." This consensus statement is available among the papers of the General Conference Theology of Ordination Study Committee (2013–2014) at www.adventistarchives.org/gc-tosc (accessed 16 June 2015); emphasis mine.

20 For instance, Acts 2:17–21 and 11:27–28.

21 A handy discussion of the "Image of God" can be found in Edward M. Curtis, "'Image of God (OT)," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, edited by David Noel Freedman (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), III:389–91.

2:23–24).²² In fact, it is ironic that when the narratives of Genesis 1 and 2 are viewed at the metanarrative level, one could make a stronger argument for the superiority of women than for the inferiority of women. For example, light is created on day 1 while the sun, moon and stars are created on day 4. Again, the waters are separated and sky is formed on day 2 while fish and birds fill the sea and sky on day 5 (and so on). God “forms” on days 1 through 3, and then “fills” on days 4 through 6 in creative moments that move from the simple to the complex.²³ This creative movement reaches its climax on day 6 with the creation of land animals followed by the crowning act of creation—the divine stooping to form the human pair, first Adam, and then Eve.

There is no ontological inequality apparent between the genders at the time of their creation. In fact, it is not until the fall of humankind into sin as described in Genesis chapter 3 that one finds any evidence of inequality. There, in the context of the “curses” that are pronounced on the serpent, the man, the woman, and the ground, God says “he [Adam] will rule over you [Eve]” (Gen 3:16). It should be recognised that the subordination of the woman to the man is a result of sin. It does not find its origin in God’s creative activity. It was not meant to be! If this is the case, might not one argue that the implementation of salvation would at the very least begin to repair the damage done by the entrance of sin into the world with the full restoration (or re-creation) to occur at the eschaton? The New Testament makes the case that the Christian community reverses all human separation and inequality in Jesus Christ: “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:29). If there is to be equality between men and women in the salvation provided ultimately through Jesus Christ (the primary issue), surely there should be equality in the proclamation of the gospel of salvation (the secondary issue).

Third, the New Testament affirms the ministry of women. While those who make a case against the ordination of women represent their case as based solely on Scripture (i.e. the Reformation principle of *sola Scriptura*), the totality of the witness of Scripture cannot be ignored (i.e. the twin Reformation principle of *tota Scriptura*). Jesus’ interactions with women can only be described as revolutionary when viewed in the context of his day.

22 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1890, 1958), 46.

23 See Laurence A. Turner, *Genesis*, 2nd ed. (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), 12–15.

For example, in conversation with the woman of Samaria, Jesus first reveals who he really is: "I, the one speaking to you—I am he" (John 4:26); and the woman becomes such an effective missionary to her own town (vss. 28–30) that "many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony" (vs. 39). What of the disciples' role in this story? They are "surprised" to find Jesus talking to a woman!

Along with affirmation of women by Jesus, Paul—the one who apparently speaks against the ministry of women—also affirms the ministry of women. Romans chapter 16 conveys Paul's greetings to a number of Christian believers, mentioned among whom are Priscilla and Aquila, "my co-workers in Christ Jesus" (vs. 3), and Mary, "who worked very hard for you" (vs. 6). Then Paul greets Andronicus [a man] and Junia [a woman] as "my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me." "They," says Paul, "are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was" (vs. 7).²⁴ It is difficult to see why women, who could carry the role of apostle in earliest Christian times, should not be ordained to the ministry of the Word in the twenty-first century.

This "other side" of Paul should send us back to look at the historical and literary context of chapters 2 and 3 of 1 Timothy and chapter 11 of 1 Corinthians. For instance, the wider context of 1 Timothy should prompt us to ask whether at least some of the details of Paul's advice to the church at Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3) through Timothy must be read contextually and culturally. Paul's counsel in regard to elders extends through to chapters 5 and 6 in which he addresses specific issues pertaining to widows, elders, and slaves. Paul's advice to slaves is that they should "consider their masters worthy of full respect," and if their owners happen to be fellow-believers, "they should serve them even better because their masters are dear to them as fellow-believers." (1 Tim. 6:1–4). In considering the context of 1 Corinthians 11, one does not even have to go beyond the chapter to find mention of cultural norms in worship- settings such as head coverings (for women) and the "disgrace" of long hair (for men). Paul concludes his discussion with a series of questions: "Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, but that if a

24 For a discussion of the merits of the arguments regarding Junia/Junias see James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16, Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 38 (Dallas, TX: Word, 1988). Dunn remarks: "The assumption that it [the name] must be male is a striking indictment of male presumption regarding the character and structure of earliest Christianity" (p. 894).

woman has long hair, it is her glory?” (1 Cor. 11:13–14). Almost certainly, the answers to Paul’s questions that would be given by many contemporary Christians would be different from those that he would have expected in his own day.

We have to conclude that it is legitimate—even essential—to ask ourselves, what was going on in Ephesus and Corinth that prompted Paul’s specific admonition to those churches? The point is that conservative Christians believe that while the Scriptures are divinely inspired, they do not come down to us from heaven through a stainless-steel conduit untouched by the cultures, conditions, and contexts of the time of their writing.²⁵ If we are to take the Bible seriously, we must continually re-read and re-apply its truths to new contexts.

Fourth, the gifts of ministry or the gifts of the Spirit are not gender-specific. Paul, in listing the spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12, gives no indication that some belong exclusively to men, and not to women. In fact, the very opposite seems to be the case: “All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines” (vs. 11).²⁶ The list of spiritual gifts in Ephesians 4 includes “the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, [and] the pastors and teachers” (vs. 11). A number of passages in the New Testament indicate that female prophets were not uncommon in the early church period.²⁷ This is particularly significant in light of Paul’s argument in 1 Corinthians 12–14 for the pre-eminence of the prophetic gift over the gift of tongues in the communal worship setting.²⁸ If the prophetic gift is available (at the will of the Spirit) to both men and women, why would some of the other spiritual gifts belong exclusively to men?

25 I do not attempt here to re-construct the societal or ecclesial situations in Corinth or Ephesus during the 1st Christian century. Suffice it to say that there is enough evidence within the writings themselves to indicate quite conclusively that cultural and historical factors should be taken account of as believers strive to understand them in a postmodern age. For an examination of 1 Tim. 2:8–15 that takes account of the historical context, see Carl Cosaert, “Paul, Woman and the Ephesian Church: An Examination of 1 Timothy 2:8–15,” available among the papers presented at the General Conference Theology of Ordination Study Committee (2013–2014) at www.adventistarchives.org/gc-tosc (accessed 16 June 2015).

26 Compare Rom 12:3–8 where Paul infers that all “members” of the body of Christ “have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us” (vs. 6).

27 See, for instance, Acts 21:9; 1 Cor. 11:5; and Acts 2:17. In fact, in the latter passage, prophesying by men and women is seen as a direct fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel 2:28.

28 Note particularly 1 Cor. 14:22–25.

A Way Forward?

Although not always acknowledged by the participants, it is apparent that those on both side of the debate about women's ordination in Adventism take Scripture very seriously. A reasonable biblical case can be made for both positions. So where does that leave us? It seems to me that either we have to come to the conclusion that Scripture—and perhaps Paul in particular—contradicts itself, or, alternatively, that we are asking questions of the Bible that its writers never intended to answer specifically. Where are conservative believers to turn if Scripture does not appear to supply unambiguous answers to our questions?

Perhaps we need to examine again what the Reformation *sola Scriptura* principle really meant and means. In actuality, Luther's own personal practice is indicative of a wider perspective than "the Bible alone." He appears to have operated within a circle of authority that included the tradition of early Christianity (with Augustine remaining his favourite theologian) along with the insights and experience of his Wittenberg colleagues, all viewed within the context of Scripture remaining the centrepiece of his interpretive framework.²⁹

This approach is best summed up in what has been termed the "Wesleyan Quadrilateral" of Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience.³⁰ Within that particular circle of authority, while the Bible is seen as the ultimate or primary authority, human reason may lead us to ask such questions as: "Does it make sense to exclude more than fifty percent of Christian believers from the possibility of serving the church in pastoral ministry?" and "What do we make of the fact that the biblical evidence is ambiguous?" At the very least such questions should propel us back to the Bible and to ask whether we have understood it completely or correctly.

Again, it is legitimate for us to ask questions that relate to Christian and Adventist history (or tradition) such as: "What are the origins of the contemporary ordination rituals and practices?" and "What happened in the journey from early Adventism, which saw many women involved in the ministry of the church, to modern Adventism, which often disallows the full participa-

29 Egil Grislis, "Martin Luther—Cause or Cure of the Problem of Authority," *Consensus: A Canadian Lutheran Journal of Theology* 14 (1988): 37.

30 A fuller description and analysis of the origins and features of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral can be found in Robert K. McIver and Ray Roennfeldt, "Text and Interpretation: Christian Understandings of Authoritative Texts in the Light of Social Change," *Islam and Christian – Muslim Relations* 20/3 (2009): 268–271.

tion of women in pastoral ministry?" Again, such questions should send us back to Scripture in order to ascertain whether we have read our own cultural biases into its words.

Equally relevant are the questions that arise from our experience as Christian believers: "What are we to make of the fact that the church, far from being weakened, has been blessed and strengthened by the ministry of many outstanding female elders and pastors?" and "How are we to respond to the strong affirmation of a divine calling on the lives of the many women who are undertaking ministry studies in our colleges and seminaries?" Perhaps it is time that the Christian community took seriously the evidence from experience, returning to Scripture with a mind open to hearing anew the voice of the Spirit.

Do we have the analogy of Scripture on our side as we undertake this task? Perhaps the earliest church council (recorded in Acts 15) provides a possible resolution. The most significant question at this council related to the way in which Gentiles might be incorporated into the church. Would it be necessary for them to become Jews first, requiring circumcision, and only then Christians? It is obvious that the debate was robust³¹ with "the believers who belonged to the Pharisee party" arguing for circumcision (vs. 5), the Apostle Peter referencing his experience with Cornelius (vss. 7–11)³², and Barnabas and Paul telling of the "signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them" (vs. 12). Finally, "James spoke up" (vs. 13), summarised the discussion, cited the "words of the prophets" (vss. 16–18) and concluded: "It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God" (vs. 19). While from the perspective of a literal reading the weight of Scriptural evidence clearly favoured the "Pharisee" party, it is very clear that a broader approach was evident in the council's conclusion: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us..." (vs. 28). Certainly we can detect all of the elements of what has become known as the Wesleyan Quadrilateral in creative play and counterplay in the council's discussions—Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience—and a decision was made that allowed the church to avoid stagnation and disunity.

31 See vs. 7.

32 See Acts 10 and 11.

Finally

A reasonable biblical case can be made by both sides of the debate. I have attempted to portray the strengths of each without examining their respective deficits in any great depth. It seems to me that a fresh methodology is needed. It is somewhat ironic, given Seventh-day Adventism's roots in Methodism, that the Wesleyan Quadrilateral might provide a means to obtain a resolution as we take account of the questions raised by contemporary believers, acknowledge our history, and affirm the evidence of God's call in the lives of women to pastoral ministry, while at the same time valuing Scripture as the ultimate authoritative Word.³³

And a final irony: how is it that Seventh-day Adventists (of all people) are still debating this issue when a woman, Ellen G. White, was one of the denomination's principal founders?

33 For the Christian believer, Scripture itself is authoritative because it reveals Jesus Christ (see John 5:39-40; 2 Tim 3:15-17; and cf. Heb 1:1-3).

Chapter 2: A Biblical and Historical Reflection on the Theology of Ordination and Whether Women May be Ordained as Ministers in the Seventh-day Adventist Church

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In this paper the theology of ordination will be explored, with particular emphasis on the question as to whether women may be ordained as ministers in the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church. Addressing this question is a challenging and complex task. The fact that the SDA Church has tried on at least five previous occasions to resolve the issue, with people in favour and opposed both claiming to be faithful to Scripture, demonstrates convincingly that there are more layers to this issue than many care to admit.

I shall attempt to synthesize and re-examine a number of facets of this important topic, beginning with possible historical roots for the current practices employed in the ordination of SDA pastors. A review of the biblical practice of setting people apart for various types of leadership follows, with a view to identify the role of Adventist ministers. Next is a discussion of various models of the Church, and how different models determine how ministry functions and is viewed by various faith traditions. Finally I shall provide examples of biblical women who were spiritual leaders, and the issues that some people believe prevent modern women from following in their steps.

Before drawing conclusions, I refer to an instance in denominational history when a husband-and-wife team was so vocal in its opinions that Ellen White felt impelled to confront them and ask them to be quiet.¹ It so happened that what they were teaching was correct, but their attitudes were splitting the Church. There was a larger issue at stake. The tragedy of our time is that not only does this issue have the potential to split the Church, but while we hesitate in indecision, multitudes are dying every day who have not heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 1:204-209.

Origins of the Adventist Idea of Ordination

The pioneers of the SDA Church shared the Protestant Reformers' distaste of the medieval Catholic view that ordination is a sacrament of the Church. This view was considered to bring about a wide separation between ordained clergy and non-ordained laity. The Reformers tried to bridge this gap, and spoke of the priesthood of all believers.² They saw ordination as an act of prayer, so with the laying on of hands, a special blessing or spiritual gift was transferred in some way. But the dividing line between clergy and laity still appeared blurred until it was decided that the distinguishing factor between a minister and his church members should be the authority to baptize and to administer the Lord's Supper.³

However, in the early days of the Wesleyan (Methodist) tradition, from which tradition Adventism grew, very few ministers were ordained. When John Wesley travelled to the United States, he ordained men who would later become leaders of the Methodist Church and called them "elders," and the head of the Church he called "superintendent." Thus by the nineteenth century the term "elder" would become a title for ministers in America in many denominations. Their function was to act as travelling evangelists, which left local churches without a resident minister. Because of this, Wesley arranged for the Lord's Supper to be celebrated only once each quarter, to give the travelling "elders" the chance to visit their far-flung parishes.⁴ From this practice arose the need to ordain lay elders to officiate at the Lord's Supper and to care generally for the local church during the travelling elder's absence, causing confusion between the functions of these two types of elder. It was this terminology of elder, model of ministry and Church organizational structure that was adopted in the Adventist Church in its formative years.⁵

2 As Peter Matheson observes, "References abound to Luther's *Appeal to the Gekman Nobility* and especially to his teaching on the priesthood of all believers." Peter Matheson, *The Rhetoric of the Reformation* (London and New York: T. & T. Clark, 2004), 90.

3 Russell L. Staples, "A Theological Understanding of Ordination," in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 144.

4 *Ibid.*, 145.

5 *Ibid.*, 145-146.

Biblical “Ordination”

It is appropriate to ask from where did the idea of ordaining ministers come? What are the biblical roots of this practice? The word “ordain” does not have an exact equivalent in the original languages of Scripture. Instead there are up to 30 different Hebrew and Greek words that have been used to convey the sense of the English word “ordain/ordination.”⁶ In the Old Testament (OT), when the idea of ordination is presented, the Hebrew uses such expressions as “lay hands on” (Num. 27:18–23), “fill the hands of” (Exod. 28:41), “set in place” (2 Kings 23:5), “made to stand [in their place]” (2 Chron. 11:15), “to arrange [everything in its place]” (Ps. 132:17), “made” (Num. 28:6) and “put” (Ps. 81:5). The literal meanings of the New Testament (NT) words include “to make” (Mk 3:14), “to assign or arrange” (1 Cor. 9:14), “to put in charge” (Heb. 5:1), “to stretch out the hand” (Acts 14:23), “to place” (1 Tim. 2:7), and “to appoint or choose” (Acts 14:23).

In other words, what the Church today may think of as “ordination” and what the people of biblical times understood may not be the same thing. The various biblical contexts convey concepts of empowerment, of strengthening the hand of a leader for a particular task, or of being in one’s place in order to contribute to some grand scheme. The verbs that denote standing in a certain place or taking one’s stand both have military connotations, depicting a soldier being in position to guard or to defend. These concepts may be quite different from those that people have in mind today.

Similarly, the expression “laying on of hands” occurs 25 times in the OT, but only five of those relate to people being set apart.⁷ Most of the others refer to placing hands on an animal before it is sacrificed. A related term that is used is “to fill the hand,” referring to the empowering of someone for a task.⁸ This particular term is only used to describe the ordination of Aaron and his sons as priests. In the NT, “laying on of hands” occurs 20 times, but

6 Staples, “A Theological Understanding of Ordination,” 139.

7 Three references refer to Moses’ ordination of Joshua (Num. 27:18, 23; Deut. 34:9); one refers to the Israelites consecrating the Levites (Num. 8:10) and one refers to the congregation laying hands on a blasphemer (Lev. 24:14); see Keith Mattingly, “Laying on of Hands in Ordination: A Biblical Study,” in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 60.

8 Exod. 28:41; 29:9, 35; Lev 8:33. It has the sense of consecrating something in Ezek. 43:26.

only five of these relate to setting apart for a special role.⁹ Most of the other occurrences relate to acts of healing.

So the particular activity of laying hands on someone for the purpose of setting them apart for ministry is not the main use of the phrase. The less-frequent usage relating to setting apart is outnumbered by the usage in reference to the confession of sin on a sacrificial animal, or to the act of healing someone.

The Act of Consecration

Another aspect of the setting apart of leaders in the OT is the description of the ceremonies that were employed to do this. There were different ceremonies for each of the various classes of “minister” mentioned above. The consecration of the priests (Exod. 29) including washing them (verse 4), clothing them (verse 5), anointing them (verse 7), placing coats, hats and sashes on them (verse 9), sacrificing a bull and two rams (upon which hands had been laid, verses 1, 10–20), dabbing blood on their right earlobe, thumb and big toe (verse 20), sprinkling a mixture of blood and anointing oil on their clothes (verse 21), presenting wave offerings (verses 22–28), then eating portions of the sacrifices (verses 31–34). The consecration of the Levites (Num. 8:5–26) began by sprinkling them with water. Then they were required to shave their whole body, then wash. This was followed by a public ceremony of laying on hands. Aaron then presented the Levites as a wave offering to the Lord to set them apart from the rest of the Israelites.¹⁰

The recognition of prophets appears to be a little simpler. Elijah gave Elisha his cloak and Elisha asked him for a double portion of his Spirit (2 Kings 2:1–14). Isaiah saw a vision of God before he was *sent* (6:1–8). God also *sent* Ezekiel (2:3), but he *consecrated* and *appointed* Jeremiah (1:5); he *revealed mysteries* to Daniel (2:19); and the *word of the Lord came* to Hosea (1:1), Joel (1:1), Jonah (1:1), Micah (1:1), Zephaniah (1:1), Haggai (1:1), and Zechariah (1:1). Furthermore, Amos (1:1), Nahum (1:1), Habakkuk (1:1), and Malachi (1:1) shared the oracles or visions that God gave them. But it is more difficult to determine the public nature of those demonstrations—except for the case of Elisha, whose commissioning was witnessed by 50 students from the school of the prophets.

It is clear, then, that the act of consecration was something significant, that it confirmed something that God had already decided. From all the

9 The five texts that mention laying on hands in the context of consecration are: Acts 6:6; 13:3; 19:6; 1 Tim. 4:14; 5:22; 2 Tim. 1:6, see Mattingly, “Laying on of Hands in Ordination,” 67.

10 Mattingly, “Laying on of Hands in Ordination,” 61–62.

above examples we may conclude that the current concept of “ordination” in the Adventist Church is only a very thin slice of the biblical concept of setting apart. In fact, what we see today is perhaps a development of tradition rather than being a mirror of biblical practice. In addition, and as previously outlined, the priestly function involved in the sacrificial system does not parallel Adventist ministry today.

It may be helpful, by way of clarification, to examine the consecration of three individuals; first Joshua, then Paul and Barnabas. When Joshua was consecrated as the new leader (Josh. 1:1–9), Moses first spoke words of encouragement, then spelled out his duty, assured him of God’s help and, lastly, charged him always to obey God.¹¹ The commissioning of Paul and Barnabas receives Ellen White’s most extensive comments on the subject of the function of laying on of hands.¹² She stresses that God had already chosen both Paul and Barnabas before the ceremony, and that no new grace, qualification, or virtue was added. It was the Church’s recognition of God’s prior appointment to office.¹³

In sum, there are some features of biblical rituals of setting apart and consecration to which we can relate. These may include: ensuring the solemnity of the occasion; making sure that the service publicly affirms the call that God has already given; offering words of encouragement; spelling out the work to be done; giving assurance of God’s help; charging the person to be obedient to God; and in the tradition of inaugurating a new prophetic voice, praying that God will fill the new minister with his Spirit.

Models of Ministry

Since there is no clear biblical pattern to copy as a basis for the ordination of Adventist ministers, there is a need to determine which biblical leadership role best parallels the role of the Adventist minister today. Is an SDA minister the equivalent of a priest, Levite, prophet, scribe, or Pharisee?

In most discussions on the topic it seems to be assumed that the *priests* of the OT form the pattern for ministry today. However, the main function of the priest was to officiate at the sacrifices.¹⁴ The priests also had special

11 Ibid., 64.

12 Staples, “A Theological Understanding of Ordination,” 142.

13 Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1911), 161–162.

14 Jacques Doukhan disagrees. He includes administrative and prophetic functions in the role of priests. See Jacques B. Doukhan, “Women Priests in Israel: A Case for their Absence,” in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University

access into the holy parts of the wilderness tabernacle (when it came time to move camp), and later, the sanctuary. At the time of the Exodus, the priests were to cover and then carry the Ark of the Covenant and the incense altar on poles borne on their shoulders. So the question remains, what function/s of priesthood do Adventist ministers perform in the twenty-first century? Very few, it would seem.

The *Levites* ensured the smooth running of the sanctuary and later the temple, and when it came time to move on in the wilderness, they gathered all the elements of the tabernacle, loaded them on to ox-carts and reassembled everything again at the new campsite. Before breaking camp they were to wait for the priests to cover up all the items of the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place and place poles through the rings on each item (Num. 3–4). Only then could the Levites carry the sacred items to the next campsite (Num. 4:15). Other Levite clans were responsible to load the remaining curtains and all the planks and fittings onto ox-carts. They were also responsible for organizing the water and firewood supply and carrying out the other duties required in the daily operation of the sanctuary. Thus the work of the Levites seems to be related to the work of today's deacons rather than that of pastors.

Prophets were called by God to be his mouthpieces. They did not need to come from a particular family line as did the priests and Levites, and they could come from any social stratum or background. Although prophets are popularly known for telling the future, that was not their main work. Their main calling was to proclaim fearlessly the "Word" that came to them from God. Neither Samuel, Elijah, nor John the Baptist, are known for predicting the future, yet Jesus called John the Baptist the greatest of the prophets (Luke 7:28). These were powerful people who were fearless in their proclamation, and were greatly respected by king and commoner alike.

Scribes, mentioned in the NT, were, as their name suggests, able to read and write. They specialized in the knowledge of and the teaching of the law. In their ranks were those who were responsible for training the young to follow the traditions of the elders.

Since Pharisees and Sadducees are not thought of today in a very positive light, it is unlikely that they would be considered as being acceptable role models for ministers.

Press, 1998), 32. But it could be argued that these functions did not figure very largely, and were superseded by separate orders that primarily dealt with prophecy (the school of the prophets), teaching (the scribes) and administration (the scribes).

The OT Best Model for the Adventist Minister

Which of the above roles of priest, Levite, prophet or scribe best parallels the Adventist minister? If it is that of priest, the function of Adventist minister would be primarily to perform sacrifices as the Catholic priest does in the daily sacrifice of the mass. In contrast to this model, Adventists recognize that since NT times there is no need for priests, as there is only “one mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). As Norman Geisler and Ralph MacKenzie affirm, “nowhere in the New Testament are church leaders called ‘priests.’”¹⁵ So the OT priest does not seem to be the best parallel for the Adventist minister.

What of the Levites? Is it the first responsibility of the Adventist minister to care for the physical plant? I suggest that this is not the case unless they perform the work of the deacons—and there may be some pastors who try to do this. Do the Scribes provide a good role model? Ministers may well have a teaching role, but the Church relies heavily on lay people to fulfil that function.

So perhaps the best OT parallel to the Adventist minister is that of prophet—someone called of God to deliver his Word to a people, warning them of judgment to come, and assuring them of God’s incredible patience in the face of human rebellion.

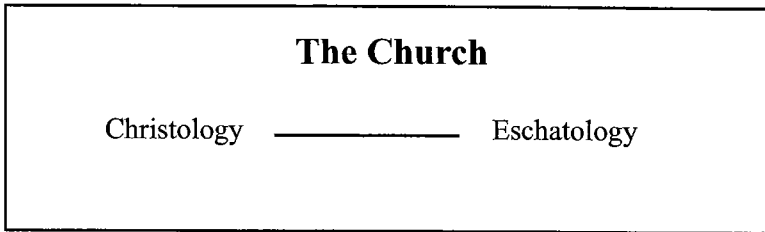
The Nature of the Church

The variety of biblical practices described above, and the fact that the practice of Adventist ordination developed from Christian tradition rather than from a specific biblical model, suggest that any discussion of ordination for Adventist ministers must begin with an understanding of the nature of the Church. Christians through the centuries have developed a number of definitions of “church,”¹⁶ and each one has an impact on determining how people are set apart for ministry. Therefore it is necessary to identify the ecclesiological context that drives our own views of Gospel ministry and ordination.

15 Norman L. Geisler and Ralph E. MacKenzie, *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals: Agreements and Differences*, 2004 ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995), 291.

16 See, for example, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical and Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002). Kärkkäinen identifies seven ecclesiological traditions, representing Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Free Church, Pentecostal/Charismatic and Ecumenical perspectives.

Russell Staples has developed a very helpful overview. He considers that from the many metaphors for “church” in the NT (including “salt of the earth,” “a letter from Christ,” “branches of the vine,” “the bride of Christ,” “ambassadors,” “a chosen race,” “a holy temple,” “the body of Christ,” “a new creation,” “citizens of heaven,” “the household of God,” and “a spiritual body”), two dominant focal points can be identified. The first of these is Christology—the Church being the body of Christ; and the second is eschatology—the Church being a last-day movement with a unique mission to fulfil (see figure below).¹⁷ Jürgen Moltmann succinctly describes the relationship between the two when he states: “the Christological foundation always points toward the eschaton” making the Church “Christologically founded and eschaologically directed.”



From this basic framework, four main views of the Christian Church have developed:

1. Merged Christology and Eschatology
2. Primary Emphasis on Christology
3. Primary Emphasis on Eschatology
4. The Two in Balance

Merged Christology and Eschatology

An example of the first structure, where both focal points are merged, is medieval Catholicism. Both Christ and the end times are swallowed up in the Church, so the Church replaces the promise of heaven and the new earth. In the Catholic tradition, because the priests stand in the place of Christ, the Bridegroom of the Church it would therefore be impossible for a woman

¹⁷ Staples, “A Theological Understanding of Ordination,” 135. There is also a helpful section on the nature of the Church in Raoul Dederen, “The Church,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, SDA Bible Commentary (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 12:538–581. The citation from Jürgen Moltmann that follows is cited in Kärkkäinen, *Introduction to Ecclesiology*, 127.

ever to become a priest. How could a woman priest relate to the Church “nuptially” as a bridegroom to his bride?¹⁸

Furthermore, with the Church understood as the intermediary between God and humanity, priests are empowered to perform sacraments that give divine blessing. Therefore ordination is understood as “the sacramental conferral of an indelible grace.”¹⁹ In other words, according to the understandings of medieval Roman Catholicism something divine is imparted to the priest at his ordination.

Primary Emphasis on Christology

The second pattern, in which the primary emphasis is on Christology, is seen among communities of faith that have a high regard for the Church as being the “mystical body of Christ”—the invisible Church. The inherent danger of this model is that Church can become self-absorbed, despite its preference to speak only of Christ. In this model, eschatology can be understood in terms of personal salvation, and it is possible that there is little or no sense of the Church having a mission to the world. Although there may be a deep sense of piety and devotion among these communities, there is no over-arching mission focus. Ministers ordained in these groups are seen as instruments of divine grace, and when they are ordained, they too receive a “downward flowing of grace from God.”²⁰

Primary Emphasis on Eschatology

The third pattern, in which the primary emphasis is on eschatology, embodies a profound sense of urgency fired by a passionate belief in the return of Jesus. This so preoccupies the Church that the matter of being the “body of Christ” can be seen as less important. Rather, the Church is seen as “an institution to be organized and directed in ways that enhance the business-like efficiency of spreading the good news.”²¹ Ministers in these faith communities are set apart for service—mostly evangelism—and little seems to differentiate clergy from lay leaders (especially church elders) except “clerical vocation and office.”²²

18 George Weigel, *The Truth of Catholicism: Inside the Essential Teachings and Controversies of the Church Today* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2002), 68.

19 Staples, “A Theological Understanding of Ordination,” 136-137.

20 *Ibid.*, 137.

21 *Ibid.*

22 *Ibid.*

The Two in Balance

The fourth pattern emerges when the twin foci of Christology and eschatology are in balance. This type of Church views itself as a divinely constituted community of faith but also as having a responsibility to proclaim the coming kingdom of Christ—"there is a balance between what the Church is and what it does."²³ Ministers to these congregations sense a divine call, and the community of faith confirms that call. They not only evangelize but also nurture. They not only promote the health of the body, but also maintain the mission of the Church in order to reach a lost world.

Seventh-day Adventists probably fall under the third category. They follow the pattern set by the Methodists, and in their concern for mission they appear to be driven more by practical concerns than by theological reflection. However there is much to commend the fourth option.

Women as Ministers

Does any of the foregoing shed light on the appropriateness of having women serving as ordained ministers in the Church? This question has in no small way exercised the minds of Christians in many denominations. As Richard Rice observes, "[Adventists] on both sides find support for their position in the Bible. Those in favour of ordaining women point out that both the biblical doctrines of creation and salvation affirm the equality of women,"²⁴ while those who oppose the ordination of women

... also appeal to the Bible to support their position. They observe that there is no Biblical command to ordain women, nor any record in the New Testament that women were ever ordained. In addition, there are several passages that seem to indicate that women are intended to occupy a place in human affairs that is distinct from, if not inferior to, that of men.²⁵

Reasons for not Ordaining Women

There are a number of reasons given by those who advocate against ordaining women, the main ones being:

No Female Priests in Ancient Israel

Despite the fact that a number of women mentioned in the Bible fulfilled very significant roles, there is a perceived difficulty in their doing the

23 Ibid., 138.

24 Richard Rice, *Reign of God: An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-Day Adventist Perspective*, 2nd ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1997), 251.

25 Ibid., 252.

same today. One reason for this is based on the observation that there were no women priests in ancient Israel.²⁶ However, we have already seen that the sacrificial function of priests does not equate to the function of today's SDA minister. Furthermore, Jacques Doukhan explains that God wanted the Israelites to avoid any connection with the goddess-fertility rituals of the surrounding nations. The religious traditions of the non-Israelite people encountered by the Israelites were associated with temple prostitution and gross immorality, and were focused on the priestesses.²⁷ To avoid these excesses, women did not become priests in the Hebrew temple.

Doukhan also makes the point that in Hebrew thinking, women from Eve onwards were acknowledged as life-givers, and since a woman symbolizes life-giving, it was totally unacceptable for a woman to participate in sacrificial rituals involving slaughter and death. Rather, her duty was to be the expectant mother of the Messiah, ready to bring life and hope to God's people.²⁸

However, if ministry is seen as a reflection of the prophetic ministry rather than the priesthood, then this objection becomes a non-issue. It certainly makes a lot more sense in the light of Adventist ecclesiology in which the church is viewed as a last-day movement upon which God pours out the "latter rain" of his Spirit. Then sons and daughters will prophesy, the old men will dream dreams, the young men see visions, and even the young servants—male and female—will be an integral part of the "loud cry" (Joel 2:23, 28-29; Matt. 25:6.)

Women Created Subservient to Men

Bacchiocchi suggests that one of the main reasons women should not be ordained is because women were created in a subservient role from Creation. This assertion is based on two things: Eve was created second, and she

26 Doukhan, "Women Priests," 29. Samuel Koranteng-Pipim uses this point to begin his case against the ordination of women, see Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, *Searching the Scriptures: Women's Ordination and the Call to Biblical Fidelity* (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventists Affirm, 1995), 15. C. Raymond Holmes, *The Tip of an Iceberg: Biblical Authority, Biblical Interpretation, and the Ordination of Women in Ministry* (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventists Affirm, 1994) makes the same assumption, as does Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Study on the Role of Women in the Church* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1987).

27 Doukhan, "Women Priests," 31.

28 Ibid., 33-34.

was to be “for man.”²⁹ This is a misunderstanding.³⁰ As Holmes correctly observes, Eve was “the crowning act of creation.”³¹ And Richard Davidson notes that in every occasion when submission is mentioned in the NT it refers to the home, not the Church.³²

More significant is the connection between an understanding of the Godhead and the nature of the Church. As Moltmann observes, “where there is a hierarchical notion of the Trinity, a hierarchical view of the Church follows.”³³ In other words, where Father Son and Spirit are seen as equals, the Church “is a communion of equals,” but if Father is elevated above Son, and Son is elevated above Spirit, then the Church becomes closed and exclusive.³⁴ It is evident that such a discussion leads easily into the Arian position of Christ’s being a created being and eternally subordinate to the Father.

The “headship” argument fails on this very important implication. It is interesting that Jesus never affirms his headship—quite the opposite in fact: “Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant” (Matt. 20:26); he “made Himself of no reputation...[took] the form of a bondservant...[came] in the likeness of men... humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:7-8). How many times did the disciples plot to become key leaders in Christ’s new kingdom, and how many times did Jesus have to remind them that his message had nothing to do with headship, and everything to do with humility?

Women Should Not Have Authority over Men

This point is related to the previous one. To suggest that women should not have any authority in church leaves Seventh-day Adventists wide open to the rejection and abandonment of the ministry of Ellen G. White. If women are not supposed to have any authority over men, then not only is Ellen White in trouble, but so are all of the Bible’s women prophets, especially

29 Bacchiocchi, *Women in the Church*, 31. He seems to waver on this point, see *ibid.*, 192.

30 See Richard M. Davidson, “Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture,” in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 259-295.

31 Holmes, *The Tip of an Iceberg*, 77.

32 Davidson, “Headship,” 276-281.

33 Kärkkäinen, *Introduction to Ecclesiology*, 128. For a fuller treatment of this theme, see Millard J. Erickson, *Who’s Tampering with the Trinity: An Assessment of the Subordination Debate* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2009).

34 *Ibid.*

Deborah. She was a judge as well as a prophet (Judges 4:4—16), and very few positions had a higher authority than that.

Women Should Keep Silent in Church

A further related issue is the injunction for women to remain silent in the church (1 Tim. 2:12). As Jo Ann Davidson points out, this letter was written to the church in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3)—a church that had real struggles with the Mother-goddess cult (Diana of the Ephesians). This cult taught that a female goddess gave birth to the world, and that in order to achieve the highest exalted position, women must achieve independence from all males and from childbearing.³⁵ To avoid that influence, it is suggested that Paul simply told all women in that church to be quiet. Paul makes the same statement to the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 14:34), so this issue is more widespread than just Ephesus. Richard Davidson, in explaining Paul's directive, suggests that the issue is marriage harmony rather than the subjection of women to all men in the congregation.³⁶ He concludes his study by declaring:

Perhaps the most crucial finding of this survey is that all of the New Testament passages regarding "headship" and "submission" between men and women are limited to the marriage relationship.³⁷

To suggest otherwise is to prohibit all women from teaching a Sabbath School class. What chaos would this bring? Again, Ellen White's writings still inform the Church to this day. Must that ministry now be stopped because of the concern that women should not teach men?

Ordained Deacons and Elders Should Have one Wife

The issue of an ordained person being the husband of one wife (1 Tim. 3:2, 12) is seen by some as a reason for an exclusively male ministry.³⁸ To demand that in biblical grammar all masculine nouns apply only to males creates untold difficulty and confusion. For example, God's statement, let us create *man* in our image and after our likeness (Gen. 1:26), would suggest that females were excluded from creation, despite the Scriptures later (Gen. 5:1,2) explaining that, "male and female he created them." Clearly "man" in this context refers to both genders. Similarly the term "children of Israel" in Hebrew literally means the "sons of Israel." The Exodus consisted of both

35 Jo Ann Davidson, "Women in Scripture: A Survey and Evaluation," in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 178.

36 Richard Davidson, "Headship," 276—281.

37 *Ibid.*, 281.

38 See, for example, Bacchiocchi, *Women in the Church*, 190; Holmes, *The Tip of an Iceberg*, 146—147; Koranteng-Pipim, *Searching the Scriptures*, 16.

men and women, so to hold the strict gender-exclusive position here would mean only men and boys came out of Egypt, and all the women and girls were abandoned back in Egypt. Thus terms such as “son,” or “man,” and even “husband” could refer to either gender.

The issue here is hermeneutics, not the theology of ordination. To say that “the husband of one wife” only applies to men is to impose a Western understanding on an Eastern text. Such a reading is not justified.

Women Would Not be Accepted as Ministers in All Parts of the World

Those that argue that women ministers would not be acceptable in all parts of the world Church point to the issue of the unity of the Church. While unity is of utmost importance, this objection has no substance. In current practice, no minister has the right to appoint himself to any new field of labour. The authority for granting ministers credentials lies with the Union, and the Union Committee makes the final decision as to who is, or who is not, suitable for employment in their field as a minister. Although in theory, a minister, once ordained, is considered eligible to serve anywhere in the world, the reality is that most ministers are placed in a defined field where their language and social skills best apply. For that reason, when ministers are considered for employment in another geographic region, some may be regarded as being unsuitable for the new task, so those names are passed over and someone else is considered. If women were in this mix, they would simply be appointed to a place where their ministry was going to be accepted and appreciated. To deny them that possibility is simply to say that we know better than God when it comes to the call he places upon the people of his choice.

Women as Leaders in the Bible

Therefore the question arises, is it ever appropriate to appoint women as leaders in the Church? It is interesting to note that at times in biblical history, God called and empowered women to senior leadership roles that paralleled, and even surpassed, those of men. It did not seem to be the norm, but during times of crisis, transition and social upheaval, God commissioned women to do the work that the men were either afraid or unable to do.

Probably the most dramatic of these leadership roles has been that of prophet. Biblical tradition recognizes more than 29 men and four women as prophets.³⁹ Miriam (Exod. 15:20), Deborah (Judg. 4:4), Huldah (2 Kings

³⁹ Aaron, Abraham, Ahijah, Elijah, Elisha, Ezekiel, Gad, Habakkuk, Haggai, Hananiah, Iddo, Isaiah, Jehu, Jeremiah, Jonah, Micaiah, Moses, Nathan, Oded,

22:14), Isaiah's wife (Isa. 8:3), and the false prophetess Noadiah (Neh. 6:14, are found in the OT;⁴⁰ while in the NT we find Anna (Lk 2:36), the four daughters of Philip (Acts 21:9), and the false prophetess Jezebel (Rev. 2:20). In this role, the women have just as much authority as the men. Deborah, for example, as well as being called a prophet, was also seen as a judge (Judg. 4:4). The rabbis had great difficulty with the idea of a woman having so much power and, rather than simply ignoring it, they actually contradicted Scripture to declare that she was not a judge.⁴¹

As well as the female prophets mentioned above, there also are a few very influential women found in the NT. In Romans 16, Paul greets 26 different people, nine of whom are women. Phoebe, the first person mentioned in the list (verse 1) is said to be a deacon. Although some Bible translations say she was a "servant," the same biblical word is used to describe her as to describe male deacons.⁴² Furthermore, Paul also uses the same word in Romans 15:31 to describe his work—as a minister of the Gospel. So this is not just a description of serving tables and collecting offerings for the poor.

Another woman Paul mentions is Prisca (Priscilla) who is mentioned before her husband (Rom. 16:3), suggesting she was the more prominent teacher of the two. Another example of a female leader in the early Church, in the same chapter, is Junia. According to Robert Johnson, Andronicus

Samuel, Shemiah, Zechariah, and the anonymous, but clearly male prophets of Judg. 6:8; 1 Kings 13:11, 18; 20:13, 38; 2 Kings 9:4; 2 Chron. 25:15. However, this list includes only men whom the Biblical record labels "prophet." If we were to include those men who bear the titles of "seer," "man of God," and the like, the total would be even higher. See Susan Ackerman, "Why is Miriam also among the Prophets? (And is Zipporah among the Priests?)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 121 (2002): 49.

40 Rabbinic tradition says that there were 48 prophets and seven prophetesses who arose during Israel's history. The female prophetesses are enumerated by name, but, surprisingly, the male prophets' names are not given. The women designated as prophets are Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Abigail, Huldah, and Esther. See Leila L. Bronner, "Biblical Prophetesses through Rabbinic Lenses." *Judaism* 40 (March 1, 1991): 171–183.

41 See the Mishnah, T.B. Niddah 60b; Tosafot Niddah 49b, 50a, cited in Bronner, "Biblical Prophetesses," 179.

42 Davidson, "Women in Scripture," 177. The feminine ending does not denote a separate class of church worker and is not equivalent to the modern word "deaconess." The noun is still masculine in the way it follows the declensions, but functions as a feminine if the subject is feminine (correspondence with Dr Kim Papaioannou).

and Junia (verse 7) were a husband-and-wife “apostolic team.”⁴³ This is by no means a unanimous understanding, but it raises interesting possibilities about the leadership role of women in the early Church.

Women as Teachers and Leaders before Jesus Returns

Since Joel gave his prophecy about the outpouring of the Spirit in the last days, the Church has been put on notice that God intends to do something remarkable and out of the ordinary. The whole point of ordination is a human recognition of a divine calling. To ignore that on the basis of gender is something that Joel knew nothing about. He simply proclaimed that “all people” (all flesh) would be eligible (Joel 2:28–30). Notice how he lists the different types of people: sons, daughters, old men, young men, and male and female servants. There is no suggestion here that any of those groups are unable to devote themselves fully to God in full-time ministry. The urgency of the message at the end demands the participation, not exclusion, of all the types of people just listed. To deny that is to walk to the beat of a different drummer.

Learning from History

Knowing how to relate to and to apply all this information is a challenge. But there is one fascinating story from Adventist history that—to me at least—puts this discussion in context. The year was 1858, and the place was Battle Creek. A certain “Brother A,” who has since been identified as Stephen Haskell, was trying to convince his fellow church members on an issue that he had discovered in the Scriptures. He and his wife had pushed and agitated so much that Ellen White decided to step in to the argument.⁴⁴ She was concerned that Haskell and his wife were both heading for certain ruin.

I saw that all was not right with you. The enemy has been seeking your destruction.⁴⁵

[You] rush on without divine guidance, and thus bring confusion and discord into the ranks...I saw that you both must speedily be brought where you are willing to be led, instead of desiring to lead, or Satan will step in and lead you in his way.⁴⁶

43 Robert M. Johnston, “Shapes of Ministry in the New Testament and Early Church,” in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 47.

44 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 1:204–209, written October 21, 1858, nearly five years before the significant health vision of 1863.

45 Ibid., 204.

46 Ibid., 207.

Your souls are withering beneath the blighting influence of your own errors... You are deceived. You cannot bear the plain, cutting testimony... [you are] setting up your judgment and notions as a rule for others... you have overreached the mark.⁴⁷

The remarkable thing about this story is the issue of contention—eating swine’s flesh. She continues:

I saw that your views concerning swine’s flesh would prove no injury if you have them to yourselves... If God requires His people to abstain from swine’s flesh, He will convict them of the matter... If it is the duty of the church to abstain from swine’s flesh, God will discover it to more than two or three. He will teach His church their duty... Some run ahead of the angels that are leading this people; but they have to retrace every step, and meekly follow no faster than the angels lead. I saw that the angels of God would lead His people no faster than they can receive and act upon the important truths that are communicated to them.⁴⁸

This testimony came nearly five years before the great health vision of 1863 that confirmed to the young Church that it should, in fact, abstain from swine’s flesh. But notice the issue at stake here. Ellen White’s concern is not the topic of discussion, but how certain people were trying to push their views onto the Church. This is not God’s way. As Ellen White stated, God (the angels) leads his Church as a whole, and progresses at a pace that the Church as a whole can keep up with. And that is in fact what happened in this case.⁴⁹

Therefore in the discussion of the sensitive topic of ordination, God must be allowed to be the one to lead the Church, and not the disciples who claim they are seated at the right hand or at the left of the Saviour.

Conclusion

In considering whether it is appropriate to ordain women to the Gospel ministry, there are a number of things to ponder, including:

1. What is the model of ecclesiology adopted?
2. What is the biblical pattern for understanding the ordination of ministers?
3. What is the best way of commissioning ministers?
4. Is the Church today living in “normal” and “stable” times, and if not, is it time to consider what happened in biblical times of instability—and allow God to appoint women as leaders?

47 *Ibid.*, 208.

48 *Ibid.*, 206-207; emphasis in original.

49 *Ibid.*, 205.

This chapter has argued that the ways in which Churches relates to Christology and Eschatology have had a significant impact on whether or not they consider that women could be ordained as Gospel ministers. If Christology and Eschatology are merged into the Church itself, it would be quite unacceptable to have female priest-pastors. In that model, the Church replaces Christ and the physical return of Christ to establish his literal kingdom to be established for his people is not required, so the decision made by such a Church not to ordain women priests makes perfect sense.

However, if Adventists see themselves instead as part of an end-time movement, upon which God will pour out his Spirit (on all flesh and not just on the men), then they need to be ready as a community of faith to accept the ministry of those "daughters," and "handmaids" that the Bible tells us will be proclaiming the Word just before Jesus returns. The Church should be recognized as more than just a movement that is looking forward to the Second Coming, but that it is also the Body of Christ, in which every different part works together under his call, and his direction.

If we want to see the full latter rain and the return of Christ in our lifetime, then maybe it is time to consider the possibility that God is indeed pouring his Spirit out on ALL flesh. Is this something we desire above all else, or would we rather wait another generation or two until we are all of the same opinion?

Chapter 3: The Ordination of Women: A Biblical–Theological Introduction

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Theology is popularly defined as “faith seeking understanding.” This popular definition is useful. It highlights a fact of key importance: “theology” is not simply a matter of lining up a selection of Bible texts as is done in a doctrinal Bible study. Rather “theology” draws on a broad selection of resources in attempting to answer foundational questions which confront Christians. Although many of these questions appear to be permanent and universal, confronting people in all times and places, other questions arise in specific cultural and historical contexts and not in others. Theology is thus a dialogue of believers—informed by their situation in history and culture—with Scripture (and tradition) inherited from the past.¹

The implication of the dialogical nature of theology is two-fold. First “theology” is never in a final form. Rather it needs to be formulated and reformulated as time and cultures change. Second, and sometimes to our disconcertion, some of the questions that confront us today were simply not issues for the writers of the Bible. One such issue is the ordination of women. The issue simply did not arise for the Bible writers. There is no text which says “Thou shalt not ordain women” or “Thou shalt ordain women!” In fact, when Scripture is carefully scrutinized, there are only two unchallengeable,

1 Like other Protestants, Seventh-day Adventists are often wary of the concept of tradition. However, a remarkable amount of Adventist theology and practice is based on tradition more than anything else. Why, after all, does Sabbath School start at 9:30 on Sabbath morning and why do we have four ordinance services a year? The first question is answered by the needs of dairy farmers, long before the rise of Seventh-day Adventists, to have church start after their milking was finished; the second goes back to a compromise between Calvin and his early followers regarding the frequency of the Eucharist if it was not regarded as a sacrament. “Tradition” indeed!

irrefutable pieces of data that are *directly* relevant to this issue.² The first is that there were no female priests in the Mosaic cultus of Israel; and, the second, that Jesus did not choose any women to be among his twelve disciples.³ Everything beyond this is a matter of interpretation, application and (sometimes) speculation. How, then, is it possible to make a decision that is based on the Bible?

It is not valid simply to leap from the two pieces of biblical data to the negative conclusion that the Bible forbids the ordination of women! Neither datum forbids *anything*. They reveal what was not done in the past rather than giving a command about what may not be done in the present. Thus they are historical rather than theological in nature. It is easy to reach absurd theological conclusions if they are drawn too directly from historical data. Would it be valid to conclude that since the incarnate Son of God was greeted by males (shepherds and Magi), and because those who greeted him represent the worshipping church community today, only men can be full members of the church? Absurd nonsense!

2 The importance of the word "directly" must be underscored. There is certainly data which is *indirectly* relevant.

3 Some scholars have suggested that there were, in fact, female priests in Israel. See, for example, Ismar J. Peritz, "Woman in the Ancient Hebrew Cult," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 17 (1898): 111-148; Frank M. Cross, Jr. "Priestly Houses of Early Israel," in Frank M. Cross, Jr., *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 195-215; Bernadette J. Broton, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue*, *Brown Judaic Studies* 36 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1982), 83-90. Such scholars have established that women were involved in the ancient Israelite cultus in some way but their arguments fall far short of demonstrating that they were active as priests. For example, the fact that Exod. 38:8 and 1 Sam. 2:22 refer to women ministering "at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting" does not establish that they had a role inside the sanctuary. Similarly, the fact that Zipporah performs a circumcision (Exod. 3:24-26) does not establish her priestly status unless it is assumed that only priests could perform this rite. The suggestion that Jael (Judg. 5:24) may have been a priestess at a shrine connected to the terebinth of Elon-bezaananim—or at least be the wife of a priest there—could well be correct. However, this would not establish a role for female priests in Yahwism unless it were assumed that only strictly orthodox Yahwistic Hebrews were in anyway patriotic and hostile to the occupying army of Sisera. Lastly the fact that Miriam was a prophetess is insufficient grounds for assuming that she had a priestly role.

Evaluation of Possibilities Presented in the Biblical Data

One way to bridge the gap is to ask why these historical situations arose. Certainly, this is a matter of interpretation and needs to be undertaken with caution. However, the Bible does provide information which allows the evaluation of a number of possibilities: that women were physically disqualified, intellectually disqualified, spiritually or ontologically disqualified, or culturally disqualified.

Women as Physically Disqualified

The only tasks which women could be physically disqualified from performing in the strictest sense are those which require male genitalia in order to be performed. Obviously a woman cannot father a child, the notorious crux of Hebrews 11:11 notwithstanding! This sort of sexual role is far removed from the Mosaic priesthood of the Old Testament (OT). Such thinking would have been anathema in the Mosaic cultus—especially if the reenactment of the divine sexual activity was an integral part of the Canaanite fertility religions.⁴

The work of the priests in ancient Israel was often physically demanding, especially those aspects which demanded the slaughter and sacrifice of animals. The animals could be large and sacrifices were sometimes carried out on a large scale.⁵ There is, consequently, a plausible-sounding argument that women were simply not physically strong enough to do such work.⁶ As plausible as this might be, it flounders on the irrefutable fact that the OT legal corpus does not specify “strength” as a qualification for the priesthood. Priests did not have to “retire” when age reduced their strength to an unacceptable level. The plausibility of this argument is also predicated on an error in mathematical thinking. Even if, in general, men are physically stronger than women, this simply would not mean that in every case, all men would be stronger than all women. The statement “men are stronger than women” at best only reflects a mean of the population and not the reality in each individual case. The terrible unfairness of this sort of argument can be

4 On this point, see further, below.

5 For example, the dedication of Solomon’s temple involved the sacrifice of “twenty-two thousand cattle and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep and goats” (1 Kings 8:62).

6 I have vivid recollections of hearing this argument put forcefully in a sermon on the more general topic of the role of women and the validity of feminism, even though it must be almost 40 years since I heard the sermon.

seen immediately when it is transposed into the area of race.⁷The only physical requirements for the Israelite priesthood were lineage from Levi (Num. 1:50–51) and physical wholeness. Physical defect disqualified a man from the priesthood. Leviticus 21:16–23 is explicit on this point:

The LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron: 'For the generations to come none of your descendants who has a defect may come near to offer the food of his God. No man who has any defect may come near: no man who is blind or lame, disfigured or deformed; no man with a crippled foot or hand, or who is hunchbacked or dwarfed, or who has any eye defect, or who has festering or running sores or damaged testicles. No descendant of Aaron the priest who has any defect is to come near to present the offerings made to the LORD by fire. He has a defect; he must not come near to offer the food of his God. He may eat the most holy food of his God, as well as the holy food; yet because of his defect, he must not go near the curtain or approach the altar, and so desecrate my sanctuary. I am the LORD, who makes them holy.'"⁸

The fact that such a man could still eat the holy food suggests that he retains his priestly status even though he is prohibited from performing key priestly duties. However, since women were created by God *as women*, being female would certainly not have been regarded as a physical defect, akin to blindness or injury. The Torah states explicitly that female animals without defect could be found for sacrifice (Lev. 3:1, 6; 4:28, 32).

One last consideration of relevance here is the attitude in the OT to blood and the fact that women menstruate and menstruation made women ceremonially unclean (Lev. 15:19–24). The defilement of the land by Judah which led to the Babylonian captivity is compared by Ezekiel to the uncleanness of a menstruating woman (Ezek. 36:17) which shows how seriously this type of ritual uncleanness was regarded. Indeed, Ezekiel includes disregard for the prohibition on sexual intercourse during a woman's menstruation among his list of reasons why God sent Israel into Babylonian captivity (Ezek.

7 Although it is possible to gather evidence that "blacks" score lower than "whites" on IQ tests, surely in the light of the Ben Carson story, no right thinking person would say, "Consequently, blacks should be barred from occupations such as brain surgery. They simply aren't smart enough." This is not the place to enter a discussion of either race or intelligence. However, even if it were true that blacks were less intelligent than whites (which I certainly do not accept), it would remain true that some blacks are more intelligent than some whites—most whites, even. It may even still be true that some blacks are more intelligent than *all* whites. See Mano Singham, "Race and Intelligence: What are the Issues," *Phi Delta Kappan* 77, no. 3 (1995): 200–209.

8 Unless otherwise indicated all Scriptural citations are from the New International Version (NIV).

22:1–16; note especially Ezek. 22:10). Similarly, the bleeding associated with childbirth made a woman unclean. Giving birth to a girl resulted in a longer period of uncleanness than giving birth to a boy (Lev. 12:1–5). The issue is clearly one of blood causing uncleanness (Lev. 15:25). Why this should be is puzzling to modern Westerners. The worldview being reflected in these sorts of stipulations is very foreign to that which dominates today, even among Bible-believing Christians.⁹

In a matter like this dogmatism would be folly but it may well be that Genesis 9:1–7 provides a crucial insight. The passage is essentially a retelling of the primordial instructions and blessing initially given to Adam and Eve, but here given to Noah as the world is reborn after the devastation of the flood. Noah is told what he can and cannot eat and once again the concept of man's being in the image of God is restated. One key addition to the original account is that "life" is located in the "blood." The reason for the absence of this comment in the Edenic accounts is obvious: it was unnecessary, and even meaningless, in a world without violence and death. However, it is easy to see that the concept may undergird the LORD's commenting to Cain that his brother's blood called out to him from the ground (Gen. 4:10). Surely it is Abel's destroyed life that calls out, not his blood *per se*.

If life was seen as being in the blood, then it follows that loss of blood equated to loss of life (at least symbolically). A loss of menstrual blood represented a loss of life and was defiling in exactly the same way that touching a dead body was defiling. Paradoxically, the very act of giving birth simultaneously represented (in some sense) loss of life because it entailed loss of blood. To give birth to a female baby was doubly defiling in that the birth entailed blood loss and the child born would become an adult who would become unclean on a monthly basis.¹⁰

How does the New Testament (NT) relate to this understanding of impurity? A most telling incident in the life of Jesus gives a clear answer. The synoptic Gospels all recount the story of Jesus' encounter with a woman who had been bleeding for "twelve years" (Matt. 9:20–22; Mk 5:25–34;

9 Interestingly, Adventists whom I have worked with in Papua New Guinea have told me that traditional cultures in Papua New Guinea put a similar value on blood. If two people fight and one of them bleeds as a result it is a very serious matter according to these traditional worldviews. Christians from such traditional cultures may well be quite bemused that Western Christians struggle to come to grips with these passages.

10 A similar suggestion is tentatively made by John H. Otwell, *And Sarah Laughed: The Status of Woman in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1977), 176–77.

Lk 8:42–48) which presumably means she had been experiencing continuous menstrual flow throughout that period.¹¹ The crucial issue was ritual uncleanness. Robert Guelich notes, “This woman was not only defiled, she defiled anything and anyone she touched. Her illness had left her personally, socially and spiritually cut off.”¹² Yet, Jesus does not reject her. She touches his robe, but rather than defiling it (and through it, him), his power and purity cleanses and heals her. In that one act Jesus sweeps away the whole paradigm of women’s ritual impurity with its implication of religious inferiority.

The OT stipulations regarding the impurity of menstruating women are part of the so-called “holiness code” of the Pentateuch (Lev. 17–26). This code includes a considerable range of stipulations all of which were designed to emphasize that Israel was to be a distinct people, separated from the nations in their holiness. The capstone of these regulations was circumcision. In the NT, Paul discusses this stipulation in some detail. His central thesis is that in the Christ, in the Church, “circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing” (1 Cor. 7:19). In saying this, Paul, like Jesus before him, signals the complete negation of the temporary theology of separation which the holiness code contained. This belonged to the era of spiritual immaturity, not the age of fulfilment (see Gal. 3:26–4:6). In the light of this it is surely illegitimate to attempt to extract from the holiness code a prohibitory principle regarding the ordination of women.¹³

Women as Intellectually Disqualified

If women are not physically disqualified in Scripture from either the priesthood or apostleship, could it be that they are intellectually disqualified? The likelihood of this being the case rests on the weakest of all supports: silence. Not one text in either the OT or the NT indicates an inherent intellectual inferiority of women (although such is not denied either). Even Paul, when declaring that women should not teach (1 Tim. 2:11–15) does not anchor his statement in women’s inherent intellectual inferiority.¹⁴ A number of subtle, but none-the-less real, hints point away from female intellectual

11 Donald Hagner regards this interpretation as probable if not definitively established; See Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, Word Bible Commentary 33A (Dallas, TX: Word, 1993), 248.

12 Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1–8: 26*, Word Bible Commentary 34A (Dallas, TX: Word, 1989), 296.

13 Paul who, as we have seen, dismissed circumcision (1 Cor. 7:19) is equally willing to deny gender divisions: “There is neither...male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28).

14 This text is discussed in further detail, below.

inferiority in the biblical picture. It is undoubtedly a linguistic accident that both the Hebrew and the Greek word for wisdom (חֵכְמָה; *hokhma*, and σοφία; *sophia*, respectively) are feminine nouns. No attempt should be made to make judgements regarding male and female on this basis. However, there is other data which is not so easily dismissed. First, it is in the creation narrative that Eve is seen to be made from the same constituents as the male. She is formed from a rib taken from Adam as he slept (Gen. 2:22). The emphasis in the story is on the equality of the two human beings.¹⁵ Eve was to be a “suitable helper” for Adam (Gen. 2:18). There is no suggestion that this equality did not extend to the intellectual sphere.¹⁶ The Hebrew word עֲזָרָה (helper) certainly does not necessarily connote inferiority of any kind. Words from this root can be applied to God in the OT (Ps. 10:14; 30:10; 72:11). The qualifying word (לְפָנָיו; suitable) literally means “as in front of him” and thus indicates complementarity— “a corresponding to him, his counterpart.”¹⁷ Claus Westermann sums up the point nicely: “The man is created by God in such a way that he needs the help of a partner; hence mutual help is an essential part of human existence . . .”¹⁸ The emphasis is rightly placed not on help with labour or with reproduction (although both may well be included) but on companionship. Surely, this more likely indicates intellectual similarity rather than difference.

Perhaps the strongest evidence that the Bible does not view women as inherently intellectually inferior to men is provided by the book of Proverbs. This book reaches its climax in a presentation of the “wife of noble charac-

15 See Ellen G. White’s comments in *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1958), 46.

16 There are serious dangers in suggesting that Eve was somehow intellectually inferior to Adam. In terms of the great controversy such inferiority on the part of Eve would leave God open to the accusation that his design in the creation of Eve was responsible for the establishment of sin on earth, on the basis that, if Eve had been as wise as Adam she would have seen through the serpent’s lies.

17 Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis*, Mercer Library of Biblical Studies, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997), 11. See also, John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, International Critical Commentary (New York: Scribner, 1910), 67; Ephraim A. Speiser, *Genesis*, Anchor Bible I (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 17; Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis*, Old Testament Library, rev. ed., trans. John H. Marks (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1972), 82; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Word Biblical Commentary 1 (Dallas, TX: Word, 1987), 68.

18 Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, A Continental Commentary, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1994), 227.

ter" (Prov. 31:10–31). The last verses of Proverbs are fully occupied with this presentation. Such a wife is more valuable than rubies (Prov. 31:10). Significantly her husband has full confidence in her (verse 11), indicating that he "relies on her."¹⁹ Nor is this woman a stay-at-home wife and mother. Rather she is actively involved in business interests: textiles (verse 12), property (verse 16), agriculture (verse 16) and trade (verse 18). She contributes significantly to the household economy (verse 11b). As a result of her activities her husband's status is elevated (verse 23).²⁰

The "wife of noble character" is not merely praised for her business acumen. Rather we are told that she "speaks with wisdom and faithful instruction is on her tongue" (verse 26). "Whatever she has to say ranks as wisdom and reliable advice."²¹ She is a woman who "fears the Lord" (verse 30), which is the essence of wisdom in Proverbs (1:7; 9:10; 15:33)—its "first principle."²² Her worth is not based on such ephemerals as "charm" and "beauty," but on true wisdom (verse 30). There is not the faintest hint here that woman is intrinsically intellectually inferior to man—quite the contrary. Strikingly the "good wife" is described in language that Proverbs elsewhere uses for "wisdom." Both are to be "found" (31:10; 3:15). If the good wife is more precious than rubies (31:10), wisdom is more precious than jewels (3:15).

The location of this extended portrayal of a good wife is also significant: it forms the last 22 verses of Proverbs. Throughout the book Wisdom has been presented as a woman (Prov. 8:1–21). As such she is explicitly contrasted with Dame Folly (Prov. 9:13–18; 6:20–29), an adulteress (Prov. 7:1–27; 5:1–23) who is unfaithful to her husband (Prov. 7:19). By placing the picture of the "wife of noble character" as the final word of the book, the compiler of Proverbs presents this woman as the very embodiment of

19 William McKane, *Proverbs: A New Approach*, Old Testament Library (London: SCM, 1970), 666.

20 The text does not explicitly state that his elevated status was the result of his wife's activities but the fact that the comment is set in the middle of a poem honouring her means that any other conclusion is scarcely possible.

21 McKane, *Proverbs*, 670. It is uncertain who exactly received these instructions with the woman's children, servants and friends all being suggested by various scholars.

22 Derek Kidner, *The Wisdom of Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes: An Introduction to Wisdom Literature* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 17 cited in Andrew D. Swafford "The Valiant Wife of Proverbs XXXI 10-31 as Embodiment of Royal Wisdom" (MA thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2009), 9.

wisdom itself.²³ (This, of course, does not preclude the possibility that the author of this section of Proverbs had an actual woman in mind as he crafted his description).²⁴

A comparison with Psalm 112—widely acknowledged to be a “wisdom Psalm”—shows how easy it would have been for the author of Proverbs to craft his ideal representative of wisdom as a male figure. Al Wolters notes the numerous points of contact:

Not only are both perfect alphabetic acrostics, but there is also considerable thematic correspondence. Prov. xxxi describes ‘the woman who fears the Lord’ (vs. 30) by listing her God-fearing works. Ps. cxii describes ‘the man who fears the Lord’ (vs. 1) by listing his God-fearing works. In the one case there is a concluding antithesis between the fear of the Lord and deceptive beauty (Prov. xxxi 30); in the other there is a concluding antithesis between the righteous and the wicked (Ps. cxii 10). The woman and the man are both described in terms of wisdom (Prov. xxxi 26; Ps. cxii 5), wealth (Prov. xxxi 16, 18, 29; Ps. cxii 3), children to be proud of (Prov. xxxi 28; Ps. cxii 4, 5, 9) and a fearless attitude to the future (Prov. xxxi 25; Ps. cxii 7,8).²⁵

Far from indicating any intellectual inferiority of women in comparison to men, the book of Proverbs indicates that the status of men and women in this regard is one of equality.

Women as Spiritually Disqualified

There are numerous stories in the Bible of women who are spiritually bankrupt and functioning as enemies of God and God’s people—Jezebel and Athaliah in the OT; Herodias in the NT. However, there is not a single hint that women are inherently spiritually inferior to men. In fact the opposite impression is given on numerous occasions. In many stories the women involved appear to be more spiritually sensitive and open to the presence and leading of God.

The account of the deliverance of Israel from the oppressive presence of Jabin and his army under the generalship of Sisera (Judg. 4) is instructive in this regard. Deborah, the prophetess, was the “leader” (Judg. 4:4; Heb.: *בְּרִיָּה*) of Israel at the time. Barak appears to be her field marshal. But the unfolding character development in the narrative runs contrary to stereotypical expectations: while Deborah is confident and unwavering in her belief that

23 Swafford, “Valiant Wife,” 78.

24 Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs Chapters 15–31*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 518.

25 Al Wolters, “Proverbs XXI 10–31 as Heroic Hymn: A Form-Critical Analysis,” *Vetus Testamentum* 38 (1988): 448.

God will give them victory (Judg. 4:6–7, 14), Barak is timid and frightened. He will only go out to battle if Deborah accompanies him (Judg. 4:8)—an attitude which earns him a mocking rebuke from Deborah (Judg. 4:9). In the end, in keeping with this rebuke Sisera is killed by another woman, Jael. Barak once again is shown as passive and ineffectual, arriving on the scene only after a woman has already accomplished his goal (Judg. 4:22). The story thus highlights the two women as sensitive in hearing the calling of God and faithful in their obedience to it. Barak, on the other hand, is shown as a reluctant and somewhat ineffective follower of God.

The story of Manoah and his wife (Judg. 13) has a similar feel. When the angel of the Lord initially appears, it is to Manoah's wife, rather than to Manoah himself (Judg. 13:3). The angelic message is that she is going to have a son, despite the fact that she has been sterile and childless (Judg. 13:3–5). Manoah's wife appears to manifest no doubt about this startling revelation but relates it to her husband in great detail (Judg. 13:6–7). The situation is somewhat different with Manoah. He prays that God will send his messenger again and instruct them how to rear the child—despite that fact that his wife has already received such instructions (Judg. 13:8 cf., 13:4, 6). When the messenger does return, he appears, not to Manoah but to his wife (Judg. 13:9). Rather than repeat his instructions to Manoah, the messenger is content to tell him "Your wife must do all that I have told her" (Judg. 13:13).

One text in the NT—1 Timothy 2:14—suggests the inherent spiritual inferiority of women.²⁶ However, the picture in the NT generally is very similar to that in the OT. There is not a single account of any woman rejecting Jesus in the Gospels. This is not the case with regard to men. The rich young ruler is but one case in point (Lk 18:23). There are others. In a number of ways women occupy a privileged position in the NT. Women are the first to discover that Jesus had been raised to life, and are consequently the first proclaimers of that good news (Matt. 28:5–10). In the book of Acts, the first Christian who dies and is accounted worthy of being resurrected is Dorcas, a woman of Joppa (Acts 9:36–42). The author of Acts does not make clear whether this was because her contribution to the church was so valuable or because her character was so noble. But it is hardly reasonable to posit that she was spiritually inferior to those men of note who were not raised—Stephen (Acts 7:59–8:2); and James (Acts 12:2) among them.

The general picture of the spiritual equality of women and men in the NT is even more noteworthy in view of the fact that views deprecating the spiritual nature of women were certainly known within the Judaism of the NT era (see, for example, Sir 25:24 and Philo, *QG* 1, 33, 43).²⁷

26 This text will be examined in some detail in the next section of this paper.

27 Korinna Zamfir and Joseph Verheyden, "Text-Critical and Intertextual

Women as Ontologically Disqualified

This possibility suggests that women might have been ontologically disqualified from the OT priesthood or for membership of the Twelve in the NT simply because God decreed it to be so and had somehow made women inherently unfitted for such roles. Such views were known in the ancient world. Aristotle, for example, is quite explicit on this point: “the male is by nature superior and the female inferior; and the one rules, and the other is ruled; this principle, of necessity, extends to all mankind.”²⁸ Nothing in the OT suggests such a thought but two NT texts (1 Cor. 11:2–10 and 1 Tim. 2:11–15) may seem to do so. A third text—1 Corinthians 14:34–35—is close to these two texts in content, but nevertheless lacks their ontological argument.

The relationship between these three texts is clear when they are viewed side-by-side (see table below).

The Ontological Inferiority of Women: Three Key New Testament Texts		
1 Corinthians 11:2–10	1 Corinthians 14:33–35	1 Timothy 2:11–15
I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the teachings, just as I passed them on to you. Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head.	For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says.	A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.

Remarks on 1 Tim. 2:8–10,” *Novum Testamentum* 50 (2008): 402.

28 Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, 1.5.12, accessed November 25, 2012, <http://classics.mit.edu/artistotle/politics5.five.html>.

The Ontological Inferiority of Women: Three Key New Testament
Texts

<p>And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is just as though her head were shaved. If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off; and if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut or shaved off, she should cover her head. A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head.</p>	<p>If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.</p>	<p>For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.</p>
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Key points of commonality and difference stand out clearly:

1. In both 1 Corinthians 11 and 1 Timothy 2, but not in 1 Corinthians 14, the argument hinges on the priority of Adam's creation over Eve's, with the implication "that because of this priority the man is superior."²⁹
2. In 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2 women are to be silent and in "submission," but women's silence is not mentioned in 1 Corinthians 11.
3. In 1 Corinthians 11 the issue is "the sign of authority;" in 1 Timothy 2 it is "having authority over a man;" but in 1 Corinthians 14 "authority" is not explicitly mentioned.

²⁹ Robert Falconer, "1 Timothy 2:14, 15. Interpretative Notes," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 60 (1941): 375.

4. In 1 Timothy 2 the issue is women teaching; in 1 Corinthians 14 it is women “inquir[ing] about something;” but in 1 Corinthians 11 neither issue is mentioned.
5. In 1 Timothy 2 women are to “learn” and this is also implied in 1 Corinthians 14 but it is not mentioned in 1 Corinthians 11.
6. Among the three texts, only 1 Timothy 2 suggests women’s spiritual inferiority to man, although this *may* also be implied in 1 Corinthians 14, if the phrase “as the Law says” refers to the fall narrative of Genesis 3 (specifically Gen. 3:16).³⁰
7. Similarly 1 Timothy 2 alone declares that “women will be saved through childbearing.”

Between 1 Timothy and 1 Corinthians, as Korinna Zamfir and Joseph Verheyden correctly point out, we thus have repetition of “key words and themes” but “in a noteworthy manner, implying omissions and expansions as well as the re-interpretation of the recurring themes.”³¹

The chronologically latest text—1 Timothy 2—is the most strident and our analysis must start there. However, interpretation of this text is certainly not as straightforward as is sometimes assumed. For a start, neither of the rationales offered therein seems immediately relevant to the issue at hand.³² Why should the fact that Eve was created after Adam mean that women should not teach men? Again, why should the fact that Eve was deceived by the serpent—unlike Adam who was led astray by his wife—means that women should not teach men? What does “have authority over” (αὐθεντεῖν) actually mean? In what sense will women be “saved through childbearing”—but only if they continue in the fundamental Christian virtues? All of

30 This is the position of Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *The First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1911), 325; and C. K. Barrett, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Black’s New Testament Commentaries 2nd ed. (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1971), 330. F. F. Bruce, on the other hand, thinks the phrase refers to the creation account (specifically Gen. 1:26). See F. F. Bruce, *I & II Corinthians*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 136. Gordon D. Fee is even more forthright in qualifying any certain referent for the text: “More difficult yet is the fact that the Law does *not* say any such thing.” See Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 707.

31 Zamfir and Verheyden, “1 Tim 2:8-10,” 397–398.

32 Gordon P. Hugenberger, “Women in Church Office: Hermeneutics or Exegesis? A Survey of Approaches to 1 Tim 2:8-15,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 35 (1992): 345–346.

these questions suggest that Paul is responding to a specific constellation of ideas being faced in Timothy's church and that establishing the nature of the problem being solved is the key to understanding the solution.

This suggestion is strongly confirmed by a striking element of discord between 1 Timothy 2:12 and 1 Corinthians 11:5. In 1 Timothy Paul declares "I do not permit a woman to teach . . . ; she must be silent." However, in 1 Corinthians 11:5 it is clear that women can both "pray" and "prophecy" in worship services—as long as they are properly attired. (The fact that 1 Corinthians 14 appears to countermand this permission and takes a position closer to 1 Timothy is noted by *all* commentators on 1 Corinthians, many of whom suggest that at least one of the Corinthian passages is a later secondary interpolation).³³ The clear implication of Paul's permitting women

33 Among those who note the tension between the two passages in 1 Cor. and attempt to resolve them on the premise that both are Pauline are F. W. Grosheide, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1953), 341–343; Elim Hiu, *Regulations Concerning Tongues and Prophecy in 1 Corinthians 14.26-40*, Library of New Testament Studies 406 (London: T. & T. Clark, 2010), 139–150; Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (London: Tyndale, 1958), 201–202; Robertson and Plummer, *1 Corinthians*, 324–326; Ben Witherington, III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 287–288; Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "The Non-Pauline Character of 1 Corinthians 11:2–16?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 95 (1976): 615–621; Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "Sex and Logic in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 42 (1980): 482-500. Among those concluding that 1 Cor. 14:34–35 is a non-Pauline interpolation are: Barrett, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 330–333; Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1975), 246; Bruce, *I & II Corinthians*, 135–136; Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 705–708; Nigel Watson, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Epworth, 1992), 153–154. Robert W. Allison regards 1 Cor. 14:34–35 as a genuinely Pauline—although misplaced—fragment. See Robert W. Allison, "Let Women be Silent in the Churches (1 Cor. 14:33b–36): What did Paul Really Say, and What did it Mean?" *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 32 (1988): 27–60. Among those who consider 1 Cor. 11:2–16 to be secondary are Wm. O. Walker, Jr., "1 Corinthians 11:2-16 and Paul's Views Regarding Women," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 94 (1975): 94–100; Wm. O. Walker, Jr., "The Vocabulary of 1 Corinthians 11:3–16: Pauline or Non-Pauline?" *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 25 (1989): 75–88. Garry Trompf argues that both Corinthian passages are secondary. See Garry W. Trompf, "On Attitudes toward Women in Paul and Paulinist Literature: 1 Corinthians 11:3–16 and its

to pray and prophecy in 1 Corinthians 11:5 is that the prohibition on them speaking at all in church (1 Tim. 2:12) *cannot* be universal precept. Rather the comment to Timothy must be understood to mean “In this particular case I do not permit a woman to teach...” or “I do not permit these particular women to teach...”³⁴

Fortunately, 1 Timothy (and the Pastoral Epistles generally) provides considerable information about the specific context to which it was written. Timothy is in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3)—a church that is being plagued by false teachers and false teachings (1 Tim. 1:3). The false teachings focused on “myths” (1 Tim. 1:4; 4:7; c.f., 2 Tim. 4:4; Titus 1:14) and genealogies (1 Tim. 1:4; c.f., Titus 3:9) a misapplication of the Law (1 Tim. 1:4; c.f., Titus 1:7, 14; 3:9) and an emphasis on “knowledge” (1 Tim. 6:20) which led to speculation and controversy (1 Tim. 1:6; 6:4, 20; c.f., 2 Tim. 2:14–16, 23; Titus 1:10; 3:9–10). In some sense the resurrection was thought to have already occurred (2 Tim. 2:17–18; c.f., 1 Tim. 1:19–20). Asceticism was advocated, marriage and meat eating were forbidden (1 Tim. 4:1–5), but immorality (1 Tim. 1:19–20; c.f. Titus 1:10–13) and a desire for material gain (1 Tim. 6:5; c.f., 2 Tim. 3:2–4; Titus 1:11) were practiced. Thus Paul associates the errorists and their followers with the worst of sinners, hypocrites whose consciences have been seared (1 Tim. 4:1–2; c.f., 2 Tim. 2:3–5).³⁵

There are three basic understandings of the identity of these false teachings in contemporary scholarship:

1. Hellenistic Judaism;³⁶
2. Proto-Montanism,³⁷ and
3. (Proto-)Gnosticism.³⁸

Context,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 42 (1980): 196–215.

34 Mark D. Roberts, “Woman Shall be Saved: A Closer Look at 1 Timothy 2:15,” *Reformed Journal* 33 (1983): 20.

35 David A. Mappes, “The Heresy Paul Opposed in 1 Timothy,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 156 (1999): 455–456.

36 I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1999), 46–51.

37 J. Massingberd Ford, “A Note on Proto-Montanism in the Pastoral Epistles,” *New Testament Studies* 17 (1971): 338–346.

38 The difference between “proto-Gnosticism” and “Gnosticism” essentially hinges on whether the Pastorals are regarded as genuine first-century letters of Paul or second-century productions of a later Paulinist. There are endless terminological difficulties in this area. “Gnosticism” is best reserved for the fully formed Gnostic systems of the second century and later. The corresponding elements in the first century are referred to variously as “pre-Gnostic,” “proto-

The great majority of scholarship sees a Gnostic or proto-Gnostic background for these false teachings.³⁹ All the heretical elements referred to in the Pastorals are easily explicable in terms of Gnosticism. Evidence from the first century—not least the book of Colossians—shows the proto-Gnostic ideas circulated in the region of Ephesus.⁴⁰ Gnosticism was endlessly entangled with “myths” and “genealogies.” In Gnosticism the universe was conceptualized as a complex interweaving of spiritual emanations—the eons—which were related to one another. The heavenly homeland was not only a place of pure spirit, but also a place of pure undifferentiated unity. With progressive emanations—and emanations from emanation—the spirit became both more and more fragmented and progressively more and more entangled with matter. The relationships between the various layers of emanations became correspondingly more and more complicated and these mythic genealogical relationships were explored in greater and greater detail. Obviously “knowledge” (γνῶσις) was a crucial element of Gnosticism and that knowledge was highly speculative.

Gnostic,” “Gnosticizing,” “‘Gnostic’ elements” or such like. The challenge for scholarship is the extent to which such elements in the first century attain their “Gnostic” character by virtue of their incorporation in later fully formed Gnostic systems. For a thorough discussion of these issues see Gilles Quispel, “Gnosticism and the New Testament,” in *The Bible in Modern Scholarship*, ed. J. Philip Hyatt (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1965), 252–271; Robert McL. Wilson, “Response to G. Quispel’s ‘Gnosticism and the New Testament,’” in Hyatt, *Bible in Modern Scholarship*, 272–278; Hans Jonas, “Response to G. Quispel’s ‘Gnosticism and the New Testament,’” in Hyatt, *Bible in Modern Scholarship*, 279–293.

39 Among those who see a Gnostic background for the heresy referred to in the Pastoral Epistles are Kenneth L. Waters, Sr., “Revisiting Virtues as Children: 1 Timothy 2:15 as Centerpiece for an Egalitarian Soteriology,” *Lexington Theological Quarterly* 42 (2007): 37–49; Roberts, “Woman Shall be Saved,” 18–22; Bruce Barron, “Putting Women in Their Place: 1 Timothy 2 and Evangelical Views on Women in Church Leadership,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 33 (1990): 451–459; John N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles: I Timothy, II Timothy, Titus*, Black’s New Testament Commentaries (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1963), 60; although not prepared to be definitive on the matter, David Kimberly regards a Gnostic background as a “distinct possibility.” See David R. Kimberly, “1 Tim 2:15: A Possible Understanding of a Difficult Text,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 35 (1992): 484.

40 F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 17–26.

The ontological dualism at the heart of Gnosticism emphasized the purity of spirit and the irredeemable corruption of matter. On a cosmological level the inter-relation of the cons was one of progressive entanglement of spirit in matter as each emanation was more and more alienated from the heavenly homeland of pure spirit. Human souls were seen as fragments of the divine so lost in the world of matter that they did not realize that their homeland was the realm of pure spirit. Such a view inevitably led to an ethic which was either libertine—"the body is irredeemable; let it do what it wants so long as the spirit is pure"—or ascetic—"the body is evil and must be punished by being deprived of that which brings it pleasure." If the ascetic ethic dominated, sex was frowned upon and strict abstemious diets were mandated. Sex was regarded as a particularly heinous sin. It was not only physically pleasurable but it resulted in the further scattering and fragmenting of the divine spark in the world or matter as new children were conceived and born. In such a system "resurrection of the body" was not even remotely desired. "Resurrection" was understood as a strictly spiritual event.⁴¹ This spiritual resurrection corresponds to the moment of enlightenment, the transferences from the death of ignorance to the life of knowledge.⁴²

The OT was used in Gnosticism but it was turned upside down. Its heroes were regarded as villains and its villains as heroes.⁴³ The God of the OT was the demonic creator of inherently evil matter. Eve was particularly revered in Gnosticism. Not only did she rebel against the "demonic" creator of matter but she sought "knowledge," taking and eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge. It was through Eve that Adam was enlightened! She gave the fruit to him (Gen. 3:6).

41 Kurt Rudolph and R. McL. Wilson, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1987), 189–194. Rudolph and Wilson quote Epiphanius who summarizes Gnostic theology at this point: "There is no resurrection of the flesh, but only of the soul" Epiphanius, "Panarion," 40.2.5, cited in Rudolph and Wilson, *Gnosis*, 190.

42 Ibid., 191.

43 Birger Pearson suggests that the inversion of the OT is so thorough that "The Gnostics, at least at the earliest stages of the history of the Gnostic Movement, were people who can aptly be designated as 'no longer Jews.'" See Birger A. Pearson, "Jewish Elements in Gnostics and the Development of Gnostic Self-Definition," in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition 1: The Shaping of Christianity in the Second and Third Centuries*, ed. E. P. Sanders (London: SCM Press, 1980), 155, emphasis added. Pearson is quoting from Irenaeus, "Against Heresies," 1.24.6.

When viewed against such a backdrop as this, 1 Timothy 2:11–15 becomes much less difficult to understand. Paul is not decreeing that women can never teach because they are inherently spiritually inferior to men. Rather he is countering a specific argument which elevated women *above* men because of the act of Eve taking from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Paul counters that this was not a virtue but a deception—and by implication those women wanting to teach on this basis are also deceived. These women should not teach Gnosticizing error but need to learn to discern the errors inherent in this theology. Significantly, Paul encourages women to “learn” in contradistinction to rabbinic Judaism which forbade women to study the Torah. In their capacity to “learn” Paul seems to suggest that women are inferior in no way to men.⁴⁴ Far from child-bearing being viewed as a particularly heinous sin which “spiritual” women would avoid, Paul insists that it is no inhibitor of salvation. However, he is no more insisting that no Christian woman can teach or be in a position of authority in the church than he is insisting that all Christian women *must* have children.⁴⁵

The similarities of 1 Corinthians 11:2–16 and 1 Timothy 2:8–15 are frequently noted. Indeed, the earlier text has been referred to as the “pre-text of 1 Timothy 2:8–15.”⁴⁶ It is thus also necessary to examine this text. In 1 Corinthians 11 the priority of man’s creation over woman’s creation is also stressed. Once again man’s ontological superiority seems to be implied: he is created in the image of God whereas the woman is only the glory of man! This distinction cannot be derived from Genesis 1:26–28 where both man and woman are said to be created in the image of God. It is true the creation of woman in Genesis 2 is secondary to that of the man but the stress in this creation narrative (as noted above) is on the complementary nature

44 For further discussion of the attitudes towards women in Judaism, see below.

45 Robert Putnam and David Campbell present a case study of *Our Savior Lutheran Church* in Houston, Texas, which does not even allow female church members to vote in the congregational assemblies which govern the parish, because that would give them authority over male members. See Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), 191. This position, at least has the virtue of consistency. It highlights the vast inconsistency of insisting that women cannot be ordained (a topic not directly addressed in 1 Tim.), while allowing them to both teach and hold other positions of authority in the church. Such a position, although common in the modern church is inconsistent to the point of incoherence.

46 Zamfir and Verheyden, “1 Tim 2:8–10,” 389.

of the relationship rather than the idea that women was created “for man.” The meaning of the passage is further obscured by the introduction of “the angels.” For most moderns the relation of any of these things to head coverings is far from clear. So it should be noted that just like 1 Timothy 2:11–15, this passage is not straightforward or simple but abounds in obscurities and difficulties. Mark Goodacre correctly notes that it “remains one of the most perplexing in the interpretation of Paul, and persuasive attempts to understand what Paul is talking about are at a premium.”⁴⁷

Once again, the context of the entire epistle is crucial to the understanding of this difficult passage. The church is rent by serious disunity (1 Cor. 1–4); immorality (1 Cor. 5–6); legal disputes between members (1 Cor. 6); disputes about marriage (1 Cor. 7), eating of meat offered to idols (1 Cor. 8–10) and spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12–14). The church was characterized by an over-realized eschatology (1 Cor. 15); an out-of-control enthusiasm, especially in worship (1 Cor. 14) and a libertine ethic (1 Cor. 5–10). Given the notoriety of Corinth in antiquity for sexual licentiousness it is scarcely surprising that issues of sexual morality were rife in the church.⁴⁸

What exactly Paul means by the head being “covered” or “uncovered” has been much discussed and absolutely certainty still alludes scholarship. It may refer to a veil of some sort although a reference to the hair itself seems more likely in light of the parallel between being uncovered and having a shaved head (1 Cor. 11:6).⁴⁹ What is undisputed is that Paul makes an

47 Mark S. Goodacre, “Does περιβολαίον mean ‘Testicle’ in 1 Corinthians 11:15?” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130 (2011): 391.

48 It is true that many of the explicit comments about the sexual licentiousness characteristic of Corinth refer to the old Greek city of Corinth, destroyed by the Romans in 146 BC, and the new Roman city established a hundred years later which was visited by Paul. It may well be that the old city’s reputation was exaggerated in any case. Jerome Murphy-O’Connor observes that “in reality, [old] Corinth was neither better nor worse than its contemporaries.” See Jerome Murphy-O’Connor “Corinth,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols., ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:1136. C. K. Barrett similarly observes that “In Paul’s day, Corinth was probably little better and little worse than any other great seaport and commercial centre of the age.” See C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Black’s New Testament Commentaries (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1968), 3. However, that comment in itself suggests an environment well familiar with sexual immorality!

49 For the “hair” interpretation see: Murphy-O’Connor, “Sex and Logic,” 482–500, Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, “1 Corinthians 11:2-16, Once Again,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 50 (April 1988): 265–274; James B. Hurley, “Did

explicit appeal to the custom of the day when he asks, "Does not the very nature (φύσις) of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory?" (1 Cor. 11:14–15). It makes no sense here to suggest that trimmed hair on a man is "natural" but long hair is "unnatural." That would be analogous to suggesting that the phrase *au naturel* implied fully clothed rather than naked! Rather Paul is referring by way of analogy to "the prevailing custom (which is held to be in harmony with nature)."⁵⁰ The fact that Paul evaluates behaviour here in terms of the social construct, "shame" confirms a social understanding of "nature" in this passage.

In the ancient world a woman's hair was considered sensuous if not outright erotic. Married women wore their hair long but tied up in a bun to signify their sexual unavailability. The hair of chaste women was not worn loose in public except in carefully defined delimited circumstances—especially ecstatic prophecy or occasions of great emotional outpouring (extreme grief or extreme gratitude).⁵¹ This fact seems particularly important in the context of 1 Corinthians where concerns about both sexual morality and ecstatic worship (including "prophesying") are explicitly dealt with.

Paul Require Veils or the Silence of Women? A Consideration of 1 Cor. 11:2–16 and 1 Cor. 14:33b–36," *Westminster Theological Journal* 35 (1973): 190–220; Khiok-Khng Yeo, "Differentiation and Mutuality of Male–Female Relations in 1 Corinthians 11:2–16," *Biblical Research* 43 (1998): 7–21; Alan Padgett, "Paul on Women in the Church: The Contradictions of Coiffure in 1 Corinthians 11:2–16," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 20 (1984): 69–86. For the more traditional "veil" interpretation see J. W. Roberts, "The Veils in 1 Cor. 11:2–16," *Restoration Quarterly* 3 (1959): 183–198; David W. J. Gill, "The Importance of Roman Portraiture for Head-Coverings in 1 Corinthians 11:2–16," *Tyndale Bulletin* 41 (November 1990): 245–260; Bruce K. Waltke, "1 Corinthians 11:2–16: An Interpretation," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 135 (1978): 46–57; Preston T. Massey, "Long Hair as a Glory and as a Covering; Removing an Ambiguity from 1 Cor 11:15," *Novum Testamentum* 53 (2011): 52–72.

50 Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*. Hermeneia (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1975), 191. Similarly, see: Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 527; Loren T. Stuckenbruck, "Why Should Women Cover their Heads because of the Angels? (1 Corinthians 11:10)," *Stone-Campbell Journal* 4 (Fall 2001): 228–234.

51 Charles H. Cosgrove, "A Woman's Unbound Hair in the Greco-Roman World, with Special Reference to the Story of the 'Sinful Woman' in Luke 7:3–50," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 124 (2005): 678–686.

But what exactly is Paul's advice on the matter? Most scholars have thought that it has to do with whether or not women's hair was covered or veiled. However, much of the comparative material used to confirm the prevalence of the veiling of women in the Greco-Roman world of the first century is either far too early or far too late to be compelling.⁵² An alternative is suggested by 1 Corinthians 11:15b, ὅτι ἡ κόμη ἀντὶ περιβολαίου δέδοται [ἀντὶ] which may legitimately be translated "because long hair is given to her instead of a veil."⁵³ The passage makes surprising good sense on the assumption that Paul is dealing with hair rather than veils.

Paul's topic in this whole passage is "Propriety in Worship."⁵⁴ He opens with a key thought: "the head of every man is Christ" (verse 3a). This is supported with an extended analogy drawn from the relationship between men and women (or more correctly, husbands and wives), which is also described in terms of headship (verse 3b). For a woman to have her hair tied up indicates that she has come under the authority of her husband. For a Christian man to pray with his hair tied up would be tantamount to proclaiming that he has also put himself under the authority of another man, which dishonours his head—Christ (verse 4). The reverse situation is true for a Christian woman. For her to pray with her hair loosened would indicate (in that social context) her sexual availability to other men, which would shame her head, her husband (verse 5). This puts her virtually on a par with a woman whose head has been shaved—the prescribed penalty for adultery (verse 5). Not only is her husband shamed by such behaviour, she is also (verse 6).

52 Hurley, "Did Paul Require Veils," 194–196. Preston Massey, for example, draws on several passages from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* to illustrate the practice of women being veiled in public but these sources pre-date Paul by hundreds of years. See Massey, "Long Hair," 55–64.

53 Massey, ("Long Hair," 52–55) rejects the interpretation given here but recognizes, nonetheless, how difficult verse 15 is for those who interpret the passage in terms of veils. The key issue in verse 15 is the meaning of the word ἀντὶ; which *may* mean "instead of" but could equally be translated "as."

54 Correctly indicated in this section heading in the NIV. See also J. W. Roberts, "The Veils in 1 Cor. 11:2–16," *Restoration Quarterly* 3 (1959): 184. Harold Holmyard's attempt to disassociate 1 Cor. 11:2–16 from the setting of public worship is unconvincing. See Harold R. Holmyard, III, "Does 1 Corinthians 11:2–15 Refer to Women Praying and Prophesying in Church?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154, no. 616 (October-December 1997): 461–472.

Paul next endeavours to anchor his analogy in ontology, making a three-point argument:

1. Man is the "image and glory of God," but woman is only the "glory of man";
2. Man did not come from woman, but woman came from man;
3. Man was not made for woman but woman was made for man.

His conclusion: "for this reason [!], and because of the angels" woman should not have "the sign of authority on her head."⁵⁵ There is a certain obscurity here: according to Genesis 1:27–28 both man and woman were made in the image of God. However the general point is clear. Paul argues that the custom of the day (cf., "nature," verse 14) which saw wives come under the authority of their husbands could be justified by the order of the creation of man and woman in Genesis 2. It is important to note that gender relationships is not his primary topic. Rather he is concerned with propriety in worship. The Christian worship service is not the place, Paul suggests, for flouting the conventions of the day regarding gender, which would bring the church into disrepute. To do so would be an abuse of Christian freedom, a topic Paul addresses in the immediately previous section of his letter (1 Cor. 10:23–11:1).

Several further things need to be noted: Paul does not here use an ontological proof to argue that women should be silent in church, nor does Paul use his ontological argument to show the spiritual inferiority of women—or any other kind of inferiority for that matter. Rather his point is very narrowly limited: women should not be using their Christian freedom to flout the social conventions of the day in Christian worship services. However, Paul subtly undermines the patriarchal conventions by stressing the complementary nature of the sexes. It is true that woman came from man originally (verse 8) but it is equally true that man comes from woman at birth (verse 12). Male and female are not independent of one another but rather are dependent on each other (verse 11).

The situation in regard to 1 Corinthians 14:33–35 is simpler. Again the issue is propriety in worship. Paul makes this very clear with his opening gambit: God is a God of order (verse 33) and that fact should be reflected in

55 The reference to angels has been much discussed and absolute certainty regarding Paul's meaning is impossible to come by. However, he is probably alluding to the fact that eschatology is not yet fully realized. The freedoms which will be fully possessed by Christians in the heavenly future when they will even judge the angels (1 Cor. 6:3) are not their prerogative while the present age remains. See Hurley, "Did Paul Require Veils," 209-211.

Christian public worship services. Women are to remain “silent” (verse 34). However, Paul makes it absolutely clear that he is talking about a specific kind of speech when he adds “If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home” (verse 35). He is clearly not referring to women preaching, praying, or teaching. Rather he is referring to the asking of disruptive and disorderly questions. No ontological argument is introduced to support this position.

What then, can be concluded about the suggestion that women are ontologically disqualified from either the priesthood or the apostolate? There is no evidence to support this at all in the OT and the only texts that might appear to support it in the NT, when read within their textual and cultural context, do not lend any support to it either.

Women as Culturally Disqualified

The fourth possible reason for women’s absence from the priesthood and the apostolate is the most difficult to evaluate. In the same way that a fish in the ocean presumably does not know that it is “wet,” cultures generally do not engage in self-analysis. Nowhere in either the OT or the NT is anything said to be forbidden or permitted on cultural grounds. Such an evaluation is only possible when a culture is viewed from the outside. This means that any evaluation of the cultural disqualifications from the priesthood or the apostolate involves arguments from silence (in the text) and the importation of data from the surrounding cultural environments.

It is, however, generally agreed that the absence of female priests in Israel’s cult was highly unusually in an Ancient Near Eastern world—indeed, it was “probably a unique case.”⁵⁶ John Otwell correctly observes that “Since other peoples in the ancient Near East worshipped in cults which used priestesses, their absence in the Yahwism of ancient Israel must have been deliberate.”⁵⁷ What was the reason for this deliberate exclusion of women priests? Otwell wisely cautions that all attempts to answer this question must be “conjectural.”⁵⁸ In light of this fact, it would be wise to be cautious and conservative with the data, rather than to give free reign to speculation.

It was once widely agreed that the priestesses of the nations surrounding Israel—and especially those of the Canaanites, the closest of Israel’s

56 Jacques B. Doukhan, “Women Priests in Israel: A Case for their Absence,” in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 31.

57 Otwell, And Sarah Laughed, 155.

58 Ibid.

neighbours—were integral to fertility rites including sacred prostitution.⁵⁹ However, “recent studies seriously question this widespread assumption.”⁶⁰ Nevertheless an essential element of the previous consensus remains: the nations surrounding Israel held to fertility religions, worshipped a pantheon of gods, and attributed the origins and ongoing fertility of this world to the sexual activities of those gods. Joan Westenholz allows that in Mesopotamia at least, a “sacred marriage ritual” which involved ritualized sexual intercourse was performed once a year as part of the New Year’s celebration.⁶¹ Both the plurality of gods and the importance of ritualized sexual rites were thus easily associated with those (fertility) religions that had a dual-gender priesthood.

Carol Meyers, although admitting that any details of cultic imitation of divine mating are “tantalizingly vague and distant in the face of our modern inquiries,” endeavours to place the fertility cults in a broader context.⁶² She insists that concerns over “fertility” should not be thought of exclusively in terms of the land. Rather, especially in Palestine, they must have included questions of human fertility and population growth.⁶³ Such concerns are reflected in a religion centring originally on the great Mother Goddess.

All of this was anathema to Yahwism and to Israel. Both the Torah and the Prophets taught the oneness of God, who created and sustains by his word and not by sexual activity.⁶⁴ It is scarcely surprising that the oneness

59 Carol L. Meyers, “The Roots of Restriction: Women in Early Israel,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 41, no. 3 (September 1978): 92; Samuel L. Terrien, *Till the Heart Sings: A Biblical Theology of Manhood and Womanhood* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1985), 78; Doukhan, “Women Priests in Israel,” 31.

60 E. A. Goodfriend, “Prostitution (OT),” *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols., ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:507. See also J. G. Westenholz, “Tamar, Qēdešā, Qadištu, and Sacred Prostitution in Mesopotamia,” *Harvard Theological Review* 82 (1989): 245–265; Susan Ackerman, “Cultic Prostitution,” *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 300.

61 Westenholz, “Tamar,” 262.

62 Meyers, “The Roots of Restriction,” 92.

63 *Ibid.*, 93. The great River Valley civilizations may have had periodic concerns with overpopulations but Palestine, buffeted as it was by waves of warfare, pestilence, famine and disease, would have been more concerned with depopulation. Meyers describes this as an “archeologically demonstrable” fact.

64 The archaeological find at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud shows that some worshippers of Yahweh understood him in terms similar to that prevailing in the Ancient Near Eastern context—as a god with a consort. See Ze’ev Meshel, “Did Yahweh have

of God was represented in Israel by a single-gender priesthood. As the feminine gods vanish from the theology of Israel, the female priesthood vanishes also.

The situation of Jesus and the apostles is also readily understandable in the cultural context of first century Israel. Jesus was a wandering preacher who pointed out his lack of a permanent residence (Matt. 8:20). His opponents cast thinly veiled aspersions on his legitimacy—and by implication, his mother's sexual history (Jn 8:41).⁶⁵ The Pharisees, who held to strict standards of purity were regularly astonished, not to say horrified, at his willingness to come into physical contact with “unclean” people. They had strict rules regarding contact with women who were rendered “unclean” by menstruation. It is certainly not difficult to imagine the firestorm of controversy and scandal which would have engulfed Jesus if he had included women along with men in his group of companions. Such women would easily have been vilified as prostitutes, in analogy to the “camp-followers” who were historically drawn to armies on the march.⁶⁶ (It is instructive that scarcely a hundred years after the ministry of Jesus, the rigourist and ascetic reformer, Montanus, engaged in a similar itinerant ministry accompanied

a Consort? The New Religious Inscriptions from the Sinai,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 5 (March-April 1979): 24–34; J. A. Emerton, “New Light on Israelite Religion: The Implications of the Inscriptions from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud,” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 94 (January 1982): 2–20; William G. Dever, “Asherah, Consort of Yahweh? New Evidence from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 255 (Summer 1984): 21–37; David Noel Freedman, “Yahweh of Samaria and his Asherah,” in *Divine Commitment and Human Obligation*, 2 vols., eds. David Noel Freedman and John R. Huddleston (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 1:403–408; Andrew D. H. Mayes, “Kuntillet ‘Ajrud and the History of Israelite Religion,” in *Archaeology and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. John R. Bartlett (London: Routledge, 1997), 51–66.

65 Matthew's inclusion of four women who are all tainted by scandal in his genealogy of Jesus is regarded by some scholars as a counterstrike against this sort of slander against Mary. See R. V. G. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St Matthew*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Leicester: Intervarsity, 1961), 32. For scholarly reservations regarding this idea see: Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 15; Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Matthew* (London: SPCK, 1975), 24–25.

66 J. D. Buckley and H. E. Bicheno, “Camp Followers,” in *Oxford Companion to Military History*, ed. Richard Holmes (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 170–171.

by two women—Priscilla and Maximilla. He could not escape the charge of “reeking of every impurity and licentiousness.”⁶⁷ Nor could his female companions.⁶⁸)

There remains a further issue: Palestinian Judaism in the NT period does not appear to have allowed women to study the Torah or take a leading role as religious teachers. The only unambiguously Palestinian source material from the first century is the Dead Sea Scrolls. The evidence for women leaders at Qumran is ambiguous at best. The *Community Rule* makes no mention of women.⁶⁹ On the other hand, *Damascus Document* (4Q270 7.i.13–14) refers to “fathers” and “mothers” [of the community], suggesting that women held positions of respect and honour in the community. This evidence is ambiguous, however. The penalty for “complaining” against the fathers was permanent expulsion from the community, but the penalty for complaining against the mothers was ten days’ punishment. Eileen Schuller and Cecilia Wassen suggest that 4Q512 (41.2) permits either a man or a woman to pronounce the blessings of purification which are integral to ritual washings.⁷⁰ However, the text is so fragmentary that it is difficult to draw any definitive conclusions from it. Lastly 4Q502 19.2 may speak of male and female “elders”, but given that this reference is part of a sequence of gendered pairs (young men and young women, boys and girls) it is more likely that the correct translation is “old men and old women.” There is thus no unambiguous evidence of female leadership at Qumran.⁷¹

Three other sources are rooted in Palestinian Judaism of the first century but are written at a later time or with a different audience in mind. The first of these is the writings of Flavius Josephus. He was a witness to and a

67 David Wright attributes this accusation to Cyril of Jerusalem and suggests that little weight should be given to it. See David F. Wright, “Why Were the Montanists Condemned?” *Themelios* 2 (1976): 18.

68 Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Christian F. Cruse (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 175.

69 Sidnie W. Crawford, “Not According to the Rule: Women, the Dead Sea Scrolls and Qumran,” in *Emanuel: Studies in the Hebrew Bible, Septuagint and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of Emanuel Tov*, eds. Shalom M. Paul et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 127.

70 Eileen M. Schuller and Cecilia Wassen, “Women, Daily Life,” *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 2 vols., eds. Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 2:983.

71 This leaves aside the question of how significant such evidence would be even if it were present. If the community represented some sort of reformist sect at the time, how representative should we understand its practices to be?

participant in events in first-century Palestine, especially the Jewish revolt of AD 66–70. However, he wrote in Rome and his target audience appears to have been sophisticated Gentiles rather than Jews. In his picture of the first century AD (and the century before) a number of prominent women are mentioned—Alexandra, Queen of the Jews; Mariamme, wife of Herod the Great; Salome, the sister of Herod; Antonia, a Roman noblewoman who saved the Jewish prince Agrippa; Herodias, wife of Philip; Berenice, the daughter of Herod Agrippa I and supposed lover of Titus, the future Caesar; Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt; and Poppaea, wife of Nero. All of these women—Jews and Gentiles alike—were members of royalty. Josephus makes no reference to women exercising authority in Palestine as either warriors or as religious leaders. Rather their sphere of influence is the home.

The second of the sources dealing somewhat obliquely with first-century Palestine is the NT, specifically the four Gospels. Like Josephus, the Gospel writers describe events in first-century Palestine but again, like the works of Josephus, the Gospels were written with a primarily Gentile audience in mind and after a gap of a number of years from the events described. In each of the Gospels Jesus interacts with a variety of synagogue-rulers and Jewish religious teachers. However, none of his interlocutors are female despite the fact that Jesus is presented as having a wide range of social contacts with women at various levels of society. From the perspective of the literary context of the Gospels themselves, female Jewish religious teachers in Palestine were unknown in the time of Jesus.

The last of the three sources is the early rabbinic writings, particularly the Mishnah. This source is different from the previous two in that it does not purport to be a description of first-century Palestine or to deal with the situation as it existed at that time. This means there are inevitable methodological difficulties in using the rabbinic sources because it is impossible to be certain that any particular detail given in them actually reflected the first-century situation. To what extent is the comment attributed to R. Eliezer—“Whoever teaches one’s daughter Torah teaches her lasciviousness”—reflective of the situation in the first century? Since Eliezer was one of the earliest of the Tannaim, the comment presumably had some roots in first-century thought but it is impossible to know for certain. What is certain is that the Mishnah preserves no names of female religious leaders or teachers of the Torah from that period. Bernadette Brooten has demonstrated that there were female religious teachers and synagogue leaders in early Judaism.⁷² Significantly, however, all of her sources, except for one fourth-

72 Brooten, *Women Leaders*, 1–99.

century inscription, come from outside Palestine. This is not due simply to a lack of inscriptions in Palestine. Brooten is able to document numerous inscriptions testifying to female donors to synagogues in Palestine.⁷³

Conclusions

If women were excluded from the priesthood and the apostolate for cultural reasons rather than physical, spiritual, or ontological reasons, what are the implications for the modern Church? The Bible itself may provide an answer to that question. Even though Jesus did not include a single female among the apostles, there are clear indications that Paul's practice in regard to female religious leadership was different. He refers to a lady, Junia, as an apostle in Rome (Rom. 16:7). Similarly, he lists Euodia and Syntyche among his "fellow workers" (συνεργῶν; see Phil. 4:2-3)—a clear reference to ministry. Why is Paul willing to act so differently from Jesus on this matter? The most obvious answer is that he was working in a different cultural context—the broader Gentile world where in Judaism, female synagogue leaders were known.⁷⁴ There was also a clear, even if regionally diverse heritage of female leadership in the Greco-Roman world.⁷⁵ If this reconstruction is valid, then two conclusions can be drawn for the contemporary Church: first, there is no reason why women could not be ordained for the ministry if such an action was acceptable in the cultural context in which it was happening; and second, there is no reason why the Church's practice need be uniform throughout the entire world instead of being responsive to cultural contexts on a case-by-case basis.

73 Ibid., 157-165.

74 Ibid., 1-99.

75 Ben Witherington, III, *Women in the Earliest Churches*. Society of New Testament Studies, Monograph Series 59 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 5-23

Part 2
Biblical Studies

Chapter 4: The Language of Appointment to Offices and Roles in Scripture

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Clearly people are appointed to specific offices and roles in Scripture. However, the question remains, do the ceremonies involved in such an appointment ever constitute ordination in a way that corresponds to modern ordination to ministry, or is something else happening?

The King James Version uses the verb “to ordain” with reference to the appointment of priests to the service of idols (2 Kings 23:5; 2 Chron. 11:15) and to the appointment of the high priest to the service of God (Heb. 5:1; 8:3). It also uses “to ordain” with reference to the appointment of Jeremiah as a prophet (Jer. 1:5); to the appointment of the Twelve (Mk 3:14–15; Acts 1:21–22); to Paul’s appointment as a preacher, apostle, and teacher (1 Tim. 1:27); and to Titus’s appointment of elders in every city (Titus 1:5). On the surface these facts may seem sufficient to settle the debate. However, it is no secret that King James was insistent the version he authorized retain traditional ecclesiastical titles (e.g., in Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1, 2; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 2:25. Cf. Acts 1:20). Even if we could be sure that the translators intended to speak of ordination here in a technical sense, that fact would hardly settle the issue of what the Bible writers themselves intended.

The methodology adopted here has been to identify the verbs used in the Old Testament (OT) and New Testament (NT) for the appointment of people to a whole gamut of human offices and roles, then to study the use of these words in the canon to clarify what the language actually implies.¹ The approach has been inductive and comprehensive. However, for the sake of the reader the whole study is not presented here, just the conclusions.

¹ The Hebrew and Aramaic word studies were based on *The Englishman's Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance of the Old Testament* (London; Samuel Bagster and Sons, n.d.). The Greek word studies were based on W. F. Moulton and A. S. Geden, eds. *A Concordance to the Greek Testament according to the Texts of Westcott and Hort, Tischendorf and the English Revisers*, 5th ed., H. K. Moulton rev. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1978).

Biblical Terminology for Installation into Office or Role

The study begins with terminology involving physical imagery that may indicate actual ceremonies connected with installation to office. It then moves on to the discussion of more general terminology.

Terminology Tied in with Installation Ceremonies

In this section consideration is first given to the practice of the laying on of the hand(s), a ceremony accompanying installation into office in both the OT and NT, and then to the practice of anointing, a ceremony accompanying installation in the OT but not in the NT. Causing an appointee to stand is part of OT ceremonial installation on at least one occasion and may still have value today. It is unclear to what extent the filling of the hand of OT priests was a live or a dead metaphor but it does have potential as a part of Christian installation ceremony today. It is unclear whether appointment by the stretching forth of the hand in either Testament was a dead metaphor or a literal practice in appointment ceremonies. However, it likewise has potential as a part of Christian installation ceremony today.

The Laying on of the Hand(s)

Moses lays his hand on Joshua as a sign of the transfer of authority (Num. 27:18–20). In the NT the delegation of authority is evident in the laying on of the hand upon deacons and the laying on of the hand(s) upon elders (Acts 6:4–6; 1 Tim. 4:15; 5:22). This practice is an extension of the laying on of the hand upon new believers (Acts 8:17; Heb. 6:1). The use of laying on of the hand upon all believers challenges the idea that it can be limited to a particular group of believers. There is no distinction between commissioning and ordination here. Nor is there any delay between appointment to the task or office and the laying on of the hand. If a person is called to the work, the laying on of the hand(s) is appropriate. Blessing and privilege as well as authority are conveyed by the laying on of the hand as apparent in, for example, Jacob's blessing of Joseph and his two sons (Gen. 48:12–20).

Similarly, responsibility is being transferred when Moses lays his hand on Joshua and ceremonially appoints him as his successor (Num. 27:18). Moses is said to be giving a portion of his *hōd* or authority to Joshua so that the entire congregation of the children of Israel may hear or listen to him (cf. Deut. 34:9).²

So the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit of leadership, and *lay your hand on him*. Have him stand before

2 Note how Yahweh himself likewise gives unparalleled *hōd* to Solomon (1 Chron. 29:25).

Eleazar the priest and the entire assembly and commission him in their presence. Give him some of your authority so the whole Israelite community will obey him" (Num. 27:18-20; emphasis added).³

The significance of the laying on of the hand for the transfer of authority becomes clearer as we examine the function of the laying on of the hand throughout the OT as a whole. The laying on of the hand can be an act of violent intrusion into the body space of another (e.g., Gen. 22:12; 37:22). It is done to sacrificial animals, apparently as a transfer of sin to the animal (e.g., Lev. 4:1-4). In a case of blasphemy, all who heard a man curse are commanded to lay hands on his head before the entire congregation stone him (Lev. 24:14). The words follow, "When one curses his God, (s)he will carry his own sin" (Lev. 24:15).⁴ The idea appears to be that by coming forward as witnesses, the hearers have absolved themselves of any responsibility attached to the man's sin. Is the forced intimacy of the hand-laying a way of making potentially false accusers take stock? In any case, more precisely it is responsibility for sin that is here being transferred to the accused, rather than sin itself.

Delegation of responsibility and the granting of privilege come to the fore in Jacob's blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh, with the right hand on one and the left on the other (Gen. 48:12-20).

Delegation of authority is evident in the way the appointment of deacons is seen as freeing up the apostles for prayer and ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4). Timothy's installation as an elder is in view when Paul instructs him not to neglect the gift given to him with the laying on of hands of the eldership (1 Tim. 4:15) and his installation of other elders would appear to be in view when Paul warns him against laying hands on anyone too quickly (1 Tim. 5:22). The apostles pray over the Church's first deacons and lay hands on them (Acts 6:6).

In the NT, elders and deacons are not the only object of the laying on of hands. In Acts 8:17 it is recorded that Peter and John lay hands on the Samaritan converts and these converts receive the Holy Spirit, suggesting part of a ceremony of dedication of new believers. In Hebrews 6:1, it is listed with the foundational matters of repentance, faith, baptism, resurrec-

3 Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from this point on are taken from *The Holy Bible, New International Version* NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.®, as accessed through www.biblegateway.com.

4 This is a more literal rendering than the NIV's "Anyone who curses their God will be held responsible." Cross references: Exod. 22:8, Lev. 5:1.

tion, and eternal judgment, suggesting that it happened with all believers. The laying on of hands for elders and deacons would be an extension of this initial installation as Christians, and would consistently apply to instalment into and other offices and roles, as the need arises.

No mere symbolism is involved in the laying on of hands in Acts 8:17. Without divorcing the efficacy of the ceremony from the faith it expresses, a real transformation takes place; to the extent that Simon offers money so that he may also have the power to convey the Spirit through the laying on of hands (Acts 8:18–19).⁵ Peter roundly rejects Simon's suggestion (verses 18–24).

Anointing the Appointee

Priests, kings, prophets, and proclaimers of good news are anointed to their tasks in the OT. The titles "Messiah" and "Christ" refer to the anointing of Jesus. Anointing as a ceremony of installation is absent from the NT. The language of anointing stresses the initiative of divine grace.

The verb *mšck*, "to anoint," is frequently used of appointment to a particular office and roles. Priests are anointed,⁶ as are kings,⁷ prophets (1 Kings 19:16), and promulgators of good news (Isa. 61:1). The cognate noun, *māšīack* ("anointed one"), has come into English with reference to the ultimate Davidic king as "Messiah."

The Greek equivalent of *māšīack*, *Christos*, has likewise come into English with reference to Jesus as "Christ" and is cognate to *chriō* ("I anoint") and *chrisma* ("anointing"). Jesus applies *chriō* to himself when he speaks of the Spirit having anointed him to proclaim good news (Lk 4:16). It is God who has anointed Jesus (Acts 4:27; 10:38; Heb. 1:9) and who has anointed believers as well (2 Cor. 1:21). The anointing of the Holy One brings knowledge in 1 John 2:20, 27.

In OT times anointing was no mere metaphor. Actual oil was used often enough.⁸ Nor was it used in any small measure. In Aaron's installation, it is said to have run upon the head, down the beard, and down on the edge of

5 That real spiritual power is seen as in some way conveyed by the laying on of hands is confirmed by its use in miraculous healings, as in Matt. 9:18; Mk 5:23; 16:18.

6 Exod. 28:41; 30:30; 40:11; Lev. 6:20; 7:36; 8:12; 16:32; Num. 3:3; 35:25; 1 Chron. 29:22.

7 Judg. 9:8, 15; 1 Sam. 9:16; 10:1; 15:1, 17; 16:3, 12, 13; 2 Sam. 2:4, 7; 3:39; 5:3, 17; 19:15; 1 Kings 1:39, 45; 19:16; 2 Kings 9:3, 6, 12; 11:12; 23:30; 1 Chron. 11:3; 14:8; 29:22; 2 Chron. 22:7; 23:11; Ps. 45:7; 89:20.

8 Exod. 29:5-7; Lev. 8:10-12, 30; 10:7; 21:10, 12; 1 Sam. 16:13; Ps. 89:20.

his garments (Ps. 133:2). In the NT, oil was apparently never used in ceremonies of installation into Christian office,⁹ perhaps because the sanctuary on earth was no longer in focus.¹⁰ The language does not therefore directly inform any ordination ceremony. However, it does stress the divine call behind installation to office or service. Where ceremony does occur, it is at the beginning of office.

Since priesthood and kingship were hereditary, the act of anointing was ever and always an act of initial grace, never a reward or recognition for work well done.

Causing the Appointee to Stand

The OT and NT alike speak of appointees to various offices being “made to stand.” Moses had Joshua literally stand before the people when he appointed him as his successor. Where an appointee to office can stand, it may remain to this day a rich symbol of readiness to serve.

The *Hiph'il* of the verb 'md (“stand”) is frequently used with reference to the appointment of priests and Levites to office. Priests are made to stand. In two passages, the Hebrew word translated in the KJV as “ordain” is a *Hiph'il* of 'md, or “stand,” conveying the idea of causing people to stand.¹¹ The Greek verb *kathistēmi* is a compound variation of the verb *histēmi*, “stand,” and is used in Hebrews for the appointment of the high priest (Heb. 5:1; 8:3). Standing is the appropriate posture for a priest or temple assistant, ready to serve at a moment's notice, although the characteristic posture of Jesus as high priest is sitting, his atoning work finished in a way an earthly high priest's work could never be. Of course, his followers serving him on earth today have a work before them that is not yet finished (Heb. 1:3, 13; 10:12).

The *Hiph'il* of 'md is also used of appointment of Joshua as Moses' successor (Num. 17:22), of appointment to the office of king (1 Chron. 17:14),

9 Although the NT contains instruction for elders to use it during prayers for the sick (James 5:14), but this act may have had as much to do with the perceived curative properties of the oil as with any supposed special spiritual significance.

10 Indeed even in OT times, Psalm 133 suggests that unity was well on the way to operating as a functional substitute for the oil in times when the temple was not operational. See Elie Assis, “Family and Community as Substitutes for the Temple after Its Destruction: New Readings in Psalm 127 and 133,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 85 (2009): 55–62.

11 E.g., in 1 Kings 12:32; 1 Chron. 6:31; 9:22; 15:16, 17; 2 Chron. 8:14; 11:5; 19:8; 23:19; 29:25; 31:2; 35:2; Ezra 3:8; Neh. 13:10, 30.

of advancement in princely office (2 Chron. 11:22), of appointment as a eunuch to serve a queen (Esther 4:5), of the installation of judges (2 Chron. 19:5), of the raising of an army (Dan. 11:11, 13), and of appointment to serve under a military commander (2 Chron. 25:5).

The verb *kathistēmi* is used with reference to the appointment of the faithful and wise servant over his master's household, who is subsequently given authority over all the master's goods (Matt. 24:45, 47; Lk 12:42, 44). Appointment to wider responsibility is likewise in focus in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:21, 23. It is used with reference to the appointment of an arbitrator or judge with authority over another (Lk 12:14; Acts 7:27, 35) and with reference to the appointment of the first Christian deacons (Acts 6:3). It is likewise used of Pharaoh's appointing Joseph over his household and over Egypt (Acts 7:10), of Titus' appointment of elders in Crete, and of God giving human beings authority over creation (Heb. 2:7).

Obviously the idea of "causing to stand" applies to a wide variety of roles, not all of them strictly priestly. In Numbers 17:22 it is no dead metaphor. Moses apparently literally stands Joshua up before the people. Where an appointee to office can stand, it remains an appropriate symbol in any appointment ceremony of the readiness of the appointee to serve.

The Filling of the Hand

The "filling" of the hand is an expression often used in the OT to refer to the consecration of priests. It may have been a dead metaphor. However, placing emblems of grace in the hand of a person being installed to Christian office may be a rich symbol indeed.

When priests are symbolically installed in office, the Hebrew often speaks of the "filling" [*ml'*] of the hand of the priest. The idea appears to be that of provision for the priest to do his work. The special dress and anointing of priests are described in Exodus 29:5-9 and the statement is made, "And thou shalt consecrate Aaron and his sons," as rendered in the King James Version, or more literally, "You will fill the hand of Aaron and the hand of his sons" (verse 9).¹²

The expression may have been a dead metaphor. However, Christian ceremonies installing people to office may be significantly enriched by the placing of gifts of grace in the hand of the candidate, such as the Word of Scripture.

¹² So also the Hebrew behind the verb "consecrate" is literally "fill the hand" in Exod. 28:41; 29:33; Lev. 8:33; 16:32; Judg. 17:5, 12; 1 Kings 13:33; and 1 Chron. 29:5. Cf. the passive "was consecrated" in Lev. 21:10.

The Stretching of the Hand

The “stretching of the hand” is closely related to the “laying on of the hand(s).” It signifies acting in power, delegation of authority, and commitment into divine care, and sometimes involves roles rather than offices. The stretching forth of a hand by community members in installation ceremonies would be a ceremonial practice reflecting the element of community support implicit in 2 Corinthians 8:19.

The stretching out of the hand is a Hebrew idiom, indicating acting in power, whether to deliver (e.g., Exod. 3:20) and/or to destroy.¹³ It particularly involves commissioning a prophet to speak: “Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, I have put my words in your mouth” (Jer. 1:9). The Greek verb for stretching the hand, *cheirotoneō*, is twice used in the NT to describe appointment to offices and roles that emphasize delegated authority to act:

Paul and Barnabas *appointed* elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust (Acts 14:23; emphasis added).

What is more, he [Titus] was *chosen* by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help (2 Cor. 8:19; emphasis added).

Commitment into the care of God as a related symbolism of the word is indicated in Acts 14:23. However the focus is sometimes on a specified role rather than on an ecclesiastical office, as indicated in 2 Corinthians 8:19.

As my colleague Wendy Jackson has pointed out to me, the question must be asked, was the stretching out of the hand in these instances a dead metaphor? In other words, does *cheirotoneō* simply denote (s)election without any particular accompanying ceremony of the hand? Perhaps. Nevertheless, services of installation might be enriched by members of the congregation lifting up a hand to show support for the person being installed to an office or role and to affirm that person acts on the community’s behalf.

General Terminology of Installation

We now turn to other Hebrew and Greek verbs used to denote installation to office, verbs that do not appear to denote ceremony at all, but broaden our understanding of what appointment involves. This section examines in turn the language of appointment to office as gift, the language of placement in office, the language of sanctification or separation, and the language of appointment as “making.”

¹³ Exod. 9:15; 1 Sam. 24:6, 10; 24:6, 10; 26:9, 11, 23; 2 Sam. 1:14; 18:12; Job 1:11-12; 2:5; 30:24; Ps. 55:20; 138:7; Dan. 11:42.

The Language of Appointment as Gift

Those who are appointed to an office or task not only receive gifts of enablement, they are themselves also a gift to God's people. The Hebrew verb *ntn* is usually translated as "give" in English. However, it can also refer to the setting of objects in space, e.g., of the greater and lesser lights in the firmament on the fourth day (Gen. 1:17) or of the rainbow in the cloud (Gen. 9:13). By extension, it can refer to the metaphoric placement of people in particular roles or offices, such as with the appointment of (false) priests mentioned in 2 Kings 23:12 and as with the appointment of Jeremiah as prophet in Jeremiah 1:5. The gift aspect of the verb may not apply in every instance, but particularly comes to the fore in the notion of Yahweh's giving the Levites to help the priests (Num. 8:19; 18:6; cf. 1 Chron. 6:48) and of David's appointment of temple servants to the same end (Ezra 8:20; cf. Jer. 29:26; Ezek. 44:14). This is in line with the NT concept of particular roles and offices as gifts to the Church bestowed in consequence of her Lord's exaltation (Eph. 4:7–13). The verb is especially applied to the appointment of kings,¹⁴ including the elevation of the king as the divine firstborn (Ps. 89:27). It is used to speak of the appointment of the prince of Tyre as covering cherub (Ezek. 28:14), the stationing of garrisons (2 Chron. 17:2), and the appointment of deliverers in time of oppression (Neh. 9:27).

The use of *ntn* in the context of appointment to ecclesiastical office emphasizes the wide range of offices and roles that may be involved, and celebrates the ways in which those fulfilling these offices and roles are a divine gift to the community.

The Language of Placement in Office

The Hebrew verb *šym* ("place") denotes action under authority. On the other hand, the use of the Greek verb *tithēmi* (also "place") emphasizes that divine calling comes from God and denotes the diversity of the gifts that God has ordained in the Church.

The Hebrew verb *šym* ("place") is used usually with reference to setting someone above something or someone else, i.e., placing that person in a position of authority over the other. Pharaoh makes Joseph ruler of his household (Ps. 105:21), and suggests that Joseph place one of his family over the royal livestock (Gen. 47:6). A Hebrew slave asks who has made Moses ruler and judge over them (Exod. 2:14). Pharaoh sets taskmasters over the Israelites (Exod. 1:11; 5:14), and Jethro urges Moses to set officials over the people to settle their disputes (Exod. 18:21). Military commanders are likewise set over their troops (1 Sam. 8:11; 18:5; 22:7; 2 Sam. 18:1). Yahweh

14 Deut. 17:15; 1 Sam. 12:13; 1 Kings 10:9; 2 Chron. 9:8; Neh. 13:26.

promises to set David's hand "over the sea," i.e., in a position of authority (Ps. 89:25). Leaders are set over individual tribes (Deut. 1:13), judges are set for the nation (1 Sam. 8:11; 2 Sam. 15:4), and leaders, princes, and kings are set over people (1 Kings 10:9), sometimes at the insistence of the people themselves (Deut. 17:14, 15; Judg. 11:11; 1 Sam. 10:19). The Chaldeans are set in place by God to bring judgment upon Judah (Hab. 1:12). Yahweh's setting of Zerubbabel as a signet ring is synonymous with according him great authority (Hag. 2:23). Mordecai is set over Haman's household (Esther 8:2). When Yahweh sets the lowly on high, he gives them high position (Job 5:11). The verb *šym* is used once for appointment to a position of leadership in Levitical office (2 Chron. 26:10). The use of *šym* to denote installation in an office or role tends to underscore the fact that sometimes offices and roles require the exercise of leadership one over another.

The Greek verb *tithēmi* conveys the idea of putting a certain thing in place, much like the Hebrew verb *šym*. Like *šym*, it is sometimes used to denote appointment to specific roles and offices. Jesus' choosing of his disciples, described in John 15:16, doesn't relate to the ordination of a particular group of believers, but to a role that Christ in his sovereignty applies to all. Paul's appointment as preacher, apostle, and teacher is certainly not from men, though acknowledged by others reputed to be apostles (Gal. 1:11–2:21).

The verb *tithēmi* is used with reference to the appointment of Israel as a light to the Gentiles (Acts 13:47). Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit as making the Ephesian elders overseers of the flock. However, the fact that the Holy Spirit is the grammatical subject suggests he does not primarily have a human ceremony in mind. Abraham is spoken of as having been appointed or put in place as the father of many nations, again a distinctly divine act (Rom. 4:17). God sets different members of the body and spiritual gifts in place, as pleases him (1 Cor. 12:18, 28). Paul speaks of God placing him into ministry or service (1 Tim. 1:12). Paul is placed as a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher to the Gentiles (1 Tim. 2:7). Christ is appointed as heir of all things (Heb. 1:2).

The Language of Sanctification

The use of *qdš* in the OT and the use of *hagiazō* in the NT show how God appoints every one of his people to a variety of different offices and roles. The installation comes at the commencement of the role, if not beforehand. Therefore it is not a reward for a job well done. It just is!

Intensive forms of the Hebrew verb *qdš*, "separating as holy," are often used to denote the appointment of people to special roles. Examples of this

use with the *Pi'el* stem include Moses' "sanctification" or preparation of Israel as they anticipate Yahweh's self-revelation in giving the Decalogue from Sinai,¹⁵ the dedication of the firstborn of humans and animals to Yahweh (Exod. 13:1), and the appointment of priests.¹⁶ However, it is also used with reference to enemies appointed to destroy the king of Judah (Jer. 22:7). The *Hiph'il* stem of *qđš* is used to depict the appointment of Jeremiah as a prophet even before his birth (Jer. 1:5), and the selection of future generations of firstborn for dedication to Yahweh (Num. 3:13; 8:17). Indeed, the very reason for the use of the *Hiph'il* rather than the *Pi'el* stem may be to indicate that the office or role assigned is in process, rather than being immediately brought into effect.¹⁷

Like the Hebrew word *qđš*, the Greek word *hagiazō* expresses the idea of separation for a purpose. Jesus speaks of himself as being set apart and sent into the world (Jn 10:36) and of his disciples as being set apart through God's Word (Jn 17:17). Paul declares the Gentiles who receive Christ to have been set apart (Rom. 15:16), as he does the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 1:2) and the Church as a whole as Christ's bride (Eph. 5:26).

Appointment as a "Making"

The language of Christ "making" the Twelve to be with him and to be sent forth by him (Mk 3:14) is suggestive of appointment to office from the beginning of the time a ministry starts, not from some later time.

In the King James Version the verb *poieō* is once translated as "ordain" with reference to human beings: "And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach" (Mk 3:14).

The verb *poieō* is generally translated as "do" or "make." It occasionally has the sense of assigning someone a new role or function, as here in Mark 3:14, where the idea seems to be that Jesus designated a group of twelve, corresponding to the twelve sons of Jacob and the twelve tribes of Israel, with a specific function in mind, i.e., preaching. Jesus promises to make Peter and Andrew "fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19; Mk 1:17). The Jews use *poieō* to describe Jesus making himself God (Jn 10:33; 19:7), and John speaks of the one who does not believe God as making him a liar (1 Jn 5:10).

15 Exod. 19:10; cf. Exod. 31:13; Lev. 20:8, 15; Josh. 7:13; Ezek. 20:12; 37:2.

16 Exod. 25:41; 28:3; 29:1, 44; 30:30; 40:13; Lev. 21:8; 1 Sam. 7:1.

17 On the fine but important distinction between the use of the *Pi'el* stem as factitive and the use of the *Hiph'il* stem as causative, see Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, ID: Eisenbrauns, 1990), §27.1c, 27.2c.

In Mark 3:14 this "ordination" is placed at the beginning of the disciples' ministry. The use of the verb *poieō* is suggestive of appointment to office from the beginning of the time a ministry starts.

Conclusions

In the Bible the laying on of the hand(s) is an actual physical act accompanying the installation to an office or task and denotes the delegation of authority and the granting of blessing. It comes at the beginning of the office or task, not long afterwards as a reward for work done. Moses laid hands upon Joshua, thus designating him as his successor. The laying on of the hand upon elders and deacons in the NT is an extension of the laying on of the hand upon all new believers, so the laying on of the hand cannot be confined to one subset of Christians. No biblical distinction can be made between laying on of the hand in commissioning and laying on of the hand in ordination.

Priests, kings, prophets, and promulgators of good news were anointed to office in the OT. The physical act of anointing to office is not present in the NT. Anointing denotes the primacy and initiative of grace and divine call in appointment.

In the Bible, installation to office is often spoken of as requiring the appointee to stand. In the case of Moses' appointment of Joshua, Moses physically stood Joshua in front of Israel. It is an act that appropriately symbolizing readiness and willingness to serve.

The consecration of OT priests is often described in terms of filling the hand, presumably for service. There is no evidence it was physically a part of priestly installation ceremonies, although a physical filling of the hand with emblems of grace would be an enriching addition to installation ceremonies.

The use of gift language in the context of appointment to ecclesiastical office emphasizes the wide range of offices and roles that may be involved, and celebrates the way that those fulfilling these offices and roles are a divine gift to the community.

The stretching out of the hand may or may not have been a physical act of appointment in the OT and NT. However, it can appropriately be included in contemporary ceremonies of appointment as a way of indicating the appointee acts on behalf of the community.

The Hebrew language of placement denotes action under authority. The Greek language of placement emphasizes that divine calling comes from God. It denotes the diversity of the gifts that God has ordained in the Church.

The OT and NT language of sanctification or separation shows how God calls every one of his people to a variety of different offices and roles. The installation comes at the commencement of the role, if not beforehand. Therefore it is not a reward for a job well done. It just is!

The language of Christ “making” the Twelve to be with him and to be sent forth by him (Mk 3:14) is suggestive of appointment to office from the beginning of the time a ministry starts, not from some later time.

In summary, the laying on of the hand upon an appointee to ecclesiastical office and having the candidate stand before the congregation have clear biblical precedent. A case for the congregation to stretch forth the hand toward the appointee and for the appointee’s hand to be filled with emblems of grace can be made. However, there is no biblical basis for a distinction between ordination and commissioning, and certainly no basis for separating ceremonies of instalment from the actual commencement of a ministry or role. Language of gift, placement, separation, and “making” can be used for the enrichment of such occasions.

Chapter 5: A Biblical Theology of Ordination

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The question of ordination to the Gospel ministry is a vexing one in a world Church that encompasses every continent with their diverse cultures, languages and historical perspectives.¹ Beside the distance of time, culture and language between the early Christian community and the global Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) community of faith, the problem lies in the scarcity of language in both the Old and New Testament that clearly articulates what ordination is and the lack of a coherent service of ordination in the New Testament (NT). In this chapter the Scriptural data will be examined in

1 The significance of this topic in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is attested by the publication of numerous monographs and articles on the subject. The following is only a sampling of published works on the matter: Patricia A. Habada and Rebecca Frost Brillhart, eds. *The Welcome Table: Setting a Place for Ordained Women* (Langley Park, MD: TeamPress, 1995); Nancy Vyhmeister, ed. *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998); Raoul Dederen, "A Theology of Ordination: A Seventh-day Adventist Interpretation," *Ministry Supplement* 51, no. 2 (February 1978): 24K–24P; Keith A. Burton, "A Practical Theology of Ordination," *Ministry* 69, no. 11 (November 1996): 26–27, 29; Nancy Vyhmeister, "Ordination in the New Testament?" *Ministry* 74, no. 5 (May 2002): 24–27; Thomas Blincoe, "Needed—A Theology of Ordination," *Ministry* 51, no. 2 (February 1978): 22–24; Willmore Eva, "Should Our Church Ordain Women? Yes," *Ministry* 58, no. 3 (March 1985): 14–22; Bernard E. Seton, "Should Our Church Ordain Women? No," *Ministry* 58, no. 3 (March 1985): 14–22; Floyd Bresee, "Women in Ministry," *Ministry* 61, no. 8 (August 1988): 22–23; John Brunt, "Ordination of Women: A Hermeneutical Question," *Ministry* 61, no. 9 (September 1988): 12–14; Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, *Searching the Scriptures: Women's Ordination and the Call to Biblical Fidelity* (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventists Affirm, 1995); Mercedes H. Dyer, ed. *Prove all Things: A Response to Women in Ministry* (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventists Affirm, 2000); Eddy Johnson, "Women's Ordination: The Flaw in the Debate," *Spectrum* 37, no. 1 (Winter 2009): 24–27.

the recognition that it is the Spirit who leads into all truth (Jn 16:13).

The key questions that will be addressed in this paper include: what is the meaning of ordination; does ordination confer on an individual a unique status or does ordination symbolize a community's recognition and selection of a person to provide a spiritual leadership within the community; what would a preliminary theology of ordination look like? According to Rowan Williams, "the theology of Christian ministry is an area in which we are too readily tempted to avoid discussion of first principles since practical urgencies unsettle and distract us."²

In this paper lexical analysis of important words will be engaged first in an attempt to articulate the first principles of the NT in relation to the matter of ordination. Second, the notion of "laying on of hands" will be discussed and relevant points will be made from the analysis undertaken in steps one and two. In the final section of this paper a preliminary biblical theology of ordination will be proposed.

The New Testament Background

There is no unambiguous and informed evidence in the NT that supports the concept of ordination as it is currently practised in the SDA Church. In fact, the NT writings do not have a single word for "ordain." The word "ordination" comes from the Latin *ordinare* which means to arrange, regulate or set in order.³ The first evidence for commissioning known as ordination comes from Hippolytus' *Apostolic Tradition*, written in the early third century AD. It is surprising that, for all he wrote about the Church, Paul makes no reference to ordination or to the laying on of hands in relation to any of the leaders he worked with in the churches under his care (cf., 2 Cor. 8:19).

Furthermore, there is no evidence for ordination or the setting-apart of an individual for ministry in the early Church. Jesus' consecration of the disciples recorded in John 20:22 may or may not involve the laying on of hands. This act of Jesus is also not limited to the disciples, but indeed every believer possesses the Spirit (1 Jn 2:27). While there may have been some sort of installation service for the elder (2 Jn 1; 3 Jn 1) nothing is explicitly mentioned.⁴ In sum, the early Church may have conducted an ordination

2 Rowan Williams, "Women and the Ministry: A Case for Theological Seriousness," in *Feminine in the Church*, ed. Monica Furlong (London: SPCK, 1984), 11.

3 Vyhmeister, "Ordination in the New Testament?" 24.

4 R. Alan Culpepper, "The Biblical Basis for Ordination," *Review and Expositor* 78, no. 4 (Fall 1981): 471-484.

service of some kind, but no evidence of it has survived. While historical evidence is lacking a lexical analysis of key words can aid in understanding the concept of ordination.

Lexical Analysis

There are four different Greek words found in different contexts in the NT writings that point to the idea of “ordain.” The King James Version (KJV) is most helpful in identifying such words, as it uses the words “ordain, ordained” in translating the New Testament. For example, Mark 3:13–14 states: “And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth (*proskaleitai*) unto him who he would: and they came to him. And he ordained (*epoiēsen*) twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach.” Jesus went up into a mountain, which was, in Jewish tradition, the place of communion with God and for receiving authoritative revelation (Exod. 19:3–6; Deut. 32:48–34:9; Mk 9:2; 13:3). The word *proskaleitai* is translated “calleth” in the KJV and “summoned” in the NIV. The NIV translation reflects more accurately the intent of the word as it is stronger than the verb “call” (*kaleō*) used in the previous call narratives (Mk 1:20; 2:17). The word *proskaleitai* has connotations of a summons to teach, to instruct, of an invitation or call to a special task (see also Mk 3:23; 6:7; 7:14; 8:1; 10:42; 12:43; 15:44).⁵

The word *poiēō*, from which *epoiēsen* derives, means “to do,” “to make” and is repeatedly used to portray the creative, historical and future eschatological action of God.⁶ The word has overtones of a new creative act in Mark. The choosing of twelve disciples is not arbitrary, but evokes biblical connections with God’s covenant people in the Old Testament (OT).⁷ By a sovereign act, Jesus appoints the Twelve as the eschatologically renewed people of God, to be with him and to proclaim his kingdom to Israel and the world.⁸

5 K. L. Schmidt, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 3:500.

6 W. Radl, *ποιέω*, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 3:124.

7 M. Eugene Boring, *Mark*, The New Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 100.

8 For a discussion on the eschatological implications of Mark 3:13–19, within which our passage is found, see Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, Hermeneia – A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2007), 215–218. Ellen White writes: “When Jesus had ended His instruction to the disciples, He gathered the little band close about Him, and kneeling in the midst of

The next text of consequence is Acts 1:22, which reads: "Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained (*genesthai*) to be a witness with us of his resurrection." This verse does not indicate any service or any activity on the part of the disciples other than that of casting lots after two names are put forward. The practice of casting lots has precedent in Judaism.⁹ The *SDA Bible Commentary* argues that while some suggest that the word *genesthai* reflects the view of Church government held by the KJV translators, this argument is invalid since the disciples were already ordained.¹⁰ It is interesting however, that the disciples do not lay hands on the newly chosen disciple. The word used by Mark (*epoiēsen*) to portray what Jesus did for his disciples in Mark 3:13–14 is closer to the idea present in Acts 1:22 and may have been used to demonstrate continuity between the eleven disciples and the new disciple.

It is stated in Acts 14:23: "And when they had ordained (*cheirotoneōsantes*) them elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed." Richard Longenecker maintains that *cheirotoneō* means "to choose" or "elect by raising hands" but it can also mean "to appoint" or "to install." It seems that it is the latter that Luke has in mind since it is coupled with prayer and fasting.¹¹ This conclusion is strengthened since it is doubtful that Paul and Barnabas would have left the election or choosing of an elder to a new congregation that were still infants in the faith.¹²

The next text to be examined is 1 Timothy 2:7, which reads: "Whereunto I am ordained (*etethēn*) a preacher and an apostle (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity." The emphatic *I* used here expresses a sense of wonder that God would call Paul as his herald.¹³ Furthermore the verb *etethēn* (placed, appointed) is in the passive

them, and laying His hands upon their heads, He offered a prayer dedicating them to His sacred work. Thus the Lord's disciples were ordained to the gospel." Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1963), 296.

9 F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 47.

10 Francis D. Nichol, ed. *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1980), 6:130.

11 Richard N. Longenecker, *Acts*, Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 439.

12 This is a convincing argument made by Nichol, *SDA Bible Commentary*, 6:301.

13 Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 83.

indicating that Paul's ministry "was not of his own choosing but of God's."¹⁴ The same root, *tithēmi* (place, appoint), is also used in 1 Timothy 1:12: "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting (*themenos*) me into ministry." The word *tithēmi* has the general meaning of "put" or "place" and is used here in the sense of appoint. The word is in the aorist tense indicating that this placing or appointing was completed at a specific time or point in the past.¹⁵

Titus 1:5 is another verse of interest. It reads: "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting and ordain (*katastēsēs*) elders in every city, as I had appointed thee." The word *kathistēmi* is an aorist subjunctive and according to Knight, here means "appoint."¹⁶ This does not add much to our discussion but it does highlight another word that NT writers used to express their ideas about ordination.

From this brief excursion into the NT literature we can conclude the following: the call of the disciples, not just to follow Christ, but to be like him, is in its primary sense a call to witness to his ministry and be able to pass on authentic traditions about him (Lk 1:2). In a plenary sense I would argue that this summons in Mark 3:13–14 is what Seventh-day Adventists call the "inner call" of God that a man or woman receives to Gospel ministry. This call is to devote and surrender one's life to Jesus—to be with him—and to engage in the specific task, flowing from this "being with," of proclamation and service. At its core this "inner call" is to continue the ministry of Jesus and to proclaim him, the Living Word.

The placing of Paul in ministry was a sovereign act of God, just as the placing of the disciples was a sovereign act of Jesus. This putting or placing of Paul, on the basis of the letter to Timothy, suggests that it also corresponds to the inner call. Paul asserted that God enabled him, counted him faithful and put or placed him in ministry at a set time. The inner call of God established Paul in the ministry of herald or proclaimer of Jesus and his truth.

14 Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, New International Bible Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 69.

15 George Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 125.

16 Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 288, understands this passage as pointing back to Acts 6 and Acts 13 and suggests that the verb *χειροτονέω* could be rendered "lay on hands" or "ordain."

Laying on of Hands

After careful research on the subject of “laying on of hands” in both the OT and NT Keith Mattingly concluded that: 1) laying on of hands is an act of identification; 2) it sets an individual apart from the community for a specific task; 3) it mediates a transfer from God and the community of faith; 4) it indicates that an individual represents the community; and 5) it identifies an individual as appointed to an office.¹⁷ In examining the role and function of Moses’ laying on of hands in relation to Joshua, Mattingly concluded that the laying on of hands was a public gesture that confirmed and authorized the spiritual gifts God had already bestowed on Joshua.¹⁸

It would be surprising if the NT evidence did not lean in the same direction because the NT writers inherited the idea of laying on of hands from their OT counterparts. There are five texts that speak of a commissioning or installation service of some kind (Acts 6:6; 13:3; 19:6; 1 Tim. 4:14; 5:22; 2 Tim. 1:16). These texts have traditionally been interpreted as referring to ordination. The NIV will be used in this section of the paper.

The first reference to the laying on of hands (Acts 6:6) reads: “They presented these men to the apostles who laid their hands on them (*epethēkan autois tas cheiras*).” This is the first explicit mention of the act of laying on of hands in the NT¹⁹ and it recalls Moses’ commissioning of Joshua (Num. 27:18–23). Through this act Moses imparted some of his authority to Joshua. Similarly the apostles delegated authority to the seven deacons (Acts 6).²⁰ Luke uses the word *diakonia* (ministry) in Acts 6:1–6 in reference to the ministry of the apostles and deacons. Clearly both apostles and deacons have different functions but the same ministry. In Acts 13:1–3 it is recorded that Paul and Barnabas were sent as missionaries to Cyprus. One of the prophets no doubt received a message from God and the whole church, in a

17 Keith Mattingly, “Laying on of Hands in Ordination: A Biblical Study,” in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 70.

18 *Ibid.*, 66.

19 Nichol, *SDA Bible Commentary*, 191. Further, the commentary suggests that this first use of the laying on of hands is the blueprint for all the other occasions where there is reference to the laying on of hands. It also equates the laying on of hands with the later practice of ordination, referencing 1 Tim. 4:14; 5:22 and 2 Tim. 1:6.

20 Richard N. Longenecker, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Expositors Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 9:331. So also, Jon Dybdahl, *Andrews Study Bible* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2010), 1428.

posture of fasting and prayer, agreed with this decision.²¹ Bruce avers that the laying on of hands did not impart any spiritual gift or authority that the apostles did not already possess. The church at Antioch commissioned these men for service and they returned to share the good news of God's blessing with them at a later stage.²²

The next text of consequence is 1 Timothy 4:14, which reads: "Do not neglect your gift (*en soi charismatos*), which was given (*edothē*) you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you (*meta epetheseōs tōn cheirōn*)."²³ In this instance Timothy's gift is given through a prophetic message, while in Acts it is also a prophetic message that is the catalyst to send Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. Timothy's case is unique in Scripture since his gifting was given to him prophetically. It was confirmed and accompanied by the laying on of hands. A number of scholars have drawn attention to the fact that the laying on of hands (*epetheseōs tōn cheirōn*) is preceded by *meta* in 1 Timothy 4:14. C. K. Barrett asserts that the laying on of hands is not a means but rather "an accompanying act" for the endowment on Timothy of *charism*, for "meta with the genitive must mean 'with' not 'through'."²⁴ Timothy is given a gift that comes with prophecy rather than through the laying on of hands which only accompanies the prophecy.

A number of important questions now emerge. Is what took place in the early Church normative for the Church at all times? Might someone in the local church today have their gift confirmed prophetically? Might what happened in the book of Acts, for example, happen again? Not every feature in the early Church functions as the norm for practice and experience in the contemporary Church. Much of what the early Church did was for pragmatic reasons rather than to follow any specific theological injunction.

Fee and Stuart maintain that "unless Scripture explicitly tells us to do something, what is only narrated does not function in a normative way – unless it can be proved that the author intended for it to function in this way."²⁵

21 See Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1948), 160; Ellen G. White, *The Story of Redemption* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1948), 303.

22 Bruce, *Book of Acts*, 246.

23 The aorist passive *edothē* indicates the gift was given by God.

24 C. K. Barrett, *The Pastoral Epistles*, New Century Bible (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), 71–72. Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 775, also notes "the preposition *meta* has no known instance in the *Koine* of an instrumental sense."

25 Gordon D. Fee and Douglas K. Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All*

What is normative in Acts is therefore what Luke explicitly and intentionally wanted to teach. An example of something that would not happen today, unless sovereignly willed by God, is the experience described in Acts 8. Luke reports that Peter and John came to verify that the Samaritans had accepted the word of the Lord (Acts 8:14–16). While they had been baptized into Christ they had not yet received the Holy Spirit, so they laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. It is not God's normal purpose for the reception of the Spirit to be an experience subsequent to conversion and baptism.²⁶ In Peter's sermon reported in Acts 2 forgiveness and the gift of the Spirit are twin blessings that one receives upon repentance and baptism (see Acts 2:38; Rom. 8:9, 14–16; 1 Cor. 6:19; Gal. 3:2, 14; 4:6). Since this was the first time the Gospel was to be taken out of the boundaries of Jerusalem, God delayed the gift of the Holy Spirit to ensure "the acceptance of these converts by believers in Jerusalem."²⁷ God worked in ways that were conducive not only to the reception of the Gospel but also to promote the unity of the Church and the preparation of the apostles for the expanding Gentile mission.

This occurrence recorded in Acts 8 is an historical exception. The question of biblical precedent must then be handled with careful exegesis and a consideration of the overall message of the Scriptures to determine Luke's or any other Bible writer's actual intent. However, since "all Scripture is inspired by God" (2 Tim. 3:16) we can discover truth for Christian life and practice from those passages that may have been incidental to the author's primary intent. God provides the inner call to a person through his Spirit and the Church; seeing the fruit of ministry confirms this call.

The *SDA Bible Commentary* states unequivocally, "Timothy's gift of church leadership was not bestowed on him at the time of his ordination. No special power flowed through the hands of the 'presbytery.' Rather, the ordination service recognized Timothy's abilities and consecration and thus

Its Worth, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993), 106. Contra Philip B. Payne, "The Fallacy of Equating Meaning with the Human Author's Intention," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 20 (Summer 1977): 243–252 and Sandra M. Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture*, 2nd ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 144–148.

26 I refer here to the initial reception of the Spirit which initiates conversion, grows and guides the new Christian and leads to baptism. See James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London: SCM, 1970), 127–131 and Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 767–768.

27 Longenecker, *Acts*, 359.

expressed the church's approval of his appointment as a church leader."²⁸ The prophetic message of Timothy's gifting, however, is an exception.

The next text to be explored is 1 Timothy 5:22 which reads: "Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure." The wider context of 1 Timothy 5 suggests that Paul was speaking to Timothy about how to handle public accusations and appoint leaders. He advised Timothy that the accusations must be guided by the objective criteria of two or three witnesses and that those who commit sin must receive a public rebuke. The whole process must be done without prejudgment or preference. Paul admonished Timothy not to lay hands on someone aspiring toward leadership too quickly since he could share in their sins (verse 22). This reference is important in demonstrating that there needs to be a time of examination and reflection and that stringent precautionary measures need to be put in place when someone who aspires to leadership has been involved in a damaging public or personal dispute that may jeopardize the advancement of the kingdom.

The evidence of Acts 6 suggests that the concept of "laying on of hands" refers to the delegation of a specific task and the conferring of authority to function and to perform the duties required for that task. In Acts 13 it is related that it was the whole church that sent Paul and Barnabas out into the mission field, a task initiated by the Holy Spirit. The laying on of hands functions in this instance to confirm the direct message of the Holy Spirit to set Paul and Barnabas aside for missionary work. While the prophetic confirmation of Timothy's leadership given in 1 Timothy 4:14 is a historical exception, there is no reason for a prophetic message not to be given to a contemporary leader in relation to a person who may be considering Gospel ministry.

Toward a Theology of Ordination

A biblical theology must be grounded in the *whole counsel of Scripture* and must seek for principles that are germane to the inspiration of Scripture as a means to discern the divine will. The overall thrust of Scripture is that every member of the Church has the opportunity for Jesus to shape and transform their lives into conformity to his plan and will (Rom. 8:29; 12:1-2; Eph. 4:23-24). It is at the time of baptism, as it was for Jesus (Matt. 3:13-17), that the Holy Spirit fills all believers and grants them his gifts for ministry. This act of granting spiritual gifts is the prerogative of the Spirit and he grants them according to his purpose and with no distinction (1 Cor. 12:4-11; 1 Cor. 11:11-12; Gal. 3:13, 28, 5:1).

²⁸ Nichol, *SDA Bible Commentary*, 7:307.

The NT evidence suggests that God is sovereign in calling a person to a specific ministry. Ordination is the setting apart of an individual for service to God and his people. God sovereignly calls an individual to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ—the ministry of the Word—to the Church and the world. This inner call is then authenticated by the body of Christ as the examples in Acts and the later witness of the NT demonstrate. There is no evidence that the authenticity of the inner call is questioned or debated in the NT. The body of Christ is nurtured and grows by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit and it is in staying sensitive to the voice of the Spirit that the Church is able to discern who is to be ordained. The fruit (character and soul-winning) of a person's life is normally an important step to consider in the process of ordination (Gal. 5:22; Jn 15:1–11).

There is no evidence in the NT that the inner call of God is gender-biased. Jesus eradicated class and racial distinctions of “Jew and Gentile, slave and free” at the Cross (Gal. 3:28).²⁹ Christ came to establish a new community built on mutual respect and mutual submission (Eph. 5: 21) through a new covenant.³⁰ The Old Covenant was a sexually discriminatory one in that the mark of entrance into it was by circumcision of males (Gen. 17:10). However, in the NT the mark of entrance into the new community is by baptism without any gender discrimination. Both sexes enter the Christian community on an equal footing based on their acceptance of Christ as Lord and Saviour.

While there are different roles and functions for God's leaders in the NT

29 Ben Witherington III, states that “Gal. 3:28 has been called the Magna Carta of Humanity and there is a sense in which that label is apt, but it is also well to be aware that Paul is not suggesting here the obliteration of the distinctions he mentions in this verse, but rather their redemption and transformation in Christ. The new creation is the old transformed and transfigured. These ethnic, social and sexual distinctions continue to exist but in Christ they are not to determine one's soteriological or spiritual or social standing in the body of Christ. It is also fair to say that being in Christ and being led by the Spirit also affects what roles one may play in the Christian community...” Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 280–281.

30 John Stott argues passionately that there is to be mutual submission of men and women in the home and the church on the basis of equality. Even though the husband is head of the home just as Christ is the head of the Church this does not preclude the submission of husbands to their wives. John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians: God's New Society*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1979), 213–220.

(Eph. 4:11–13) there is no evidence that there are different levels of ordination or that ordination meant something different to those that had different roles. The Church is a worshipping, serving and discipling community for everyone.

Conclusion

My examination of the NT literature in this paper has shown that the strongest evidences for ordination are the inner call which comes sovereignly from God and the fruit of a person's life. The early Church practised ordination by "laying hands" on the individual and in so doing set them apart for service. Furthermore, ordination does not grant a person a higher status or a "direct line" to God, but simply refers to being called by God to proclaim the Living Word in a life of service to the Church and the world. The ordained person should indeed be deeply humble and grateful for the privilege and joy of proclaiming Christ.

Part 3
Historical Studies

Chapter 6: The Problem of Ordination: Lessons from Early Christian History

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With few exceptions, most contemporary Christians consider ordination to be a legitimate rite of setting selected members apart for the purpose of pastoral ministry and oversight in the Christian Church. It is also universally assumed that the rite finds its foundations in the Old and New Testaments.

At the same time, however, we do not seem to find in Scripture an unambiguously clear theology of either ministry or ordination. Setting apart the scarcity of theological data, readers are immediately confronted with additional difficulties. These include the following: first, that the modern notion of the pastor's office does not readily correspond to the position of leader/elder in the early Christian Church; second, that there appears to be little Scriptural evidence for the three-fold ordination of the pastor, elder, and deacon as it is practiced today in the Seventh-day Adventist Church; third, that, while assumed, there is no direct Scriptural evidence that the local elders/bishops were actually "ordained" through the laying on of hands;¹ fourth, that the current practice of inviting only ordained pastors and elders to lay hands upon those to be ordained is not explicitly found in the New Testament (NT); and, finally, that the rite of laying on of hands—today almost exclusively associated with the rite of ordination—was used in a variety of circumstances during the Apostolic phase of Christian history, including post-baptismal prayer for the Holy Spirit, healing, setting apart for missionary service, and blessing. It is not surprising, therefore, that there are as many ways in which ministry and ordination can be understood as

1 While it is commonly assumed that elders were appointed through the laying on of hands, the NT does not provide clear evidence for such a claim. Instead, both the local and missionary elders appear to be "voted in" by the raising of hands (Acts 14:23; 2 Cor. 8:19). William Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1957), s.v. "χειροτονέω," 889.

there are denominations; and there tend to be as many views on ministry and ordination as there are church members within a particular denomination.

This is the situation in which Seventh-day Adventists find themselves today. Like most modern Christian denominations, Seventh-day Adventists acknowledge the ministerial call through the rite of ordination. Adventists have also adopted the three-fold structure of ministry in the church—that of pastor, elder, and deacon—each initiated by a separate rite of laying on of hands and each referred to as ordination. The lack of unambiguous Scriptural data, however, has resulted in a decades-long intra-denominational discussion on the qualifications for ordination of pastors, elders, and deacons. Acknowledging these difficulties, the delegates to the 2010 Session of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Atlanta called for a thorough review of the theology of ministry and ordination during the 2010–2015 quinquennium. This paper is written in the spirit of this call and contributes to the discussion by presenting a short history of ministry and ordination in the Christian Church.

Setting the Problem

In 379 AD Jerome stated: “There can be no Christian community without its ministers.”² By Jerome’s time, however, the Christian Church had moved far away from the early Christian community as described in the pages of the NT. By the middle of the third century, the Church was well developed organizationally; it promoted both theological and ontological distinctions between laity and clergy; and it accepted a sacramental understanding of ministry and ordination, thereby making it essential for the salvation of believers. Thus, for many Christian authors writing from the second century onward, the Church could not exist without a separate class of individuals distinguished from other believers by the rite of ordination. As a student of history, I find it astonishing that in such a relatively short period of time, ranging from the death of the last apostle (late 90s of the first century) to the middle of the third century (or about 160 years) the Christian theology of ministry experienced such a radical shift. What factors contributed to Christianity’s speedy move in this direction? Before we address these post-Apostolic developments a few words must be said about the laying on of hands ritual as it is found in the Holy Scriptures.

2 Jerome, *Dialogus contra Luciferanos* 21 in *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 6:331.

Laying on of Hands: The Biblical Precedent³

While modern Christianity associates the rite of laying on of hands almost exclusively with ministerial ordination, both the Old Testament (OT) and NT attest that the rite tended to be used in variety of circumstances. During OT times, hands were laid, for example, in blessing others (Gen. 48:14; Lev. 9:22); human guilt was transferred upon the sacrificial animals through the agent of human hands (Lev. 4:4); the entire priestly tribe of the Levites, called to serve the people (Ezek. 44:11), was consecrated in a one-off ceremony involving the entire congregation (Num. 8:10); finally, the laying on of hands occurs during the act of commissioning Joshua as the next leader of the nation of Israel (Num. 27:23). When we encounter the laying on of hands in the NT, therefore, it is clear that the rite had its roots in the ancient Hebrew practices.

As in the OT, the NT mentions the laying on of hands in many different circumstances. In the NT the phrase actually occurs about 25 times and is most often associated with healing and blessing (for example, Mk 10:13–16; Lk 4:40; Acts 28:8). Several times the laying on of hands occurs in association with receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit following baptism. As described in Acts 8:17 and 19:6, the Samaritans and the converts in Ephesus received the Holy Spirit through the Paul's laying hands on them. In Hebrews 6:2, the laying on of hands also appears to be associated with baptism. In only two instances is the laying on of hands clearly associated with endorsement of Christian servants: the setting apart of the Seven (Acts 6) and the commissioning of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13 to fulfil a missionary task.⁴ Several Pauline passages indicate a possible indirect reference to the leadership instalment ceremony. The first of these (1 Tim. 4:14) refers to the laying of hands on Timothy by the elders. Unfortunately, it is not known whether, on this particular occasion, Timothy was actually ordained to a church office or if this particular laying on of hands followed Timothy's baptism. The fact that Paul speaks of the *charisma* (gift) that was received

3 For an excellent study on the laying on of hands ritual in both the OT and NT, see Keith Mattingly's article "Laying on of Hands in Ordination: A Biblical Study," in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 59–74.

4 It is important to note that in neither case did the laying on of hands indicate appointment to an office, nor did these people receive a special rank or status within the Christian community. The Seven were chosen to "serve the tables" (Acts 6:2), a task performed by the Apostles until this time, and Paul and Barnabas were selected for a specific missionary task.

by Timothy through the laying on of hands suggests the latter interpretation (see Acts 8:17 and 19:6). In the second instance (2 Tim. 1:6), it is also impossible to ascertain the occasion that called for the Paul's laying hands upon Timothy. Finally, 1 Timothy 5:22 the writer simply cautions that laying on of hands should not be done hastily. The reader is not informed why Paul says this nor is the laying on of hands related to any particular occasion. Nevertheless, each of these passages has traditionally been interpreted as dealing with instalment into an ecclesiastical office. On the basis of known evidence, however, such a conclusion may not necessarily be warranted.

In view of this, it must be stated once again that the NT offers little foundation for contemporary Adventist ordination practices and beliefs. This, however, raises several questions. First, from where do Adventists derive their way of understanding and practicing ordination? Second, why is the ritual of the laying on of hands today almost exclusively associated with ordination? Finally, why do only ordained pastors lay their hands on those to be ordained? A brief review of the post-Apostolic developments will shed some light and allow these questions to be addressed.

Terminology

The modern term "ordination" comes from the Latin, *ordo* (order, class, rank), and its derivative *ordinatio* appears to refer in ancient Rome to instalment or induction, appointment or accession to rank.⁵ It is well-attested historically that throughout its existence pagan Roman society was ranked according to various classes or orders.⁶ The historical evidence points out that already during the early phase of the Roman Empire's existence (second century BC), society had evolved into three basic orders. Thus historians speak of an *ordo senatorum* (the highest class), an *ordo equester* (the knights), and the *plebs*—the lowest class of the society. It was eventually accepted that within Roman society, there was *ordo et plebs*, i.e., the higher

5 Edwin Hatch, *The Organization of the Early Christian Churches* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1918), 129; World Council of Churches, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), 31; Catherine Hezser, *The Social Structure of the Rabbinic Movement in Roman Palestine* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 2007), 86.

6 Fredericus von Boddien, *Disputatio Historico-Juridica Inauguralis: De Nobilitate* (Lugdini Batavorum: M. Cyfveer, 1823), 8–18; cf. A. H. J. Greenidge, *Roman Public Life* (London: Macmillan, 1922), 107–113, 224–225, 398–405; William E. Dunstan, *Ancient Rome* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2011), 102–103, 334.

class of citizens and the lower class.⁷ If, by any chance, one was destined to move upward in rank, he was to go through the process of *ordinatio*.⁸ *Ordinatio* appears to have also been used as a classical way of installing imperial officers⁹ and for the promotion of officers to a higher rank in the army.¹⁰ Finally, the idea of ordination appears also to have been used in the cultic context of pagan Roman society. Here, a person would be appointed to the cultic office received from the gods of the ancient world.¹¹ All this

7 Pierre-Marie Gy, "Notes on the Early Terminology of Christian Priesthood," in *The Sacrament of Holy Orders* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1957), 99; Giambattista Vico, *Universal Right* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 140; Edward Schillebeeckx, *Ministry: Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ* (New York: Crossroads, 1981), 39; cf. Kenan B. Osborne, *Priesthood: A History of The Ordained Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 114–115.

8 Thus, in *Historia Augusta*, there is a statement that the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (121–180 AD) would never ordain anyone to senatorial rank whom he did not know personally. The exact phrase reads: *nec quemquam in ordinem legit, nisi quem ipse bene scisset*; *Historia Augusta*, 3 vols., ed. David Magie (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 1:159.

9 Thus, for example, the Roman historian Seutonius (c. 69–c. 122 AD) reports that, at one point of his rule, Emperor Domitian (51–96 AD) had decided to ordain Mettius Rufus as prefect of Egypt. The exact phrase reads: *cur sibi visum esset ordinatione proxima Aegypto praeficere Mettium Rufum*. Seutonius, *Lives of the Caesars*, vol. II (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 326–327. Aelius Lampridius also appears to use the term in this way, with reference to the appointment of the consuls and procurators. The exact phrases read: *ubi aliquos voluisset vel rectores provinciis dare vel paepositos facere vel procuratores...ordinare*. "Life of the Alexander Severus" in *The Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, ed. David Magie (London: William Heinemann, 1947), 270; cf. Otto Hirschfeld, *Die Kaiserlichen Verwaltungsbeamten: Bis Auf Diocletian* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1963), 443; Hezser, *Social Structure*, 86; Ludwig Friedländer, *Roman Life and Manners Under the Early Empire*, 4 vols. (London: Routledge, 1928), 4:53.

10 The author of *Historia Augusta* reports, therefore, that prior to becoming a Roman Emperor, Publius Helvius Pertinax (126–193 AD) sought to be ordained to a command in the ranks. David Magie, ed. *Historia Augusta*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 1:315. The exact phrase reads: *ducendi ordinis dignitarem petiit*.

11 In one of the interesting anomalies of ancient literature, the Latin word *ordinatio* found its way into the writings of Greek Stoic philosopher Epictetus. Thoroughly familiar with Roman civic and cultic life, Epictetus imported this Latin word into the Greek language and endowed it with cultic importance. See

suggests that when the word *ordinatio* was used in the ancient world, it clearly indicated a movement upward in ranks and status.¹² Once a person was ordained, they held some kind of office that not only separated them from ordinary people but allowed them to exercise governmental, jurisdictional, or cultic authority over others that demanded submission. Through the work of second century Christian writers, and especially the writings of Latin apologist Tertullian (c. 160–c. 220 AD), these concepts and ideas seeped into the Christian psyche. Eventually, the early post-Apostolic Christian Church wholeheartedly embraced the ways in which the Roman Empire was governed and adapted the structures of the latter to its own needs.

Tertullian was a brilliant Christian writer and apologist who saw his main task as the defence of Christianity against both heretical and pagan attacks. In his zeal to defend the Christian faith and to show its reasonableness he incorporated common words found in daily usage among the people of his time. He is thus responsible, for example, for introducing into Christian vocabulary such headache-causing words as *sacramentum*, *substantia*, or *persona*.¹³ The copious list of nouns and verbs Tertullian introduced into Christian vocabulary also includes *ordo* and *ordination*.¹⁴ Being intimately familiar with the way in which the Roman Empire was run, Tertullian apparently had no qualms applying these words to Christian ministry as he understood it.¹⁵ Thus P. M. Gy states that “with the emergence of Christian

Epicetetus, *The Discourses* (London: William Heinemann, 1928), 222.

12 Even the authors of the official Roman Catholic Catechism admit as much when they write: “The word *order* in Roman antiquity designated an established civil body, especially a governing body. *Ordinatio* means incorporation into an *ordo*.” See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1994), [paragraph 1537], 384.

13 According to some estimates, during his career as a Christian writer, Tertullian was responsible for coining and introducing 509 new nouns, 284 new adjectives, and 161 new verbs into Latin vocabulary. Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 249.

14 Tertullian uses these words with specific reference to the ministry in the church. See his *On Prescriptions Against Heretics* 41 in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 3:263; Tertullian, *On Exhortation to Chastity* 7 in Roberts and Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:54.

15 Osborne, *Priesthood*, 115; Pierre van Beneden, *Aux Origines D’Une Terminologie Sacramentelle: Ordo, Ordinare, Ordinatio Dans La Littérature Chrétienne Avant* 313 (Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1974), 12; Karl-Heinrich Bieritz, *Liturgik* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 173.

Latin in Tertullian, we see that the analogy of the *ordo* and the people of the city of Rome was taken up to describe the relationship of the clergy to the people of God.”¹⁶

In light of this evidence, we need to ask, are there any problems with incorporating pagan words and/or customs into Christian theology? On the one hand, the answer is no. It is an undeniable fact that there are many words and customs within our society that have their roots in the pagan past of our civilization. These concepts seeped into the Christian practices and theology and did not cause any harm. A case in point is the well-known word *ecclesia*, which in secular Greek simply meant assembly. It later became a technical designation for the Christian community.¹⁷ On the other hand, some words and concepts came into Christianity loaded with meanings and connotations.¹⁸ The same applies to *order* and *ordinatio*, which appear to have carried a specific baggage when they entered into Christian vocabulary. This implies that when Tertullian used these words for the first time and applied them to Christian ministry, he knew exactly what he was doing. As it will be shown below, as in the Roman Empire, ordination for Tertullian implied a movement from a lower to a higher position. It represented status and ranking that did not appear to exist among NT Christians. This is also why the rite of laying on of hands was eventually limited strictly to ministerial ordination. In order to elevate the status of the Church officials, its usage had to be limited to a certain class of people. This immediately raises the question, what happened to Christianity during the post-Apostolic era that made the use of the terms *order* and *ordinatio* so enticing for Tertullian? The story of the theological developments relating to the ministry in the Church is a cautionary tale of Christian ecclesiology gone awry. It is also a complex story with many twists and turns that ultimately resulted in ingenious solutions to the problem of unity facing early post-Apostolic Christianity. It is beyond the scope of this paper to address every single development relating

16 Gy, *Notes*, 99.

17 In Acts 19:32 the word *ecclesia* is used in its regular meaning as “assembly.” In Eph. 5:25 Paul uses the same word, this time as a technical term designating the Christian Church.

18 For example, the word *sacramentum* (referred to above and a word also introduced by Tertullian) was loaded with cultic meaning when first used by Tertullian with reference to the Christian rites of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. *Sacramentum*, in ancient literature, referred to a sacred oath or a pledge a soldier made to the Roman emperor. *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, ed. Richard McBrien (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), s.v. “sacrament.”

to ministry in the Church and thus only the main points of this development will be mentioned.¹⁹

Early Post-Apostolic Developments in the Theology of Ministry

The early post-Apostolic theology of ordination did not develop in a vacuum but was powerfully influenced by the developing theological trajectory set by a variety of late first-century and early second-century Christian writers. In order to understand more fully the early Christian rite of ordination, the developing theology of ministry must first be explored briefly.

The Christian movement of the post-Apostolic era found itself in a precarious position. The issues with which Christians struggled included the following: Jesus did not return, as expected; the first generation of leaders disappeared, leaving Christian communities with a problem of viable leadership;²⁰ Christianity was pressured both externally, by persecutions initiated by the Roman authorities, and internally, by various dissensions, heretical movements, and schisms. In these circumstances, maintaining the unity of the Church became a major issue. Virtually all Christian authors writing during this era address the problem of unity in one way or another. Whether they influenced Christianity towards finding the right way of dealing with these problems is another matter.

Responding to these external and internal threats, the early Christians looked to their leaders for guidance and protection. According to historical sources, it is apparent that the system of elders, which seemed to spring out of the Jerusalem Church, spread rapidly throughout the Christian world.²¹ As it spread, seemingly innocuously, historical circumstances such as an attraction to the pagan system of governance as well as inattention to the wit-

19 For an in-depth study of these developments, see Hans von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1969). Campenhausen discusses these developments from a Protestant perspective. For a Catholic perspective, see Francis Sullivan, *From Apostles to Bishops* (New York: The Newman Press, 2001). Interestingly, although a Catholic, Sullivan finds himself in an agreement with Campenhausen when he states that none of the post-Apostolic developments in theology and structures of ministry and ordination can be traced to the NT.

20 The preoccupation with the future leadership of the church is already evident in Paul's writings late during his life. See 1 Tim. 3:1–12 and Titus 1:5–9.

21 Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority*, 76.

ness of Scripture, gradually pushed Christianity towards what later became the papal system of church organization.²²

Two of the earliest Christian documents that document the gradual changes in the theology of ministry are *1 Clement* and the *Didache*.²³ The significance of both of these documents lies in the fact they seem to be the first actual Christian writings dealing with the importance of the office of bishop in the early Church. *1 Clement* is a pastoral letter written in the name of the Roman Church and by one of the Roman bishops, Clement, to admonish the younger men in Corinth to respect the office of bishop in the Church.²⁴ In it, Clement supported his arguments by surveying the history of the local church ministry, which, according to him, went back to the period of Apostolic evangelization in the middle of the first century, when the apostles “went through the territories and townships preaching,

22 Catholic scholars readily admit that while the movement from the simple NT Church structure to a fully developed papal system of Church governance was necessitated by historical rather than biblico/theological exigencies, it was nevertheless guided by the Holy Spirit. They would argue that the current papal system of Church governance constitutes, therefore, the will of God for the Church. Sullivan, *Apostles to Bishops*, 217–236; cf. Richard McBrien, *Catholicism* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 744–745; Hans Küng, *Church* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967), 417.

23 *1 Clement* is considered to be one of the earliest patristic document of the post-Apostolic era and is generally dated to about 100 AD. Although the author did not introduce himself, the unanimous opinion of the ancient fathers and traditions accepts the authorship of Clement, the bishop of Rome. For more information, see *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations of Their Writings*, trans. and ed. J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), 23–27. The *Didache*, the full title of which is *The Teaching of the Lord to the Gentiles through the Twelve Apostles*, is an important document of Christian antiquity and can be regarded as the first Christian Catechism. Ever since its discovery, there has been debate regarding its authorship and date, but most scholars place it at the end of the first century, since it is mentioned in other early patristic writings. Lightfoot and Harmer, *Apostolic Fathers*, 246–249; Philip Carrington, *The Early Christian Church*, vol. 1, *The First Christian Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 1:483.

24 It appears that at the time the Church of Corinth was experiencing an internal struggle during which the younger members of the congregation removed the duly elected bishops. Consequently, Clement rebukes these younger men and calls for them to restore the bishops to their rightful positions and to submit themselves to the judgment of the Church. The elders, in turn, were asked to exercise forgiveness. Carrington, *Early Christian Church*, 381–382.

[appointing] their first converts ...to be bishops and deacons for the believers in the future."²⁵ The reading of the document clearly conveys the thought that Clement viewed the presbyterate (or episcopate, an equivalent term for Clement) as a permanent institution established by the apostles.²⁶ It appears that the authority of the presbyters was based on a continuation of Apostolic authority—although this is not clearly expressed—and their office was to serve as a protection of the Apostolic tradition. On this basis, Clement of Rome rejected the claim of the Corinthians that they were able to depose officers who had been “commissioned by the Apostles.”²⁷

The *Didache*, another of the earliest Christian documents, also addresses the importance of the bishop’s office. As in *1 Clement*, the unknown author of the *Didache* uses *episcopos* interchangeably with *presbuteros* (an elder). The focus of the author, however, appears to be the itinerant, rather than the established, ministry, as he spends considerable time dealing with the itinerant ministers of the early Church, the apostles and prophets, whom he considers as superior to bishops/presbyters.²⁸ Reading the *Didache* leaves one with an unmistakable impression that the class of the prophets and teachers had already begun to show ominous signs of corruption, and the author is anxious to give the early Church some tools that would enable them to distinguish between the true servants of God and those who seek their own interests. One of the answers offered is to have an efficient presbyterate in the form of specially designated church officers who were to help the ordinary people to distinguish between true and false ministers.²⁹ One can also see in the *Didache* a stress on the correct performance of the rites during divine worship. In order to perform all the ordinances in a proper way, the Church

25 *1 Clement* 42 in *Early Christian Writings: The Apostolic Fathers*, trans. Maxwell Staniforth (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1968), 45.

26 Schillebeeckx, *Ministry*, 19.

27 *1 Clement* 44, in Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 46.

28 The *Didache* 11, 13 in J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer, *Apostolic Fathers*, 263–267; Edmund Hill, *Ministry and Authority* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1988), 33; cf. Osborne, *Priesthood*, 92; W. K. Lowther Clarke, “The Origin of Episcopacy,” in *Episcopacy Ancient and Modern*, ed. Claude Jenkins (London: SPCK, 1930), 26.

29 The *Didache* 11, in Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 233; Peter Stockmeier, “The Election of Bishops by Clergy and People in the Early Church,” in *Electing Our Own Bishops*, eds. Peter Huizing, Knut Walf and Marcus Lefebure (New York: Seabury Press, 1980), 5; Eric G. Jay, “From Presbyter-Bishops to Bishops and Presbyters,” *Second Century: A Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1 (1981): 128.

needed a special type of leader. Presbyters, having attained their position by popular election (which was still practised at the time), seemed to be perfect candidates for that office.³⁰

While neither document explicitly mentions a laying-on-of-hands ceremony (or ordination), both present the first signs of the early post-Apostolic Church's attempts towards unification and institutionalization.

Second-Century Developments in the Theology of Ministry and Ordination

The second century AD, and especially its latter half, is a very important period of time for Christian ecclesiology. This is the time when ecclesiology developed by leaps and bounds, eventually leading to the development of mature institutional doctrine in the third century.

It appears by the beginning of that century, the presbyterate had already become a well-established institution that was readily embraced by various Christian congregations that had sprung up throughout the Roman Empire. The historical evidence suggests that during the early part of the century, the itinerant ministry of prophets and teachers slowly vanished as its functions became unnecessary or were absorbed by the rising order of resident ministers.³¹ The most important documentation from this period consists of the epistles of Ignatius (d. ca. 110–130 AD), the writings of Irenaeus (d. ca. 202), and Tertullian (c. 160–c. 225 AD). The writings of these three writers represent the earliest evidence of the evolution of the presbyterate and had significant impact on the theology of the laying on of hands ritual, which during this period became known as “ordination.”

Among the early writers, Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch, stands out.³² Although, as many scholars contend, only a few decades separate Ignatius from the writings of the latter part of the first century, he is often viewed as the first unambiguous representative of the episcopal type of church polity.

30 The *Didache* 15, in Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 234; cf. Adolf Harnack, *The Constitution and Law of the Church in the First Two Centuries* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1910), 80; Schillebeeckx, *Ministry*, 15–16.

31 Bernard Cooke, *Ministry to Word and Sacrament* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1976), 61.

32 Ignatius was known as a bishop of Antioch in Syria. Unfortunately, very little is known about this historical figure. While some biographical information may be found in his letters, most of the information about Ignatius comes from the fourth-century Christian historian Eusebius of Caesarea. Cf. Hermut Löhr, “The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch,” in *The Apostolic Fathers: An Introduction*, ed. Wilhelm Pratscher (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 91–113.

While on the way to Rome to face martyrdom, Ignatius desired to encourage congregations in each city through which he passed and produced a series of letters dedicated to each church that he and his accompanying party of Roman soldiers passed.³³

These letters show twofold concern. First, Ignatius shows a strong concern for the unity of the Church. He thus refers to himself as a man “dedicated to the cause of unity.”³⁴ Second, he also desired that his fellow Christians would remain steadfastly faithful to Christian teachings in the face of heresy.³⁵ Notwithstanding his noble intentions, several departures from the NT may be detected in Ignatius’ writings. It was these departures that ultimately became the foundation of Roman Catholic ecclesiology. In his letters, for example, one for the first time finds that a distinction is made between bishops and presbyters, something which had been absent in the literature of the first century.³⁶ The two terms are clearly applied in a different sense and are used to designate two separate offices. The bishop is presented as the undisputed head of the congregation, surrounded by a council of presbyters, as well as deacons, who in Ignatius’ letters appear to exist at the bottom of the hierarchical ladder. For Ignatius, this three-fold ministry was grounded in a divinely ordained pattern and essential for the existence of the Church.³⁷

33 The letters which are relevant to this paper belong to what is known as the middle recension and are considered by most scholars as authentic. There seems to be a general agreement among scholars that these letters were written at the end of Ignatius’ life during the reign of Emperor Trajan (98–117 AD), although there is scholarly debate over a possibly later date. These letters represent a system of episcopal structure which was eventually to become the standard pattern throughout most of the Christian world. For a discussion on short, middle, and long recensions, see *The Apostolic Fathers in English*, trans. and ed. Michael W. Holmes (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006) and Löhr, “Epistles of Ignatius,” 93–95.

34 Ignatius, *Philadelphians* 8.1, in Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 113; cf. Ignatius, *Polycarp* 1.2, in Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 127, where he writes “give thought especially to unity, for there is nothing more important than this.”

35 John E. Lawyer, “Eucharist and Martyrdom in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch,” *Anglican Theological Review* 73 (Summer 1991), 281; cf. Michael A. G. Haykin, *Rediscovering the Church Fathers: Who They Were and How They Shaped the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 32.

36 Osborne, *Priesthood*, 52.

37 Daniel J. Harrington, *The Church According to the New Testament: What the Wisdom and Witness of Early Christianity Teach Us Today* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 163–164.

Thus he wrote: "Let the bishop preside in the place of God, and his clergy in place of the Apostolic conclave, and let my special friends the deacons be entrusted with the service of Jesus Christ."³⁸ The ministry of the bishop was, for Ignatius, analogous to the work of God in presiding over the whole of creation, whereas the ministry of the presbyters was to be a continuation of that of the apostles.³⁹ Edwin Hatch thus rightly observes that if one builds the theory of ecclesiastical organization upon this analogy, the existence of a bishop becomes an absolute necessity.⁴⁰ Considering it as such, Ignatius proceeded to elevate the position of bishop to previously unknown heights. For him, obedience to the bishop was equal to obedience to God, whom the former represented.⁴¹ For this reason, the unity of church members with their bishop was the single most important duty of individual Christians.⁴² Ignatian emphasis upon the importance of the episcopal office gave rise to what became known in Christian ecclesiology as mon-episcopate or monarchical episcopate. While, according to the NT, there appear to be many bishops/presbyters in any given particular city or region, all having equal authority, the mon-episcopal system corrects that and introduces the rule of a single bishop in each city. Only such a system, in which the believers are required to submit to the leading officer of the Church in all matters, had a chance to protect the unity of the Church and ensure peace and stability in a Christian community.⁴³ Through his insistence upon the authority of the

38 Ignatius *Magnesians* 6.4 in Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 88.

39 Ignatius, *Magnesians* 6.1 in Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 88.

40 Hatch, *Organization*, 89.

41 In the epistle to *Magnesians*, Ignatius wrote: "For your part, the becoming thing for you...[is] to show him [the bishop] every possible respect, having regard to the power God has conferred on him. My information is that the sacred clergy themselves never think of presuming on the apparent precocity of this rank; they give precedence to him as a sagacious man of God—or rather, not so much to him as to the Father of Him who is the Bishop of us all, Jesus Christ. So for the honour of Him who loved us, propriety requires an obedience from you that is more than mere lip-service. It is not a question of imposing upon a particular bishop who is there before your eyes, but upon One who is unseen; and in such a case it is not flesh and blood we have to reckon with, but God, who is aware of all our secrets" *Magnesians* 3, in Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 87–88.

42 Ignatius, *Philadelphians* 3.2, *Smyrneans* 8.1 *Trialians* 3.1, in Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 112, 121, 95–96. Ernst von Dobschütz, *Christian Life in the Primitive Church* (New York: Williams and Norgate, 1904), 242.

43 John-Paul Lotz, *Ignatius and Concord: The Background and Use of the*

bishop and his role as a protector of unity, Ignatius inadvertently laid the foundation for further developments that ultimately led to the establishment of the papal office.

Christianity in the second half of the second century found itself in the midst of a great struggle. Gnosticism had reached its peak and was threatening to engulf the Church. Facing the danger, the believers grew closer to their leaders.⁴⁴ It appears that, by that stage, the Ignatian type of church, with one bishop as the head of the congregation assisted by a variable number of priests and deacons, became widely accepted.⁴⁵ By now, bishops came to be seen by the congregations as those who alone taught pure doctrine and defended the community against heretical teachings.⁴⁶ The second-century writer who greatly contributed to this development was Irenaeus.⁴⁷ In the context of his struggle with Gnostic teachers, Irenaeus borrowed the concept of successive teachers from Gnosticism and developed a theory of Apostolic succession, a theory that put Christian bishops in a chain of succession linked directly with the apostles and aimed at preserving the pure teaching handed down by them.⁴⁸ As one can expect, a side effect of the development of the idea of Apostolic succession, which eventually became one of the foundational doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church, was that it not only strengthened the episcopal organization of the Church against heresy, but it also elevated the position and authority of the bishop to a higher level than

Language of Concord in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 170–174.

44 Jules Lebreton, *The History of the Primitive Church*, 2 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1949), 2:661.

45 Everett Ferguson, "Bishop," *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, ed. Everett Ferguson (New York: Garland, 1997), 183–184.

46 Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority*, 171.

47 While Ignatius gave the Church a system of organization, Irenaeus, who followed Ignatius after an interval of about two generations, is known to be the first Christian writer to provide a concise theology of the ecclesiastical institution. Mary T. Clark, "Irenaeus," *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, ed. Everett Ferguson (New York: Garland, 1999), 588.

48 Carlos Alfredo Steger, *Apostolic Succession* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1995), 17. It must be observed, however, that Irenaeus was not the first to use the argument of Apostolic succession. The concept was already present in the writings of Hegesippus earlier in the second century, and Tertullian, a younger contemporary of Irenaeus. It was Irenaeus, however, who developed it theologically. Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority*, 165.

ever before.⁴⁹ The ministry gained a new dimension. While for Ignatius the episcopate represented the very centre of ecclesiastical unity and thus the spiritual unity of the Church, for Irenaeus the episcopate came to be seen as a depository of Apostolic tradition.⁵⁰ Only bishops who stood in the Apostolic succession possessed the true interpretation of the Christian Scriptures and could teach the truth. From this viewpoint, Irenaeus made the episcopate one of the primary essentials of Christianity.⁵¹

Another interesting element found in Irenaeus' writings relates to the special spiritual endowment that Christian bishops received as they entered the chain of Apostolic succession. Thus he wrote in *Against Heresies*, "Wherefore it is incumbent to obey the presbyters who are in the church—those who, as I have shown, possess the succession from the apostles; those who, together with the succession of the episcopate, have received *the certain gift of truth*, according to the good pleasure of the Father."⁵² In this passage, some scholars find one of the first allusions to ordination, although the laying on of hands is not explicitly mentioned.⁵³ For Irenaeus, the succession to the episcopate, or the episcopal consecration, is accompanied by a special gift referred to as the "certain gift of truth" (in Latin *charisma veritatis certum*), which enables bishops to teach the truth.⁵⁴ Only bishops receive this gift and they can exercise it only if they are in communion with other bishops.⁵⁵ The remainder of the Catholic priesthood possesses it in a deriva-

49 Robert Lee Williams, *Bishop Lists: Formation of Apostolic Succession of Bishops in Ecclesiastical Crises* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2005), 132–133.

50 Thomas C. Oden, *Classic Christianity: A Systematic Theology* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 182.

51 The doctrine of Apostolic succession remains foundational for Roman Catholicism and some Episcopal Protestant churches. This is despite the fact that the NT and the early first-century writers do not support the theory and the fact that it is impossible to verify historically an unbroken chain of succession from apostles to bishops. This is well attested by Sullivan, *Apostles to Bishops*, 12–16; cf. *Lumen Gentium* 20–29, in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), 39–56.

52 Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4.26.2 in Roberts and Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:497 (emphasis added).

53 J. F. Puglisi, *The Process of Admission to Ordained Ministry: A Comparative Study* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 16.

54 Eric Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 146.

55 Henri De Lubac, *The Motherhood of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius

tive way, as long as they stay in the communion with their local bishop.⁵⁶ Christians of the second and subsequent centuries embraced this teaching, seeing it as the best way to protect the Church against Gnosticism and other heretical teachings. Irenaeus' efforts to protect the unity of the Church had the effect of elevating the authority of the bishops even more. Today, no modern scholar, Catholic or Protestant, questions the fact that a clear link exists between this statement of Irenaeus and the modern Roman Catholic teaching on papal and episcopal infallibility.⁵⁷

This was the kind of ideological and theological context within which Irenaeus' younger contemporary, Tertullian, lived and worked. Interestingly, it is in Tertullian's writings that we find for the first time a statement that appears to separate clergy from laity ontologically. In his *Exhortation to Chastity*, he wrote: "It is the authority of the Church that instituted the distinction between clergy and laity and the honour shown the ranks of the clergy made

Press, 1982), 248; cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, [paragraph 1556-1558], 389.

56 Jerome D. Quinn, "Charisma Vertitatis Certum: Irenaeus, Adversus Haereses 4, 26, 2," *Theological Studies* 39 (1978): 520-525; Anthony J. Figueiredo, *The Magisterium-Theology Relationship: Contemporary Theological Conceptions in the Light of Universal Church Teachings Since 1835 and the Pronouncements of the Bishops of the United States* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 2001), 32-33; Carl Sommer, *We Look for a Kingdom: The Everyday Lives of the Early Christians* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), 170; cf. David Currie, *Born Again Fundamentalist, Born Again Catholic* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 70; "Lumen Gentium" 28-29 in Abbott, *Documents*, 53-55.

57 In recent centuries, this teaching found its most clear expression in the pronouncements of both the First and Second Vatican Councils (1869-1870 and 1962-1965 respectively). For example, *Dei Verbum*, one of the documents issued by the Second Vatican Council, speaks of bishops as those "who have received through episcopal succession the sure gift of truth." *Dei Verbum* 8 in Abbott, *Documents*, 116. Furthermore, the official *Catechism of the Catholic Church* issued by Pope John Paul II in 1994 states: "The mission of the Magisterium [the Pope and bishops] is linked to the definitive nature of the covenant established by God with his people in Christ. It is this Magisterium's task to preserve God's people from deviations and defections and to guarantee them the objective possibility of professing the true faith without error... The Roman Pontiff, head of the college of bishops, enjoys this infallibility in virtue of his office, when, as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful... he proclaims by a definitive act a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals." *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [paragraphs 890, 891], 235; cf. Quinn, "Charisma Vertitatis Certum," 520-525; Figueiredo, *Magisterium-Theology Relationship*, 32.

holy for God.”⁵⁸ With this and other statements to this effect, Tertullian powerfully contributed to the clericalization of early Christianity and to the belief that there exists an ontological distinction between the clergy and laity, a doctrine that continues to function as one of the foundational teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.⁵⁹ It appears that Tertullian was also the first to apply priestly language to the Christian ministry and to endow the bishop with the title of *summus sacerdos* or chief priest.⁶⁰

It was into this kind of theological environment that Tertullian introduced the loaded word *ordinatio*. While nowhere in his writings is there reference to laying on of hands, it is reasonable to assume that both Irenaeus and Tertullian were familiar with the rite and that is perhaps why the ministry began to be installed into office during their times. Both of these thinkers laid the foundation for the rite of the laying on of hands to become one of the most important Christian rites, a rite that separated clergy from laity through an invisible ontological, or essential, barrier. This barrier placed ministers on a higher spiritual level than the rest of the believers and endowed them with rank, status, and authority that clearly did not belong to the Christian ministry during NT times.⁶¹ Notwithstanding their noble motivations of protecting the Church from heretical teachings and preserving its unity, the work of Tertullian and his colleagues, in an aberrant and unexpected way, eventually

58 Tertullian, *Exhortation to Chastity* 7, trans. Robert B. Eno, in *Teaching Authority in the Early Church* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1984), 54–55; cf. Roberts and Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:54.

59 *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: “The ministerial or hierarchical priesthood of bishops and priests, and the common priesthood of all the faithful participate, ‘each in its own proper way, in the priesthood of Christ.’ While being ‘ordered one to another,’ they differ essentially.” *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [paragraph 1547], 386. The quotations within the quote come from the Vatican II Document *Lumen Gentium* 10 (*Light of the Nations*) in *The Teachings of the Second Vatican Council: Complete Texts of the Constitutions, Decrees, and Declarations* (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1966), 85.

60 Tertullian, *On Baptism* 17 in Roberts and Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:677; cf. David Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 163.

61 A Catholic writer, Francis Sullivan, readily acknowledges that “the historical episcopate developed in the post-New Testament period.” Sullivan, *Apostles to Bishops*, 217. For an extended discussion on the episcopal office and powers, see *Lumen Gentium* 20–27 in Abbott, *Documents*, 39–52.

resulted in the Christian ministry assuming the role of *ordo senatorum* as in ancient Rome.⁶²

The writers of the third and following centuries built upon the foundation laid by Ignatius, Irenaeus, and Tertullian, making the spiritual life and salvation of the believers thoroughly dependent upon the clerical class. Also in the third century, for the first time in Christian literature, we encounter the description of an actual ordination service. To these developments we now turn briefly.

Further Developments in the Theology of Ministry and Ordination

While no late first- or second-century literary evidence exists of the ministerial ceremony of laying on of hands, it is reasonable to assume this rite was practised among the Christians of the second century. It is also plausible that it became increasingly limited to the ministerial *ordo*.⁶³ The first complete description of the Christian ceremony of ordination, however, does not appear in literature until the beginning of the third century and it is found in the *Apostolic Tradition*, a work attributed to Hippolytus of Rome (c. 170–c. 235 AD).⁶⁴ In this work, there is a detailed description of early Christian ordinations, complete with a detailed theology of ministry and the liturgy to be followed during the ordination service.⁶⁵ The document takes for granted the Ignatian three-fold structure of ministry, each structure necessitating a separate ordination service through the laying on of hands and a separate set of prayers, and with each order of ministry requiring a higher order to place hands upon the lower order.⁶⁶ From this time on, only ordained bishops could ordain lower-ranking clergy. This is probably the root of the common Christian practice, both Catholic and Protestant, of only ordained clergy ordaining candidates for ministry.

No other writer of the early Christian centuries contributed more to elevating of the authority of the episcopal office than did Cyprian of Carthage (d. ca. 258 AD). Like his predecessors, Cyprian's main concern was the

62 Gy, *Notes*, 100.

63 Henry Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society: From Galilee to Gregory the Great* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 220.

64 Gregory Dix, ed. *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome* (London: The Alban Press, 1992).

65 *Ibid.*, 2–18.

66 For a detailed description of these three ordination services, see Osborne, *Priesthood*, 117–129.

unity of the Church. In fact, his most famous treatise is entitled *On the Unity of the Church*. While he is not known as a theological innovator, his writings consolidated and strengthened the ideas of his predecessors.⁶⁷ Cyprian exercised his ministry during a very difficult time in the history of Christianity when persecution, schisms, and heresies threatened its very survival.⁶⁸ Firmly agreeing with his predecessors, he believed that the only way to overcome the difficulties was to stress church organization and discipline. In his eyes, in order to survive, the Church should resemble a well-trained army in which submission to the leadership of the Church was of utmost importance and insubordination was simply wrong.⁶⁹ He believed that the Church was, above all, a concrete, visible community, a corporate body, with a clearly established structure and constitution that was comprised of two classes of members, the ordained clergy and non-ordained laity. This system, Cyprian believed, was established by God and, as such, was indispensable for the existence of the Church.⁷⁰ The strongest endorsement in the writings of Cyprian was granted to the office of bishop in the Church. In Cyprian's eyes, God established the office of bishop and made the latter his spokesman. A bishop was thus the ultimate and virtually irremovable authority in the church, the centre of the congregation, final arbiter, and decision-maker. In Cyprian's writings, notes Everett Ferguson, the bishop was not only the chief teacher "on the teaching chair of the church", but also the "magistrate making governmental and judicial decisions."⁷¹ "The necessity for unity," writes Edwin Hatch, "outweighed all other considerations.

67 In his ecclesiology, Cyprian appears to be heavily dependent on Tertullian, whom he considered as his teacher. Thus Campenhausen writes: "Cyprian treads consciously in the footsteps of his 'master' Tertullian; he copies him and plagiarizes him in his writings." Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority*, 266.

68 Robert D. Sider, "Cyprian," *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, ed. Everett Ferguson (1997), 306-308; Rose Bernard Donna, "Introduction," in *Saint Cyprian Letters*, ed. Roy Joseph Deferrari (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1964), ix.

69 Peter Hinchliff, *Cyprian of Carthage and the Unity of the Christian Church* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1974), 40-41.

70 Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority*, 269, 273.

71 Ferguson, "Bishop," 184; J. B. Lightfoot writes that, "if with Ignatius the bishop is the centre of Christian unity, if with Irenaeus he is the depositary [sic] of the Apostolic tradition, with Cyprian he is the absolute vice-regent of Christ in things spiritual." J. B. Lightfoot, *St Paul's Epistle to the Philippians: A Revised Text with Introduction, Notes and Dissertations* (London: Macmillan, 1868), 240.

Henceforth, whoever in any city claimed to be a member of the Christian Church must belong to the established organization of the city. The seamless coat of Christ must not be rent. As there was one God, and one Christ, and one Holy Spirit, so there could be but one bishop.⁷²

Although, as pointed above, Tertullian appears to be the first to introduce the term “priest” (Latin: *sacerdos*) to Christian vocabulary, it was Cyprian who developed the theology of priesthood by a large-scale application of the OT priestly language to the ministry of a Christian pastor. For him, notes Edward Benson,

“... the Bishop is the sacrificing priest. Christ was Himself the Ordainer of the Jewish Priesthood. The Priests of that line were ‘our predecessors.’ The Jewish Priesthood at last became ‘a name and a shade,’ on the day when it crucified Christ. Its reality passed on to the Christian bishop.”⁷³

The new terminology applied especially to the Eucharist, of which, according to Cyprian, the bishop is the only celebrant.⁷⁴ From that time on, the bishop became an indispensable channel of God’s grace and blessings. This innovation raised the episcopate to an even higher level and put new force into the old titles of respect, because it caused the spiritual life of the faithful to be entirely dependent upon the bishop. Cyprian clearly saw this and believed that unless a person was in unity with the bishop and belonged to the true Church, that person’s salvation was doomed.⁷⁵ The Church, consisting of the ministry and those in unity with them, was, for Cyprian, the divine “ark of Noah,” outside of which there was no possibility of forgiveness of sins, no true sacraments—in short, no possibility of salvation.⁷⁶ Thus he famously stated, *Quia salus extra ecclesiam non est!* (“Outside of the Church there is no salvation”).⁷⁷ All this, of course, depended on the rite of ordina-

72 Hatch, *Organization*, 105.

73 Edward White Benson, *Cyprian, His Life, His Times, His Work* (London: Macmillan, 1897), 33.

74 Schillebeeckx notes that originally the title “priest” was bestowed only on the bishop. However, with the passage of time, as the presbyters increasingly began to replace bishop as presidents at the Eucharist, they too were finally called priests. In this way, “sacerdotalizing” enveloped all the ministers of the Church. See Schillebeeckx, *Ministry*, 48–49.

75 Cyprian, *Epistle 27.21* in Roberts and Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:383.

76 Cyprian, “On the Unity of the Church,” 6 in Roberts and Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:423.

77 Cyprian, *Epistle 72.21* in Roberts and Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:384. Throughout the centuries, and especially since the Second Vatican Coun-

tion that the bishop received from the hands of other ordained bishops. In this fashion, Cyprian combined the Ignatian prerogatives of ecclesiastical authority with the sacerdotal claim of the ordained ministry and made obedience to the ordained clergy necessary for the unity of the Church and the salvation of the believers.

To this day, this understanding of the Christian ministry and its role dominates the Roman Catholic thinking on the matter.⁷⁸ Thus, there appears to be a clear ideological line between these early developments, spurred on by the thinkers discussed above and their emphasis upon the unity of the Church, and the statement made by John Paul II in his 1995 encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* (*That They May Be One*), in which he presented the papal office as the “perpetual and visible principle and foundation of unity”⁷⁹ and the pope as “the visible sign and guarantor of unity.”⁸⁰ Historically speaking, then, it could be said that when the emphasis on the clearly unscriptural kind of unity taught by the second-century thinkers replaced the emphasis on the charity within the Church, the papacy was born!

Two more developments relating to ordination into Christian ministry must be mentioned at this time. First, from the time of Augustine, Christian writers began to write of ordination as the moment when the Catholic minister receives a special, permanent seal upon his soul.⁸¹ This indelible mark

cil, both Catholics and Protestants wrestled with the exact intention of Cyprian when he uttered this phrase (later also known as *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*). Mahmud Aydin, “The Catholic Church’s Teachings on Non-Christians with Special Reference to the Second Vatican Council,” in *Multiple Paths to God: Nostra Aetate, 40 Years Later*, eds. George F. McLean and John P. Hoga (Washington, DC: John Paul II Cultural Center, The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2005), 23–39.

78 *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* thus states “The Pope, Bishop of Rome and Peter’s successor, ‘is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful. . . .’ ‘The individual *bishops* are the visible source and foundation of unity in their own particular Churches.’” *Catechism*, [paragraphs 882, 883, 886], 234.

79 John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint* 88 in *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, ed. J. Michael Miller (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1996), 967–968. This quotation is taken directly from *Lumen Gentium* 23 in Abbott, *Documents*, 44.

80 John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint* 88, in Miller, *Encyclicals*, 968; cf. Martin C. Abl, *Reason, Faith, and Tradition: Explorations in Catholic Theology* (Winona, MN: Saint Mary’s Press, 2009), 353.

81 This seal is variably referred to as *character indelebilis*, *dominicus character*, or sacramental character. For Augustine’s teachings on this matter, see Emmanuel J. Cutrone, “Sacraments,” *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclo-*

assures that the actions of the priest, such as baptism and administration of the Lord's Supper, are valid in a sacramental sense, i.e., that they convey God's salvific grace with them. According to this view, ordination becomes one of the most important Catholic rites since it allows the Catholic priest to function as a channel of God's grace. Salvation, thus, in some way, depends on ordination. This much is clear from the following statement found in the official *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: "By the imposition of hands and through the words of the consecration, the grace of the Holy Spirit is given, and a sacred character [seal] is impressed in such wise that bishops, in an eminent and visible manner, take the place of Christ himself, teacher, shepherd, and priest, and act as his representative."⁸² Christ, thus, is present in the Church through his representatives, bishops and priests, who together function as *vicarius Christi*, or in the place of Christ.⁸³ This is only possible if the rite of ordination is performed correctly and according to the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church.

Another development relates to the practice of *absolute ordinatio*, i.e., ordination in which hands are laid upon a minister without his being asked to fulfil a particular task or minister to a particular community. It appears that until about fifth century, only someone who had been called by a particular community to be its pastor and leader, or to a particular missionary task, received the authentic *ordinatio*. Only in later ages does this practice seem to have become a regular practice in Christianity. Ordination thus becomes attached to a person rather than a task.⁸⁴

pedia, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 741–747.

82 Catechism of the Catholic Church [paragraph 1558], 389.

83 Cyprian also appears to be the first Christian thinker to apply this title to the bishop. While in the early Christian ages, the title *Vicarius Christi* was applied equally to all bishops, during the later ages it became a monopoly of the bishop of Rome. The pope, however, and according to the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, is to be considered as the "first among equals" (*primus inter pares*). The title *vicarius Christi*, thus, may equally apply to the bishops who stay in the communion with the bishop of Rome and to the priests who stay within the communion with their bishop and who represent their bishop to the communities within which they perform their priestly duties. Michael G. Lawler and Thomas J. Shanahan, *Church: A Spirited Communion* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 107; cf. Richard R. Gaillardetz, *Teaching With Authority: A Theology of the Magisterium in the Church* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), 58–59; Agostino Paravicini-Bagliani, trans. David S. Peterson, *The Pope's Body* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 58–59.

84 Schillebeeckx, *Ministry*, 38–41; cf. Vinzenz Fuchs, *Der Ordinationstitel*

The death of the last apostle and the death of Cyprian in 258 AD are separated by approximately 160 years. Thus it took only 160 years for the Church to depart from its NT roots and to embrace sacramental ecclesiology in which the sacraments of the Church officiated by the ordained ministry (a sacrament itself), rather than individual faith, became accepted as the means of salvation. It was also during this period of time that the Church departed from a variety of biblical teachings such as the seventh-day Sabbath and the non-immortality of the soul. It is of interest that the same period of time witnessed the phasing-out of the ministry of women in the Church. For example, Canon XI of the Council of Laodicea (364 AD) forbids ordination of women elders.⁸⁵ It appears that the Council's message regarding the ordination of women elders did not receive widespread acceptance as Pope Gelasius I, in 494 AD, felt it necessary to issue a strong condemnation in his letter to the bishops in Lucania (Southern Italy):

von seiner Entstehung bis aug Innozenz III (Amsterdam: P. Shppers, 1963), 280; R. Paul Stevens, *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), 151; Gary Macy, *The Hidden History of Women's Ordination: Female Clergy in the Medieval West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 27.

85 W. A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, 3 vols. (Collegeville, MN: The Order of St. Benedict, 1970), 1:316. Historical and inscriptional evidence indicate that prior to the developments of the second and third centuries, women served the Church in various leadership capacities. Many were ordained. Both Catholic and Protestant studies have shown conclusively the existence of women ministers in the early Church. See, for example, a recent work by a Catholic scholar, Gary Macy, who, incidentally, does not appear to endorse the ordination of women in the Catholic Church. Gary Macy, *The Hidden History of Women's Ordination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) and Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek, *Ordained Women in the Early Church: A Documentary History* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2011); cf. William Tabbernee, "Epigraphy," in the *Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, eds. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David Hunter (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 134. Inscriptional evidence in ancient Jewish synagogues suggests there may have existed women elders who, at times, even functioned as head elders. Scholars of antiquity, however, do not always find themselves in agreement on this issue. See the insightful work by Pieter Willem Van Der Horst, *Jews and Christians in Their Graeco-Roman Context* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 25 and Günter Mayer, *Die jüdische Frau in der hellenistisch-römischen Antike* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1987), 90ff.

“Nevertheless we have heard to our annoyance that divine affairs have come to such a low state that women are encouraged to officiate at the sacred altars, and to take part in all matters imputed to the offices of the male sex, to which they do not belong.”⁸⁶

Many other teachings such as various Marian doctrines, cult of the saints, and relics were also introduced into Christian theology at the time. Could it be that creating a division between the laity and clergy, thus separating the Church into two distinct groups of individuals and granting the ordained clergy special powers and authority, contributed in a significant way to the Church’s departure from its NT roots?

The Church, divided into two classes, *ordo* and *plebs*, continued throughout the centuries. It received a powerful jolt during the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation, but not even this movement, with its emphasis on the priesthood of all believers, was able to break the stronghold of sacramentalism over Christian ecclesiology. On the one hand, the Reformers

86 Deborah Halter, *The Papal No: A Comprehensive Guide to Vatican’s Rejection of Women’s Ordination* (New York: Crossroads, 2004), 50. It is interesting to note that the Biblical Pontifical Commission established by Paul VI in 1967 declared that opposition to women’s ordination cannot be sustained on biblical grounds. The Commission concluded: “It does not seem that the New Testament by itself alone will permit us to settle in a clear way and once and for all the problem of the possible accession of women to the presbyterate” *Origins* 6:6, July 1, 1976, 92–96. Even more significant is the following remark: “It must be repeated that the texts of the New Testament, even on such important points as the sacraments, do not always give all the light that one would wish to find in them” *Commentary on the Declaration of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1977), 27. Notwithstanding such findings, both Paul VI and John Paul II defended the male priesthood. In 1994, John Paul II published an Apostolic letter, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, in which he authoritatively declared that the Church had no authority to ordain women on traditional grounds. Commenting on the papal letter, Avery Dulles, a well-known Roman Catholic scholar and ecclesiologist, recalled the traditional Catholic argument against women’s ordination, known as the “iconic argument,” which states that “the priest at the altar acts in the person of Christ the Bridegroom. These theological reasons,” Dulles concludes, “show why it was fitting for Christ to have freely decided to reserve priestly service to men. If the maleness of the priest is essential to enable him to act symbolically in persona Christi in the eucharistic sacrifice, it follows that women should not be priests.” Avery Dulles, “Infallible: Rome’s Word on Women’s Ordination,” *National Catholic Register* (January 7, 1996): 1, 10.

preached salvation by faith and grace alone; on the other hand, they perpetuated the sacramental vision of the Church. Echoing Cyprian's *extra ecclesiam*, Martin Luther thus wrote: "Outside of this Christian Church there is no salvation or forgiveness of sins, but everlasting death and damnation."⁸⁷ Similar concerns are found in Book IV of John Calvin's *Institutes*, devoted entirely to the doctrine of the Church. He even used language that is reminiscent of Cyprian when he referred to the Church as "mother."

"For there is no other way to enter into life unless this mother conceive us in her womb, give us birth, nourish us at her breast, and lastly, unless she keep us under her care and guidance until...we become like angels...Furthermore, away from her bosom one cannot hope for forgiveness of sins or any salvation...It is always disastrous to leave the church."⁸⁸

For Calvin, therefore, clearly there was no salvation outside of the Church.⁸⁹ However, at the core of Calvin's ecclesiology, as in Cyprian's, lies deep concern for the unity of the Church.⁹⁰ John Hesselink thus writes that Calvin has rightly been hailed as the "Cyprian of the Reformation," as "none of the reformers had a higher view of the church and...worked so tirelessly toward achieving its unity."⁹¹ While it is incontestable that Calvin subscribed

87 Martin Luther, "Confessions Concerning Christ's Supper," in *Luther's Works*, ed. Eric W. Gritsch (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1970), 37:368. The fact that this statement shows up in Luther's treatise on the Lord's Supper further accentuates his position on sacraments viewed as the means of grace and salvation. Further elaboration on Luther's understanding of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* may be found in his *Large Catechism*, where he makes a close connection between being a part of the Church and forgiveness of sins. Martin Luther, *The Large Catechism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 56–62.

88 John Calvin, *Institutes* iv.i.4, ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1960), 2:1016.

89 According to analysis provided by the Reformed scholar Louis Berkhof, the belief at the centre of Calvin's ecclesiology was that "the blessings of salvation can be obtained only through the Church, since God in dispensing His grace binds Himself absolutely to the ordained means, the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments." Louis Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1937), 238.

90 John Calvin, *Institutes* iv.i.4, 11; iv.iii.1 in McNeill, *Institutes*, 2:1019, 1026, 1054. Thus he wrote, "Always, both by word and deed I have protested how eager I was for unity." John Calvin, "Letter to Sadoletto," cited in William J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 215.

91 John Hesselink, "Calvin's Theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

to the Protestant principle of the priesthood of all believers, he continued to believe in the elevated status of the Christian ministry, although not entirely in a Catholic sense.⁹² “The church,” he wrote, “can be kept intact only if it be upheld by the safeguards in which it please the Lord to place its salvation.” These “safeguards” were the Christian ministers who governed the Church and who were, for Calvin, the “the chief sinew by which believers are held together in one body.”⁹³ The vestiges of Catholic sacramentalism thus hampered the Magisterial Reformers’ emphasis on the priesthood of all believers and their attempts to establish alternative governmental structures.⁹⁴ As a result, the Reformers continued, albeit inadvertently, the Catholic tradition of separating clergy from laity through the act of ordination. Consequently, the elevated status and prestige of the Christian ministry was never fully repudiated, and ordination continued to separate clergy and laity into two separate castes of believers. Could it be that by leaving the traces of Catholic sacramentalism in Protestant theology, as well as by their perpetuation of the non-biblical rite of “ordination,” the Reformers inadvertently contributed to the faltering of the Reformation?

Early Adventism, Organization, and Ordination

As a result of the magisterial Reformers’ hesitancy,⁹⁵ various restorationist movements advocating a complete return to NT Christianity arose already during the life of the Reformers (most notably the Anabaptists) and throughout the subsequent centuries. Many of these movements attempted

2004), 87; cf. Gottfried Wilhelm Locher, *Sign of the Advent: A Study in Protestant Ecclesiology* (Fribourg: University of Fribourg Academic Press, 2004), 157.

92 Calvin, *Institutes* iv.iii.2. Not that it mattered to common, theologically untrained people, who were often forced to take on the religion of their magistrates.

93 Ibid.

94 For a detailed study on the sacramentalism of the Protestant Reformers, see my three papers: Darius Jankiewicz “Sacramental Theology and Ecclesiastical Authority,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 42 (2004): 361–382; “Models of Ecclesiastical Authority,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 18 (2007): 15–34; and “The Sixteenth-Century Protestant Reformation and Adventist Ecclesiology,” in *Message, Mission, and Unity of the Church*, Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology, 3 vols., ed. Ángel Rodríguez (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2013), 2:191–217.

95 The term “Magisterial Reformation” is usually applied to the three branches of the sixteenth-century Reformation going back to Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli.

to portray the Christian ministry in a more functional (i.e., service-oriented) rather than sacramental way, thus bringing their communities towards a closer realization of the NT principle of the priesthood of all believers. Over time, some of these movements continued to maintain their anticlerical ethos, while others oscillated between a functional and a more sacramental understanding of ministry and ordination.

Seventh-day Adventists consider themselves heirs of the various restorationist movements that advocated a return to biblical Christianity. Two out of three of the principal founders of Adventism, Joseph Bates and James White, were part of the movement known as Christian Connexion, which advocated just such an ideal. As a result, early Adventist Sabbatarians tended to view such human constructs as creeds, organization, and structured ministry with great suspicion.⁹⁶ It took some years for Adventists to realize that, while not present in Scripture, not all organizational forms are necessarily pernicious and opposed to the spirit of Scripture. In fact, they recognized that some form of organization was necessary in order to facilitate the preaching of the Advent message. Under the leadership of James and Ellen G. White, and amid significant strife, the first organizational steps were taken during the mid-1850s. These eventually culminated in the achievement of formal organization in 1863.⁹⁷

It was only natural that, during those turbulent years, the question of ministry would also be discussed. The early Adventist Sabbatarian communities struggled to distinguish between legitimate Adventist Sabbatarian preachers and those who were not. As a result of such difficulties, Adventist leadership of the early 1850s decided to issue credentials to those who truly represented the message of the nascent denomination. At about the same time, aware of the needs of the Church and mindful of the Protestant practice of ordination, early Adventist leaders began to ordain their ministers

96 In his book, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission*, Gerard Damsteegt notes that the ecclesiological thinking of early Sabbatarian Adventists was a “consistent extension of the Millerite views,” in which any form of “organized” religion was “considered to be Babylon.” Any discussion on the “church” in these early years appears to have been limited to differentiations between false and true religion. P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1977), 147–148.

97 This and other developments have been documented in George Knight’s excellent book *Organizing to Beat the Devil: The Development of Adventist Church Structure* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2001).

through the laying on of hands.⁹⁸ These changes followed a careful study of the Scriptures and were supported by Ellen G. White, who concluded that, for the sake of “gospel order,” men who were clearly called by God to a special ministry of the Gospel should be set apart through the laying on of hands.⁹⁹ These laying on of hands rituals were to follow the model described in Acts 13:1–3, in which Paul and Barnabas were set apart for a special ministry of the Gospel. Set apart as such, these ministers were to preside over baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and other rites of the Church. These and other organizational developments were necessary to protect the Church and its mission. It is still necessary today, and Scripturally supported, to identify those who have the gift of leadership and set them apart for ministry. While acknowledging the importance of the ministerial calling and the solemnness of the laying on of hands rite, Ellen G. White nonetheless warned early Adventists against ascribing to the rite of ordination more than its due:

At a later date, the rite of ordination by the laying-on-of-hands was greatly abused; *unwarrantable importance* was attached to the act, as if a power came at once upon those who received such ordination, which immediately qualified them for any and all ministerial work. But in the setting apart of these two apostles, there is no record indicating that any virtue was imparted by the mere act of laying on of hands. There is only the simple record of their ordination, and of the bearing that it had on their future work.¹⁰⁰

Careful perusal of early Adventist literature regarding ordination indicates that while Adventist writers viewed the rite as thoroughly Scriptural, they were also mindful of White’s warning and did not ascribe to the rite of ordination “unwarrantable importance.” It appears that for them, the rite had more to do with “gospel order” and was necessary at the time for more prag-

98 George Knight thus notes that “The Sabbatarian approach to ordination was pragmatic and eclectic rather than built upon a tightly-reasoned theology of ordination. The leaders of the movement, however, were concerned to justify their practices from the Bible. The function of ordination was to serve the mission of the church.” George Knight, “Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination,” in *Women in Ministry*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 111.

99 Ellen G. White, *Supplement to the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White* (Rochester, NY: James White, 1854), 18–19; cf. Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil*, 37.

100 Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 162; emphasis added.

matic rather than theological reasons.¹⁰¹ One is hard pressed to find in these early writings any discussion on the status, rank, or gender of these ministers. This simply did not appear to be on the agenda of the early Adventists. All that mattered was the proclamation of the three angels' messages.

Conclusion

In the light of my findings presented in this paper, I feel that the following questions need to be asked. Could it be that, as we have been experiencing the delay of the Second Coming of Christ, we may have begun placing more emphasis on the institutional aspects of the Church, where rank, status, and position matter more than the preaching of the Gospel? Have we tended to ascribe “unwarrantable importance” to the simple NT rite of laying-on-of-hands—thus inadvertently repeating the mistakes of early Christianity? Is the distinction between ordained clergy and un-ordained laity, as accepted and practised within the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in agreement with the biblical principle of the priesthood of all believers? Have Adventists sufficiently freed themselves from the shackles of sacramentalism bequeathed to them from other Christian churches? Have Adventists truly understood the radical implications of Paul’s teaching on the Body of Christ and his belief that “to *each one of us* grace has been given as Christ apportioned it?” (Eph. 4:7, 11; Rom. 12:6; emphasis added). Finally, Adventists must ask themselves the all-important question: does the current way of understanding and practising ministerial ordination continue to serve the mission of the Church in every region around the globe?

In answering these questions, let the history of the organizational developments of the early Church serve as a warning. It didn’t take long for the persecuted Church to become a persecuting Church, with those who disagreed suffering much at the hands of the ordained clergy; a Church which was so enamoured with its own institution and the protection of the powers of its clergy that it ultimately lost its place in the divine scheme of things. There are no guarantees that history will not repeat itself again!

101 George Knight, “Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination,” 111.

Chapter 7: “The Lord Has Ordained Me”: Ellen G. White’s Perspective

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In the two letters written on October 19, 1909 and January 20, 1910, Ellen White used a significant and reflective phrase—“The Lord has ordained me as his messenger.” The aims of this paper are (1) to explore the meaning of this significant phrase in the framework of its contextual setting; (2) to explore Ellen White’s understanding of the term “ordination” and its ecclesiastical function in God’s mission to the world; and (3) to explore Ellen White’s practical application of the term “ordination” in the life and work of the Church. In this study examines the meaning of the phrase “the Lord has ordained me” will be examined from three perspectives: a) experiential; b) biblically reflective; and c) practical.

Experiential Perspective

On October 19, 1909, Ellen White appealed to the churches at large to raise money for the completion of the church in Portland, Maine. The foundations of the building were already laid but the members were few. She wrote, “Unless they [believers in Portland] receive help from their brethren and sisters, they cannot complete the building.” The project was crucial as it was “the first Seventh-day Adventist church to be built in that city.”¹ While visiting Portland the previous summer, she was encouraged to appeal to all the Church members throughout the state “asking each member to make a donation of ten cents.” While visiting several camp meetings on her way home, Ellen White collected a small sum of “over two hundred dollars.”² Now in an open appeal, she invited all, “young and old, parents and children to take part in this missionary effort.”³ Her appeals were backed up by personal commitment. In a letter written to Elisa Morton on February 17, 1910,

1 Ellen G. White, Letter written from St Helena, California, “An Appeal,” October 19, 1909.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

W. C. White observed, "Brother Montgomery tells us that of the amount received, \$391.04 has come from the West as the result of Mother's labors."⁴ During this period, she actively encouraged churches to support the work in Portland by appealing both to local church communities and to the churches at large.⁵ Why was this project so close to her heart?

First, as she pointed out, "The Lord has given instructions that the work of uplifting the banner of truth in the eastern states must now go forward with new power."⁶ More specifically, "Portland has been especially pointed out as a place that should be labored for without delay." Second, with this instruction, she recalled the thriving revival that took place in Portland during the events leading to the Great Disappointment.

The city of Portland was remarkably blessed by God in the early days of the message. At that time able ministers preached the truth of the soon coming of the Lord giving the first warning of the near approach of the end of all things... The first and second angels' messages sounded all through Portland, and the city was greatly moved. Many were converted to the truth of the Lord's soon coming and the glory of the Lord was revealed in a remarkable manner.⁷

In contrast to this spiritual revival, Ellen White described the decline she encountered in the city of her childhood. "Now there are only few believers in Portland." Some of the faithful ministers had aged and were unable to do "much active work for the cause." In her mind, God's work in Portland needed a new sparkle of fire. She declared, "These faithful workers would be greatly encouraged if they could see the work in Portland revived as a result of the Holy Spirit's work upon the hearts of the believers."⁸

Specific needs combined with love and passion for God's work triggered in Ellen White's mind a vivid recollection of her childhood years and the pictures of the thriving spiritual revival experienced in the distant past. In this context, she recalled the moments of her personal life-changing experience. "In the city of Portland, the Lord has ordained me as his messenger,

4 W. C. White, Letter to Miss Eliza H. Morton, February 17, 1910. In the same letter he comments "Now I had in mind that Mother has raised and sent to you nearly \$500, and I wish you would send us a particularized statement of what you have received from Mother and from our Conferences, as raised by her."

5 Ibid. "Mother has written four appeals regarding this meeting house,— one to the people of Portland Church, one to our brethren in the state of Maine, one to our people in New England and one to our people everywhere."

6 Ellen G. White, Letter, October 19, 1909.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

and here my first labors were given to the cause of the present truth.”⁹ It is evident that this experience left a lifelong imprint in her memory. On another occasion, while visiting the city of Portland in 1884, she recalled, with distinctive clarity, the intensity of the emotional struggles associated with the experience of God’s call.

How clearly I remembered the experience of forty years ago, when my light went out in darkness because I was unwilling to lift up my cross, and refused to be obedient. I shall never forget the agony of my soul when I felt the frown of God upon me.¹⁰

Twenty-five years later, prompted by the circumstances described, a mood of reflective reminiscence opened the scenes of God’s involvement in her life.

In this succinct expression filled with conviction, Ellen White linked the notion of ordination with God’s actions, or God’s initiative, leading to a specific purpose in her life, a role, which she termed “His messenger.” Furthermore, God’s direct call ignited her response of commitment to the designated task. However, even though her recollections involved nostalgic and emotionally charged sentiments, she described her experience in a rather plain and un-emotive, matter-of-fact manner, that was nonetheless based on an undeniable conviction.

A few months later, on January 20, 1910, Ellen White wrote another appeal to “all the churches throughout the United States.”¹¹ She urged the believers to provide financial support for the completion of the church in Portland. In the introduction she wrote, “Unless they receive help from their brethren and sisters, they will be greatly embarrassed.”¹² At this time the church still needed to raise \$5,848.¹³ The second letter had an ongoing motivational purpose. At the same time, Ellen White added more details to the

9 Ibid.

10 Ellen G. White, “Notes of Travel,” *Review and Herald* 61, no. 47 (November 25, 1884): 737.

11 Ellen G. White, Letter written from St Helena California, January 10, 1910.

12 Ibid.

13 W. C. White, Letter to Eliza Morton, February 17, 1910. The cost of the Church was estimated at \$7934.91. The funds raised by donations added to \$2086.91, out of which nearly \$500 was raised by Ellen White’s efforts. The tone of the letter suggests a degree of frustration: “I wish you would send us a particularized statement of what you have received from Mother and from our Conferences.”

descriptive recollections of this significant experience, namely, "the Lord has ordained me."¹⁴

First, she recalled her transition from a state of emotional despair to the revelation of God's love and the experience of joy and happiness: "After a period of despair, the blessed Saviour revealed to me His love and brought joy and happiness to my soul."¹⁵ She attributes this change to God's direct leading through which she received a new appreciation of his love. The new understanding ignited in her life a burden and a passion for the conversion of her friends.

When I was but a child, the Lord placed upon me a burden for souls. I worked earnestly for the conversion of my playmates, and at times ministers of some of the churches would send for me to bear a testimony before their congregations.¹⁶

In this instance, her recollection moved beyond the events associated with the direct call she received soon after her first vision in December 1844. The extended reflection reveals the heart of her transformational experience, the journey that eventually led to God's specific call.

Second, she described the more direct nature of the call: "After the great disappointment, the Lord has revealed himself to me in a special manner and bade me to bear His message to the people."¹⁷

It seems, these events were part of a wider two-phase process that Ellen White interprets as being an ordination: "the Lord has ordained me." The two experiences described have one common denominator—a personalized reference to God's involvement in the process: "The blessed Saviour revealed to me His love" and "the Lord has revealed Himself to me in a special manner."¹⁸ In the second letter, the additional details move beyond the descriptive, statement-of-fact quality and task-oriented specificity expressed in her first letter. In this context, ordination was not simply an act conferring a set of ecclesiastical responsibilities, sacerdotal power or titles of authority. Here, Ellen White's understanding of the phrase, "God has ordained me" differed from the accepted definitions and views.¹⁹ Rather, her

14 Ellen G. White, Letter, January 17, 1910. In the second letter she repeats exactly the same sentence. "In the city of Portland the Lord has ordained me as His messenger and here my first labors were given to the cause of present truth." However, she provides a more comprehensive description of the experience.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 Noah Webster, *Dictionary 1828*, Ellen G. White Writings Comprehensive

reflections brought into the picture what matters to God. It is apparent that to Ellen White ordination was not a rite or occasioned conferral of a pastoral title. Rather, it was a process involving a relationally experiential interaction or a spiritual dialogue between God and a person. On this journey, God's actions, namely his guidance, nurture and prompting, direct individuals towards his ordained purpose.

Furthermore, Ellen White's reflections recapture the essence or the ethos of God's act of ordination. The first component is the revelation of his love. The second component involves a transformational journey on which individuals develop a vision of what God cares about, namely a burden and passion for people. The third component involves a clear understanding of the designated task. In Ellen White's case, she was called to be God's messenger. The fourth component includes human response—the outflow of passion demonstrated in active ministry for the conversion of people.

The intensity and impact of God's call rested on her through her entire life. It carried her through ups and downs and helped her to survive the most challenging and discouraging circumstances. In 1906, she exclaimed, "At the age of seventy-eight I am still toiling. We are all in the hands of the Lord. I trust in him; for I know that he will never leave nor forsake those who put their trust in him. I have committed myself to his keeping."²⁰ In the same article, she expressed her unwavering conviction about God's act of ordaining her to a specific task: "I am instructed that I am the Lord's messenger; that he called me in my youth to be his messenger, to receive his word, and to give a clear and decided message in the name of the Lord Jesus."²¹

It is of interest to note that although Ellen White wrote the second letter on January 20, 1910, it was published in *Review and Herald* in May 18, 1911 under the title, "An Appeal to our Churches throughout the United States."²² According to W. C. White, the fund-raising for Portland competed

Research Edition CD. "The act of conferring holy orders or sacerdotal power; called also consecration. In the Presbyterian and Congregational churches, the act of settling or establishing a licensed clergyman over a church and congregation with pastoral charge and authority; also, the act of conferring on a clergyman the powers of a settled minister of the gospel, without the charge or oversight of a particular church, but with the general powers of an evangelist, who is authorized to form churches and administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper, wherever he may be called to officiate."

20 Ellen G. White, "A Messenger," *Review and Herald* 83, no. 30 (July 26, 1906): 9.

21 *Ibid.*, 8.

22 Ellen G. White, "An Appeal to Our Churches throughout the United States," *Review and Herald* 88, no. 20 (May 18, 1911): 3.

with other major financial commitments, namely the “Ingathering Campaign and the annual offerings.”²³ However, he added, “it did not seem to her [Ellen White] wise to send a general appeal to the *Review* before we were sure that our leading brethren in Maine and in the Atlantic Union were ready to take up the work and push it forward to success.”²⁴ It is evident the tone of her appeal in the second letter is stronger than in her first letter. “I am now urging that a strong effort be put forth to give the last message of warning to the city of Portland.”²⁵ Over a year later, the building stood unfinished. She wrote, “Our people are now meeting in the basement.”²⁶ However, her concern moved beyond the boundaries of Portland for work had to be opened in “different sections of our cities.” During this period, her heart carried a burden for the expansion of work in other cities. She wrote, “When I think of the cities yet unwarned, I cannot rest. It is distressing to think that they have been neglected so long.”²⁷ Is it likely that Ellen White recognized more serious spiritual issues? What did she have in mind by referring to the leading brethren in Maine and the Atlantic Union?

Her correspondence reveals three major concerns. First, she called the leaders to open up new fields and to focus on mission in large cities. She felt that this work was neglected. In this context she twice referred to the city of Portland, Maine.²⁸ She warned of the dangers of “gathering too many responsibilities in one place” while the message should be proclaimed “in needy fields, yet unworked.”²⁹ Here she called for a change in regard to “the work that God has pointed out to do in opening new fields.”³⁰

Second, she called for a spiritual revival and conversion. In contrast to the growing challenge of sharing God’s message in new places, Ellen White identified the prevailing problems that hindered the progress of God’s vision. “I sometimes feel sick at heart when I consider how the work has

23 W. C. White, Letter to Elder O. Montgomery, February 18, 1910. He wrote, “But it did not seem to her [Ellen White] to be wise to send a general appeal to the *Review* at the time when our people were straining every nerve to do their duty in the Ingathering campaign and the annual offering.”

24 Ibid.

25 Ellen G. White, Letter, January 20, 1910.

26 Ibid.

27 Ellen G. White, cited in W. C. White, “Visits to Philadelphia, New York, and Newark,” *Review and Herald* 86, no. 47 (November 25, 1909): 7.

28 Ellen G. White, Letter, June 23, 1900; Letter 21, 1909; Letter, June 13, 1910.

29 Ellen G. White, Letter, January 13, 1910.

30 Ellen G. White, Letter, June 15, 1910.

been hindered by men who are eager to use authority."³¹ With this thought in mind, she challenged physicians, ministers and Conference officials to "walk in the counsel of God instead of using arbitrary authority that has greatly retarded the work."³² In addition she called for "an entire change based on thorough conversion," a swing away from worldly attitudes and the spirit of self-exaltation.³³

Third, in view of the existing tension between God's vision and the prevailing problems, Ellen White focused on the heart of the matter, namely life in Christ and its relationship to human responsibilities. Here she identified an important connection. "While Christ ministers in our behalf in the heavenly sanctuary, through the delegated ministry of the church he carries forward His work on earth."³⁴ Again she highlighted God's all-inclusive and continual involvement in this process:

From His ascension to the present day, chosen men ordained of God, deriving their authority from the great Teacher, have borne the message to the world. The under shepherds are to rely upon the chief Shepherd.³⁵

In calling the Church to refocus on what matters to God, Ellen White attributed the process of ordination to God's actions and to his sole involvement in this process. God ordains or designates specific responsibility for his message to be proclaimed to the world. Individuals respond and "become workers together with Christ representing Him before the world." Ordination means more than being set aside for a specific task. Rather, it involves a transformational experience of allowing God to "mould the character after the divine similitude" with the purpose of connecting other people with God.³⁶ Ellen White understood this process from an all-inclusive perspective. "Thank God that his truth can be communicated by men and women, even in their old age."³⁷ Under the umbrella of Christ's leadership, "each of us has a special part to act."³⁸

In the context of this urgency and the prevailing lack of commitment to God's mission, Ellen White recalled the moments of God's call: "It was in Portland that the Lord first gave me a work to do as his messenger, when I

31 Ellen G. White, Letter, June 10, 1910.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 Ellen G. White, Letter, December 21, 1909.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

38 Ellen G. White, Letter, January 13, 1910.

was but fifteen years old."³⁹ Further, her mind raced back to the time of the spiritual revival in Portland: "The city of Portland was remarkably blessed by God in the early days of the message." The moments of God's involvement in her life were still vividly impressed in her memory. These recollections prompted her desire to ignite the passion, commitment and enthusiasm for God's mission. It is clear that, in her mind, the spirit of love and commitment to God's work should be all-inclusive: "Let the children, as well as the older members of the Lord's family, have a share in it."⁴⁰ Arthur White correctly comments: "She encouraged the spirit of self-sacrifice" and reminded the Church of "constant devotion to the needs of a lost world."⁴¹

Ellen White's understanding of the expression, "The Lord has ordained me," moved beyond the boundaries set by human perceptions and traditions. She linked ordination with the divine process through which God invites individuals to a life of commitment and involvement in his mission to the world. The heart of the process involves a journey of transformation and reorientation initiated by the revelation of God's love and the awakening of passion and burden for what God cares about, namely, people. On this journey people ordained by God, both men and women, are simply his ambassadors, receiving commission and wisdom from Christ.⁴² The act of God's ordination has a specific purpose, namely to connect other people with God.

Biblically Reflective Perspective

The aim of this section is to demonstrate how Ellen White's biblical reflections affirm God's involvement in the process of ordination. In her reflections on Paul's ministry, Ellen White stresses emphatically that ordination involves the divine process through which God sets apart individuals to a life of commitment and involvement in his mission to the world.⁴³ At the same time, she highlights the Church's role in recognizing the divine call. "Paul did not depend upon man for his ordination. He received from

39 Ibid.

40 Ellen G. White, Letter, October 19, 1909 and Letter, January 20, 1910.

41 Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, vol. 6, *The Later Elmshaven Years, 1905-1915* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1982), 209.

42 Ellen G. White, Letter, December 21, 1909.

43 The term *biblical reflection* is based on Ellen White's statement in her letter written to W. C. White. "I am thankful that I can remain for a time where I can be close to my helpers...I have been fully employed in preparation of matter for the 'Life of Paul.' We are trying to bring *scriptural evidence of truth* and these we believe will be appreciated by our people." Ellen G. White, Letter, February 15, 1911 (emphasis added).

the Lord his commission and ordination.”⁴⁴ She then refers to his attitude in seeing the ministerial work “as a privilege” by which “he labored for the souls of men.”⁴⁵ Here she links ordination with the process through which individuals recapture God’s vision and a passion for the lost and a time during which they strengthen their conviction about the specific nature of the call. “Paul’s labors at Antioch, in association with Barnabas, strengthened him in his conviction that the Lord had called him to do a special work for the Gentile world.”⁴⁶ She adds, “He studied constantly how to make his testimony of the greatest effect.”⁴⁷ Paul’s testimony focused on his conversion and call to service: “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful appointing me to his service” (1 Tim. 1:12–17). God’s calling initiated in Paul’s life a transformation and commitment to God’s purposes. At this point, Ellen White draws an important lesson: “Would that to-day men might be found with faith to do as Paul did, men who would preach the gospel, not looking to men for their reward, but willing to receive their reward in souls.”⁴⁸

In this context, she highlights specific instructions relating to the Church’s role in the divine process of ordination. Her comments on the narrative of Acts 13:2–4, the setting apart by the Church of Paul and Barnabas, unfold the depth of her understanding.

The biblical story presents the following sequence.

1. 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.”
2. After they have fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them.
3. They sent them off.

It is of great interest to note Ellen White’s reflections and her contextual treatment of this story:

Both Paul and Barnabas had already received their commission from God himself, and the ceremony of the laying of hands added no new grace or virtual qualification. It was an acknowledgment form of des-

44 Ellen G. White, Manuscript, 74-03, July 27, 1903.

45 Ibid.

46 Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 159.

47 Ellen G. White, Manuscript, July 27, 1903. Also, see White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 159.

48 Ibid.

ignation to an appointed office and a recognition of one's authority in that office. By it the seal of the church was upon the work of God.⁴⁹

First, she understood that an ordination was simply a public recognition of the divine call: "Paul and Barnabas had already received their commission from God." So why was such recognition necessary? She points out that specific circumstances raised the need to provide a protective framework. Its main purpose was to authenticate the work of the apostles in an adverse environment: "The apostles who had been appointed to lead out in this work would be exposed to suspicions, prejudice and jealousy."⁵⁰ God foresaw the difficulties and "He instructed the church by revelation to set them apart publicly to the work of ministry."⁵¹ The main reason for this public action was to provide protection against external challenges. The prevailing circumstances compelled God to instruct the Church to affirm officially, or set apart, what he has already set in motion. It is important to recognize Ellen White's emphasis on the circumstantial need. In response to the raising challenges and difficulties God instructed the Church to provide a protective umbrella for those called to a specific ministry.

Second, she clarifies that the laying on of hands "added no new grace or virtual qualification." She adds that with passing time "ordination by laying of hands was greatly abused" and "unwarranted importance was attached to it as if a power came at once upon those who received such ordination."⁵² Further, her reference to "one's authority in that office" must be understood in the light of her personal experience. In this context, the recipient of God's ordination reflects the depth of his passion for the lost and shares the authority of servanthood. Ellen White understood this in terms of "the means he [God] has ordained for the help, encouragement and strength to His people."⁵³ So what did the rite of laying hands imply? In the framework of cultural practices, it implied a provision of blessings:

And when the ministers of the church of believers in Antioch laid hands upon Paul and Barnabas, they by that action, asked God to bestow blessings upon the chosen apostles in their devotion to the specific work to which they had been appointed.⁵⁴

49 White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 161–2.

50 *Ibid.*, 161.

51 *Ibid.*

52 *Ibid.*, 162. "To the Jews this form was a significant one. When a Jewish father blessed his children, he laid his hands reverently upon their heads."

53 *Ibid.*, 164.

54 *Ibid.*, 162.

Through the laying of hands, the Church prayed for God's blessings and the continuity of his involvement in the designated task. This culturally ingrained practice had a future-oriented bearing.⁵⁵ Facing the challenge of the designated task, Paul and Barnabas needed the support of the community. They became an extension of the body of Christ, and of Christ himself. In accepting God's call and the Church's affirmation, they became Christ's extended hands in the world he came to save. In this capacity, "they were authorized by the church, not only to teach the truth, but to perform the rite of baptism and to organize churches, being invested with full ecclesiastical authority."⁵⁶ It needs to be understood that in contrast to the prevailing views, Ellen White understood the ecclesiastical authority in the framework of the responsibility to "give to the world the glad tidings of the grace of God."⁵⁷

In this context, the act of ordination or setting-apart created a bond and a sense of mutual accountability in carrying the Gospel to the Gentiles. There was to be a close tie between those whom God ordained and the body of Christ, the Church, a tie of mutually interdependent participation in God's vision. It safeguarded individual workers from the danger of self-oriented confidence and trust in personal judgment and at the same time it challenged the Church to provide a support-base of encouragement for those in specific leadership roles. Ellen White summarized the importance of this link in the following words: "The Lord in His wisdom has arranged that by means of the close relationship that should be maintained by all believers, Christian shall be united to Christian and church to church."⁵⁸ It appears her focus was not on the functions or rites. These should be understood only as a means to an end. Her main focus was on God's action and on the ability to discern his movements in the lives of those he ordains. Moreover, she challenged the Church to maintain openness to the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit: "Every agency will be subordinate to the Holy Spirit, and all the believers will be united in an organized and well-directed effort to give to the world the glad tidings of the grace of God."⁵⁹

In summary, it is important to note the contextual framework in which Ellen White comments on the process of ordination or the setting apart of

55 Ibid. This spiritual act was later distorted. It assumed the role of a rite which conferred holy orders or sacerdotal power.

56 Ibid., 161.

57 Ibid., 164.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid.

Paul and Barnabas by the church in Antioch. She points out that specific circumstances occasioned the need for the Church to recognize what God has already set in motion. In the context of God's mission, ordination, or setting-apart, was no more and no less than an act of affirmation. Through this process, God invited the Church to become a supportive base providing spiritual encouragement, motivation, guidance, help and strength. Such a nurturing climate empowered the ones ordained by God with vibrancy to carry on the task. Furthermore, it provided a mechanism for accountability to protect individuals from the danger of self-oriented independence. Last but not least, ordination had a unifying purpose through which the Holy Spirit guided all entities towards successful fulfilment of God's vision.

It is also important to stress that, in the context of the progressive organizational development of the movement, Ellen White gained a clearer understanding of the nature of ordination and its relationship to the life of the church. In the third volume of *The Spirit of Prophecy*, published in 1878 she referred to the story of the ordination of Paul and Barnabas. She emphasized that their "ordination was an open recognition of their mission, as messengers chosen by the Holy Ghost for a special work."⁶⁰ She defined the rite of laying hands as a "seal of the church upon the work of God." At the same time, she pointed out that the "rite of laying of hands was at a later date greatly abused."⁶¹ Ellen White adopted the same position in *The Acts of the Apostles*, published in 1911. However, in the later edition her biblical reflections included a more profound understanding of ordination in its relationship to the life of the church. As previously shown the prevailing circumstances of that time necessitated a revision of this understanding to help the Church to refocus on a refreshed view of ordination in the context of God's mission to the world. Was it then necessary for the Church to understand the process of ordination as recognition of what God has already set in motion, in the framework of circumstantial needs? With this question in mind, in the next section Ellen White's application of the named principles in the context of God's missional vision is explored.

60 Ellen G. White, *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 3 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1878), 348-9.

61 Ibid.

Practical Perspective

It appears that during this time Ellen White's thoughts were preoccupied with a passion for the expansion of God's work and for raising awareness of unopened fields:

The cause of God in the earth today is in need of living representatives of Bible truth. The ordained ministers alone are not equal to the task of warning the great cities. God is calling not only upon ministers, but also upon physicians, nurses, colporteurs, Bible workers and other consecrated laymen of varied talent who have a knowledge of the word of God and who know the power of His grace to consider the needs of the unwarned cities.⁶²

With this mindset, she spoke against views hindering its progress. In her understanding, every opportunity should be utilized and improved.⁶³ It is important to consider whether this drive enlarged the scope of Ellen White's understanding of ordination. The quotation above suggests that new circumstances required a conceptual rethink in the approach to mission. She pointed out that the ordained ministers alone were not equal to the task. In this thought, one detects a broadening concept and a more-inclusive thinking. God was not only calling ordained ministers, but a team of other talented workers to share the knowledge of the Bible in the unwarned places. One may ask whether God places a burden for souls on people's hearts, and in view of the new circumstances, did Ellen White expand her understanding of ordination and its application in ministry? Furthermore, did she see ordination as an exclusive process, or did she see it from a more inclusive perspective? With these questions in mind one may explore her progressive thinking in the light of the passion she had to see the progress of God's work.

In 1896, during her tenure in Australia, Ellen White wrote an insightful note entitled "Remarks Concerning Foreign Mission Work," in which the main thrust of her concern focused on the "many fields right around that ought to be worked that are not worked."⁶⁴ The paragraph quoted below unfolds the heart of her concern:

But from the light that I have had there has not been all that training of men for workers, and bringing them right up close in the connection with ministerial labor, and appreciating their talents, and teaching them how to use them so they could go out and go right in to such places as these and work, all over, all around, and let the light shine, as should have been. God does not rest his work on a few ministers.

62 White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 158.

63 *Ibid.*

64 Ellen G. White, *Manuscript 75*, November 12, 1896 (previously unpublished).

He does not do it. We have let the matter settle in our minds altogether too strongly and too firmly that it is a full-fledged minister that must be prepared to take hold of the work.⁶⁵

The opening sentence is very significant. The light on this subject came from a higher authority. It coincides with her emphasis on the work to be carried out in Portland: "The Lord has given instruction...Portland has been especially pointed out as a place that should be labored without delay."⁶⁶ Further, it also reflects the tone of her passion expressed in the extract from *The Acts of the Apostles* (1911) quoted above. It seems evident that God, who ordained or set apart individuals for a specific role in his mission, gently worked through Ellen White to break the barriers raised by set traditions. Indeed, God's views are different: "God does not rest his work on a few ministers. He does not do it." Then she exclaims: "We have let the matter settle in minds altogether too strongly and too firmly." In view of the new circumstances Ellen White called for a change in the approach to the mission work at hand. In fact, she proposed an innovative, all-inclusive alternative.

First, she referred to the early Apostolic times. Persecution scattered the believers around and in adverse circumstances they continued to preach the Gospel. She followed this thought with an interesting insight: "Well now, they were not ministers."⁶⁷ What follows is rather interesting. "We have got to begin to handle as we have not yet done, those who are not ministers not waiting until they are ordained, but take men that we know fear God and make them feel that it is possible for them to go and take hold of the work in these countries."⁶⁸ She encouraged the Church to note that changed circumstances opened ways to new opportunities.

Second, in this context, she moved further: "There must be men that shall be commissioned or encouraged by our brethren to go out, and if they feel [brethren] that it is best for these men to be ordained—some of them—why, ordain them."⁶⁹ In other words, she encouraged the Church to affirm what God has already set in motion. "But if not let them go out and let them do to the very best of their ability."⁷⁰ Her statements suggest that she did not view ordination from an exclusive perspective, relating to the process of establishing an ecclesiastical and hierarchical authority. Rather, she saw it in the

65 Ibid.

66 Ellen G. White, Letter, October 19, 1909.

67 White, Manuscript 75, 1896.

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.

light of God's missional purpose. "When men go out with the burden of the work to bring souls into the truth, those men are ordained of God, [even] if [they] never have a touch of ceremony of ordination."⁷¹ She found support for this position in the Bible, claiming that the scattered believers preached the Gospel but "they were not ministers." She encouraged the Church to be supportive of those who feel a burden for souls. "Our finite mind must not pronounce upon it, and think that they must go through the minister's ordeal, all the way through, before they can be accepted as laborers. Let them go out. Let them test their power, their ability, and see what they will do and not go to them and say, 'You aren't a minister.'"⁷²

In this context Ellen White pushed the boundaries of the prevailing thinking even further. She argued that if individuals feel the burden for the work and they lead people to conversion, "To say [they] shall not baptize when there is nobody else, [is wrong]."⁷³ Then she made a rather strong statement: "When the Lord works with a man to bring out a soul here and there, and they know not when the opportunity will come that these precious souls can be baptized, why he should not question about the matter, he should baptize these souls."⁷⁴ To support her position, again, she adhered to the authority of the Bible by referring to the story of Philip. "Philip was not an ordained minister" but when asked by the eunuch, he baptized him.⁷⁵

It becomes evident that to Ellen White new circumstances create a demand for conceptual change, and what this study reveals Ellen White's functional flexibility and openness to new possibilities. In the light of God's mission one detects a broadening, more-inclusive view of ordination. When God ordains people or sets them apart for a specific role by creating in their heart a burden for souls, she warned, "we must not put men in straightjackets."⁷⁶ Rather, she encouraged the Church to affirm such a call and to provide support and nurture through earnest prayers.⁷⁷

Her openness to new possibilities stemmed from the urgency to expand God's work in "unworked" places and in large cities. In 1909, she wrote,

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid.

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid. "We must lead this [sic] men with our prayers, earnest prayers, and our hearts to go with them, and bid them Godspeed, and for the Lord to prosper them. This is what we must do."

“The message that I am bidden to bear to our people at this time is, work in the cities without delay. The Lord has kept this before us for the last twenty years or more. A little has been done in few places but much more might be done.”⁷⁸ She expressed her frustration so clearly in a letter written in 1910: “Nine years have passed into eternity, Elder Daniells, and these fields in our cities have been neglected. Untaught, uneducated souls are perishing. How can we save these souls?”⁷⁹ In the light of this urgency, she encouraged the Church to expand the work through every possible avenue— medical missionary work, literature evangelism and the church members at large. She wrote, “Everyone who has received Christ is called to work for the salvation of his fellow men... The charge to give this invitation includes the entire church.”⁸⁰ During the passing years, and in the spirit of missionary urgency, Ellen White used a gender-inclusive phrase, referring to both men and women.

Space does not permit an extensive study of all the references. However, a selected sample shows her arguments in support of the inclusion of women in all facets of ministry:

In ancient times the Lord worked in wonderful ways through consecrated women who unite in His work with men whom He had chosen to stand as His representatives. He used women to gain great and decisive victories. More than once in times of emergency, He brought them to the front and worked through them for the salvation of many lives.⁸¹

Again, Ellen White highlighted God's initiative to work through consecrated women in what she considered to be a primary role for the salvation of many lives. Then she added a fascinating challenge. “A study of women's work in connection with the cause of God in Old Testament times will teach us lessons that will enable us to meet emergencies in the work to-day.”⁸² The

78 Ellen G. White, Letter 168, December 1, 1909, “To the Officers of the General Conference.”

79 Ellen G. White, Letter, c. 1910, to “Dear Brethren and Sisters.”

80 White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 110. It is in this light and urgency that she wrote the book. “While preparing the book of Acts of the Apostles, the Lord has kept my mind in perfect peace. This book will soon be ready for publication.... There should be an awakening on the part of the people, and fresh efforts made to get the light of the present truth before the world...missionaries are needed everywhere.” Ellen G. White, Letter to F. M. Wilcox, July 25, 1911.

81 Ellen G. White, Letter to Ruble, Burden and Evans, Loma Linda Sanitarium, California, May 7, 1911.

82 Ibid.

letter was written in the context of the issues relating to the medical work in Loma Linda Sanitarium. At the same time, the passage quoted above demonstrates Ellen White's sanction of the role women played in God's plans at large. She did not see it just in terms of professional engagement. Expressions such as, "times of emergency," "forefront" and "salvation of many," connect women with a significant role in God's mission to the world. In the same letter, she admonished the leaders: "The work must move forward on a higher plane, and after a more sacred order than it has heretofore it is to accomplish all that God designs should be accomplished by it in our churches and for the world."⁸³ Could it be considered that her reference to "times of emergency" coincides with the challenge of the neglected work in large cities? Could it be assumed that such a time of emergency prompted God to inspire Ellen White with openness to new possibilities?

Such a prospect comes to view when examining her gender-inclusive references: "All men and women who are Christians in every sense of the word should be workers in the vineyard of the Lord;"⁸⁴ "God chooses his workers from all classes of people and imbues them with his own Spirit. So it was in ancient times. The men and women of God's selection were of intense earnestness, full of zeal."⁸⁵ She encouraged an inclusive participation in God's mission to the world: "God is waiting for His people to bear to them the message of him who died—the just for the unjust. He desires to work through men and women who, losing sight of self in Christ, are content to say, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.'"⁸⁶ In unfolding an all-inclusive understanding of God's vision, she wove subtle motivational gems into the fabric of her admonitions. Through the sparks of new ideas she endeavoured to open the collective mind of the Church to functional flexibility and openness to new possibilities.

Addressing the need for schools and education, she emphasized the importance of specific roles: "There should be men and women who are qualified to labor in the churches, and to train our young people for special lines of work, that souls may be brought to Jesus."⁸⁷ On another occasion, she

83 Ibid.

84 Ellen G. White, "Ye Shall be Witnesses Unto Me," *Advance* (June 1, 1899).

85 Ellen G. White, "Labor and the Laborers," *Advocate* 1, no. 3 (March 1, 1899): 113.

86 Ellen G. White, "A Spiritual Awakening," *Australasian Union Conference Record* 16, no. 16-17 (April 15, 1912): 2.

87 Ellen G. White, "Right Education and Its Object," *Bible Echo* 9, no. 4 (January 29, 1894): 27.

wrote about the best training ground for preparing both men and women for the work of ministry:

All who want an opportunity for true ministry, and who will give themselves unreservedly to God, will find in the canvassing work opportunities to speak upon many things pertaining to the future immortal life. The experience thus gained will be of the greatest value to those who are fitting themselves for the work of the ministry.⁸⁸

After outlining the benefit of canvassing the work, she made a significant all-inclusive statement:

It is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God. As they cherish the thought that Christ is their companion, a holy awe, a sacred joy will be felt by them amid all their trying experiences and all their tests.⁸⁹

It is evident that, in preparation for pastoral work, both men and women had the same equal privilege to be led by the Holy Spirit. What about the question of ordination? It appears that Ellen White was silent on any direct instruction regarding this matter. However, as shown, she was open to the prospect of seeing both men and women in a pastoral role. In view of this would she be completely silent on such a vitally important issue as ordination?

In her diary notes dated November 1, 1889, Ellen White referred to a visit by Brother Prescott, who at that time served as the President of the Battle Creek College. During the conversation, he informed her about the "brethren's" plans to ordain him and about his personal indecision on this matter.⁹⁰ Ellen White's response was rather interesting as it suggests a voice of approval: "I could only say I could see nothing to hinder this move being made if he [Prescott] in his judgment considered it best."⁹¹ She then qualified her approval with an important argument: "His duties as principal of the college were important and large, and his responsibilities many. If he could serve the cause of God any better in receiving ordination and credentials, it would be best."⁹² It is evident that in her understanding, the practice of ordination extended beyond the scope of the one specific role of pastoral ministry. Rather, it reveals a more-inclusive practice of ordination involving those in teaching-leadership ministry.

88 Ellen G. White, "Canvassers as Gospel Evangelists," *Australian Union Conference Record* 5, no. 8 (July 1, 1902): 1.

89 Ibid.

90 Ellen G. White, Manuscript 23, 1889.

91 Ibid.

92 Ibid.

In a letter written in 1899 to J. H. Kellogg, Ellen White referred to the work of the Holy Spirit enabling committed and humble individuals to gather the harvest. She argued that fitness and success derives from the lessons “learned in the school of Christ.”⁹³ She followed it with a rather significant statement: “If human hands have never been laid upon them in ordination, there is One who will give fitness for the work if they ask for it in faith.”⁹⁴ In her understanding, success in reaching people depends totally on personal commitment to Jesus and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It does not derive from the rite of ordination by laying of hands. As previously shown, Ellen White understood that this practice added no new grace and virtual qualification. She was quite clear about God’s directives. The Church had to recognize and affirm his call and to provide support, encouragement and strength. She expressed this thought in the following words: “The Lord Jesus calls for soul winners, and those who go forth to gather the sheaves should have the prayers of the whole church, that they may go as sharp sickles into the harvest field.”⁹⁵

On another occasion, Ellen White referred to some matters presented to her “in regard to the laborers who are seeking to do all in their power to win souls to Jesus Christ.”⁹⁶ Again, she reinforced this point by adhering to the divine authority: “While I was in America, I was given light on this subject. I was instructed that there are matters that need to be considered.”⁹⁷ She referred to a particular minister, whose wife’s ministry was not recognized:

If the Lord gives the wife as well as the husband the burden of labor, and if she devotes her time and her strength to visiting from family to family, opening the Scripture to them, although the hands of ordination have not been laid upon her, she is accomplishing a work that is in the line of ministry. Should her labor be counted as naught, and her husband’s salary be no more than that of the servant of God whose wife does not give herself to the work, but remains at home to care for her family?⁹⁸

Ellen White supported her argument with the divine revelation “I was given light on this subject.”⁹⁹ Firstly, due to fact that the wife’s commitment was taken for granted “injustice has been done to the women who labor just

93 Ellen G. White, Letter to John H. Kellogg, January 14, 1899.

94 Ibid.

95 Ibid.

96 Ellen G. White, Letter to Brother Mountain, October 25, 1899, Sunnyside Cooranbong.

97 Ibid.

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid.

as devotedly as their husbands and who are recognized by God as being as necessary to the work of ministry as their husbands."¹⁰⁰ Interestingly, addressing this problem Ellen White switched the emphasis from the singular case to a more inclusive tone referring to the injustice of women (plural). Secondly, she affirmed that this practice is not after the Lord's order: "Injustice is done. A mistake is made."¹⁰¹ Thirdly, she warned, "This arrangement if carried out in our Conferences, is liable to discourage our sisters from qualifying themselves for the work they should engage in."¹⁰²

One wonders, whether the injustice was not only committed in the area of remuneration but in the Conferences' failure to recognize and affirm what God has already ordained. This question arises from these remarks:

If women do the work that is not the most agreeable to many of those who labor in word and doctrine, and of their works testify that they are accomplishing a work that has been manifestly neglected, should not such labor be looked upon as rich in results as the work of the ordained ministers? Should it not command the hire of the laborer?

Would not workers be defrauded if they were not paid?¹⁰³

She concludes with a strong and convincing "thus said the Lord": "The question is not for men to settle. The Lord has settled."¹⁰⁴ So what was the Church's responsibility? "You are to do your duty to the women who labor in the gospel whose work testifies that they are essential to carrying the truth into families."¹⁰⁵ In Ellen White's understanding, the duty of the Church was to affirm what God has already set in motion. Its main role was to provide support, spiritual encouragement, motivation, guidance, help and strength.

Conclusion

In this research it has been demonstrated that Ellen White did not delineate a theology of ordination. Rather, her experiential understanding of the phrase, "The Lord had ordained me", combined with her biblical reflections and practical application clarifies the view of this vital experience in the life and ministry of the Church. From this investigation of her writings it is evident that circumstances prompted Ellen White to reflect on the experience of her call to the ministry as God's messenger. Recalling this significant

100 Ibid.

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid. It needs to be noted that Ellen White used the plural form not only in reference to gender but in reference to the Conferences.

103 Ibid.

104 Ibid.

105 Ibid.

time, she described it in terms of a two-phase process during which God's actions are highlighted in a personalized manner. The first phase referred to God's revelation of his love that ignited her burden for souls. The second phase involved God's personal call. In this context, Ellen White understood the phrase, "God has ordained me", in the context of God's involvement in human life. The process included a relationally experiential interaction or a spiritual dialogue between God and herself. On this journey, God's actions, namely his guidance, nurture and circumstantial nudging directed her towards his ordained purpose. From this research it is also apparent that Ellen White's understanding of her expression, "The Lord has ordained me", moved beyond the boundaries of set traditions. She saw it as a divine process through which God invited her to a life of commitment and involvement in his mission to the world. At the heart of this experience was a journey of transformation initiated by God's revelation of his love and the awakening of a passion and burden for what God cares about, namely, people.

Furthermore, in this research it has been demonstrated that Ellen White's biblical reflections about ordination affirmed her personal experience of God's call. Reflecting on the ordination of Paul and Barnabas, she highlighted two basic facts. First, they received their commission and ordination from God. Second, new circumstances raised the need to provide a protective support against external challenges. Therefore God instructed the Church to confirm what he had already set in motion. In this context the symbolical laying of hands had a future-oriented bearing. Its purpose moved beyond the function of a one-off event. Through this act God invited the Church to a participative role in his mission, to provide spiritual encouragement, motivation, guidance, help and strength—in other words, an attitude of an ongoing state of prayer, an ongoing pleading for God's presence in the life and ministry of those he ordained. Such a nurturing climate empowers the ones ordained by God with vibrancy to carry on the task. At the same time, it provides an environment for accountability, protecting individuals from the danger of self-oriented independence. Further, it moulds a unifying purpose through which the Holy Spirit guides all entities towards successful fulfilment of God's vision.

It has also been shown that Ellen White's experiential perspective and biblical reflections under God's guidance expanded her understanding and application of the phrase, "The Lord has ordained me." In the context of new challenges associated with the expansion of God's mission, she used the concept of ordination in a gender-inclusive framework that embraced all aspects of ministry. As shown, the light given to her on this subject did

not only refer to one isolated case. Rather, the changed language directs attention to the inclusiveness of the experience through which God ordains individuals for the ministry, both males and female. The depth of such an experience is so graphically illustrated through her personal experience. According to Ellen White's understanding, the phrase, "The Lord has ordained me", includes a memory of God's direct call. Such an experience creates a lifetime imprint and generates an ongoing passion for the lost. In Ellen White's understanding, the duty of the Church was to discern, affirm and nurture what God had already set in motion. Her last words ring of a convinced optimism. It seems: "the question [of ordination] is not for men to settle. The Lord has settled"¹⁰⁶ it through his direct call—His act of ordaining or designating people for specific roles for the purpose of connecting others with God.

106 Ibid.

Part 4
Theological Studies

Chapter 8: The Authority of the Christian Leader¹

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In order to thrive, every human society must establish its own organizational and authoritative structures. If someone desires to know something about a particular nation, family, or association, they are most likely to inquire about the nature and use of its authority. Human groupings may thus be described as “dictatorial,” “authoritarian,” “democratic,” “egalitarian,” “republican,” “laissez-faire,” and so on. Each of these designations reflects the way in which authority is used within a particular community.

While different from a nation, family, or association, the Church is also a human society that must have organizational/authoritative structures in order to disseminate its message and thus fulfil the Great Commission given to it by Christ.² With this in mind, it is legitimate to inquire about the nature

1 At the very outset of this paper, I would like to state that I fully accept Ellen G. White’s inspiration and prophetic ministry in the Adventist Church. It was through reading the *Desire of Ages* that I fell in love with Jesus; through reading of the *Great Controversy*, I became acquainted with God’s purpose for humanity; and no other book has taught me more about salvation through Jesus Christ than *Steps to Christ*. In preparing this paper, however, I purposely avoided using Ellen White’s writings to support my conclusions. My insights, thus, are based on my understanding of Scripture’s message alone. This, I believe, is in agreement with Ellen White’s counsel that her writings should not be used to settle doctrinal debates when the Lord had not given her specific light on the matter. To my knowledge, Ellen White does not speak to the issue of women’s ordination. William Fagal reached a similar conclusion when he wrote: “Her statements neither support ordination for women nor explicitly forbid it. None of her writings deal directly with this issue.” William Fagal, “Did Ellen White Call for Ordaining Women?” *Ministry* 61, no. 12 (December 1988): 11.

2 For an excellent treatise on the Church and its divinely instituted origin, mission, and organizational structures, see Raoul Dederen, “Church,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 538–581.

and use of authority within the community of believers.³ Such inquiry is of vital importance, because much depends on the way authority is understood and exercised within the Church. Even foundational Christian teachings such as the nature of God and salvation are influenced by the way authority is defined.

Any discussion on the nature of Christian authority, however, tends to be muddled by our cultural context, as the way we view authority is shaped by the way in which authority is exercised within the society of which we are a part. For many people, the term “authority” carries few positive connotations. A simple class exercise proves the point. When I teach on the subject of ecclesiology, I sometimes flash the word “authority” on the screen and ask students to tell me what immediately comes to their minds. Invariably, I hear words such as “dominance,” “power,” “control,” “abuse,” “rule,” or “final decision-making.” Then we check a dictionary definition of “authority” and, indeed, we find that the most prominent way in which authority is defined follows the same line of thinking, i.e., “the power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience” or “the power to determine, adjudicate, or otherwise settle issues of disputes; jurisdiction, the right to control, command, or determine.” Authority defined as such demands submission, which is defined in the dictionary as “the action or fact of accepting or yielding to a superior force or to the will or authority of another person.” In my personal experience, I have yet to meet a person who likes to submit in such a manner. On the contrary, it almost seems as though we arrive in this world with an inborn tendency to resist this type of authority—just ask parents whose children have entered the teenage years or think about our inner reaction when while driving we are flagged by an officer for speeding.

Very rarely do my students consider “authority” a positive thing in the life of a society. Nevertheless, authoritative structures are essential to provide society with continuity, stability, safety and boundaries. Without some form of authority, no human society would or could exist. It is the combination of our sinful nature and the abuse of authority that causes us to develop negative attitudes towards authority. Unfortunately, all too often abuse of authority, disguised by the addition of the adjective “spiritual,” happens in the Church, the community Christ established to be different from any other human society on earth.

In recent years, the issue of authority has received considerable attention in Seventh-day Adventist circles. As we have experienced the delay of the Second Coming of Christ, we have become increasingly concerned

3 Dederen, *Handbook*, 559–561.

with issues related to gospel order, organization, ranking, and policy, all the while attempting to be faithful to Scripture. The nature of authority and its use has surfaced most prominently within the context of the discussion on women's ordination. The most sensitive question raised in these debates is whether women can or should hold authoritative positions within the Church structure. Should women be allowed to preach/teach or lead in the Church? Would not ordination place them in headship positions over their male counterparts?

Responses to these questions vary. Some believe that women can never be placed in any position—be it pastor, theology professor, university or hospital president—that would situate them in authority over men. Others would allow women to fill leadership roles within the greater Adventist organization but not in the local church. Accordingly, women must not be allowed to teach or preach in the church when men who are able to do so are present. Still others allow women to preach in the church providing that they stand under the authority of an ordained male senior pastor. All of these positions have one common denominator: “spiritual headship” in the Church must be limited to men alone. Ordination is believed to raise a particularly gifted man to a position of spiritual headship in the Church, and since the Bible speaks of male headship alone, the position of pastor (or senior pastor) is closed to women; no woman, it is believed, can have authority over any man.

Having observed the debate for a number of years and listened carefully to both sides, I ask myself several questions. Are we certain that we truly understand what we mean when we use the word “authority”? When I utter the word “authority,” is it possible that I am falsely assuming that you know exactly what I mean and vice versa? What informs the concept of authority that resides in our minds—is it our culture (both secular and religious) or is it careful attention to the words of Jesus?

Like many good things in life, the concept of authority has its counterparts. The purpose of this paper is to explore two opposing views of authority. This is necessary to tease out the essential elements of the New Testament (NT) view of authority and thus help to avoid the ecclesiological pitfalls—of which many may not be aware—that modern Christianity inherited from post-Apostolic Christianity and which are deeply ingrained in both Catholic and Protestant traditions. For this reason I will first explore the characteristics of an alternative kind of “authority” as it evolved in Christianity from the second century onward, and which continues to be the foundation of

both modern Roman Catholicism and Protestant fundamentalism.⁴ Second, I will explore the concept of authority flowing from the teachings of Jesus. Finally, I will provide a response to the counterfeit view of authority.

The Post-Apostolic Church and a Counterfeit View of Authority

Faced with the death of its pioneers, the delay of the Second Coming, schism, the rise of heretical teaching, as well as persecution, the early post-Apostolic Christian Church searched for ways to maintain its unity and to defend itself against various heretical teachings.⁵ Such a goal could be accomplished through providing the Church with strong leadership.

After the first century, when the Gospels and the writings of Paul were produced, other authors such as Ignatius (d. ca. 110–130 AD), Irenaeus (d. ca. 202 AD), Tertullian (c. 160–c. 225 AD), Cyprian (d. ca. 258 AD), and Augustine (354–430 AD) gradually endowed Christian ministry with special authority, which was available only through the rite of ordination. The Christian ministry that emerged from this era was far removed from what we find in the pages of the NT. The authority of the ministry was (and continues to be) marked by the following characteristics:

First, it was **hierarchical**, that is, when conceived in terms of order, ranking, or chain of command. The Church became divided into two classes of individuals—clergy and laity—separated from each other by the rite of ordination. At the head of the Church was a monarchical (*mon* – one, *archē* – rule) bishop, surrounded and assisted by a group of elders as well as deacons, who were at the bottom of the hierarchical ladder.⁶ The bishop—or the senior pastor— was placed at the centre of religious activity and was en-

4 For the sake of brevity, the following description will be limited only to the concept of authority that evolved within early post-Apostolic Christianity. In many ways, Fundamentalist Protestantism, especially those branches that come under the umbrella of Calvinism, tends to reflect the pre-Reformation understanding of authority. The question of the Fundamentalist Protestant understanding of authority, however, will be addressed in another study.

5 Ralph Martin Novak, *Christianity and the Roman Empire* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001), 45.

6 It is in the writings of the early Church writer Ignatius (d. ca. 110–130 AD) that we encounter a strongly hierarchical ministry for the first time. Ignatius *Magnesianus* 6.4 in *Early Christian Writings*, ed. Maxwell Staniforth (London: Penguin Books, 1972), 88. Kenan B. Osborne, *Priesthood: A History of Ordained Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 52.

dowed with complete control over the affairs of the local church.⁷ His duties included preaching, teaching, administration of the community, and money management. Without his presence, no Christian rite, such as baptism or the Lord's Supper, could be conducted. Believing this system to be established by God, Christians were expected to submit to the decisions of their bishop-pastor.⁸ The bishop-pastor's position and prestige in the church was significantly strengthened by the doctrine of Apostolic Succession developed by Irenaeus, who taught that the twelve apostles passed on their leadership and teaching authority to the bishops.

This system of early Church governance was largely modelled on the way in which the Roman Empire was governed.⁹ While it was originally established for the sake of order and unity in the Church, it eventually became an end in itself, to be protected and perpetuated at any cost. Such concentration of power in the Church in the hands of the ordained elite led, of course, to the eventual establishment of the papacy. There is no need to elaborate here on the prophetic significance of this development.¹⁰

Second, it was **sacramental**, from the perspective that the spiritual life of the believers, and thus their salvation, in some way depended on their

7 Hans von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1969), 100.

8 Ignatius thus writes: "For your part, the becoming thing for you...[is] to show him [the bishop] every possible respect, having regards to the power God has conferred on him. . . . So for the honour of Him who loved us, propriety requires an obedience from you that is more than mere lip service." Ignatius *Magnesians* 3 in Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 87–88.

9 Thus Novak writes: "Because essentially all of the cultures of the Graeco-Roman world were hierarchical and patriarchal, a gradual increase over time of the bishop's authority might have been reasonably expected as the natural result of the local Christian communities adopting modes and structures of authority that paralleled the predominant cultural values." Novak, *Christianity*, 45; Will Durrant adds that "when Christianity conquered Rome the ecclesiastical structure of the pagan church...passed like maternal blood into the new religion, and captive Rome captured her conqueror." Will Durrant, *Caesar and Christ: The Story of Civilization* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1944), 671–672; cf. Edwin Hatch, *The Organization of the Early Christian Churches* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1918), 185, 213; Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 134.

10 For a detailed history of how the humble position of the pastor evolved into episcopal and papal offices, see Klaus Schatz, *Papal Primacy: From Its Origins to the Present* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996).

pastor. It was during this time that the Christian minister began to be referred to as a priest. The writers of this period came to the conclusion that the Old Testament (OT) priesthood was a type of Christian ministry.¹¹ An ordained Christian pastor, thus, became a mediator between God and other believers. This mediation was enabled through the rite of ordination when the pastor received a special seal—known as *dominicus character*—which enabled him to re-enact Christ's sacrifice each time he celebrated the Lord's Supper.¹² In such a system, the existence of the church itself depended upon the existence of the ordained ministry.¹³ As with the previous point, the prophetic significance of this development cannot be overestimated and will be elaborated below.

Third, it was **elitist**; i.e., divided into two classes of individuals, those ordained and those un-ordained. As mentioned above, it was gradually accepted that, through the rite of ordination, the minister became separated from the rest of the community. The laying on of hands endowed the pastor with special authority from God and enabled him to provide spiritual and mediatorial leadership to the believers.¹⁴ This teaching, first introduced by Tertullian, promulgated the view that there are two groups of people in the Church—the ordained and the un-ordained, otherwise referred to as clergy and laity.¹⁵ Only those who were ordained could provide spiritual leadership

11 Frederick J. Cwiekowski, "Priesthood," *Encyclopedia of Catholicism* (New York: HarperCollins, 1989), 1049.

12 Paul Josef Cordes, *Why Priests? Answers Guided by the Teaching of Benedict XVI* (New York: Scepter, 2010), 28–30.

13 Thus, in the fourth century Jerome stated: "There can be no Christian community without its ministers." Jerome *Dialogus contra Luciferanos* 21, in *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, eds Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 6:331. It is not surprising, therefore, that Cyprian would famously exclaim, *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (outside of the church there is no salvation). Cyprian *Epistle* 72.21 in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, eds Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 5:384.

14 This happened mainly through the work of Augustine, although already in the second century Tertullian had written of an essential (or ontological) difference between the clergy and laity; cf. Benedict J. Groeschel, *A Priest Forever* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1998), 185; Bernhard Lohse, *A Short History of Christian Doctrine* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1966), 139.

15 In his *Exhortation to Chastity*, he wrote thus: "It is the authority of the Church that instituted the distinction between clergy and laity [Lat.: *ordinem et plebem*] and the honour shown the ranks of the clergy made holy for God." Tertullian, *Exhortation to Chastity* 7.3. trans. Robert B. Eno, in *Teaching Authority*

in the Church. In line with this thinking, the Church could not be conceived as egalitarian. It was not a community of equals in terms of leadership roles. This is clearly reflected in the documents of the First Vatican Council (1869–1870). *The Constitution on the Church* thus states:

The Church of Christ is not a community of equals in which all the faithful have the same rights. It is a society of un-equals, not only because among the faithful some are clerics and some are laymen, but particularly because there is in the Church the power from God whereby to some it is given to sanctify, teach, and govern, and to others not.¹⁶

Through the act of ordination, therefore, an elite group of leaders was created in the Church and only members of this elite could take the office of pastor in the Church. As we shall see below, this view is contrary to the teachings of the NT.

Fourth, it was oriented towards **male headship** in the Church—only men could fulfil headship roles in the Church. Ever since its beginnings, the Christian Church has taught, and continues to teach, that Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church. However, faced with the reality of the physical absence of Christ on earth, the post-Apostolic Church felt it needed someone who could take his place, represent him to believers and the world, and represent believers to God. Viewing themselves as separated for special ministry

in the Early Church (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1984), 54–55; cf. Roberts and Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:54. The exact Latin phrase reads: *Differentiam inter ordinem et plebem constituit ecclesiae auctoritas et honour per ordinis consessum sanctificatus*. John Henry Hopkins, *The Church of Rome in Her Primitive Purity, Compared with the Church of Rome at Present Day* (London: J. G. and F. Rivington, 1839), 89. Note the parallels between the order of senators and plebs of the Roman Empire and this usage found in Tertullian. Pierre-Marie Gy, “Notes on the Early Terminology of Christian Priesthood,” in *The Sacrament of Holy Orders* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1957), 99.

16 “Constitution on the Church,” in J. Neuner and H. Roos, *The Teaching of the Catholic Church* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1967), 219–220. Similar sentiments are expressed by Pius X in his 1906 encyclical *Vehementer Nos* 8. There the pope states: “The Church is essentially an unequal society, that is, a society comprising two categories of persons, the Pastors and the flock, those who occupy a rank in the different degrees of the hierarchy and the multitude of the faithful. So distinct are these categories that with the pastoral body only rests the necessary right and authority for promoting the end of the society and directing all its members towards that end; the one duty of the multitude is to allow themselves to be led, and, like a docile flock, to follow the Pastors.” http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_x/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_11021906_vehementer-nos_en.html

via the rite of ordination, early Christian ministers assumed the position of headship in the Church in place of Christ. This is the actual meaning of the widely used Latin phrase *in persona Christi Capitis* (in place of Christ the Head).¹⁷ Another phrase, *Vicarius Filii Dei* (in place of the Son of God), expresses the same belief.

The acceptance of ministerial headship through the rite of ordination was accompanied by a developing theology of male headship in the Church. The reasoning was very simple: in the NT, the relationship between Christ and the Church is represented in nuptial terms. Christ is represented as a bridegroom, a male, who marries his bride, the Church, a female. If the pastor serves his church *in persona Christi Capitis*, i.e., by taking the role of headship in place of Christ, he also must be a man. It follows that the ordination rite is not a simple blessing but a conferral of headship powers and duties and, as such, it is a type of a marriage ceremony; the church becomes the pastor's spouse.¹⁸ In short, through the rite of ordination, the pastor assumes

17 Reading the section dealing with the office of a priest in the official *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is particularly illuminating on this point. In it the authors clearly and concisely explain the need for human headship in the church. The particular portion dealing with a pastor's headship in the church is entitled "In the Person of Christ the Head," *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 2004), 387–388.

18 Ceremonial of Bishops: Revised by Decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and Published by Authority of Pope John Paul II (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1989), 33. See also Paul VI, "Inter Insigniores (Declaration on the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood)" issued in 1976 in From "Inter Insigniores" to "Ordinatio Sacerdotalis," Catholic Church, *Congregatio pro Doctrina Fidei, et al.* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1996), 43–49. The imagery of marriage is clearly visible in the ceremony of Catholic/episcopal ordination. The ordained bishop vows his fidelity to the Church and receives the episcopal ring, which symbolizes his authority over the Church. The bishop thus becomes the "husband" of the Church. The symbolism of marriage is further accentuated by the use of the "marriage ring" and "the kiss of peace" within the ordination rite. One of the prayers used during ordination reads: "Receive this ring, the seal of your fidelity; adorned with undefiled faith, preserve unblemished the bride of God, the holy Church." Susan K. Wood, *Sacramental Orders* (Collegeville, MN: The Order of St. Benedict, 2000), 53–55. In the *Ceremonial of Bishops*, a church manual for episcopal ordination, we also find this statement: "The ring is the symbol of the bishop's fidelity to and nuptial bond with the Church, his spouse, and he is to wear it always," 33. Megan McLaughlin further writes: "The bishop's marriage to his church [is] more than just a metaphor. ... At least by the beginning of the tenth century, and prob-

a headship position in the Church.¹⁹ All of this means that women cannot be ordained as ministers in the Church because they must remain in hierarchical submission to male pastors. This ancient theology is clearly expressed in John Paul II's Apostolic Letter, *Mulieris Dignitatem* (*On the Dignity and Vocation of Women*), issued in 1988, in which the late pope takes the biblical teaching of male headship in the home and applies it to the Church.²⁰ As we shall see below, there are significant problems with applying male-headship terminology to relationships within the Church.

Jesus on the Authority of the Christian Leader

Does the evolution of Christian ministry into papal hierarchy, as documented above, mean that the Church should be deprived of leadership and organization or that authoritative structure should not exist within the community of faith? By no means! In order to exist and disseminate its mission the Church must have organization and leadership. Rather than modelling its organization upon secular structures of authority, as early post-Apostolic Christianity did, the Church should first of all look to Jesus to search for ways in which authority in the Church should be exercised. It is Christ who founded the Church and he knows best what Christian authority is and how it should be exercised. Thus, his followers must take seriously his teachings on authority. Other NT teachings related to the issue of authority, including difficult Pauline passages (e.g., 1 Tim. 2:12) must thus be read through the

ably before, it had acquired a mystical significance as well, which was derived from the ancient and influential allegory of Christ's marriage to the church." Megan McLaughlin, "The Bishop as Bridegroom: Marital Imagery and Clerical Celibacy in the Eleventh and Early Twelfth Centuries," in *Medieval Purity and Piety: Essays on Medieval Clerical Celibacy and Religious Reform*, ed. Michael Frassetto (New York: Garland, 1998), 210. Conversely, when a Catholic woman takes her vows to become a nun, she becomes a Bride of Christ. Completed with marriage vows and a ring, her final investiture represents a marriage ceremony. E. Ann Matter, "Mystical Marriage," in *Women and Faith: Catholic Religious Life in Italy from Late Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Lucetta Scaraffia and Gabriella Zarri (Rome: Eulama Literary Agency, 1999), 35.

19 Timothy M. Dolan, *Priests for the Third Millennium* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2000), 70–71; Sarah Butler, *The Catholic Priesthood and Women: A Guide to the Teaching of the Church* (Chicago, IL: Hillenbrand Books, 2006), 90; McLaughlin, "The Bishop as Bridegroom," 210–211.

20 John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem* (Boston, MA: St. Paul Books and Media, 1988). See especially the section entitled "The Church—The Bride of Christ," 79–94.

prism of Jesus' understanding of the term rather than vice versa. So what did Jesus have to say about authority?

In preparation for writing this chapter, I re-read and studied the Gospel passages where Jesus speaks about authority.²¹ His views are truly astounding. For most of us, immersed in hierarchically-oriented cultures, Jesus' message continues to be counterintuitive and difficult to comprehend, much less to accept. For this reason, we tend to gloss over the passages dealing with authority without much thought. And yet, these passages, if understood and applied, have the potential to revolutionize our personal and communal lives.

During his earthly ministry, Jesus' disciples had shown a tendency to be preoccupied with status and ranking in the kingdom of God. This is understandable, as their attitudes reflected the prevalent cultural and religious conceptions of authority. The Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus presented such a breathtakingly different understanding of Christian authority that it took the death of Jesus for the disciples to understand his teachings. Jesus' teachings on the authority of the Christian leader are most crisply articulated in a conversation that found its way into the three synoptic Gospels.²²

The story is well known. Two of Jesus' disciples, John and James, approached him with a request to be seated on his right and left in his Kingdom. It appears that they assumed that the Kingdom of Jesus would operate like other earthly institutions, their underlying desire was to have authority *over* others. Mark records that when the remaining ten disciples heard about it, they became very angry, not because they had a different idea of "authority," but because they themselves also desired such power. In response to this, Jesus gathered them together and in the simplest terms explained the operational rules of the Kingdom of God. His words are so striking that they must be quoted here:

You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them (*katakurieusin*), and their high officials exercise authority over them (*katexousiazousin*). Not so with you! Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant (*diakonos*), and whoever wants to be first must be slave (*doulos*) of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mk 10:42–45, NIV).

In this concise passage, Jesus presents two models of authority. The first is the Roman idea of authority. In this model, the elite stand hierarchically

21 Matt. 18:1–4, 20:20–28, 23:8–11; Mk 9:33–36, 10:35–45; Lk 9:46–, 22:24–27; Jn 13:1–17.

22 Matt. 20:20–28; Mk 10:35–45; Lk 22:24–27.

over others. They have the power to make decisions and expect submission from those below them. Jesus clearly rejected this model of authority when he stated, "Not so with you!" Instead, he presented the disciples with a breathtakingly new model of authority, a thorough rejection or reversal of the hierarchical model with which they were familiar.

The concept of authority in Jesus' Kingdom was to be governed by two words: servant (*diakonos*) and slave (*doulos*). From our modern perspective, these two words, often translated as "minister," have lost much of their force. For a person familiar with ancient society and its institutions, however, Jesus' words must have been appalling. So much so that the disciples were unable to understand Jesus' words, and to the last moments of his life, during the Last Supper, they argued about "who is the greatest" (Lk 22:24). This is because, in the first century milieu, servants (*diakonoi*) and slaves (*douloi*) represented the lowest class of human society, those who had few rights, and whose job was to listen to and to fulfil the wishes of those whom they served. Among slaves "there [was] no place for one's own will or initiative."²³ "Ruling and not serving is proper to a man" —so believed the ancient Greeks.²⁴ Thus, whatever the metaphors of servant and slave were meant to convey it certainly was not exercising authority, spiritual or otherwise, over others (*katexousiazousin*) or having status in the community.

Why did Jesus use these two metaphors if he could have compared his disciples with other leadership groups in society? I believe that Jesus was keenly aware that his Kingdom would be doomed if the disciples incorporated into it the authority structures prevalent within contemporary society. For his mission to succeed, all "pecking order" in the Church had to be abolished. Murray Harris grasped this well: "Jesus was teaching that greatness in the community of his followers is marked by humble, self-effacing servanthood or slavery, modelled on his own selfless devotion to the highest good of others."²⁵ All this shows that Jesus certainly did not desire to abolish all authority in the Church; he just radically redefined it and distanced it from the kind of "authority" that advocated submission to a higher authority. Instead, the Church was to be a place where those who desired to follow his example

23 Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, "δοῦλος," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964) 2:270, 261.

24 Hermann W. Beyer, "διακονέω," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964) 2:82.

25 Murray J. Harris, *Slave of Christ: A New Testament Metaphor for Total Devotion to Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 102.

were willing to serve in the lowest positions. In Philippians 2:5–7 Paul thus states, “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: who, being in very nature God...made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a slave (*doulou*).” In the church of Jesus, therefore, it is not ordination to an office, a title, or a position that makes a leader, but the quality of a person’s life and his or her willingness to be the least of all. Following his lead, the despised terms *diakonos* and *doulos* later became the quasi-technical descriptions of apostolic and ministerial leadership in the Church.²⁶ Taking all of this into consideration, it is not surprising that to the question, “Who is the greatest? (Mk 9:33–35; Lk 9:46–48), Jesus answered: “For he who is the least among you all—he is the greatest” and “if anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant (*diakonos*) of all.”

Two other terms, *exousia* and *dynamis*, are commonly translated as authority. *Exousia* appears to be related to Jesus’ teaching ministry and his ability to forgive sins (e.g., Matt. 7:29; 9:6; Mk 1:22; Lk 4:32). The authority (*exousia*) that Jesus exercised brought words of life and healing to those who were willing to listen. *Dynamis* is usually associated with Jesus’ power to perform miracles and drive out demons (e.g., Lk 4:36; Lk 9:1). Nowhere in the Gospels do the terms *exousia* or *dynamis* appear to be associated with exercising any form of headship or having authority over others. Such thinking was simply not part of Jesus’ worldview. It is *exousia* and *dynamis* that Jesus bestowed upon the entire community of believers, and it is these two terms that are often confused with a secular understanding of ministerial powers.

There is a unique usage of *exousia* in Matthew 28:18: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” Jesus does not hand over this authority to the disciples for it cannot be done. This is the absolute authority of the Almighty, Omniscient, Creator God. And how does the Almighty Creator God exercise his authority? Does he force his human subjects to be obedient? Does he take away their free will? In Ephesians 5:1–2, Paul provides an answer to the question of how God exercises his authority: “Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” The absolute authority of Christ thus represents a supreme example of love, servanthood, and self-sacrifice.

26 See, for example, 2 Cor. 4:5, where Paul writes, “For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants (*doulous*) for Jesus sake.” See also 1 Cor. 9:19. In Col. 1:7 and 4:7, Paul uses the terms *doulos* and *diakonos* interchangeably; cf. John L McKenzie, *Authority in the Church* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1966), 23.

Thus the concept of authority within the NT, founded upon the words and actions of Jesus, does not represent any form of headship in terms of authority over others where submission is expected. Clearly, Jesus always allowed the exercise of free will. Instead of exercising authority *over* others, his kind of authority can be expressed in terms of *servicing* others. This he demonstrated most forcefully when he knelt to wash the disciples' feet and when he died on the cross, thus giving a supreme example of the true conception of Christian authority. Thus the Christian rite of ordination, properly understood, is ordination to slavery; it is not going up in rank; it is not about status or having authority over others; it is about being the least in the community of believers. Only understood as such can the ministry in the Church fulfil Christ's vision for leadership.

The early, post-Apostolic Christian Church soon forgot Jesus' words and introduced pagan concepts of authority into Christian practice. A "pecking order" was established where it did not belong, all in the name of protecting the Church's unity and its teachings.²⁷ Modern Christianity, including Adventism, inherited these patterns of authority. It would serve all well to return to the words of Jesus and attempt to view ministry in the Church through the prism of his teachings, rather than merely adding the adjective "spiritual" to foreign authoritative patterns. What, then, were the characteristics of the NT community of Jesus?

The New Testament Church: A Community Like No Other

First, ministry in the New Testament Church was non-hierarchical—the organization of the Church was not conceived in terms of a chain of command. There seems to be no doubt that, during his earthly ministry, Jesus endowed some of his followers with the special task of sharing in his mission of proclaiming God's Kingdom. They were chosen to be his representatives and were to continue his mission and to reproduce in their own lives the central characteristics of Jesus himself, namely total commitment and service to God and to fellow human beings. Their witness, however, was not based on their position, rank, or status but on the mission they had received from Christ. Their special authority was based on the fact that they had been eyewitnesses to the presence of Jesus on Earth. Thus, with the aid

²⁷ McKenzie, *Authority in the Church*, 23–25. For a history of these events, see my paper, "The Problem of Ordination: Lesson from Early Christian History," presented to the General Conference *Theology of Ordination Study Committee* (TOSC) in January 2013, <https://www.adventistarchives.org/the-problem-of-ordination.pdf>.

of the Holy Spirit, this authority entailed preserving and passing on a reliable and trustworthy account of Jesus' life and teachings in a reliable and trustworthy manner. "On this basis...rested the special and unique respect accorded to the apostles within the Church."²⁸ The written accounts of many of those eyewitnesses were eventually collected into the canon of the NT and thus their writings became normative for Christian believers, expressed in a well-accepted Protestant axiom, *sola scriptura*. The NT, however, does not provide any evidence that the special position of expertise held by the twelve apostles within the community of faith was transferred to other leaders in the Church.

What we do see in the NT, however, is a community like no other. It is a community whose leaders eschewed any form of hierarchy that would place some above others. In fact, following Jesus' example, the NT leaders proclaimed what we can only describe as a *reverse hierarchy*. Following the lead of Jesus, its leaders routinely referred to themselves as *doulos* and *diakonos* of both God and the Church.²⁹ Accordingly, in 1 Corinthians 3:5, Paul writes: "What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants (*diakonoi*), through whom you came to believe." In 2 Corinthians 4:5, he emphatically declares: "For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves (*doulous*)."³⁰ We thus constantly find him lifting up Christ and others, while speaking of himself in unflattering terms such as "chief of sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15). Elsewhere he writes: "... and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle" (1 Cor. 15:7-9). In 1 Corinthians 4:1 Paul refers to himself and his co-workers

28 Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority*, 79.

29 While in ancient literature, both biblical and extra-biblical, these two terms normally have negative connotations, when used by Paul and applied to the followers of Christ, they acquire a new meaning that signifies total commitment to Christ and to one another. Murray J. Harris *Slave of Christ: A New Testament Metaphor for Total Devotion to Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 140-143.

30 Other examples include Phil. 1:1, Col. 1:7, 23, 25; Titus 1:1. Harris, in his book, notes an interesting phenomenon that most translations avoid translating the word *doulos* with reference to ministerial leadership, invariably translating the word as "minister" or "servant." He cites a general distaste for the concept of slavery and a possibility of misunderstandings as the main reasons behind this phenomenon. Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 183-185. And yet this was the very word Paul and his co-workers adopted as representing their leadership work in the Church.

as under-rowers (*hypēretas*). An image of an ancient Greek or Roman war-galley with three banks of oars comes to mind. Paul places himself in the lowest place on a trireme: he is under other rowers.

While Paul was commissioned to proclaim the Gospel, to teach, exhort, and rebuke, it appears that he purposefully desired to avoid positioning himself in a role above his fellow-believers. Instead, and despite his special position as an Apostle of Christ, we see him wooing people to follow Christ, not through the authority of his “office,” but through the witness of his life.³¹ “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Cor. 4:16; Phil. 3:17, 4:9; 1 Thess. 1:6; 2 Thess. 3:7). With a clear conscience Paul was able to write to the Corinthians that when his young disciple Timothy visits them, he would “remind [them] of his [Paul’s] way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what [he taught] everywhere in every church” (1 Cor. 4:17). Thus it was the way he lived his life rather than his position that resulted in Paul’s having genuine authority in the Church.

Within the context of being slaves in the Church, the NT writers were remarkably egalitarian. Everyone could be a slave of the Lord! In Romans 12:11, Paul encouraged all believers to “serve the Lord as his slaves” (*tō kyriō douleuontes*). In Galatians 5:13 he urged believers “to serve one another as slaves (*douleuete*) through love.” Every believer was to serve as a *doulos* of Christ and of each other.

While all believers were called to be slaves of God and one another, this especially applied to leaders in the Christian community who, according to the teaching of Christ, were to consider themselves “the least of all,” and thus examples to those under their care. Peter echoed Jesus when he wrote to the leaders in the Church: “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care . . . not lording it over (*katakuriēontes*)³² those entrusted to you but being examples to the flock” (1 Pet. 5:2–5). This was the primary reason why Paul, James, and Peter often introduced themselves to their congregations as slaves (*douloi*) of Christ (Rom. 1:1; James 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:1). All this suggests that NT leadership was not about having “authority” over others, about having the “last word,” or having an “office.”³³ Instead, it was all about having

31 It must be emphasized that the word “office” with reference to the leadership role in the Church is not found in the Greek New Testament.

32 Jesus uses exactly the same Greek word, *katakuriēuousin*, in Mk 10:42.

33 Sometimes 1 Tim. 2:12 and 5:17 are used to justify the continuance of a hierarchical understanding of authority in the church. In the former, Paul forbids women to exercise authority over a man. The word used for “authority” here is *hapax legomenon*, which is only used once in the Greek New Testament. A careful word study shows that in extra-biblical Greek literature of the first century,

the attitude of Paul, Peter and other leaders of the NT Church, who led by the example of their devotion to their Lord and to each other. This was the bedrock of genuine Christian authority.³⁴

this was not a neutral word to express the concept of authority but was associated with an oppressive kind of hierarchical authority that left little room for the exercise of free will. On the basis of our study above, it becomes clear that no one in the church, *neither women nor men, should ever indulge in exercising this kind of power*, as it clearly represents a counterfeit view of authority. For an insightful discussion on the first century meaning of *authentēin*, see Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 200–201; cf. Carroll D. Osburn, “ΑΥΘΕΝΤΕΩ (1 Timothy 2:12),” *Restoration Quarterly* 25 (1982): 1–12. The authors of the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, write on the issue of “usurping authority” in 1 Tim. 2:12: “The Scriptures exhort Christians to do everything decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:20). In the days of Paul, custom required that women be very much in the background. Therefore, if women believers had spoken out in public or otherwise made themselves prominent, these Scriptural injunctions would have been violated and the cause of God would thus have suffered reproach.” Francis D. Nichol, ed. *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1957), 295–296. See also an excellent article written on 1 Cor. 14:34, 35 and 1 Tim. 2:12 that was heartily endorsed by Uriah Smith: G. C. Tenney, “Woman’s Relation to the Cause of Christ,” *Review and Herald* 69, no. 21 (May 24, 1892): 328–329. A statement in that article deserves to be quoted here: “It is manifestly illogical and unfair to give to any passage of Scripture an unqualified radical meaning that is at variance with the main tenor of the Bible, and directly in conflict with its plain teachings. The Bible may be reconciled in all its parts without going outside the lines of consistent interpretation. But great difficulty is likely to be experienced by those who interpret isolated passages in an independent light according to the ideas they happen to entertain upon them.” Tenney, “Woman’s Relation to the Cause of Christ,” 328. In the latter passage (1 Tim. 5:17), Paul states: “Let the elders who rule well be counted of double honour, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.” The word “rule” is at the centre of contention. However, the Greek *proestōtes*, often translated as “rule,” simply means “those who are standing before you.” It is a verb form of the noun *prostates*, which in ancient Greek was applied to those who were charged with protecting the community and helping it to operate smoothly rather than ruling over it. For more details on the etymology of this word, see my article, Darius Jankiewicz, “Phoebe: Was She an Early Church Leader?” *Ministry* 85, no. 4 (April 2013): 10–13.

34 All this does not mean that there may not be an emergency situation in the life of the church during which there could arise a need for someone to take a temporary direct, hierarchical, leadership role. In such situations, anyone pos-

Viewing Church leadership from the above perspective, the overseers (*episcopēs* in 1 Tim. 3:1) or elders (*presbyterous* in Titus 1:9) were indeed to be special persons: they were to be servants (*doulous*) of the Lord and the community; they were to lead by example rather than by the authority of their position; they were to have good names in the community; they were to have stable, monogamous marriages; they were to manage their households well; they were to be protectors of the community. One thing was quite certain, however: these slaves of the Lord did not have to be males.³⁵

sessing appropriate leadership gifting could take charge until order is restored. Events like this, however, are rare, and ordained pastors are not always the best-qualified persons to deal with emergency situations. Once resolution is reached, however, the life of the church should return to a communal way of dealing with problems. On the importance of the community in Paul's writings and a communal way of resolving conflict, see the excellent study by James M. Howard, *Paul, the Community and Progressive Sanctification: An Exploration in Community-Based Transformation Within Pauline Theology* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007).

35 This conclusion is strengthened by several considerations. First, in 1 Tim. 3:1, Paul says, "if anyone (*ei tis*) desires to be an overseer." *Tis* is a gender-neutral indefinite pronoun. It simply means "anyone." In the NT, this is an inclusive term that refers to both men and women. For example, in John 6:50 we find this passage: "But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone (*tis*) can eat and not die." It would be very strange to say that only men can eat bread and not die. Indeed, some translations, such as the KJV, translate *tis* as "a man" but we instantly think of humanity. This means that the NT often uses representative masculine language to speak of both men and women. For example Rom. 12:1: "I urge you, brothers (*adelphoi* – masculine in Greek)...to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice." Would this mean that Rom. 12:1–2 was written only for men? Obviously, this is not a correct interpretation. Second, "husband of one wife" (1 Tim. 3:2) could well refer to monogamy and sexual purity. If taken as it is written, we would not be able to have unmarried men or widowers as pastors. Yet Paul himself wrote that celibate persons can serve God better (1 Cor. 7:32–35). Also, pastors would have to have children (1 Tim. 3:4) (that would exclude childless pastors). The real intent of the phrase seems to point to a person who is committed (faithful) to his one spouse. Thus, the "one-woman man" phrase functions as an exclusion of polygamy and sexual promiscuity rather than indicating that a bishop must be a man. Finally, the phrase "husband of one wife" appears again in 1 Tim. 3:12 with reference to deacons. The masculine word *diakonos* is used. If Paul did indeed speak in gender-based terms, it would mean that only men could be deacons. However, in Rom. 16:1, Paul refers to Phoebe as a deacon of the church in Cenchrea. Most versions translate this word as "servant." The word is actually *diakonos*, the same masculine word used to describe a deacon

If ministry is to be understood as slavery to Christ and others, another passage must be highlighted. As stated above, Paul's favourite description of his own ministry and that of his co-workers (such as Timothy) was "slave of the Lord" (*doulos Christou*).³⁶ We find others, such as Peter and James, also referring to themselves as "slaves of the Lord."³⁷ The same wording, this time spoken by the Lord himself, however, appears in Acts 2:18 where Peter quotes the prophet Joel: "Even on my slaves, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days." Most frequently, this passage is used to highlight the fact that the gift of prophecy was not limited to men. However, we also find in this verse the masculine *doulos* and the feminine *doulas*. In both cases, the pronoun *mou* (my) is added. Considering that, in other places in the NT, *doulos* is most often translated as "minister," this passage could legitimately be translated as speaking of both "male ministers" and "female ministers," who are God's own. Is Peter making the point that, in the NT Church, both males and females equally could be slaves of the Lord? And that both, males and females, were to receive specific gifts of the Spirit that would enable them to fulfil their ministerial calling? Whatever interpretation we place on this particular passage, one thing is clear: the Holy Spirit is not concerned with the gender of the person upon whom he bestows his gifts. Should we be?

It is indeed tragic that soon after the disciples died, post-Apostolic Christianity abandoned the charismatic understanding of Christian ministry and,

as a husband of one wife in 1 Tim. 3:12. This clearly shows that when Paul used the phrase "one-woman man," he did not try to convey that only men could be bishops or deacons. If so, Rom. 16:1 would not make any sense. I am fairly certain that the gender of a bishop or deacon was not on Paul's mind. If gender was truly important to him, we would have a clear statement such as "a bishop must be a man" in 1 Timothy or elsewhere.

36 Examples abound. Here are some of them: Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:10; Phil. 1:1; Col. 4:7; Acts 20:19. Gordon D. Fee calculated the number of times the word *doulos* and its various forms appears in the Pauline writings. The results are impressive: Fee estimates that, altogether, words that are related to the noun *doulos* appear 59 times in Paul: 30 times as *doulos*; two times as *syndoulos* (co-slave); 17 times as *douleuō* (to perform duties of a slave); four times as *douleia* (slavery); and six times as *douloō* (to enslave). While at times the word "slave" is used with reference to the actual institution of slavery (a negative usage of the term), a significant majority refer to the ministry of Paul and others. Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 62; cf. Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 20.

37 James 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:1.

instead, incorporated a pagan understanding of authority into its concept of ministry.

Second, ministry in the New Testament was not sacramental—neither salvation nor the life of the community depended on the presence of ordained clergy. While the early post-Apostolic Church created a system where ordained clergy were essential to the existence of the Church, we do not find such a requirement in the NT. From the NT point of view, it is Christ alone who is the mediator between God and humanity. Leadership in the NT thus fulfilled a purely functional role, i.e., its existence contributed to church order and the laying on of hands simply acknowledged the gift of leadership already present in a person.

A sacramental view of ministry, of course, was prophetically significant, as the mediatorial work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary was replaced by the work of an earthly priest. In other words, the early post-Apostolic Church sewed back together the earthly sanctuary's curtain rent by the divine hand at the time of Jesus' death. Consequently, every Catholic church on earth became a sanctuary with its own priest. This development clearly corresponded to the prophetic utterance of Daniel, "Yea, it magnified itself, even to the prince of the host; and it took away from him the continual burnt-offering, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down" (Dan. 8:11 ASV). It follows that any attempt to apply priestly language to the work of the ministry in the Church takes away from the one unique priesthood of Christ and has direct, negative implications for the Adventist sanctuary message, which emphasizes that all have special access to the risen Christ without the need for spiritual mediators.

Third, ministry in the New Testament was not elitist—the laying on of hands did not create a spiritual elite in the Church. The NT understanding was that functions, or roles, in the Church were to be filled according to spiritual gifting. Ordination thus can be defined simply as "the action of the church to publicly recognize those whom the Lord has called to and equipped for local and global church ministry."³⁸ Disagreements begin to appear when we ask the question: who can serve in the church as ordained elders or pastors?

The Church of God described in the pages of the NT was decidedly non-elitist. In his sayings, Jesus focused on the non-elite of the day and proclaimed them to be the children of God (Matt. 5:3–8). In Matthew 23:8–13 it is recorded that Jesus said to his followers: "But you are not to be called

38 Theology of Ordination Study Committee, Consensus Statement on a Seventh-day Adventist Theology of Ordination.

‘Rabbi’ for you have only one Master and you are all brothers... The greatest among you will be your servant” (Matt. 23:8–11). In modern terms we could paraphrase this saying as follows: “But you are not to be called ‘pastor,’ ‘elder,’ ‘professor,’ or ‘doctor,’ for you have only one Master and you are all brothers.” It is truly unfortunate that in Christian history the lowly term “pastor” has become a symbol of status.³⁹

Paul’s favourite image to portray the Christian community is as the Body of Christ, which represents a markedly non-elitist ecclesiology (1 Cor. 12:12–31; Rom. 12:1–8; Eph. 1:22). Central to this imagery were unity of the Church and the Church’s vital relationship with its Head, Jesus Christ. Paul’s insistence that the Church functioned like a human body served to remind believers that they were completely dependent upon Christ for their growth and life. While unity and the headship of Christ were Paul’s main concern, his discussion of the Church as the body of Christ was framed within the context of spiritual gifting. The recipients of spiritual gifts were all who were part of the body of Christ, and the unity of the body of Christ depended on the presence, recognition, and use of these spiritual gifts (Eph. 4:1–13). Any exclusive claim to these gifts was precluded, because their distribution was dependent upon the Holy Spirit and not on the Church (1 Cor. 12:11). Any form of elitism was settled by Paul’s masterful discussion on the mutual interdependence of believers who exhibited various spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:12–31). Furthermore, in none of the four listings of spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:6–8; 1 Cor. 12:8–10, 28–30; Eph. 4:11) was Paul exclusive in any way. Notably, in Romans 12:8, the gifts of teaching and leadership were tucked in among other, seemingly insignificant gifts. It would be ludicrous to claim, on the basis of this passage, that the gift of encouragement was lower on the scale of giftedness, while the gift of leadership was higher and thus could only be endowed upon a certain class of believers in the church. Certainly this could not have been Paul’s intention.

Paul’s use of the Body of Christ imagery aids in understanding the reality of the Church and the way it should function. Within such a community, all solidarities of race, class, culture, and gender are replaced by an allegiance to Christ alone. The old way of relating is replaced by a new relatedness in Christ (Gal. 3:28–29). In this community, all people are equal members of the Body of Christ, because all have experienced the risen Christ and all are gifted with a variety of spiritual gifts of equal value (1 Cor. 12), which are to

39 The very reason why we are discussing women’s ordination testifies to the fact that today the role of the pastor in the church has lost its original meaning.

be utilized for the benefit of believers and the world (Rom. 12:1–8). Thus, we do not find a hierarchy where some people rank above others according to status; nor do we find a division between ordained clergy and laity. What we see is a new community, the Body of Christ, a New Creation (2 Cor. 5:17), where *all* relationships should hark back to the Garden of Eden. This is what the early post-Apostolic Church forgot soon after the death of the apostles, introducing instead a notion of an unequal society in which leadership in the church was restricted to ordained male clergy. The Holy Spirit was thus quenched!

The reality is that if anything apart from commitment to Christ and his Church, spiritual gifting and maturity determine fitness for various functions in the Church, then, whether we intend it or not, we create an elitist community. No pious designations attached to the “office” of pastor—such as “servant,” “spiritual authority,” “spiritual leadership,” or “spiritual headship”—can change this reality.

Fourth, the ministry in the New Testament Church was not male-headship oriented, that is, there was no room for male headship in the Body of Christ. While Scripture testifies that women were not restricted from leadership positions (Deborah, Phoebe, Junia, Lydia, Priscilla, Nympha), history witnesses to the fact that, from the second century onward, leadership and teaching positions in the Church began to be restricted to men alone.⁴⁰ As outlined above, the main argument against women’s ordination in the Catholic Church today is that the pastor must be a male since he represents Christ, a male, to the community of believers. Male headship in the home is thus extended to relationships in the Church.

There are significant problems with extending the idea of male headship beyond the home circle. Most importantly, such a concept of headship clearly replaces Christ’s spiritual headship of the Church and endows selected individuals with Christ’s own authority. The NT is clear, however, that the only Head of the Church is Christ (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 1:22; 4:15; Col 1:18; 2:19).⁴¹ When, in Ephesians 5:23, Paul states that “Christ is the Head of the Church” and “man is the head of the wife,” he does not say that man’s headship in the home in some way extends to relationships in the Church. Paul’s

40 For more information, see my paper, “The Problem of Ordination: Lesson from Early Christian History,” presented to the General Conference *Theology of Ordination Study Committee* (TOSC) in January 2013, <https://www.adventistarchives.org/the-problem-of-ordination.pdf>

41 The Pauline image of the Church as the Body of Christ clearly conveys the idea that Christ is the only Head of the Church of God.

meaning is clear: as a husband is the head of his wife, his bride, so Christ is the Head of the Church, his Bride.⁴² In both cases, the nuptial language is clearly restricted to specific and distinct relationships: that between a husband and wife and that between Christ and his Church. It would be absurd to conclude that Paul meant to say that as Christ is the Bridegroom of the Church, so men in the Christian congregation are bridegrooms of women in the Church. Nor is it Scriptural to say that the pastor “marries” the Church and becomes its head upon his ordination, just as Christ married his Bride and became its Head.

From this it follows that any idea of headship in the Church, be it male or female, apart from that of Christ, usurps the headship of Christ. Thus, while we may legitimately speak of male headship in the Christian home, it is unscriptural to speak of any kind of headship in the Church apart from that of Christ. While, within the greater context of mutual submission (Eph. 5:21), wives are indeed asked by Paul to submit to their husbands (Eph. 5:22),⁴³ nowhere in the NT do we find an injunction that believers are to submit to the headship of the ordained ministry; the Church submits only to Christ! It follows that when a pastor/elder and a church decide to operate according to the male-headship principle, this pastor/elder and his church are committing spiritual adultery, otherwise known as *sacramentalism*.⁴⁴ For this reason, difficult Pauline passages, such as 1 Timothy 2 and 3 and 1 Corinthians 11 and 14, can never be interpreted as teaching male headship in the church, but must be understood in the light of Jesus’ statements on authority. No amount of tinkering with the text “according to the ideas they happen to entertain upon them,”⁴⁵ and adding the word “spiritual” to headship, can change this reality. As noted above, sacramentalism is primarily a hallmark of Catho-

42 Of course male headship in the family must also be defined in non-hierarchical and self-sacrificial, rather than jurisdictional, terms. As Christ gave himself up (or self-sacrificed himself) for His bride, so husbands must self-sacrifice themselves for their wives and children.

43 It must be noted, at this point, that the word “submit” in Eph. 5:22 in the Greek simply states “and wife to husbands.” The mutual submission of Eph. 5:21, therefore, provides a greater context for understanding Paul’s message to husbands and wives. If so, then the husband’s love is also a form of submission. Common human experience shows that by loving someone, we also submit to them.

44 This, of course, brings us back to the meaning of the twin expressions: *Vicarius Filii Dei* and *in persona Christi Capitis*. See footnote 17.

45 G. C. Tenney, “Woman’s Relation to the Cause of Christ,” *Review and Herald* 69, no. 21 (May 24, 1892): 328.

lic Christianity, but it also exists within those Christian denominations that choose to replace the pope (also referred to as “Holy Father;” from the Latin *papa*) with a male figure of a pastor/elder. Christian communities that embrace female headship in addition to male headship follow the same pattern.

So I have a question: can Seventh-day Adventists really afford to flirt with applying the male-headship principle to the ordained pastor/elder? I believe that this principle is a seemingly innocuous Trojan horse that has the potential to destroy the very heart of Adventism. It is telling that Ellen White never once used 1 Timothy 2 or 3 and 1 Corinthians 11 or 14 to support male headship in the Church. The developments in early post-Apostolic Christianity, discussed in the first part of this paper, clearly show the dangers of extending the biblical notion of male headship in the home to male headship in the Church and must be avoided at all costs among true followers of Christ.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there can be no doubt that early Catholic Christianity incorporated various characteristics of the OT priestly ministry into the theology and practice of Christian ministry. Christian ministry thus became hierarchical, sacramental, elitist, and oriented towards male headship. To a greater or lesser degree, most Christian communities, including Seventh-day Adventists, continue to perpetuate some of these characteristics in their communities.

All these characteristics, however, were fulfilled in Christ who, by virtue of being our Creator, stands over us and has no successors to his divine authority; who died sacramentally on the cross and thus became the sole provider of salvation; who, through his ministry on earth, made all humans equal in the eyes of God in terms of authority and endowed them with the gifts of the Holy Spirit to fulfil the great gospel commission; and who, through his sacrificial death on the cross, became the sole Head of the Church, his Bride. He shares his headship with no one! Post-NT Christianity, unfortunately denied the sole headship of Christ in the Church and contributed to the integration of a counterfeit view of authority in Church organization and thus to the birth of an apostate religion.

I began this paper with a discussion on the nature of authority. Our God, who is a God of order, created a world in which human beings, the crown of his creation, were to live according to the authoritative patterns that governed the universe prior to the creation of the earth. Then sin entered the world. The way God exercised his authority was challenged and a counterfeit notion of authority was introduced. This is the notion of authority that

the “prince of this world” taught the first couple; this is the notion of authority that forever darkened the human vision of God and his character. The precise reason why Christ, God incarnate, came to this earth and founded a community like no other to counteract the counterfeit notion of God’s authority.

He accomplished it by his life of divine slavery (*douleia*) that ultimately led him to the cross. It is unfortunate that human beings, weakened by millennia of sin’s existence on this earth, returned to the old patterns of thinking soon after the death of its pioneers. Notwithstanding their devotion to Scripture, Seventh-day Adventists inherited these patterns of thinking that are so tenaciously (and tragically) ingrained in the Christian faith.

It is a common human experience to be attracted to those who exhibit genuine Christian authority and to be repelled by the attitudes of those who rely solely on the authority of their office. Ideally, genuine Christian authority and the authority of a representative function should be integrated. After all, there is nothing intrinsically wrong with a person’s holding an office, even though it is not really a biblical concept. Nor is there anything inherently wrong with the way the Adventist Church is currently organized. However, while Jesus left no model for running the Church, he was adamant that his Church would not resemble secular structure, in which authority is organized according to a “pecking order.” Is it possible that current discussions regarding women’s ordination are complicated by a misunderstanding or misuse of true Christian authority?

I am a third generation Adventist, grandson of a head elder, son of a pastor/administrator, and an ordained pastor myself. In all my years as a Seventh-day Adventist, rarely have I encountered the integration of true genuine Christian authority with the authority of an ordained pastor. I am saddened by the fact that I often struggle with such integration myself. Some of the most authoritative persons in my life were not ordained ministers. The one I place above all others was an old Christian gentleman in Tasmania (where for a time I served as a pastor after receiving my PhD) who had only four classes of formal education and had “only” been ordained as a deacon. I recognized, accepted, and submitted to the true Christian authority he represented and learned more from him about slaving for Christ and others than from a lifetime of being an Adventist and all my theological education combined. It is unfortunate that, for too many, being an ordained pastor tends to be about having authority over others, status, ranking, and male headship, rather than being a slave for Christ and others. This, I believe, is the real reason why the Adventist Church is devoting so much of its time to discussing

the issue of ordination and who can be ordained.

I understand that “slavery” has few positive connotations, as it implies no honour, no glory, no status, and no ranking. Nobody likes that; in fact, I am repulsed by the concept. And yet this is the word that Christ used to describe himself and his work; this is the word that the apostles used to describe themselves and their work as well as that of their co-workers, both men and women; this is what Christ is calling us—Adventist pastors, deacons, elders, presidents of Divisions, Conferences and Unions—to be; not to have authority over people but rather over the task of fulfilling the great commission of Christ. Gospel order in the Church does not require hierarchical headship, spiritual or otherwise. True Christian ministry is not about status, rank, gender, equality, rights, or having “spiritual authority” over others; it is about being slaves of Christ and his people; it is not about ruling over others but being examples and, through the witness of our lives, wooing others to follow Christ. No human laying on of hands can provide this kind of authority; only the work of the Holy Spirit in a person’s heart can! While all Christians are to be ministers, those who are set apart for special ministry, both men and women, are called to be chief examples of slavery to Christ and others. I am convinced that when this understanding of authority and ministry is embraced, Christ’s vision for his community will be fulfilled, revival and reformation will follow, and the issue of women’s ordination will disappear.

So I want to leave this short investigation of the nature of Christian authority with a question. Are we going to follow culture, both secular and religious, which has taught us a hierarchical and elitist understanding of authority or are we going to follow Christ, who said, “Not so with you!”?

Chapter 9: Should Ordination Be Considered a Sacrament in the Seventh-day Adventist Church? An Evaluation in the Light of the Biblical Data

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Ordained ministers are considered to be a critical part of the life and mission of the Church by most Christian denominations, but while there is general agreement about the need for ordination there are widely divergent views about the meaning and theology of ordination. The true extent of division has been highlighted by the ecumenical dialogue of the twentieth century, and reinforced by the ongoing and at times heated discussions about the role of women in the Church.¹ One of the most significant disagreements about the nature of ordination pertains to whether ordination should be regarded as a sacrament. Roman Catholics have been foremost in defending the sacramental nature of ordination whereas Protestants have generally rejected the sacramental nature of ordination while retaining the term "sacrament" to describe the rites of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Seventh-day Adventists have aligned themselves with their Protestant counterparts in rejecting the idea of ordination as a sacrament. But unlike many of their Protestant counterparts they have also rejected sacramental terminology in relation to any church practices, preferring instead the title of ordinance to describe baptism and the Lord's Supper, and Foot Washing.²

It might seem from this preamble that an article discussing whether ordination within the Seventh-day Adventist Church is sacramental is somewhat redundant. But while Adventists profess to reject sacramental theology, lin-

1 For a discussion of divisive issues related to ministry which have arisen during ecumenical dialogue, see World Council of Churches Commission on Faith and Order, *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper No. 111 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), 16-30. See especially sections 27-29.

2 Ministerial Association of Seventh-day Adventists. *Seventh-day Adventist Minister's Manual* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, 1992), 77.

gering traces of sacramentalism can be identified in their Church practices.³ This is compounded by confusion about the distinction between a sacrament and an ordinance which results in these terms being used interchangeably, even by theologically trained individuals. It is the purpose of this article to examine the nature of sacraments, and then, in conjunction with the biblical data, use this framework to consider whether ordination in the Seventh-day Adventist Church should be considered a sacrament.

Understanding the Term Sacrament

There is lack of precision in the meaning of the term “sacrament” is due to a complex history in which its definition was subject to frequent revision and debate.⁴ Translated from the Latin *sacramentum*, it is etymologically derived from *sacrāre* denoting the concept of consecrating, or setting apart for a divinity.⁵ But prior to being employed by Christian writers, the term was more likely to evoke the idea of a pledge or oath, whether as a deposit

3 Sacramental theology underlies the notion that a pastor must be in the font when a non-ordained individual baptizes a candidate, the burning of leftover bread from the Lord’s Supper, and the requirement that only ordained individuals can participate in the ordination service of a new pastor. Other denominations have noticed the tendency for a disconnection to exist between practice and theory in relation to ordination. John E. Toews, in reflecting on this problem, gets to the heart of the issue when he suggests that, “While many Protestant churches, including the Mennonite churches, have tried to de-sacramentalize ordination, the long-time underlying assumption and reality is sacramental.” John E. Toews, “Rethinking the Meaning of Ordination: Toward a Biblical Theology of Leadership Affirmation,” *Conrad Grebel Review* 22, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 5.

4 For a helpful detailed history of the word *sacramentum* see Daniel Van Slyke, “The Changing Meanings of *sacramentum*: Historical Sketches,” *Antiphon* 11, no. 3 (2007): 245–279.

5 *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, T. F. Hoad, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), s.v. “sacrament,” accessed April 10, 2013, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780192830982.001.0001/acref-9780192830982-e-13129>.

in a lawsuit,⁶ a military oath of allegiance to the emperor,⁷ or an oath of allegiance amongst other groups such as thieves or philosophers.⁸

The earliest Christian writer to employ the term *sacramentum* is thought to be Tertullian (c. 150 – c. 220) who expanded the classical meaning of *sacramentum* by using it to identify many of rites of the Old Testament (OT) that prepared for the coming of Christ.⁹ Augustine built on this foundation suggesting that sacraments were symbols or visible signs of divine things which in some sense resemble that which they represent.¹⁰ Augustine understood that as symbols sacraments are an outward or visible reminder of the reality of Christ's work of redemption, containing both an internal seal and God's grace.¹¹

6 Marcus Terentius Varro, *On the Latin Language* vol. 1, Books V–VII, Loeb Classical Library, trans. Roland G. Kent, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1938), 166–169. Varro (127–116 BC), in his history of the Latin language, provides a mixed religious and juridical context for the term, describing *sacramentum* as a sacred deposit paid to the pontifex by opposing parties in a lawsuit. The deposit verified that the parties were in earnest about their claim to truth. Deposits were returned to persons who won their cases but the losing parties forfeited their deposits, which were added to the temple coffers.

7 G. Bornkamm, “Μυστήριον,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1967), 4:827. *Sacramentum* was best known as oath of allegiance that Roman soldiers were required to swear to the emperor on induction into his army. The first written record of the military association of the term *sacramentum* is attributed to Julius Caesar in the first century BC.

8 Daniel Van Slyke, “The Changing Meanings of *sacramentum*: Historical Sketches,” *Antiphon* 11, no. 3 (2007): 247.

9 Tertullian *On Baptism* 8; *Against Marion* 3.16, 4.40. A similar range of meanings appear in the works of other prominent Ante-Nicene writers, most notably Cyprian of Carthage and Lactantius. Although Tertullian was the first Christian writer to use the term *sacramentum*, the first written connection between Christians and *sacramentum* occurred somewhat earlier when Roman magistrate Pliny the Younger described Christians as assembling weekly to “recite a hymn antiphonally to Christ, as to a god and bind themselves by an oath (*sacramento*), not for the commission of any crime but to abstain from theft, robbery, adultery and breach of faith, and not to deny a deposit when it was claimed.” C. Plini, *Epistularum libri decem* X.96 in *Documents of the Christian Church*, eds Henry Bettensen and Chris Maunder (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

10 Augustine, *Letter* 138.1.7; Augustine *De Civi Dei* 10.5; Augustine *Reply to Faustus* 19.11.

11 Ibid.

The Middle Ages saw ongoing revisions of the understanding of the nature and function of the sacraments.¹² These revisions provided the basis for the description of sacraments in the canons of the Council of Trent (1547) which continue to be the key to the Catholic views of sacraments today. The canons assumed that sacraments were signs or symbols and insisted that all sacraments must be instituted by Christ.¹³ The Council affirmed in addition that sacraments are necessary for salvation and for the grace of justification.¹⁴ Hence in some sense the sacraments became remedies against sin. Reacting to the Reformers, the Council also made clear that the sacraments contained grace, which the Council declared was imparted *ex opere operato*.¹⁵ Literally meaning “by the work performed”, this property in essence meant that the right words from the priest accompanied by the right elements or symbolic actions ensured that the sacraments would infallibly convey grace to the recipient regardless of the state and merits of the minister or recipient.¹⁶ The canons are emphatic that this is a grace that is only obtained through partaking of the sacraments and hence could not be obtained by faith alone. Finally, the canons of Trent note that baptism, confirmation and ordination confer an indelible mark on the soul of the participant.¹⁷

The Reformers challenged aspects of the scholastic understanding of sacraments, in particular the idea that grace was imparted *ex opere operato*. Thus Luther was concerned to highlight the role of faith in the efficacy of the sacraments, but he still considered sacraments to be physical signs insti-

12 Key scholastics in the medieval revision of the ideas of sacraments included Hugo of St Victor (d. 1141), Peter Lombard (c. 1100 – c. 1164), and Thomas Aquinas (1225–74). See for instance Hugo of St Victor, *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith*, IX.2; Peter Lombard, *Sentences* IV.i.4; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* III.60–90. The pronouncements of Trent are largely based on the views of Peter Lombard.

13 Council of Trent, Session VII, Canon I and Canon VI. Initiation by Christ was considered to provide evidence that the elements were intended to symbolize the reality attributed to them.

14 Council of Trent, Session VII, Canon IV.

15 Council of Trent, Session VII, Canon VI–VIII.

16 This invokes a rather mechanical understanding of the sacraments, which Vatican II attempted to remedy. While retaining the idea of *ex opere operato*, Vatican II also emphasized the preaching of the Word in conjunction with the sacraments as a means to encounter Christ and open the heart to the grace which is to be received. See *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, December 4, 1963.

17 Council of Trent, Session VII. Canon IX.

tuted by Christ and which had power to confer forgiveness of sins.¹⁸ At the other extreme, Zwingli suggested that sacraments were simply signs instituted by Christ by which a participant demonstrated their commitment and loyalty to the Church.¹⁹ He rejected any notion that sacraments bestowed grace or forgiveness of sins, returning instead to the original idea of sacraments as oaths or pledges.²⁰

The disagreement between the Reformers has contributed to a lack of unanimity amongst Protestants in regard to the nature, function and even the number of sacraments. Most Protestants, however, will agree that there are two cardinal differences between Protestant and Roman Catholic views of the sacraments. The first major difference relates to how sacraments work. While Catholics insist that they work *ex opere operato*, that is, grace is infallibly bestowed if the sacraments are validly administered, Protestants reject this mechanical approach, insisting that the faith of the participant is essential for the efficacy of the sacraments. The second major difference lies in the relationship of the sacraments to salvation. Catholics insist that sacraments are essential for salvation, while Protestants reject this claim. Protestants suggest participation in the sacraments is helpful for the growth and development of faith, but sacraments are not essential in themselves for salvation.²¹

The Difference between Sacraments and Ordinances

In comparison with the term “sacrament,” the word “ordinance” has little variation in meaning. Used primarily to denote laws or regulations in ecclesiastical history, the term appears to have been first applied to the Lord’s Supper and baptism by the Anabaptists who rejected both infant baptism and the concept of sacrament as defined by the Roman Catholic Church.²²

18 Martin Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, 1520.

19 Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. 3rd ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), 513, 519–521. See for instance Huldrych Zwingli, *On the Lord’s Supper*, Library of Christian Classics, 24:188–191.

20 Ibid.

21 See for instance Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1958), 618–619. Berkhof notes that Protestants recognize that grace is not exclusively bound to sacraments, and that faith is the key factor identified in Scripture as necessary for salvation.

22 It is uncertain exactly when the term “ordinance” arose in relation to Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. The concept appears to be well understood prior to its appearance in the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith but is not present in the Seven Articles of Schleithem signed by Swiss Anabaptist Pastors in 1527.

For a religious ritual to be described as an ordinance it must only fulfil two simple requirements: it must have been initiated by Christ, and must be an action that Christians are asked to perform as evidenced by the teaching of Christ or the apostles.²³ By employing a term most commonly used for laws, the radical Reformers acknowledged the biblical command to perform these rites and acts of worship, while rejecting the actual transfer of grace as a consequence of performing them.

Thus, although often used interchangeably, the term “ordinance” should not be considered a synonym of the term “sacrament.” While it is true that some Protestant evangelicals do hold a view of sacraments that is Zwinglian in nature, and therefore reject the transfer of grace, by continuing to use the word “sacrament” they imply to their hearers that these rituals do convey grace in themselves. On the other hand, when the term “ordinance” is used, there is no baggage to mar its meaning. It simply refers to a symbolic ritual that testifies to our faith in Jesus and recognizes grace that already has been bestowed upon the individual.

Ordination as a Sacrament

The identification of ordination as a sacrament that conveys or confers grace upon the recipient is rooted in the sacerdotal ecclesiology which emerged in the third century. Sacerdotalism elevated the role of both the Church and the clergy, and applied the OT idea of priesthood to bishops. Consequently, it was understood that in presiding at the Eucharist, bishops actually offered a real sacrifice and thus in some special sense represented Christ.²⁴ In order to fulfil this priestly role it was considered that the bishop needed special grace which must be imparted by ordination.

Thus in calling ordination a sacrament, there is an understanding that a special grace is received as part of the rite, which in turn is thought to result in an indelible spiritual character that marks the individual as a permanent member of the clergy.²⁵ Clergy are thus considered to have some special sta-

23 Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society, 1907), 930.

24 Cyprian was the first to apply the idea of the priesthood to ministers of the Christian Church. See Cyprian, *Letter 67.4*; Cyprian, *Letter 63.14*.

25 *Catechism of the Catholic Church: Complete and Updated Edition with Modifications from the Editio Typica* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 1582–1583. The mark is irrevocable. Therefore, while ordained individuals can be forbidden from functioning as clergy, being disciplined in this way is not considered to remove the vocation conveyed by ordination. The indelible spiritual character remains. Consequently they can never become a layperson again.

tus that separates them from those who are not ordained.²⁶ The nature of this status change, while not clearly defined, appears to involve a change in the individual's relationship with Christ so that the ordinand becomes "configured to Christ in such a way that they are able to act in the person of Christ the head."²⁷ This enables them to act in each of the priestly, prophetic and kingly roles of Christ.²⁸ Consequently, the sacramental view maintains that the ordained individual obtains the ability to mediate divine grace to those without their ordained status, that is, to the laity.²⁹

From the foregoing sections, we can conclude that four major conditions appear to be necessary for ordination to be considered a sacrament in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.³⁰ First, the rite of ordination must have obvious symbolism, since sacraments are symbols of divine things, or visible symbols of invisible grace. Second, the rite of ordination must convey grace to the ordinand. Third, ordination needs to be instituted by Christ. Fourth, ordination should convey an indelible mark which results in a distinction between ordained clergy and laity and allows the clergy alone to represent Christ. Biblical evidence for these conditions will be sought in the following sections.

Is Ordination Symbolic?

The first criterion for ordination to be a sacrament requires that the rite of ordination be symbolic. Since ordination as we know it did not arise before the third century, and therefore is not directly addressed in Scripture, I propose to focus on the symbolism associated with the idea of the laying on of hands in conjunction with the setting apart for a task since laying on of hands is so central to current Adventist concepts of ordination that many equate the two ideas.³¹

26 Ibid., 1551.

27 Lumen Gentium, 28.

28 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1581; *Presbyterorum ordinis*, 5, 6, 7. Sharing in Christ's priesthood is considered to enable the ordained to offer the mass and transform the communion elements into the actual body and blood of Christ; while sharing in Christ's prophetic role provides the basis for the preaching and teaching roles, and sharing in Christ's kingly role serves to endorse their ability to exercise church governance.

29 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1548–1550.

30 I exclude the ideas of necessity for salvation and working *ex opere operato* since these are rejected by Protestant definitions of sacraments.

31 V. Norskov Olsen, *Myth and Truth: Church, Priesthood and Ordination* (Riverside, CA: Loma Linda University, 1990), 125.

The hands are frequently mentioned in Scripture with more than two thirds of these uses being figurative or metaphoric.³² Like many of their Ancient Near Eastern neighbours, Israel understood certain attributes to be associated with body parts.³³ In the biblical context references to hands evoked ideas of power, strength, authority, and grace. These images are intensified in passages which refer specifically to the right hand.³⁴ The right hand could also be used to indicate favour and prominence. Thus we find God described as supporting, protecting and saving Israel with his right hand (e.g., Ps. 18:35, Ps. 20:6). The specific act of “laying of hands” upon a person or object can be found in both the OT and the New Testament (NT) and is associated with a variety of functions, each of which draws to some extent upon the notion of power and authority associated with the term “hand.”³⁵

Laying on of Hands for Reasons Other than Commissioning for a Task

Laying on of hands serves five main purposes in Scripture other than commissioning for a task. Indeed, the majority of instances of laying on of hands in Scripture have nothing to do with setting apart for a task or with installation to office. The following section discusses three of these purposes, omitting the ideas of arrest and the idea of healing, both of which have little relevance for this paper.

Blessing of the firstborn appears to have been a ubiquitous practice in the era of the patriarchs, but it is not until Jacob’s blessing of Joseph’s two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, that we have evidence that laying on of hands was a part of this ritual of blessing (Gen. 48:19). The association of laying on of hands with blessing also appears in the NT where Jesus is reported to have laid hands upon children in an act of blessing when parents brought their children to him (Matt. 19:15). Blessing associated with healing accounts for the majority of instances of laying on of hands in the NT.

32 *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, Leland Ryken et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), s.v. “Hand,” 360–362.

33 Keith Mattingly, “Laying on of Hands in Ordination: A Biblical Study,” in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 60.

34 Ryken et al., “Hand,” 360. Such metaphorical use is also common in other Ancient Near Eastern cultures where body parts were commonly used to portray various attributes.

35 More than one form of phrase is used to indicate laying on of hands in the OT. The verbs *šim* (put) and *shith* (place) are used with the idea of blessing, whereas cultic associations use the verb *sāmek* (laid or leaned upon).

The great majority of the OT uses of laying on of hands have a different function. They are associated with the cultic practice of sacrifice. Each person who brought an animal from their flock as an offering was required to place one hand upon the animal to be sacrificed before it was slaughtered.³⁶ Scholars, however, are divided in their opinions about the significance of this gesture.³⁷ Some attempt to interpret this act as an actual transference of the person's sin to the animal in order to align the symbolism of the OT sacrifices with its NT fulfilment in Christ.³⁸ But for the most part, scholars lean toward the suggestion that laying a hand on the animal simply represented the personal acknowledgement of the one bringing the offering that the sacrifice was theirs, and that the benefits from it belonged to them. In this sense, the worshipper acknowledged they were transferring the ownership of the offering to God.³⁹ This later view best explains the range of offerings that required the ritual of placing hands upon the animals, while at the same time provides an explanation for the omission of placing hands upon smaller sacrifices since such sacrifices fit into the hand and could thus be carried by the individual. Further identification that the offering belongs to the individual is therefore totally unnecessary.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, it should be noted that in the Day of Atonement rituals laying of hands upon the scapegoat clearly symbolized a transfer of sin to the animal (Lev. 16:20–22).⁴¹

36 The sacrifices for which this act was required include the burnt offering (Lev. 1:4, Lev. 8:18), the fellowship offering (Lev. 3:2, 8, 12, 13), and the purification offering (Lev. 4:4, 15, 24, 29, 33; Lev. 8:14). However, it was only required for the large flock-animals and not the smaller bird, or grain offerings which could be carried by the worshipper.

37 See for instance D. P. Wright, "The Gesture of Hand Placement in the Hebrew Bible and in Hittite Literature," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106 (1986): 433–46.

38 David P. Wright, "Hands, Laying on of (Old Testament)," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 3, eds. David Noel Freedman *et al.* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 47–48. Adventist OT scholar Roy Gane argues clearly that "it is not necessary to prove that hand-leaning [hand-laying] by *itself* accomplishes transfer of sin to Christ so that he can bear its penalty as the substitute for the sinner" since Christ is both Priest and Victim. Roy Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers, The New International Version Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 67.

39 Gane, *Leviticus*, 67. Gane likens this to the modern analogy of signing over a car or a house title.

40 Wright, "Hands," 47–48.

41 Some have tried to use this difference to argue that the number of hands involved in the ritual of laying on of hands alters the meaning of the term. Keith

In the NT we also find laying on of hands as an accompaniment to prayer for the infilling of the Holy Spirit. While the Holy Spirit was sometimes poured out spontaneously upon believers, this was not always the case. When the apostles discovered new believers who had not received the Holy Spirit, they prayed and placed their hands upon them.⁴² The result was that they were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14–24, Acts 19:1–7). Since the jealous Simon made the connection between the action of laying on of hands, and the reception of the Holy Spirit, we can surmise that the infilling of the Spirit occurred rapidly after this ritual.

Laying on of Hands to Commission for a Task or Role

This brings us to the laying on of hands associated with commissioning people for specific tasks. Examination of these narratives in the context of the other functions of laying on of hands will provide a basis for assessing whether or not ordination has inherent symbolism. Four biblical narratives specifically include laying on of hands as part of commissioning.⁴³ The earliest story is that of the consecration of the Levites (Num. 8) who were involved in transporting the sanctuary and its furnishings during Israel's wilderness wanderings, and also in assisting with aspects of tabernacle and temple worship. After ritual purification, members of the Israelite community were called to lay their hands upon the Levites (Num. 8:9–10) before the Levites in turn laid hands upon animals which were offered as sacrifices. The context notes that the Levites were to take the place of the firstborn sons of Israel in serving God in the sanctuary. Thus commentators are generally in agreement that the symbolic nature of the laying on of hands is here one of identification and representation.⁴⁴ The Levites are identified as those who will serve God as representatives of the people and are empowered to

Mattingly has argued convincingly against this. See Mattingly, "Laying on of Hands," 61.

42 Early Church documents reveal that a ritual of laying on of hands for the infilling of the Spirit began to accompany baptism itself. Whether this twofold ritual occurred during the NT era is unclear from the limited references we have to baptism in the NT.

43 I do not include Timothy in this list because of the ambiguity surrounding the context of the hands laid upon Timothy. This will be discussed in the following section of this paper.

44 See for instance Wright, "Hands," 47; Gane, *Leviticus*, 66; David E. Aune, "Laying on of Hands," *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, eds. Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1317.

act on their behalf. Thus laying on of hands in this context appears to have a similar function to the laying on of hands upon sacrificial offerings.

The second narrative that discusses the laying on of hands in association with appointment to a task is that which describes Moses' appointing Joshua as his successor (Num. 27:18–23; Deut. 31).⁴⁵ Joshua had been mentored by Moses in his role as Moses' aide (Num. 11:28) and likely had a close relationship with Moses. He is also described as being full of the Spirit. But despite Joshua's experience, character, and relationship with Moses, Moses turned to God when considering a successor. Joshua's appointment was thus God's choice (Num. 27:18). Moses then followed God's request to commission and give some degree of authority to Joshua by laying hands upon him in the presence of both the High Priest and the entire assembly of Israel (Num. 27:19–20). In a manner similar to that described in the previous narrative, this ceremony publicly acknowledged and identified Joshua as God's choice as Moses successor, while at the same time ensured a smooth transition of leadership as the two worked together prior to Moses' death. Joshua thus had power to act on behalf of both God and the nation of Israel. Consequently the Israelites were willing to acknowledge Joshua's leadership and to listen to him.

The NT also provides two instances in which laying on of hands is clearly associated with commissioning for a task. The first of these is the appointment of the Seven in Acts 6. The men were chosen to fulfil a particular need in the Church, so that the disciples were not diverted from preaching. The criteria for appointment were evidence of wisdom and the presence of the Spirit in their lives. Once chosen, they were presented to the apostles, after which prayer was offered, and hands laid upon them. The Greek construction does not allow us to know for sure who laid hands upon the Seven—either the congregation laid hands upon them or the apostles laid hands upon them.⁴⁶ The context suggests that the laying on of hands publicly set them apart for a task and symbolized the blessing of both God and the Church in their task.

The setting apart of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:1–3) occurred after Paul and Barnabas had been teaching in the church at Antioch for some time. The

45 Joshua's commissioning is unusual in the context of the OT. Priests, prophets, kings and other leaders were anointed with oil rather than having hands laid upon them. For an extended discussion of Joshua's commission, see Keith Mattingly, "The Laying on of Hands on Joshua: An Exegetical Study of Numbers 27:12–23 and Deuteronomy 34:9" (PhD diss., Andrews University, 1997).

46 The ambiguity of the Greek is not obvious in the New International Version, but is more clearly expressed in other English translations.

Holy Spirit indicated that they were to be set aside for a work for which he had called them. This was accomplished with prayer, fasting and laying on of hands by the congregation, after which they set out on a missionary trip guided by the Holy Spirit. In this instance the laying of hands upon the apostles appears to be an identification of God's calling and blessing of them, together with the identification and blessing of the Church for their mission.

Conclusions about Symbolism and Ordination

The brief survey of these narratives suggests that laying on of hands in commissioning for a task is symbolic, and draws from the symbolism of its use in other contexts. In each of these narratives the individual or individuals either have been divinely identified as being called to a particular task or as being full of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, the laying on of hands recognizes and affirms symbolically God's call and God's presence in the life of the individual, and consequently affirms God's blessing and continuing activity in the Church.

Second, the ritual allows the congregation to identify the one on whom hands are laid as representing them in their specific ministry tasks, and in doing so the congregation implicitly convey their support of the individual. The laying on of hands by the congregation or representatives of it reminds us that the Church is defined not by its hierarchy, but by its members in total. It is they that delegate authority to the ordinand and not other members of the hierarchy. For this reason, the congregation was actively involved in the laying on of hands in three of these narratives.

Third, the laying on of hands provides a public recognition that the individual is now authorized to undertake certain tasks. So we find that in the case of Joshua, the public laying on of hands now meant that the people obeyed him. Such public acknowledgment should prevent any questions about whether or not the individual should be performing these tasks.

Fourth, the combination of laying on of hands with prayer evokes the dual ideas of blessing and infilling by the Holy Spirit. Since those being commissioned are already noted to be filled with the Holy Spirit prior to the laying on of hands, no infilling accompanies the ritual, but there is the sense in which the ritual symbolizes the Spirit's equipping and blessing for the task to which the individual is being commissioned.

Together, these findings provide strong evidence that ordination is a sign and symbol of God's action in his Church. We conclude then, that ordination meets the first criterion required for it to be a sacrament.

Does Ordination Confer Grace Upon the Recipient?

The second major condition for ordination to be a sacrament is that it confers grace. The primary text used to justify the transfer of grace in ordination is 1 Timothy 4:14 which reads: “Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed upon you through [*dia*] prophetic utterance with [*meta*] the laying on of hands by the presbytery.”⁴⁷ This text is used in conjunction with 1 Timothy 1:18 and 2 Timothy 1:6. At first glance it is evident that there is a threefold association of spiritual gift, prophecy and laying on of hands in this passage, but several points need to be clarified before assuming that this supports the transmission of a special grace at ordination. First, we must determine whether the laying on of hands referred to here is equivalent to ordination or some sort of installation to office. Second, we must determine the relationship between the gift given and the laying on of hands. Third, we must decide whether the gift is equivalent to special grace and, fourth, we must examine the historical context to determine whether the example of Timothy should be considered normative when discussing ordination.

The Context of Hands Being Laid Upon Timothy

Most commentators assume that 1 Timothy 4:14 refers to Timothy’s ordination or at the very least his installation into church office.⁴⁸ However, we should not be too hasty in making this assumption. Ordination as we know it did not emerge in the early Church until more than two centuries after this passage was written.⁴⁹ Therefore to read ordination into this passage is anachronistic. It is still a valid possibility that the laying on of hands was part of Timothy’s being commissioned for a task, but we have already noted that the meaning of the phrase “laying on of hands” in the NT is not

47 As rendered by the New American Standard Bible.

48 For example, William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary vol. 46 (Dallas TX: Word, 2000); Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary vol. 34 (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1992); Knute Larson, *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, Holman New Testament Commentary vol. 9 (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2000); Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1972).

49 The first explicit connection of laying on of hands for installation to a bishop’s role is in the writings of Hippolytus in the third century, in which there is a discussion regarding the order of service for ordination of the bishops, presbyter and deacons. See Hippolytus, *Tradition of the Apostles*, Part I.

restricted to setting apart for a specific task. The phrase is also used to refer to the actions of blessing or healing and to describe the ritual that occurred after baptism for the reception of the Holy Spirit. Occasionally the phrase seems to combine two functions, such as described in Acts 9:17 where both healing and the reception of the Holy Spirit occur as the result of Ananias' laying hands upon Saul.

To decipher which of these meanings is intended in Timothy we need to look for contextual clues. The passages themselves call Timothy to remember the past event of the laying on of hands. More specifically, he is urged to recall the prophecies made about him, and advised not to neglect the gift that was associated with the prophecy and laying on of hands. Paul's purpose seems to be to affirm that Timothy has the gifts to accomplish what God would have him do in the Church. However the context of the laying on of hands is ambiguous. Specifically, there is no indication in the passages that the laying of hands was associated with installation to office. Assumptions that these passages do refer to some sort of installation appear to be based upon the facts that Timothy is in some sort of leadership position when Paul writes to him; that Timothy is later given advice about laying on of hands; and that a spiritual gift is given in association with the laying on of hands. But this combination of facts does not clinch the argument in favour of installation to office.

Just because someone is in a leadership position does not mean that we must understand any laying on of hands to be related to their installation to office. For example, the Apostle Paul himself is described as having had hands laid upon him on two separate occasions, the first performed by Ananias for Paul's healing and his receiving the Holy Spirit at the beginning of his Christian journey (Acts 9:17) and the second when he was set aside for a specific task by the church in Antioch (Acts 13:2-3). Any reference to laying on of hands for Paul could thus invoke thoughts of either event.⁵⁰ Consequently, we must not simply assume that any discussion of laying hands upon a leader must be an installation to office.

The admonition to Timothy regarding laying hands upon others given in 1 Timothy 5:22 confirms Timothy's leadership role, but does it really say anything about the nature of Timothy's own laying on of hands? Kelly has argued affirmatively, noting that the admonition is not understandable

⁵⁰ Moreover, the NT discusses the appointment of individuals to leadership tasks where nothing is said about laying on of hands. For instance, Titus is instructed to appoint elders in every town but is not instructed to lay hands upon them (Titus 1:5).

unless there was “special efficacy and significance in earlier setting apart of elders and deacons.”⁵¹ But his conclusion is dependent upon the assumption that 1 Timothy 5:22 is describing an installation to office, an assumption which is disputed. Some scholars believe 1 Timothy 5:22 is addressing the reinstatement of repentant sinners to church membership, and thus the warning is about readmitting sinners to membership before they have manifest sufficient evidence of repentance.⁵² Most recently it has been suggested that 1 Timothy 5:22 is a warning against premature accusation of sin.⁵³ The ambiguity of this text means that it cannot be used with any confidence to bolster support for reading 1 Timothy 4:14 as a reference to installation to office.

Finally, the fact that a spiritual gift is imparted is likewise an inadequate defence for the conclusion that the laying on of hands referred to in Timothy must be related to installation to office. Since all members of the church including those not taking on any major leadership role are equipped with spiritual gifts to build up the Church, it would be wrong to restrict the timing of the reception of spiritual gifts to an installation of office. We have already noted that the NT describes laying on of hands at baptism in association with the gift of the Holy Spirit after baptism. Prophecies and the reception of some sort of spiritual gift could easily occur in this situation, since both depend directly upon the Holy Spirit which is being received. Consequently, Paul could be telling Timothy, who is now in a leadership position, to remember the prophecies made about him when he received the Holy Spirit, and to use the gift that he was given or prophesied at that time.

51 John N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles: I Timothy, II Timothy, Titus*, Black's New Testament Commentaries (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1963), 107.

52 Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 80. In support of this suggestion is the immediate context which talks about not sharing in the sins of others. However, the challenge of mass readmissions of repentant sinners does not appear to have been a significant problem for the Church before the second and third centuries, and the first explicit connection between laying on of hands and readmission of sinners does not occur until the third century, making this suggestion appear to be anachronistic. Tertullian uses the verse to argue against quick forgiveness of those caught in adultery. Pud XVIII.9. Cyprian as Bishop of Carthage appealed to this verse when considering readmitting repentant heretics. See Cyprian, Letter XV.1, and letter LXXXI.2.

53 Brian P. Irwin, “The Laying on of Hands in I Tim 5:22: A New Proposal.” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 18 (2008).

Thus we must conclude that not only is the context of the laying on of hands described in Timothy ambiguous, but so too are the grounds usually cited for interpreting this passage as relating to installation for office. This being the case, we must accept that while 1 Timothy 4:14 could refer to being set aside for some sort of leadership position, it could just as easily be interpreted as an act occurring for the reception of the Holy Spirit at the time of initiation into the faith.⁵⁴

The Relationship between Laying on of Hands and the Gift

In order to determine the relationship between the laying on of hands and the gift that Timothy has been given, I will focus on the meanings of the prepositions employed in 1 Timothy 4:14 and 2 Timothy 1:6. In the first passage, the spiritual gift is described as being given through [*dia*] prophecy, which was merely accompanied by [*meta*] the laying on of hands. But in 2 Timothy 1:6, Timothy is reminded to use the gift “which is in you through [*dia*] the laying on of my hands.”⁵⁵ This appears to put a different spin on the relationship. *Dia* used with the genitive of person generally denotes agency, instrumentality or causation.⁵⁶ While *dia* can mean attendant circumstances as Ferguson argues, Warkentin observes that this is rare with the genitive, and in the NT this meaning only occurs when *dia* is used with the genitive of thing, not the genitive of person.⁵⁷ Thus while the *meta* in the first passage indicates that the laying on of hands was merely an attendant circumstance of the bestowal of the gift, the second passage suggests a more direct connection between the gift and the laying on of hands.⁵⁸ Therefore, if we

54 John E. Toews, “Rethinking the Meaning of Ordination: Toward a Biblical Theology of Leadership Affirmation,” *Conrad Grebel Review* 22, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 15. Toews is one of few theologians willing to concede this ambiguity. His critics do not present any evidence to contradict this position, but rather express concern that this position might lead to the total abolishment of ordination.

55 Because attention in 1 Tim. 4:14 focuses on the group of Presbyters laying hands upon Timothy, we should not draw the conclusion from 2 Tim. 1:6 that Paul’s Apostolic authority was required for laying on of hands.

56 William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 223–226.

57 Everett Ferguson, “Ordination in the Ancient Church, IV,” *Restoration Quarterly* 5 (1961): 141. Marjorie Warkentin, *Ordination: A Biblical-Historical View* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 174.

58 The use of these two texts together introduces another exegetical issue in addition to the difference between prepositions. 1 Tim. 4:14 indicates that the elders laid hands on Timothy, while 2 Tim. 1:6 indicates that Paul was the one

understand the two texts to be describing the same event, we must allow for the possibility that the gift was given to Timothy as a result of the laying on of hands.⁵⁹

The Gift and Grace

In the light of the possibility that a gift was given by the laying on of hands, Warkentin argues that we must therefore “accept the reality of the transference of ‘grace’ through the laying on of hands,” while Dibelius and Conzelmann take this line of reasoning one step further, arguing that this indicates that sacramental “grace of the office” is transferred.⁶⁰ But the text does not mention any bestowal of office, nor does it emphasize any sort of official status as the result of laying on of hands.

At issue is not only the context of the laying on of hands, but also the nature of the gift which Timothy receives. There are three main explanations of the gift current amongst NT scholars. The first suggests, as do Dibelius and Conzelmann, that sacramental grace of office is transferred.⁶¹ A second suggests that the gift should be considered as a spiritual gift which equips Timothy for service, but which is not sacramental in nature.⁶² Proponents of this view may embrace the conferral of grace but are careful to exclude the idea that this grace places an indelible mark on the character of the minister

who laid hands on Timothy. There have been several proposed solutions to this discrepancy. The first suggests that these represent two separate occasions in the life of Timothy. More likely explanations are that both texts describe the same event in which Paul participated as one of the elders, or that Paul presided at a ceremony in which the elders were involved.

59 This is in contrast to the SDA Bible Commentary which explicitly denies any power or gift giving at the laying of hands upon Timothy, noting that the event merely recognized gifts and abilities Timothy already possessed. See Francis D. Nichol, ed. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* vol. 7 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1980), 307. While this is an appealing response which accords with Adventist rejection of sacramentalism, this response fails to engage with the subtleties of the texts themselves. Ellen White does not comment specifically on this passage although she does note that no gift was transferred to Paul and Barnabas at their laying on of hands. See Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 162.

60 Warkentin, *Ordination*, 175–6; Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 70.

61 Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 70.

62 Eduard Lohse, “*χαρίσ*,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-67) 9: 433–434.

as described by the Catholic tradition. The third explanation focusses on the prayer which accompanies the laying on of hands. The prayer requests the blessing of God, while the laying on of hands identifies the individuals for whom the blessing is requested. The gift is identified as the blessings which God subsequently bestows in the life of the individual.⁶³ While the latter position is appealing because it avoids ideas which might be mistakenly considered to support a sacramental approach, it appears to ignore important textual indicators that, as we have seen, allow the possibility that *charismata* or *charisma* are temporally related to hands being laid upon Timothy.

The words *charismata* and *charisma*, which are translated as “gift” in these passages, are derived from the Greek *charis* meaning gift or grace. Grace is therefore integral to the gift, which is a favour received without any merit on the part of the recipient.⁶⁴ Spiritual gifts could thus be correctly conceived as an expression of God’s grace. Therefore, if we concede that it was at least possible that Timothy received a spiritual gift as a result of his having hands laid upon him, we must also concede that accepting that possibility means that he received grace. But is this grace a special grace, or a grace of office that imparts an indelible mark upon him as a sacramental view insists?

When we examine the context of 1 Timothy 4:14, we find Paul advising Timothy to devote himself to “public reading of Scripture, preaching and teaching” (verse 13). This is followed immediately by the admonition, “do not neglect your gift” (verse 14) and subsequently by a call to diligence and wholehearted application to these matters (verse 15). The context thus suggests that the gift to which Paul is referring may be one of teaching or preaching, or indeed both of these. The context of 2 Timothy 1:6 suggests the gift is either the Holy Spirit or some sort of gift of speech. The gifts therefore are unquestionably ones that equip Timothy for his leadership role. At no point, however, is there any evidence that the gift sets him apart from other Christians who display different spiritual gifts, or that the gift gives him a superior status. Thus, while Timothy received grace in the form of a

63 Everett Ferguson, “Laying on of Hands: Its Significance in Ordination.” *Journal of Theological Studies* 26 (April 1975): 1–12. Grace is not conferred in this approach, but rather, the prayer spells out “the grace which God is asked to bestow.”

64 J. P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989).

gift at an unspecified time, there is no evidence to support this as a special grace in the sense implied by the sacramental understanding of ordination.⁶⁵

Evidence from Other Biblical Narratives

Before making any conclusions about the transfer of grace, we must examine the wider context of Scripture, in particular the narratives in which laying on of hands is definitively associated with appointment to a task.

In the narrative of the appointment of Joshua as Moses' successor, there is one text which may be of particular relevance. In Deuteronomy 34:9 a spirit of wisdom is attributed to Joshua as a consequence of Moses' laying his hands upon him. While this text does not appear to have had the same level of scrutiny as the texts about Timothy, opinion is divided over whether anything was transferred by Moses' laying hands upon Joshua. However, since Joshua was identified as full of the Spirit prior to his commissioning (Num. 27:18), it is not necessary to attribute the Spirit's gifting to the laying on of hands *per se*. Rather, the commissioning appears to have given Joshua a role in which the Spirit's gifting could be made manifest.

In the remaining narratives that we have discussed already in this paper (the installation of the Levites, the setting apart of the Seven in Acts, and the setting apart of Paul and Barnabas), there is no evidence that any special gifting accompanied the laying on of hands. Ellen White likewise notes that in the case of Paul and Barnabas, "there is no record indicating that any virtue was imparted by the mere act of laying on of hands. There is only the simple record of their ordination and of the bearing that it had on their future work."⁶⁶

Conclusions about Ordination and the Transfer of Grace

In this section we have noted that while the Greek allows for the possibility that Timothy may have received a gift of grace as a result of the laying on of hands, the context of the laying on of hands is uncertain and proof that it was associated with an installation to office is lacking. Furthermore this gift is not characterized as being one of special grace that results in an indelible mark on the soul. Together these absences argue against using these passages in Timothy to support a sacramental view of ordination. In addition, the absence of any mention of the transfer of grace or spiritual gifts in relation to the laying on of hands in the other NT narratives in which individuals are set apart for a task supports the view that even if the example

65 See discussion of special grace in the next section.

66 White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 162. She does not comment specifically on the verse in Timothy.

of Timothy did indicate a transfer of grace, this should not be considered normative.⁶⁷ Thus we must conclude that there is no firm evidence to support the transfer of grace and, more specifically, the transfer of special grace by the laying on of hands in ordination.

Christ and the Laying on of Hands

The third condition for a sacramental view of ordination is that the practice be instituted by Christ. A review of the Gospels shows that Christ laid hands upon children to bless them (Matt. 19:13–15), and laid hands upon individuals for healing (Mk 6:5; Mk 8:22–25; Lk 13:13). Christ is noted as appointing the twelve disciples and the seventy-two (Lk 6:13, 10:1) but in neither of these instances is the act of laying on of hands or associated prayer specifically noted, nor are these acts implied from the verbs used. *Epioēsen*, used in Mark 3:14 in relation to the disciples, suggests making, or bringing the group into being, or simply appointing, whereas *anedeixen* is used in relation to the seventy-two (Luke 10:1), and simply means assigning as task.⁶⁸ Hence, we can conclude that while Christ recognized the need for leaders and the need for individuals to undertake certain tasks, attributing ordination to him is to go beyond the available evidence.

Is there a Distinction between the Status of Clergy and Laity?

The fourth criterion for understanding ordination as a sacrament is that ordination must confer an indelible mark or seal upon the ordinand. This re-

67 There are several other good reasons why the example of Timothy should not be used as normative. First, if a practice is expected to be normative, we would be given explicit information about the context in which the practice should occur. Since laying on of hands is only mentioned in passing as part of personal exhortation to Timothy, and we are not given the context of the practice, it is clear that Paul is not attempting to teach it as a normative practice. Second, while Paul frequently appointed some form of leadership in the churches he planted and nurtured, these texts in Timothy are the only place that Paul writes about laying on of hands. If Paul intended this to be normative, it is likely that he would have written about laying on of hands elsewhere. Third, there are some clues that this might be a special case in which the Paul–Timothy relationship and the laying on of hands is patterned after the relationship between Moses and Joshua.

68 William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

sults in a distinction being made between clergy and laity that allows clergy alone specifically to represent Christ and to dispense grace. This argument cannot be sustained directly from biblical evidence because, while the NT indicates that all believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of God's ownership and his promise of redemption, evidence for any seal or mark specific to laying on of hands on installation to office is absent in Scripture.

In the absence of biblical evidence for a seal, the Roman Catholic Church points to the sacerdotal role of clergy as proof that a sealing must occur.⁶⁹ The contrast between the ordinary priesthood of the OT and the special priesthood of Christ is used to suggest that 1 Peter 2:5, 9 should be understood to mean that the regular member is in some sense a priest, being consecrated through the sacraments, whereas the clergy participate in the priesthood of Christ in such a way as to "act in the power and place of the person of Christ."⁷⁰ To be able to do this, it is argued, there must be a clear distinction between the clergy and those to whom they dispense grace.

In spite of the sharp distinction between clergy and laity that is described in a sacramental view of ordination, such a distinction has no NT precedent. I will argue this by examining three separate lines of evidence: the concept of the priesthood of all believers; an examination of the Greek words from which the words "clergy" and "laity" are derived; and the choice of vocabulary in the description of the role of leaders in the NT.

A Priesthood of all Believers

While the OT Levitical priesthood was a defined group set apart from the remainder of God's people, Christ's high priestly role with its continuous intercession for us, eliminates the need for a separate ongoing earthly priesthood that mediates between God and man. Rather, all believers who are united with Christ participate in a priesthood derived from the priesthood of Christ, enabling Peter to write, "You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession" (1 Pet. 2:9).⁷¹ Thus while the NT speaks about a priesthood, it does not recognize the priesthood as a special office in the Church, but rather teaches a universal priesthood of all believ-

69 Sacerdotalism understands clergy to have a priestly role that involves the offering of sacrifices.

70 Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1539–1550.

71 Raoul Dederen, "The Priesthood of all Believers," in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 9–27.

ers who are called to a ministry that declares the power and character of God and builds up the Church.

Consequently, in the Apostolic Church we find that ministry was not restricted to a particular group of super-Christians, or to those with some sort of superior status.⁷² It was a function of the entire Church. Indeed, God's calling of all believers is repeatedly emphasized in the NT, especially in the writings of Paul.⁷³ Each individual convert is called not only to live in a certain way as a consequence of their calling, but to minister according to the spiritual gifts which they have been given.⁷⁴ The diverse gifts given by the Holy Spirit ensure that the Church lacks nothing it needs to fulfil its role in the world.

In addition to the gifting, some individuals appear to be called to particular functions in the Church such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (Eph. 4:11). These functions were not introduced to form some rigid hierarchical Church structure, nor to elevate any one person to a higher spiritual or administrative plane than another, but rather to respond to genuine needs of the Church. So, for instance, the appointment of the seven in Acts 6 was a response to the need to make sure that widows were cared for appropriately. Likewise, when a group of believers was formed, someone needed to take responsibility for encouragement and continued building-up of the Church after the founder moved on to preach elsewhere. Furthermore, the presence of leaders promoted order in the Church, something that was encouraged from the very inception of the Church so that it could best fulfil its mission.⁷⁵

Clergy and Laity

The second line of evidence that argues against a distinction between clergy and laity is the use of the words from which "clergy" and "laity" are derived. The NT uses the Greek word *klēros*, from which the English word clergy is derived, to convey the idea of something that is assigned by lot, or more loosely, as a portion, share or inheritance.⁷⁶ In contrast to the regular

⁷² See for instance Acts 8:4, which tells that those who moved because of persecution preached wherever they went; and 1 Cor. 11 and 14, in which speaking, prophesying and praying by members are allowed, provided they are done in a specified manner and order is maintained.

⁷³ See for instance Rom. 11:29; Gal. 1:6; Gal. 5:8; Eph. 1:18, 4:1; 1 Thess. 5:24; 2 Thess. 1:11.

⁷⁴ 1 Cor. 12; Rom. 12:6.

⁷⁵ See for instance 1 Cor. 14.

⁷⁶ Words derived from the root *klēros* can be found in Matt. 27:35; Mk

contemporary usage of the term “clergy,” the NT never uses the term *klēros* to describe a group of leaders. Rather, it is used to describe of all God’s people who are his possession and share in the benefits of belonging to God (1 Pet. 5:3; Acts 26:18 and Col. 1:12). The entire group of Christian believers are part of the *klēros*.

An examination of the Greek *laos* from which the English word laity is derived is also helpful. *Laos* takes on several meanings in the NT. The Gospel writers use it to describe a group of people or a crowd, and more specifically when discussing the nation of Israel.⁷⁷ In the rest of the NT the word often moves beyond both these meanings to signify the idea of the Christian community as a whole.⁷⁸ Christians are rightly called the *laos* of God. Both words, *laos* and *klēros*, are used in ways that signify the Christian community as a whole.⁷⁹ The NT context does not support a difference between them.

Changes in the meaning of each of these words occurred gradually over the first few centuries of the early Church. As a distinct leadership hierarchy emerged, those individuals at the top of the hierarchy came to be understood as clergy and were given increased status and sacerdotal function. As a consequence the understanding of laity became more restricted. In comparison to the clergy they were increasingly seen as unqualified and uneducated and therefore unable to make decisions about the Church. With further time, the laity came to be defined simply as those who were “not clergy” and supposedly therefore not called of God.⁸⁰ Thus the idea of a distinction between clergy and laity emerged in the post-NT Church.

15:24; Lk 23:34; Jn 19:24; Acts 1:17, 26; Acts 8:21; Acts 26:18; Col. 1:12 and 1 Pet. 5:3. See Werner Foerster “κλήρος,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-67) 3:758-764.

77 Hermann Strathmann, “λαός,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-67) 4:50-53.

78 Ibid., 4:54-57. This is a natural extension of Paul’s appropriation of the OT promises to the Christian community who he considers to be the “new” people of God, or the new Israel. See for instance Acts 15:4, 2 Cor. 6:16, Titus 2:14, 1 Pet. 2:9.

79 Raoul Dederen comes to a similar conclusion in Raoul Dederen, “A Theology of Ordination,” *Ministry Supplement* 51, no. 2 (February 1978): 24K-24P.

80 F. L. Cross, and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. rev. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), s.v. “laity,” 949.

The Vocabulary Used in Association with Church Leaders

A third line of evidence that the NT Church did not see a distinction between its ministers and its other members comes from an analysis of the vocabulary used in association with Church leaders. The vocabulary appears to have been very carefully selected. Warkentin, for instance, observes that the “words in secular Greek for civil and religious authorities are consistently avoided in connection with the ministries of the church.”⁸¹ Included in this group of omitted words are the words *archē*, *archōn*, and *timē*.

The Greek *archē* usually means beginning, but can denote the idea of primacy, whether in time, rank, or power.⁸² It is frequently used of Roman and other Gentile authorities, and in the Septuagint it is also applied to Jewish leaders such as the priests and Levites.⁸³ However, in the NT it is never used of Christian leaders.⁸⁴ In the same word-group, the Greek *archōn* is defined as an individual who is a ruler, or who exercises power and authority.⁸⁵ It is applied frequently in the NT to Roman and Jewish officials of various kinds (Mt 9:18; Lk 12:58; Jn 3:1), to supernatural powers (Jn 14:39; Eph. 2:2), and also to Christ (Rev.). But once again we find no evidence for its application to Christian leaders.⁸⁶

Finally, the word *timē*, which is frequently used in secular material to indicate the honour or honouring of prominent people and those in office, is used in the NT to indicate what Christ deserves, what all Christians should

81 Warkentin, *Ordination*, 160. See also Hans Küng, who makes a similar observation. Küng, *The Church* (London: Search Press, 1968), 388.

82 Gerhard Delling, “ἄρχω, ἀρχή, ...” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–1967) 1:479–484.

83 Ibid.

84 *archē* is however used of Christ in Col. 1:18.

85 Delling, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 1:488.

86 The absence of *archon* (ruler) is not obvious to the casual reader because some English translations employ the word “ruler” or “rule.” See for instance Heb. 13:17 (KJV) where we find “obey those who rule over you” and 1 Tim. 5:17 (KJV, NAS) where elders are directed to “rule well.” In Heb. 13:17, the NIV captures better the nuance of the Greek which is one of trusting, and being persuaded by your leaders or guides. In 1 Tim. 5:17, the Greek word translated as rule (*proistēmi*) has a range of meaning including, guiding, managing, helping, striving, caring for, giving aid, and directing. While Arndt *et al.* include the idea of ruling as a possible meaning of *proistēmi*, the other words in the semantic domain encapsulate the ideas of Christian leadership espoused elsewhere.

give each other, and what husbands should give their wives.⁸⁷ While it is also used in 1 Timothy 5:17 in relation to elders who direct the affairs of the church, contextually this seems to refer to the idea of elders receiving wages or an honorarium rather than honour in the sense seen in secular literature.⁸⁸ The only NT use in which the word clearly intends honour associated with office, relates to that of the first Jewish high priest Aaron (Heb. 5:4) and not to officers of the NT Church. Thus the vocabulary used of leaders in the NT Church does not support any status differences between them and other members of the church.

Conclusions Regarding the Relative Status between Leaders and Other Church Members

The fourth criterion for ordination to be considered sacramental is that the rite conveys an indelible mark which results in a differing status between clergy and laity. Supporters base much of their argument upon the sacerdotal model of clergy that sees clergy as mediatorial priests. However, this section has shown that Christ's high priestly role eliminates the need for a mediatorial human priest, and that the NT instead regards all Christians as having a form of priesthood derived from Christ. This undermines the very foundations of the argument in favour of a mark leading to a distinction between clergy and laity.

Furthermore we have seen that the distinction between clergy and laity emerged in Church history in the centuries after the NT. The NT uses both *laos* and *klēros* to describe all Christian believers and hence does not support boundaries and or status differences between them.

Finally, we have noted that words that ascribe status differences in secular administration are not applied to the leaders of the NT Church. We can safely conclude that there is no evidence of an implied difference in status between leaders and the members they shepherd. As Jim Papandrea

87 Johannes Schneider "τιμή," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–1967), 8:174. See for instance Rom. 12:10.

88 See Schneider, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 8:176. This text is contentious and interpretations range from honorarium, double pay, honour and pay, to double honour. Given the contextual clues, the lack of other suggestions supporting honour associated with office, and the overall picture painted of NT leaders, the meanings of honorarium or double pay would seem to be the more likely interpretations.

acknowledges, the only distinction in the Apostolic Church was “between those who knew Jesus and those who did not” (Acts 1:21–22).⁸⁹

Conclusion

Ordination in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, like many other issues of Church organization, developed primarily to serve the function and integrity of the Church. The earliest ordination amongst the Sabbatarian Adventists is thought to have occurred in 1853, even before the fledgling group had chosen a name or developed any formal organizational structure.⁹⁰ However ordination and licensing were considered necessary to protect believers by indicating which preachers were trustworthy, exhibiting good characters, and teaching in harmony with the revealed truth. Such a pragmatic approach meant that little thought was given to the theology of ordination in the early years of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Nevertheless, the idea of ordination as a sacrament was rejected outright in the writings of founder Ellen White.⁹¹ This early decision is consistent with biblical evidence examined in this paper.

To be considered a sacrament, ordination needs to fulfil four criteria. It needs to have obvious symbolism, convey grace, be instituted by Christ, and convey a mark or seal that results in a spiritual distinction between clergy and laity. Since ordination in the current forms did not arise until the third century, its proxy, the laying on of hands in commissioning for a task, has been used in this paper. While laying on of hands meets the first criterion of symbolism, the evidence for transfer of grace has been shown to be tenuous at best. Even if Timothy’s laying on of hands was for the purpose of commissioning, and grace was transferred to him as part of this rite, there is no evidence that this was special grace that set him apart from others, and no evidence that this example is normative for the Church as a whole. Furthermore, evidence for institution by Christ and a spiritual distinction between

89 Jim L. Papandrea. *The History and Meaning of Ordination in the Pre-Reformation Church*. 2009. <http://www.garrett.edu/gmedia/pdf/communications/Symposium-Ordination-Paper-Papandrea.pdf>. However the lack of distinction does not detract from a necessity for leaders to be examples to their fellow members.

90 James White reports laying hands upon Bro. Lawrence during the White’s tour to the Eastern States. He notes that this was for the purpose of setting him apart for Gospel ministry and for administration of ordinances. James White, “Eastern Tour,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 4, no. 11 (September 20, 1853): 85.

91 White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 162.

clergy and laity are completely absent from Scripture. Therefore we must conclude that ordination in the Seventh-day Adventist Church should not be considered a sacrament.

This conclusion has implications for the way the ordination is performed. First, in keeping with the priesthood of all believers, ordination should not appear to give extra status to the clergy or in any way suggest a ranking of clergy over and above laity. Nor should it devalue the role of the unordained in the ministry and mission of the Church. The current system of making special high days for ordination of pastors, while crowding ordination of elders and deacons into a regular service, and failing to recognize any other tasks with laying on of hands, tends to imply differences of importance and status even if unintended.

Second, since the symbolism in part involves identification, representation, and recognition that the minister will do some tasks on behalf of the congregation, the congregation should in some way be actively involved in laying hands upon the individual being ordained. It is the members and not the other leaders who impart their authority to the ordained. Adventists have rejected Apostolic succession and defining the Church by means of its hierarchy, yet they have continued to maintain that only those who are ordained can participate in the laying on of hands. This disconnection between practice and belief has sometimes been attributed to the need for order, but order need not be sacrificed to allow the participation in this rite by those who are not ordained.

As ongoing examination of the topic of ordination is conducted, it is essential that Church practice continues to be examined closely in order to ensure that practice matches verbal affirmations and rejections made by the Church.

Part 5

Moving Forward

Chapter 10: Looking Back, Going Forward¹

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At the General Conference session in July this year the delegates will be asked to vote on a number of matters. For some items the vote follows decades of discussion and study. Over the years the church has assembled its leaders and scholars for consultations, study groups and committees. Some matters have been examined repeatedly and at length, but no consensus has yet been achieved.

These issues have become prominent not only because of changes in practice and thinking by some in the church, but also because others have felt it necessary to take a stand against the changes. One such case is related to the role of women as ordained pastors in our churches. In this case the church has proposed to the Session a mechanism by which women might be ordained in different Divisions of the church if thought fit by that Division. It seems that the door to change is being held open just a little bit. Delegates are to be asked to vote “yes” or “no”.

It is not my intention here to review the arguments (pro or con) on any of these questions. Rather, I think our time might be spent more profitably looking at what the Bible has to say about change, and then consider what our attitude should be to those whose positions differ from ours.

It is clear to students of history that changes have occurred over the millennia in the beliefs and practices of the Christian church. Changes have likewise been documented in the shorter history of Seventh-day Adventism. It is self-evident that change is perceived only by reference to a point in the past, and different people choose different reference points. Therefore it is instructive to consider the Bible’s advice about the past.

1 An edited version of a sermon preached at the Avondale College Church Chapel Service June 13, 2015. The application of the original sermon was not limited to ordination practice.

Isaiah 46:9: “Remember the former things, those of long ago.”²

Isaiah 43:18: “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.”

At first sight this is not very helpful. As a scientist I love anomalies and contradictions—they often indicate where really interesting things lie. These texts have challenged my thinking for at least 20 years. Their context and reference to other Scripture passages will help us to see how they each have something important to say.

In Isaiah 46:6–13 a comparison is being made between the gods of Babylon and the God of the house of Jacob.

With whom will you compare me or count me equal? Some pour out gold from their bags...(and) hire a goldsmith to make it into a god, and they bow down and worship it. Remember this, keep it in mind, take it to heart, you rebels. Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. ... ‘My purpose will stand... I am bringing my righteousness near, it is not far away; and my salvation will not be delayed.

In other words, remember the past because it teaches us that “God is God” and He will save. Deut 32:7, 10, 11a and 13 add to the thought:

7 Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders and they will explain to you ... 10 In a desert land [the Lord] found [Jacob—here personifying the nation], in a barren and desolate waste. He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye, 11 like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young... 13 He made him ride on the heights of the land, and fed him with the fruits of the fields. He nourished him with honey from the rock and with oil from the flinty crag.

In other words remember the past because it teaches that God is good; He shields, He guards, He feeds and He nourishes His children.

The context of Isaiah 43 is captivity—Babylonian captivity. Isaiah 43:16, 17 reads:

This is what the Lord says - he who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters, who drew out the chariots and horses, the army and reinforcements together, and they lay there, never to rise again, extinguished, snuffed out like a wick.

It is clear that these verses refer to the escape from the Egyptian army at the Red Sea: a key element of the exodus story. *Then comes verse 18 like a bombshell.*

Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.

How could they forget the Red Sea? The exodus from Egypt and deliverance from its forces by God’s mighty hand were defining events in the formation of their nation! So why forget them? Why? *Verse 19 provides the answer*

2 All Scripture quotations in the sermon are from the NIV

See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.

Not a dry path through the waters, but a path (watered by streams) through the desert

In other words forget the past because God has new things in store for you.

Another well-known text that recommends forgetting is Phil. 3:13, 14: Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

This text can be read both as a warning and a promise. The warning is not to look back (with nostalgia or regret) at what we have given up to follow God. Lot's wife is the classic example. But she is not the only one. There was also the experience of Demas, who deserted Paul "because he loved the present world" (2 Tim. 4:10). The promise is that we need not be paralysed by the circumstances from our individual pasts, but can put our confessed sins and pre-conversion regrets behind us and concentrate on the prize that God has promised us.

I believe that the four passages we have just read indicate that in looking to the past we are to remember that God is good and that the principles of His activity are changeless but that the outward shape of that activity alters with the changing needs of God's people, and the circumstances in which they find themselves. God is our deliverer—but deliverance will not always come through the Red Sea. Therefore we should reflect on the past with gratitude, and let it stimulate faith: but we should not allow it to stereotype our expectations of God. What he has in mind may take our breath away.

Israel had the habit of making a particular mistake in looking at its past: an error that we might be tempted to repeat. Israel considered they had a mortgage on God because they were the chosen people. They looked to their nation's origins and to what God had done for them in the past as a guarantee of current favour.

If a church locates its self-identity in the past, the temptation will be to shy away from a careful and prayerful examination of current positions and practices. The prophets as a group condemned Israel for this tendency: it remains a highly dangerous path. So with this context let us return to the question of change—or to those new things God may bring our way. Scripture records a number of new things following the times of Isaiah.

The greatest new thing God did was to send His Son. The gospels are filled with examples of how Jesus reinterpreted the requirements of the law

in ways that outraged the religious leaders: miracles on the Sabbath; all the “it is said, but I say unto you” passages; and the identification of God as His Father. He demanded righteousness exceeding that of the Scribes and the Pharisees, and instructed that whoever would be great must become a servant. The leaders of Israel concluded that the changes Jesus was advocating threatened the very nation itself. “It is better that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish” (John 11:50). It is well worth asking ourselves whether we resist change with the same intensity.

Another new thing was the decision to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. I don’t think we comprehend the magnitude of the cultural earthquake that occurred among Jewish Christians following the vision to Peter prior to his visit to Cornelius. Neither should we downplay the impact of the decision made in Jerusalem about whether circumcision was mandatory for gentile converts. Circumcision was the sign of belonging to God. The opponents of change could quote Scripture on their side. Nevertheless, changing circumstances required a new thing – and the believers were led by the Spirit to find it. Acts 11:28-29 reads:

It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things.

In more recent times I would argue that the changing of cultural and religious attitudes to slavery in Western society was a new thing prompted by God. In Britain it didn’t come easily. Wilberforce, following his conversion, campaigned for about 50 years before a Bill to free the slaves was passed by the British Parliament. In the process he suffered death threats; his character was maligned; his opponents prophesied economic ruin of the nation; and vested interests lobbied powerfully against his proposals. But he persevered in health and through sickness.

However, illustrating that God has done new things, and presumably still has new things to teach us, does not solve all our difficulties. Two issues still arise.

The first can be stated quickly. The fact that God will do new things is not a good reason to believe that every new thing is from God. How then do we decide which new things are from Him and which are not?

The second will take a little longer to formulate and relies on three observations.

1. Some people seem to be more adventurous and accepting of change, while others tend to put more stress on precedent. My observation is that spirit-filled Christians are to be found in either group. If you

look again you will identify individuals who are adventurousness in some aspects of life but more constant in others. You will almost certainly find aspects of that dichotomy in your own experience. It is part and parcel of being human.

2. At any given time the church is made up of individuals who are at different stages of their spiritual journeys. The moment we recognise our experience with God as a journey, it becomes impossible for us to insist that where we are now is the norm for all pilgrims.
3. The church is made up of people who vary by virtue of their personality, culture and education.

Considering these three points together it is unrealistic to expect that at all members of our church are going to agree on all aspects of its teaching and practice. When the votes are counted at San Antonio (whatever the outcome) there will be people who moments before were sincerely and with moral conviction arguing against the course that has just been voted.

- Do we expect them to shrug their shoulders and say, "I suddenly see this whole matter differently"?
- Would we really want them to?
- Would it be an evidence of a healthy church if that is what they did?

My answer to all three questions is no: and I realise that by so answering I am compelled by my own logic to grant to others the right to think differently. C.S. Lewis wrote:

If all experienced God in the same way and returned Him an identical worship, the song of the Church triumphant would have no symphony, it would be played like an orchestra in which all instruments played the same note.³

So we are left with these two questions:

1. How do we identify which new things are from God? and
2. How do we live as the body of Christ in which (for the reasons I have just outlined) diversity of thought and practice is inevitable?

First, how do we identify which new things are from God? In the context that God's character and purposes are eternal but that He responds differently in different circumstances, I have some ideas for your consideration. My only caveat is that these ideas are a work in progress. When I have finished there will still be questions to address, ideas to share and conversations to be had.

The Bible tells me to expect change. Jesus said (John 16:12,13), "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the

3 C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (5th Impression, Glasgow: Fontana, 1964), 138.

Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth.” Some argue that this promise was limited to the apostles. However, it seems to me that the Spirit of truth was still at work in the anti-slavery movement, and I would expect more guidance as the church confronts other social and cultural questions. In Matt. 13:52 Jesus is quoted as saying, “Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.” In 2 Pet. 3:18 Peter admonishes, “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever.” Growth implies change. I suggest that growing in grace might well include corporate, as well as individual, changes to belief and practice.

Jesus warns me that attempts to undo the enemy’s work can be counter-productive. In the parable a servant tells his master that there are weeds in the crop. The response given in Matt. 13:28–30 is: “‘An enemy did this,’ he replied. ‘The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ ‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: first collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’” Jesus is here worried about what modern generals refer to euphemistically as collateral damage. This is simply the destruction of innocent bystanders which, when exposed by news video-footage, reveals the whole horror of war. I have lived long enough to have seen evidence of collateral damage in the church. I pray never to have to see it again.

Jesus warns me about false teachers. Matthew 7:15–20 records Jesus’ words:

¹⁵ “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.”

The test Jesus applies to the genuineness of the new thing is its fruit. Fruit by its nature may take time to develop and be identified. Then He goes on to say (verses 21–23):

²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evil doers!’”

Jesus is talking about real danger. He said, "Watch out as you would for wolves", but even in this passage final punishment is reserved for the judgement. I am relieved that I am not called upon to execute judgement on those seen to be prophesying and performing miracles.

So we arrive at the final question: How do I relate to those in the church who have views that differ from mine? Paul tells me not to be a stumbling block. Paul teaches that the true gospel is the proclamation that salvation is a gift from God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and that we can do nothing to earn it. He says to reject any other Gospel. But beyond this he recognises that there may be "disputable matters". In Romans 14 he talks about those with weak and strong faith. Even if we can't agree on who has the strong faith and who has the weak faith the personal application of this text is sobering. "Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister" (Rom. 14:13). At a personal level, if I think I am the one with the strong faith then it is mandated that I put others first. If I am tempted to cast myself as the one with weak faith so that others will feel obligated to defer to me, then I have to admit that there is a better way than mine. Paul catches me coming and going! I have no escape.

C. S. Lewis reminds me that diversity brings strength. This quote from *Mere Christianity* is edited slightly to make it gender-inclusive:

Christianity thinks of human individuals not as mere members of a group or items in a list, but as organs in a body—different from one another and each contributing what no other could. When you find yourself wanting to turn your children, or pupils, or even your neighbours, into people exactly like yourself, remember that God probably never meant them to be that. You and they are different organs, intended to do different things.

On the other hand, when you are tempted not to bother about [other members'] troubles because they are 'no business of yours,' remember that though [they are] different from you [they are] part of the same organism as you. If you forget that [they belong] to the same organism as yourself you will become an Individualist. If you forget that [they are] different organs from you, if you want to suppress differences and make people all alike, you will become a Totalitarian. But a Christian must not be either a Totalitarian or an Individualist.

I feel a strong desire to tell you—and I expect you feel a strong desire to tell me—which of these two errors is the worse. That is the devil getting at us. He always sends errors into the world in pairs—pairs of opposites. And he always encourages us to spend a lot of time thinking which is the worse. You see why, of course? He relies on your extra dislike of the one error to draw you gradually into the opposite one. But do not let us be fooled. We have to

keep our eyes on the goal and go straight through between both errors. We have no other concern than that with either of them.⁴

I need to realise that those with different perspectives are not opponents to talk “at”, but members of the body of Christ to talk “with”. If I talk “at” someone I am trying to prove a point. I will feel compelled to rebut counter-arguments. In so doing I will entrench my position, perhaps becoming more extreme: likewise the listener. However if I am talking “with” someone I recognise that they may have something for me to learn. The conversation may not cause either of us to abandon our views but at the very least it will lead to a better understanding of the topic and each other. Knowing and appreciating someone as another individual who God loves will lead us to present our ideas more kindly.

In June 2014 Mark Finley, a former General Conference Vice- President and assistant to the President, was reported in the pages of the *Adventist Review* as commenting about his changed attitude following meetings of the Theology of Ordination Study Committee. He says that he discovered that

... although I have deeply held and what I believe to be biblical convictions [on the subject of women’s ordination], there are others who cherish different views they believe are rooted in Scripture as well. Those who take different positions on the subject of women’s ordination argue that their position is most faithful to Scripture.⁵

He then asks, “How shall I relate to those who think differently than I do?” and then quotes a statement of Ellen White which, in part, states that “we cannot...take a position that the unity of the church consists in viewing every text of Scripture in the very same shade of light.”⁶

Finally, I need to love my fellow believers. On this point the following Scriptures from John 13, John 3, Matthew 26 and Philippians 2 suffice without added commentary.

- John 13:34: “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”
- John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”
- Matt 26:38, 39: “[In Gethsemane Jesus]...said to them, ‘My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.’”³⁹ Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and

4 C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (12th Impression, Glasgow: Fontana 1965), 154–155.

5 *Adventist Review*, June 19, 2014

6 White Estate, Manuscript Releases Vol. 15, no. 149,2. <http://egwtext.whiteestate.org>

prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

- Philippians 2: 5–8: “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!”
- John 13:35: “By this will all know that you are My disciples – if you love one another (as I have loved you!).”

This is a remarkably high standard. Loving one another is more important than any denominational vote. However, a denominational vote may reflect on our capacity for love. This could be to our credit, or it might be otherwise.

As Adventists we put a high value on our past and rightly so. The way in which we react to that past has profound implications for the future of our denomination.

I have fears for my church if we, its members, are looking over our shoulders with nostalgia at what we have given up. Remember Lot’s Wife and Demas.

I have fears for my church if it finds its identity only in 1844 and the exploits of its pioneers, and fails to take into account its current circumstances. Remember Israel.

I have fears for my church if we choose some point in our history as the point at which we had it right, and attempt to enshrine that moment.

I have great hope for my church if, with a clear understanding of what God has done for His people in the past, we have confidence that His power will be even more spectacular in the present and the future.

I have great hope for my church if we realise that God has some completely new things for us—maybe as different as the sea is from the desert.

I have great hope for my church if we can develop such a sense of God’s actions in the past that we will correctly interpret present situations and respond in a Christ-like manner.

I have great hope for my church if we can take to heart Jesus’ command to love one another.

Will my hopes or my fears prevail?

The answer to that question lies with each of us. I challenge you, as I challenge myself, to make a difference in favour of hope. I urge us all to pray that God will lead us to those new things that will revitalise both our own spiritual lives and the witness of our church. May we frame the salvation offered in Jesus in ways that enable it to speak to our times and to our culture

Chapter 11: “Lifeworlds” of Seventh-day Adventist Female Pastors

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Women’s ordination was first discussed in the Seventh-day Adventist Church at a General Conference session in the United States in 1881. The debate seems to have lasted over 130 years and it still remains a controversial issue today. Over the years the Adventist Church has had a “rather strange ambivalence towards women in ministry.”¹ History reveals that early Adventism “encouraged its women to enter the ministry.”² In fact “there was no definition of ministry within nineteenth-century Adventism that excluded women.”³ Thus in the United States where, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Adventism was just beginning to emerge, women began to fill roles as leader or evangelists, while many were employed by the early Church as pastors. Among early licensed women in ministry was Sarah Hallock Lindsey who started work as an evangelist in New York State with her husband in 1868. She was a licensed minister. Others included Ellen Edmonds Lane, Julia Owens and Hattie Enoch:

Ellen Edmonds Lane in 1868 became an evangelist with her husband Elbert. They worked in Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Virginia and Tennessee. She was licensed from 1878-1889. Julia Owen worked in the Kentucky-Tennessee Conference as a licensed minister from 1878-1895. And Hattie Enoch was an evangelist with her husband in the Kansas Conference and was licensed in 1879; she later served as a missionary in Bermuda.⁴

1 Roger Dudley, “How Seventh-day Adventist Lay Members View Women Pastors,” *Review of Religious Research* 38 (1996): 134.

2 Bert Haloviak, “A Place at the Table: Women and the Early Years,” in *The Welcome Table: Setting a Place for Ordained Women*, eds Patricia A. Habada and Rebecca Frost Brillhart (Langley Park, MD: TEAMPress, 1995), 30.

3 *Ibid.*, 30.

4 Kit Watts, “Selected List of 150 Adventist Women in Ministry, 1844–1994” in Habada and Brillhart, *The Welcome Table*, 359. Cf. also her chapter, “Moving Away From the Table: A Survey of Historical Factors Affecting Women

More than a century has passed. Although the Seventh-day Adventist Church still employs female pastors in many parts of the world, the Church has yet to embrace fully the ordination of women. Female pastors are able to perform most of their duties without the “official blessing” of the Church. Robinson makes an insightful statement in his interpretation of the attitude to ordination within Adventism: “This denomination has implemented a compromise policy. They do not ordain women as ministers, but do grant them most of the authority given to male ministers. They do allow ordination of women to the lower post of Elder.”⁵

Against great odds, Adventist female pastors faithfully serve their Church and are making significant contributions to their faith-communities globally. Dudley conducted a study that sought to understand how Adventist lay-members view female pastors. The study was carried out in the North American Division (NAD). Twenty churches served by a female pastor or associate-pastor were surveyed to determine how female pastors were received by congregations. The findings revealed that a substantial majority rated their female pastor as competent and effective in their pastoral duties, and 91 per cent gave them an overall rating of excellent or good.⁶

In many branches of Western Protestantism women’s ordination seems a distant memory. Almost five decades have passed since women were ordained in significant numbers. Graham concluded almost twenty years ago that clergywomen in the wider Christian context have made significant contributions to the life and communities where they minister. She wrote:

For the first time, clergywomen are articulating their vision, reclaiming their history and bringing a ‘theology of women’s experience.’ Women’s lived experience, encompasses considerations of the impact of women upon the pastoral ministry; reflection on ‘feminine’ religious experience and its distinctive nature; biblical interpretation; questions of inclusive language; feminist reconstructions of care, growth, human identity, relatedness and community, and their implications for pastoral practice.⁷

Today the picture of clergywomen’s contribution to the wider Christian Church remains positive. In a more recent study (2011), Niemela poses the Leaders” in Habada and Brillhart, *The Welcome Table*, 45–60.

5 Bruce Robinson, “Female Clergy in Eastern Orthodox Churches, Protestant Denominations, and other Religions,” *Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance*, accessed February 12, 2015, <http://www.religioustolerance.org/fem-clrg4.htm>.

6 Dudley, “Lay Members,” 134.

7 Elaine Graham, *Transforming Practice* (London: Mowbray, 1996), 124–125.

question, are “female clergy agents of religious change?” She reached the firm conclusion from her research that “clergywomen are modernizing the Church in various ways that include teaching, policies and practices.”⁸

In this Chapter I shall not explore further or measure whether female pastors in the Seventh-day Adventist Church are contributing to ministry, nor do I wish to consider the “rights or wrongs” of female ordination and the “ongoing tensions that surround the role of women.”⁹ My interest in this paper is focused on an important question which we as a denomination have neglected to ask. That question is, how do female pastors live and function behind a controversial backdrop of a Church yet to accord full ordination to women?

In 2006 in the South Pacific Division, a research project was begun in Australia. The project was focused specifically on female pastors in the Adventist Church. The investigation centred on their “lifeworlds”—how they construct, perceive and live out their reality. For the first time female pastors were given the opportunity to articulate and to describe their experience as pastors in the Adventist Church. In this paper I shall focus on the lifeworlds of female pastors in relation to their call to ministry, their experience of theological education and present ministry challenges for them. For many of us, this will be the first time we will have had an opportunity to engage with and to begin to understand their conflicting lifeworlds. We are in a privileged position as we hear their narratives and gain perspective into their lifeworlds.

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to inquire, describe and understand individual and collective meaning; to pursue the “lived experience” of Adventist female pastors in Australia. The term “lived experience” has its root in the German word *Erlebnis*, which literally means “the experience of living through something.”¹⁰ *Erlebnis* refers to the ways in which human beings assign meaning to their situation. Human beings construct meaning as they engage actively in and with the world they interpret. “Lifeworld”, then, re-

8 Kati Niemela, “Female Clergy as Agents of Religious Change?” *Religions* 2 (2011): 369.

9 David Roebuck, “I Have Done the Best I Could: Opportunities and Limitations for Women Ministers in the Church of God—A Pentecostal Denomination,” *Theology Today* 68, no. 4 (2012): 403.

10 Refer to Max van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy* (Ontario, Canada: Althouse, 1997), 2001.

fers to the human world of lived experience, which is concretely and directly encountered prior to theoretical explanations, and fundamentally characterized by meaning.¹¹ In order to understand the experiences of female pastors, their construction of meaning and how they perceive social reality, a subjective, inductive and qualitative approach was essential. For this reason an existential phenomenological design was employed for this investigation.

Participants were women who had studied theological education at an Adventist Christian tertiary institution in Australia from the year 1995 onwards. Each participant was required to have had a minimum of one year's experience either as an employed full-time pastor or a full-time volunteer in ministry. Having had this professional experience would qualify the participants to act as reliable informers through their rich descriptions of the phenomena being investigated.

There were twelve women who fulfilled the criteria, and all twelve consented to participate in the study. Throughout the study, confidentiality, ethical procedures and anonymity were maintained. Interviews began in 2006 at various locations in Australia. Each participant was interviewed for 40 to 50 minutes. The analysis of the data was guided by Colaizzi's five stages in the phenomenological method.¹²

Research Findings

The research data yielded fourteen interpretative themes. From these fourteen themes, three generative overarching themes were identified (see Tables 1 and 2 below).

11 Refer to Helen Speziale and Dona Carpenter, *Qualitative Research in Nursing: Advancing the Humanistic Imperative*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott Williams and Wilkins, 2003). For an understanding of phenomenology refer to David Smith, *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University 2003), accessed November 14, 2007, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology>.

12 For an overview of Colaizzi's work refer to Paul Colaizzi, "Psychological Research as the Phenomenologist Views It" in *Existential Phenomenological Alternative for Psychology*, eds. Ronald Valle and May Kings (New York: Oxford University, 1978), 48–71.

Table 1: Fourteen Interpretative Themes¹³

Theme (1): Formulating and accepting “call” to ministry Reflecting on “call” Pursuing “call”	Theme (8): Emotional responding to theological education Emotional response to course
Theme (2): Valuing the practice of ministry Reflecting on ministry Adapting practice of ministry	Theme (9): Coping strategies for survival of theological training Accomplishing academic success Conforming to expectations of college and employers Fulfilling a “maternal” role/figure Acknowledging “Divine” help to succeed
Theme (3): Recognising ministry challenges for clergywomen Experiencing disillusionment Feeling dissatisfied by pastoral training of theological education	Theme (10): Perceiving peers Relating to female peers Relating to male peers
Theme (4): Experiencing devaluation in professional context Perceiving organisation and employers Experiencing unequal opportunities in ministry Responding to hostile environments	Theme (11): Recognising public persona Reflecting on self-consciousness of public perception Challenging male peer biases
Theme (5): Reflections on theological program Reflecting on the academic program(s) Experiencing lecturer’s perception and beliefs Experiencing and reflecting on specific curriculum	Theme (12): Experiencing personal cost of theological education Deconstruction Construction Reconstruction

13 For a more extensive treatment of this study refer to Drene Somasundram and Anita Monro, “‘Thirdspace’ Engenders Theological Education,” *The International Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Society* 2, no. 3 (2013): 55-68

Theme (6): Reactions to course not designed for female students Unaccommodating to female students Faculty demonstrating difficulty in relating to female students	Theme (13): Imaging of theological education Describing an image for theological education
Theme (7): Experiencing discrimination and marginalisation Feeling silent desperation Recognising the concept of futility	Theme (14): Recommendations for theological training/education Recommending improvements to theological education

Table 2: Three interconnected generative overarching themes:

(1) Identity	(2) Epistemology	(3) Environment
Theme I: Formulating and accepting "call" to ministry	Theme II: Valuing the practice of ministry	Theme II: Valuing the practice of ministry
Theme II: Valuing the practice of ministry	Theme III: Recognising ministry challenges for clergywomen	Theme III: Recognising ministry challenges for clergywomen
Theme IV: Experiencing devaluation in professional context	Theme V: Reflections towards theological program(s)	Theme IV: Experiencing devaluation in professional context
Theme VI: Reacting to course not designed for female students	Theme VI: Reacting to course not designed for female students	Theme VI: Reacting to course not designed for female students
Theme VIII: Emotional response to theological education	Theme VIII: Emotional response to theological education	Theme VII: Experiencing discrimination and marginalisation
Theme IX: Coping strategies for survival of theological training	Theme IX: Coping strategies for survival of theological training	Theme VIII: Emotional response to theological education
Theme XI: Recognising public persona	Theme XIII: Imaging of theological education	Theme X: Perceiving peers
Theme XII: Experiencing personal cost of theological education	Theme XIV: Recommending improvements to theological education	Theme XIII: Imaging of theological education

Theme XIII: Imaging of theological education		Theme XIV: Recommending improvements to theological education
Theme XIV: Recommending improvements to theological education		

Research Discussion

Throughout this paper, for the sake of confidentiality female pastors have been given pseudonyms, while the name of the tertiary educational institution where the women studied is not given and actual wording from the participants is presented in inverted commas. In this section of the paper, specific discussion of female pastors’ lifeworlds in relation to their call, education and ministry challenges as extracted from the themes researched will be presented.

A Sacred Calling

Vacillation for female pastors begins with the recognition of “calling” to the vocation of ministry. A sense of “call” is central in many religious traditions; the Seventh-day Adventist Church is no exception. However “call” has become problematic in its relation to female pastors and entry into ministry. Call is often associated with a set path leading to ordination in pastoral ministry.

All participants that were interviewed expressed a strong sense of God’s call in their lives to pursue a vocation in ministry in the Adventist Church. This impression or sense of God’s divine leading could be traced from their early childhood or to their teenage years, and for some it was finally confirmed through their theological training. Their descriptions of this experience are as follows: “God told me to”; “I must have been about 13 or 14 when I first sensed God leading me to some form of ministry...It wasn’t something I had planned to do or something I could even see myself doing”; “I believed since I was a teenager that this is something God wanted me to do, to be in ministry”; “I came to the realisation that ministry is what God wanted for my life”; “it’s God’s call, without a shadow of doubt”; “on September twelfth 2001, the day after the twin towers were bombed, God spoke to me...He told me He wanted me to go to College and study theology”; “I think God had bigger plans than I ever thought. My call was confirmed during my studies”.

Female pastors all held a deep-rooted conviction and confidence that God is in control of their lives and that since He has called them into ministry, he will take care of them. The results showed that female pastors felt embarrassed or uncomfortable and faced many negative views and barriers to their “call” to ministry, but they were determined to follow God’s leading. Ruth revealed how uncomfortable she felt when publicly revealing her “call” to her family, friends and church community:

When it came to telling people what I was going to do, I avoided it until I could do so no more. The reason for this was that I felt that I had a personality that didn’t quite fit to the role of a pastor. I feared ridicule and the constant questioning. I told my Dad what I was going to do; he laughed and wouldn’t believe me. He thought that it was a joke until he finally realized I was serious. This did nothing to help my confidence.

Deborah reflected how she wanted to study theology in the ‘70s, but at that time the Adventist Church had not addressed the issue of women in ministry and the Anglican Church was yet to ordain women to the priesthood officially. Clearly, at that time the barriers were insurmountable: “I wanted to do it in the ‘70s, but instead I went off to be a nurse, a music teacher, a business woman—but the ‘call’ stayed far deep in my system until I answered it and I had to go, children and husband in tow...I just had to do it.” Rosie recalled her first day at college where she experienced negativity and was blatantly told not to study theology: “When enrolling I was actually encouraged by the Registrar to do Home Economics and Bible teaching instead. He didn’t see much point in me studying Theology.” Eve was also discouraged from studying theology: “One lecturer, who wasn’t in the Theology Department, actually said to me there was always a teaching (career), because you might not get a job.”

Annabel had to wrestle with a parent who did not encourage her to ministry and who did not believe that women were “called” to such a role: “I grew up in a fairly conservative home where women didn’t do these types of things and I suspect that one of my parents still struggles with the fact that I am a pastor.” And Rosie disclosed her commitment to God’s call and her perseverance regardless of illness by stating simply, “My conviction was so strong, I was meant to be there.”

Female pastors acknowledged the difficulties that their gender presented to their denomination in the acceptance of God’s call to ministry. However Harriet was unaware of this: “I didn’t realise women didn’t become ordained ministers.” In order to work through difficulties, the women’s descriptions of their experiences revealed how influential literature helped in their initial

acceptance of God’s call to ministry. For example, Annabel disclosed, “I had to work through this further that I was a woman and that God called me into the ministry and it was probably through reading books like *The Welcome Table*,¹⁴ that I came to the realisation that God did use women for mission.” Mature female pastor Marie took the time to study the Bible for herself and came to her own conclusions on the ministry of women. Marie felt convinced that God is no respecter of gender. She disclosed, “Yes, I had some very strong experiences prior to coming to College, which basically made me really question God about my calling as a female and made me study Scripture. This set my feet in concrete...and I knew what I believed.”

When female pastors began to accept their “call” to ministry the realisation set in that part of the “call” involved pursuing a degree program in theological education. Theological education would provide the means to equip them and to give them a theological foundation in the formation of beliefs, values and practice in ministry. A degree in theology from a Seventh-day Adventist institution would also make them potentially employable within the wider institution. Harriet recalled, “I didn’t want to go to College...but I knew I had to, so I went and started my degree.” Rosie in her account disclosed: “I was actually very shy so it required a huge leap of faith to go to College and study.” For Marie, “God told me very strongly that He wanted me to come to College and do the degree.” Nelly very factually reported, “I was called to ministry and God led me to gain formal qualifications for it.” And Annabel viewed it as a privilege to study theology, “I’ve always wanted to study theology. I have always had a fascination for God, theology and how it fits together and the mysteries of it.”

Women who pursue a ministry vocation undergo intense subjective evaluation in just simply being faithful and following God’s sacred call. This study revealed explicitly the continual ambivalence and ambiguity surrounding women and the issue of identity that pertains to “call” within the organisation. Female pastors described in great detail the difficulties of trying to form a ministerial identity in the absence of female ordination. As an organisation that has yet to validate women’s call to pastoral ministry, female pastors are and will continue to be misplaced, ungrounded in selfhood and to experience dissonance and vacillation.

14 *The Welcome Table* was published in North America in 1995, sponsored by “TEAM” – Time for Equality in Adventist Ministry. The book details fourteen prominent SDA historians and theologians who demonstrate that Scripture liberates women and men to full participation in the life and mission of the Church; it confirms women’s call and rights to ministry. Patricia A. Habada and Rebecca Frost Brillhart, eds. *The Welcome Table: Setting a Place for Ordained Women* (Langley Park, MD: TeamPress, 1995).

These findings are confirmed and validated by a number of other studies. Creegan and Pohl researched Evangelical women who studied theological education and later pursued academia—they found that “call” was significant for almost all women they surveyed.¹⁵ From the vast literature concerning “call,” it appears that many clergy do not feel that they made a conscious decision to pursue ministry, rather ministry—adhering to God’s call—chose them.¹⁶ Discerning a call to ministry is a significant step—a call must have context, must be discerned and tested within community. However Creegan and Pohl reveal that the Church’s affirmation is more “immediate and more consistent” when young men choose to follow their call into ministry.¹⁷ Men, in general, appear to have less conflict between “subjective experience” in relation to “call,” and affirmation within the wider Church institution. However, when a “call” is contested, women often feel betrayed within most significant communities, and women enter into an external and internal examination and re-examination of vocational paths.¹⁸ Internal pressure either to ignore a call or to suppress it is often interconnected. The subjective experience comes from the women’s own interior belief structures about ministry and culturally constructed views about gender.

McDougall, in her article *Weaving Garments of Grace: Engendering a Theology of a Call to Ordain Ministry for Women Today*, tells how surprised

15 See Nicola Hoggard Creegan, and Christine Pohl, *Living on the Boundaries: Evangelical Women, Feminism and the Theological Academy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005).

16 For more information see Mary Rearick Paul, *Women Who Lead: The Call of Women in Ministry* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 2011); Barbara Zikmund, Adair Lummis and Patricia Chang, *Clergy Women: An Uphill Calling* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1998); Martha Ice, *Clergy Women and Their Worldviews: Calling for a New Age* (New York: Praeger 1987); Gaye Bammert, “Narrating the Church: Protestant Women Pastors Challenge Nostalgic Desire,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 26 (2011): 153-174; Nancy Wemm, “A Different View from the Pulpit: The Life Stories of Female Episcopal Priests,” (PhD diss., University of Ohio, 2009), accessed January 11, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/304974691?accountid=26359>; Tammy Reedy-Strother, “Clergy Women of the United Methodist Church: Experiences and Perceptions of Disparities among Women of the Kentucky Annual Conference,” (PhD diss., University of Kentucky, 2011), accessed December 12, 2014, <http://gradworks.umi.com/34/55/3455557.html>; Petronella Jonck, Anda LeRoux and Lyzette Hoffman, “Parishioners’ Attitudes towards Clergywomen: A South African Case Study,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 144 (2012): 92–108.

17 Creegan and Pohl, *Living on the Boundaries*, 103.

18 *Ibid.*, 103.

she was when interviewing female theology students: “it stunned me when each in turn, began to voice her self-doubts, ambivalence, and even guilt about her call to ministry.”¹⁹ McDougall suggests that women inherit certain cultural normative scripts about their gender identity, and these scripts are played out both in their public and private lives. McDougall correlates self-doubt, or internal confusion, with women’s gender-role socialization and identity formation:

There are fewer tensions between the demands of God and the community and less pressure to reflect on the dynamics of authority. But for women, call can become the point at which subjective experience and authoritative institutions come into painful conflict.²⁰

“Painful conflict” between Adventist female pastors’ subjective experience and the Church was uncovered by this research. Discerning a call to ministry often occurs in a vacuum, and this leads to self-doubt. Zikmund, Lummis and Chang report that the few women who eventually “seek ordination do out of a feminist motivation to change church and society; most state that their call is based on a call from God.”²¹

Theological Education

Female pastors reported in their interviews their deep appreciation and love for the pursuit of learning and knowledge. They also held a deep regard for the educational institution where they studied: “I loved that it was academic”; “I absolutely loved it.,I was very passionate about coming into a degree course and doing Hebrew and Greek”; “I loved every minute of the academia”; “I really enjoyed the mental stimulation and learning”; “I loved all my subjects”; “I would give College a big tick in terms of challenging their students”.

Female pastors disclosed a deep appreciation for their lecturers and valued them as wise and supportive educators, and this helped them to survive the course: “I had a positive experience because I had professors and lecturers that loved me”; “every lecturer made you feel like you were valued because you were a woman and you were needed in ministry and in the Church”; “the lecturers were really wonderful”; “I just found (the Dean) to be fantastic... very affirming of women in ministry, highly approachable...I really appreciated him.”

19 Joy Ann McDougall, “Weaving Garments of Grace: Engendering a Theology of a Call to Ordained Ministry for Women Today,” *Theological Education* 39 (2003): 150.

20 Creegan and Pohl, *Living*, 104–105.

21 Zikmund, Lummis and Chang, *Clergy Women*, 76–77.

Female pastors experienced dissonance in relation to their theological education. On the one hand they enthusiastically reported how much they enjoyed their theological training, were grateful to have the opportunity to study theology, appreciated their lecturers and “wouldn’t change a thing,” yet on the other hand the theological experience left them wanting: “my whole world fell apart”; “it was the best and worst years of my life”.

The analysis identified a significant cause for dissonance that was epistemological in nature. Female pastors did not understand feminist issues of epistemology, nor were they exposed to feminist or womanist theologies during their theological education. It is ironic that most women felt uncomfortable and threatened by the term “feminist”—“I find it hard to relate and understand strong feminists and what they think”; “I am not one to stand up, be a feminist, burn my bra”. After completing their theological training, only two female pastors went on to further studies in which they discovered feminist and womanist theology that positively transformed their ministry. Although female pastors were not exposed to feminist epistemology, in the interviews it was apparent that, intuitively, something “felt wrong or missing.” Intuition was characterised during the second wave of feminism in the 1960–1970s: women understood in terms of physical presence, relationships and connections between ideas and feelings. Patriarchal culture can “obstruct and even silence a woman’s ability to trust her experience and value her capacities to engage her ideas with those of others.”²²

In their interviews female pastors questioned gender ways of knowing and language: “In theological education, there’s a whole new way of thinking, a language that was quite foreign to me. I felt left out”; “I never had a female lecturer in theology so it was only a male approach”; “I think it has been a shock to the theological training system to have women coming into theological training, they don’t know how to include us and they don’t know what to do with women”; “I had difficulty because [of] my female view of theology—we need to expand our view of theology—[look at it] from a female’s point of view”; “lecturers need to learn and strive for a more gender inclusiveness in language, models for ministry and feminist theology, dare I say that word.”

Female pastors felt they were disadvantaged and misunderstood by the system in which theological education is taught. They were not provided

22 Nancy Ramsay, “Truth, Power, and Love: Challenges for Clergywomen across the Life Span,” in *In Her Own Time: Women and Developmental Issues in Pastoral Care*, ed. Jeanne Stevenson-Moessner (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2000), 279.

with the space and opportunity to construct their own thoughts or to express how they saw the area being explored in tasks, assessments and examinations. As uninvited guests, women were conscious that they entered a male-constructed world in preparation for employment that is a male-constructed, male-managed and male-governed Christian organisation. Because traditional theological epistemology lacks an (en)gendered approach, women therefore learn of an “anthropomorphically constructed deity.”²³ Women disclose feelings of “isolation, desperation, feeling unsafe, a misfit, stifled, placed on the side, unwelcome” in this new unfamiliar theological world; they exist in a vacuum, “silent, despairing, having difficulty connecting.” Female pastors felt excluded from inquiry and denied epistemic authority, and thus unable to view their world through their own gendered lens.

Feminist epistemology identifies the ways in which dominant knowledge practices systematically disadvantage women and other subordinated groups, and strives to reform and serve the interests of these groups. Feminist epistemology has generated new questions, theories, and methods—it demonstrates how gender has played a causal role in these transformations, and defends these changes as cognitive, not just social, advances.²⁴ Feminist epistemology offers women reconstruction and a view of their world through a feminist lens: “if epistemology is the science of perceiving knowledge, it is obvious that women have a case for establishing their own epistemology.”²⁵

In 1986 Harding proposed her three-fold classification of feminist epistemology—*empiricism*, *standpoint theory* and *postmodernism*. She saw these as three fundamentally contrasting frameworks.²⁶ Feminist empiricism presupposes an unsuited, politically neutral subject of knowledge.²⁷ This model adopts empiricist principles and practices that are based on “objectivist epistemology, although with some adjustments: it employs a realist ontology, a modified objectivist epistemology, a concern for hypothesis testing, explanation prediction, cause and effect linkages, and conventional bench-

23 Drene Somasundram, “A Gender Inclusive Model in Theological Education for the Seventh-day Adventist Church,” (DProf thesis, Middlesex University, 2007), 181.

24 See Sotirios Sarantakos, *Social Research*, 3rd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

25 *Ibid.*, 66.

26 Refer to Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1986).

27 Sarantakos, *Social Research*, 57.

marks of rigor.”²⁸ The model employs “traditional social research, modified to avoid bias and sexism and to meet feminist standards.”²⁹ It accepts “empiricism critically, challenges the notion that the person/identity of the researcher has no effect on the quality of the findings.”³⁰ It challenges the “notion that science and politics should be left apart and criticises, not so much the foundations of science, but their practice.”³¹

Feminist standpoint theory reflects closely feminist assumptions and principles. This model works on the theoretical underpinning that women, as a result of their personal and social experience as females in the world, are in a better standpoint position than men to research, understand, write and interpret the world of women. This model embraces a relativism of standpoints. It rejects traditional research methods, focuses on feminist methodologies, builds on and from women’s experience, employs feminist qualitative methods, assumes research reflexivity and seeks to transform the marginalised lives of women.³²

Feminist postmodernism is a newer development within feminist theory and research. It views truth as a “destructive illusion” and the world as endless texts and stories, many of which sustain the integration of power and oppression. Sarantakos points out that writers have described feminist postmodernism as an epistemology that is “non-foundationalist, contextualist, and non-dualist, or multiplist, in its commitments”³³, and in which “epistemological assumptions of modernism, the foundational grounding of knowledge, the universalising claims for the scope of knowledge, and the employment of dualist categories of thought”³⁴ are rejected.

Over the last ten to fifteen years trends in these three feminist epistemologies have become blurred—Harding herself both predicted and advanced this. However, all three approaches embrace pluralism and reject totalizing theories and traditional epistemological projection of validating epistemic norms from a transcendent viewpoint.³⁵

These three feminist epistemological approaches have had an impact on debates and theories in feminist theological education and are continuing

28 Norman Denzin, and Yvonna Lincoln, *Strategies of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2003), 101.

29 Sarantakos, *Social Research*, 57.

30 Harding, *Science Question*, 162.

31 See Sarantakos, *Social Research*, 57.

32 Refer Harding, *Science Question*.

33 Sarantakos, *Social Research*, 59.

34 *Ibid.*, 59.

35 See Denzin and Lincoln, *Strategies*.

to make significant contributions in areas such as spirituality, homiletics, hermeneutics, environment, leadership and related issues on authority and pastoral ministry. Feminist epistemology in theological education challenges dominant traditional knowledge, it questions and critically explores the various ways gender influences and constructs perception of knowledge. It identifies how dominant knowledge disadvantages women, and seeks to provide an alternative perspective that addresses marginalisation and discrimination of women, both in theology and through biblical interpretation. It seeks to uncover new voices and faces in history, defines new areas of research, develops new resources, hermeneutic tools and models and insists upon inclusive language and imagery.³⁶

In this the women revealed in their responses how they viewed their theological education. All the female pastors described it as a *box*, and expressed the difficulties of being unable to fulfil college and denominational expectations: “I think as a woman...I don’t fit the box, it is difficult to decipher, is it my personality or is it my gender?”; “I felt like I was so far out of the box it wasn’t funny;”; “this is the box, get in or go away”; “it did it to the boys too, but in a different way”; “I saw how the boys were being affirmed, how they appropriately fit the box”; “I was trained as a middle-aged married man with 2.5 children”; “I hated that the program was geared for somebody who obviously wasn’t me”.

36 See texts: Mary Grey, *Introducing Feminist Images of God* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim, 2001); Namsoon Kang, *Diasporic Feminist Theology: Asia and Theopolitical Imagination* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2014); Carol Christ, *She Who Changes: Re-imagining the Divine in the World* (Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Pui-lan Kwok, “Feminist Theology as Intercultural Discourse” in *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Theology*, ed. Susan Frank Parsons (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Roxanne Mountford, *The Gendered Pulpit: Preaching in American Protestant Spaces* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003); Elizabeth Fiorenza, *Transforming Vision: Explorations in Feminist Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2011); Christie Cozad Neuger, *The Arts of Ministry: Feminist-Womanist Approaches* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996); Rasiyah S. Sugirtharajah, *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006); Martyn Percy and Christina Rees, ed., *Apostolic Women, Apostolic Authority: Transfiguring Leadership in Today’s Church* (New York: Morehouse, 2011); Wietske de Jong-Kumru, *Postcolonial Feminist Theology: Enacting Cultural, Religious, Gender and Sexual Differences in Theological Reflection* (Zurich: Lit Verlag, 2013); Kathleen Wicker, ed., *Feminist New Testament Studies: Global and Future Perspectives* (New York: Palgrave 2005).

It is clear from her response that Ruth understands that it is not necessarily the organisation's fault:

The theological education process is designed for one and all, but it doesn't really help with adapting to a man's world as a woman. All the education was exceptional but doesn't even look at the practicalities of working in ministry as a woman. It still teaches ministry within the context of masculinity, and I don't fault them for that because that is what one finds when they graduate and enter the field. It is very much a man's world, run in a man's way and there is just no room for a different perspective, a different view on the world.

A rather disturbing cost to female pastors as they pursue their theological degree was apparent from the interviews. A three-stage identity process takes place as women understand that in order to graduate with a theological degree they must somehow force themselves into the *prescribed male box*. First, the process begins with a "deconstruction" identity process. Female pastors recognised that they were "different", "female" and "in a man's world." In order to "survive the course" they felt that a somewhat conscious painful "mutilation" of gender must ensue: "For us women, they break-down our theology and...femininity"; "I came to college at sixteen, I was all bubbly and vivacious and feminine... I now shut down like a man, I think like a man"; "I...needed to sacrifice parts of myself"; "I knew God needed me to sacrifice parts of myself, in order to finish.,,and in a sense I trusted Him to hold together whatever needed to be held together for the duration of the course".

Second, a consented "construction" process takes place that enables them to fit, albeit uncomfortably, into the prescribed ministerial box: "It was a conscious decision (to conform)...I didn't want to fight against it. I needed to be somewhat vulnerable to the educational experience if I was going to gain anything from it"; "I think I became very 'male-ish'... I don't think I let myself be feminine"; "it's something I endured and got through—like a hoop, I had to jump through it in order to get into ministry...it wasn't a pleasant experience...do I wish it were different? Absolutely!"

Third, when the women had completed their theological training and had accomplished their academic goal "through God's help," they felt "free" to consciously "reconstruct" parts of their fragmented identity: "I've lost a lot of my female identity and that is something I'm trying to regain..I'm trying to find other women who have gone before and how they remain female in a male world"; "I check in with the psychologist now and again...probably in the last two or three years I have regained some faith in myself"; "I had

to reconstruct a new paradigm that deals with department issues, ethical behaviour as a minister and female ways of viewing and understanding theology”; “I discovered that it is okay for me to be a woman in ministry”; “when I came out of College I felt free...I could flap my wings and fly”.

The costs to women who pursue theological education appear to be great. A slow process of gender-mutilation occurs—the erosion of identity parts and selfhood must take place in order for women to reach their academic goal and professionally be able to live out their call in the practice of ministry. Female pastors recommended that theology programs should: include epistemology from a female perspective; employ of more female lecturers; have broader and fairer assessments; have a broader understanding of pastoral care and issues in regard to women; have a stronger gender-inclusive emphasis on practical ministry; develop a broader concept of evangelism; place a greater emphasis on spirituality and character-formation.

At the end of each interview female pastors in the study were asked to describe an image that best depicted their experience of theological education. Some of their responses were as follows: “an empty treasure chest”; “a beautiful flower behind bars”; “a huge empty field”; “the twin towers collapsing”; “the building of a house that was never completed”; “a stiff upper lip”; “my whole world fell apart”; “being roped in and tamed”; “walking on hot coals gagged.”

Ministry Challenges

Female pastors reported ambivalence in direction and focus because there were no clear set paths for them to take in ministry: “You are supposed to find your way, but there are no sign-posted paths”; “I really believed God had led me...I was okay not knowing what would come next. But it did make me rather aimless. It meant I couldn’t really focus on anything.” The lack of opportunities and direction over time eroded self-belief, call and confidence in the institution of the Adventist Church. Ministry challenges for female pastors appear to be present in two significant areas: they experience hostile church settings and hostility in their Church organisation.

Many women who were placed and employed as pastors reported hostile church settings, illustrating the enormous difficulties and amount of rejection that they face. Many female pastors reported how unprepared they were for the negativity they encountered. Ruth’s description is as follows:

My biggest surprise was the amount of rejection that I would encounter in just trying to do ministry. I always knew that they would be some rejection, but the amount that I have personally encountered is beyond what I expected. To be considered by a handful of my church

members to be “doing the devil’s work” is an exceptionally difficult thing to deal with and was not a mind-set that I was prepared to face...In my experience there are many different types of opposition but the one that surprised me the most is that I am the devil’s handmaiden and that I am going about doing his work in order to destroy the Church in the last days...In some ways College may be just a little optimistic, they have come a long way on this issue and assumes the rest of the Church and wider organisation has also.

For women, being placed in a hostile church-setting where women are not wanted and their role is not recognised creates a lot of anxiety and bewilderment. In their interviews, female pastors revealed that they experience inability to fulfil and function in their ministerial roles. They commented on the complex difficulties in a denomination that has not “officially” accepted the issue of female ordination and considered that perhaps the organization does not fully grasp the vast implication this has for women in church placements. Ruth’s long description of her experience provides a glimpse into the sense of inability that female pastors face in their functionality as a minister and the ambivalence and confusion members have. When Ruth was asked in her interview, “how do you feel about your role as a pastor?” she powerfully and emotively responded:

I feel like I am not one. I feel that I am being paid to do that role but can’t because it is simply a battle in every part of ministry. It is a battle to chair meetings because the church members don’t think that a female should have such a position of authority. It is a battle to visit, because some of them want nothing to do with you because they think that you are going against what the Bible says and therefore you are doing the devil’s work. It is a battle to lead out in communion, because you have to be an elder appointed in the local church and when the church doesn’t appoint woman elders it is impossible. It can even be a battle just to get up and preach...I don’t feel like a pastor because as some of my church members continually remind me, I am not ordained, and women shouldn’t have that kind of authority in the church, and therefore cannot be given the title. Even the title minister is something that they consider shouldn’t be given to women. How does one fulfil their role when what they are called is uncertain?

It is of interest that the lack of denominational confirmation through ordination was only addressed by two women who wondered why the Church does not affirm women to the priesthood of all believers. “I explored the ordination issue...I was very shocked and very angered by the *Church Manual*; it was very biased, very masculine almost to the point of excluding females altogether. A female, for example, is totally unable to perceive that they have been called by God and only male ministers can confirm whether or not they

have been called by God...I felt very, very frustrate;,” “the organisation must address the issue of ordination.” However, all women through their recommendations appealed to the wider organisation asking them to address positively the matter of female ordination so that they can fulfil their God-given call and function in their ministerial positions.

A common emotion experienced by almost all female pastors serving in their local churches was loneliness and isolation—their responses suggest that women seem to accept that this comes with the territory: “I found ministry very isolating...the first year I spent most of my time by myself. It’s the very (nature) of the job...I know that I’m going to move in a year, so in some ways I don’t make the effort to connect with heaps of people...I don’t have people I can rely on.” Another said:

It was interesting hanging out with so many men or boys or whatever (during College days). During class breaks it was interesting how they all bonded together. They had to fight and hassle each other and sometimes even tried to treat us girls in the same way. It didn’t worry me but it was an interesting observation, and now while in ministry I see the same thing happening at ministers’ meetings, conferences, professional days, and now as I am often the only female I feel completely out of place. I don’t know how to relate to these men in this way and they have no idea how to relate to me on any level...It is a struggle then in this kind of environment to fit in, when everything about you is different, and in this environment where it is a man’s world it is difficult to be different.

Female pastors reflected on their organization and its infrastructure. They disclosed how misplaced they feel, undervalued by the organization and unsupported through policy and job opportunities. Female pastors who are what is termed the “first generation” to be employed as ministers in the South Pacific Division understand the enormous pressure to succeed in ministry, particularly for the sake of other women who might follow in their footsteps. They have a sense of responsibility to put as much as they can in place so that future women will reap the benefits of their hard labour, to the detriment at times of their own emotional and spiritual wellbeing.

When Deborah was asked if she felt pressure being the first women to be employed in her Conference she responded, “I knew that if I failed...it could be binding.” Margaret reflected upon employment pressures and the implications of making any mistakes in her ministry context as a woman:

The expectations are not always realistic and a lot of pressure is placed on women. I was called into two offices before I left College to be told, “I am a woman, everyone is watching so make sure you represent women well,” and then the Conference president gave me

the same spiel, so there is an expectation that we must perform well.

When asked in her interview, "Have you taken on that expectation?" she replied, "I think it is hard not to. There are times when I've sat down with other female pastors and asked, is it really realistic? No not really." Deborah stated, "I guess in this country there are some people that really don't want me to be here." She also pointed out the pressure and consequence for a woman in ministry to fail:

It only takes one little mistake or one day of weakness or one little tear when you should have been stronger, for people to misrepresent [you]...it's really hard to trust somebody with your weaknesses... because it will go back to the various committees...we are not honest with the fact that it is hard out there.

Female pastors were amazed at how little listening and negotiating skills administrators within the organization have and their unwillingness to support women publicly. Deborah stated that many significant decisions are often made without consultation, and there is a lack of understanding: "Image—it all comes down to a group of men making choices that affects your whole life." Ruth related:

Last year when the Conference tried to place me in a church of my own, the rejection was overwhelming. I felt that those who made the decisions of where to place the pastors didn't listen to what I needed. They were so intent on finding me a church of my own so that I would supposedly grow and develop in ministry and to use their resources better, that they couldn't see that they were destroying me in the process. Now I have a love-hate relationship with ministry. The dramas of last year have traumatized the way I see ministry.

Ruth expressed how she needed her "Conference administrators to use their 'authoritative voice' to defend and speak up for female pastors." She related, "[At College] the lecturers weren't afraid to speak in support of women in ministry and to me this was appreciated, particularly now as I look back. Being open about one's support in this area is something that I would have liked to have seen from my employers, but never did." Female pastors reported experiencing unequal opportunities in ministry. This study has shown that a majority of women work many years in the role of volunteer youth workers in many Conferences. It is surprising to discover that a substantial number of years spent engaged in this work are not counted towards their internship, remuneration and long-service leave. This has huge implications for their pension and for retirement plans. It was significant that when asked directly about years of service and what policy states, Margaret, for example, answered, "I don't know." Female pastors seem to be unaware or not informed of the wider financial implications.

Margaret provided a good example of apparent gender discrimination in placement:

I had gone through the first year, and [the Conference] told me, “We will not renew your contract at the end of the year”...so I started to look for extra jobs, then...they said, “Yes we are going to renew it.” [In] the second year they said the same thing, “we don’t know whether we are going to renew your contract.” I felt, well, I can’t leave this in their hands, I can’t do another year of a youth worker, there has to be a point where they acknowledge that I have done two years as a volunteer.

Margaret acknowledged that men are also treated in this way. However, Margaret continued with her description: “... I was told at the end of my first year, ‘oh, look, Margaret, we are so sorry but there is not enough money for an intern; there’s only going to be one intern this year...because we sponsored him and we have no choice.’...Well I can understand that, but at the end of the year [they also hired another young guy], he gets an internship and I didn’t. I thought, ‘What makes him a more superior pastor to me?’” Nelly is currently working as a youth volunteer, having graduated from theological education. However she stated that, “This is my first year in ministry. For the purposes of finances I have not been given the title of pastor for my first year, which creates its own set of challenges.” Nelly stated the fact that she is not given the title of “pastor” in her ministry setting, and this situation is not limited only to Nelly. Nelly is a competent, intelligent woman who holds a first degree and has worked in a profession for a number of years. Clearly, it is disheartening to her to find herself in such a vulnerable position both financially and professionally. There are a number of female pastors who find themselves working under conditions that hold no benefits for them, yet they work under these conditions because they feel a sense of “calling.” They are loyal both to their God and to their Church.

Female pastors acknowledged a general lack of support from the organization that is reflected in an infrastructure that does not benefit women in ministry. Ruth’s description is accurate: “Women, it seems, don’t necessarily fit into the mould that has been traditionally made for ministry. It is a struggle then in this kind of environment...” Harriet stated that, “the men (Conference employers) aren’t supportive out there.” Deborah exclaimed, “Oh no!” There are no policies, mentors, resources that aid our survival, “you don’t get very much support out here.” For female pastors, various policies still need to be written and put in place in regard to credentials, pay, volunteering positions, pension plans, maternity issues, placement processes, mentors issues, safety issues, how the *Intern Handbook* can work

for women, education of churches to receive women, and strategic plans for “ordination.” In an insightful and spiritual moment in her interview, Deborah reflected, “We should be led by God’s Spirit with policies.” Marie expressed how “jolly demanding” ministry is and how it is one of the hardest professional roles and she asked, “who would do ministry unless you are called?” Deborah expressed:

I do believe that when God says that it is ok for us to be a minister then we need to train and gain the support and guidance to be the best woman pastor that we can possibly be, if we’re called. It’s a long journey, hours of study and anyone who succeeds deserves to be heard and deserves to be supported—whether they are male or female—cared for and loved.

Despite the challenges for ministry, female pastors find personal fulfillment in their ministerial roles. Through their responses they demonstrated a natural love for people and a desire to build and to support faith communities. It is apparent that women see ministry through the eyes of people and community. First and foremost, people are what matter and what counts to them in the vocation of ministry. They desire the practice of ministry to be relevant and authentic, to meet individual and community needs in their cultural context: “I think the highlight in ministry is the difference that you make in one or two people’s lives”; “oh, I love ministry now. I find it incredibly rewarding, very challenging, but the most beautiful thing is that I get to see God’s faithfulness day in and day out and that’s amazing”; “the great thrill I love about ministry is seeing the change—people coming to Christ”; “I love watching people’s lives change and that God is in control helping us to get our lives in control”; “ministry is a full-time commitment to encouraging those that are Christians to grow in their understanding and journey with God, and to be able to give a glimpse of God to others”; “I guess to be Christ to people...who yearn for love, who yearn to understand...we are his hands, his feet, his heart, his lips, and his eyes and I guess ministry is learning to look at people and to see in them the potential that God sees”.

The results of this research have demonstrated the difficulties female pastors face when they enter a ministry context and are placed in a church setting. Not only are they expected to succeed in ministry and exhibit a confident persona, but their internal world often has yet to find resolution in personal and ministerial professional identity. Female pastors have to forge new ways, new paradigms, by which they are forced to feminise their roles, often to the discomfort of traditional members, faith-communities and administrators. Entering ministry they also experience hostile settings through the lack of opportunities, lack of job prospects, lack of affirmation through

ordination and ambivalence in professional direction. They experience a hostile organisation that lacks policies to support them, that holds unrealistic expectations of female pastors to succeed in ministry and that is unable to negotiate and strategize future directions for females within the system.

These results are supported by other researchers’ findings. Literature in the area of clergywomen and employment-related issues describes a situation in which women remain far from equal,³⁷ they often experience discrimination, are overlooked or not considered solely upon the basis of their gender.³⁸ Typically, women have to wait much longer for their first call or placement. Some progressive denominations have created important offices specifically for clergywomen, but, as reported by Zikmund *et al.*, these top denominational positions are often too far removed from local congregational and regional decision-makers to make an impact.

Clergywomen tend to be in a disadvantaged position simply because implicit comparisons are more likely to be made with the dominant image associated with clergy, which is male...clergy women lack the ‘male character’ that has been so deeply connected to ordained ministry throughout the centuries. Gender is still an ascriptive trait with the character of clergy.³⁹

Once women find a place to serve within denominational employment, discrimination usually continues: “Women regularly encounter hostility and prejudice from colleagues, supervisors, and parishioners in the church.”⁴⁰ Clergywomen develop career paths that look “substantially different from those of their male counterparts.”⁴¹ Administrators or district supervisors may directly discourage women from accepting a call after they graduate—they may hold off placing them in a church, or place them in a church setting that is openly hostile to women in ministry where they are “likely to become discouraged and doubt their own gifts and strength.”⁴² Churches and super-

37 See Reedy-Strother, “Clergy Women of the United Methodist Church.”

38 See studies: Wemm, “A Different View;” Edward C. Lehman, Jr., “Women’s Path into Ministry: Six Major Studies,” *Pulpit and Pew Research Reports* 1 (Fall 2002); Maxine LaRue Wallace Thomas, “African-American Women Clergy: Developing Model Ministries for African-American Women in the Twenty-first Century,” (DMin diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2014), accessed November 11, 2014, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1660972559?accountid=26359>; Bammert, “Narrating the Church,” 153–174; Zikmund, Adair and Chang, *Clergy Women*; Jonck, Le Roux and Hoffman, “Parishioners,” 92–108.

39 Zikmund, Lummis and Chang, *Clergy Women*, 75.

40 *Ibid.*, 70.

41 *Ibid.*, 70.

42 *Ibid.*, 70.

visors may critique unfairly a female in ministry, basing their assessment upon past expectations where the measuring mark was based upon a male pastor. In this situation, clergywomen are expected to conform to traditional ways of pastoring and are not able to experiment or offer another perspective or approach in ministry.⁴³

Women also experience discrimination in the area of equity of salary—women consistently earn much less than men for the same level of work. Much of the literature suggests that “one way women experience discrimination is by being systemically tracked into lower-paying and less-powerful positions and career patterns.”⁴⁴ Research results have shown that women are often appointed to small, rural churches that cannot afford to pay them very well or they call women assuming they can pay them less—and if clergywomen question the remuneration they are met with hostility.⁴⁵

Nesbitt identified gender segregation. She reports, “Both multiple ordination tracking and job partition into part-time and non-stipendiary placements have been shown to serve as mechanisms for both horizontally and vertically segregating women clergy as well as for fast-tracking young men into higher level positions.”⁴⁶ Many clergywomen are left filling part-time positions, which prevent women from being financially secure. One clergywoman interviewed in the study by Zikmund *et al.* described her experience thus: “It is disconcerting in my part-time church positions to realise that I am making less now with three advanced degrees than I was in my first year of college.”⁴⁷

Lehman writes,

The need for denominational advocacy on behalf of the interests of women clergy is virtually universal. As non-traditional candidates for placement in ministry in local parishes, women confront widespread suspicion, prejudice, and potential discrimination at the hands of search committees and other parishioners. This pattern applies both to simply obtaining a position and to financial remuneration once hired. Denominational efforts to prevent such discrimination against women have not been entirely successful.⁴⁸

Clergywomen who are tokens in traditional Christian institutions are rarely seen as individuals with particular hopes and interests. Women in

43 Refer to Lehman, *Women's Path*; Thomas, “African-American Women Clergy.”

44 Zikmund, Lummis and Chang, *Clergy Women*, 73.

45 *Ibid.*, 73.

46 Paula Nesbitt, *Feminization of the Clergy in America: Occupational and Organisational Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 126.

47 Zikmund, Lummis and Chang, *Clergy Women*, 123.

48 Lehman, *Women's Path*, 21.

ministry can face extreme isolation and are treated like “zoo exhibits.” Each time a clergywoman conducts a funeral or wedding, many of the congregation may evaluate her “performance” in ministry and her right to be there. Knowing that they are always being scrutinized this way, women clergy can easily slip into becoming overachievers who drive themselves excessively.⁴⁹

The literature provides some disturbing insight into the issue of harassment and clergywomen.⁵⁰ The reality is that sexual misconduct does occur and rarely at the initiation of clergywomen. Statistical evidence reveals (male) clergy sexually abuse their parishioners and clergywomen experience sexual harassment by either their colleagues or by parishioners. Van Leeuwen cites a 1990 study of American United Methodist clergywomen that revealed a staggering 77 per cent had experienced sexual harassment. Of these, 41 per cent had been harassed by male denominational colleagues or other male pastors.⁵¹ These statistics coincide with a study done in 1991 by Lebacqz and Barton in which female and male clergy across denominations were surveyed. It was shown that at least 50 per cent of clergywomen reported that they had experienced harassment either during their theological education or on the job. “Male pastors are concerned about protecting female parishioners from unprofessional advances. Female pastors are concerned about protecting themselves.”⁵² Lebacqz and Barton associated sexual harassment in clergywomen with the lack of power women possess even in positions of authority. “We hope for the day when women genuinely carry the power that should attach to their professional roles. But that day has not yet arrived.”⁵³

Clucas and Sharpe argue that “sexuality and gender are inextricably linked to the hierarchical power relations that privilege men.”⁵⁴ They state

49 See Ramsay, “Truth, Power, and Love.”

50 Refer to studies: Mary Van Leeuwen, *My Brother's Keeper: What the Social Sciences Do (and Don't) Tell us about Masculinity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002); Karen Lebacqz and Ronald Barton, *Sex in the Pulpit* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1991); Karen McClintock, *Sexual Shame: An Urgent Call to Healing* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001); Wemm, “A Different View”; Leslie J. Francis, Mandy Robbins and Susan H. Jones, “The Psychological-Type Profile of Clergywomen in Ordained Local Ministry in the Church of England: Pioneers or Custodians?” *Mental Health, Religion and Culture* 15, no. 9 (2012): 919-932.

51 Van Leeuwen, *My Brother's Keeper*, 213.

52 Lebacqz and Barton, *Sex in the Pulpit*, 133-135.

53 *Ibid.*, 139.

54 Rob Clucas and Keith Sharpe, “Women Bishops: Equality, Rights and

that “the pervasive nature of structural male advantage in broader society and especially in the Church makes heteronormative regulation of women’s ministry inevitable in the absence of serious critical reflection.”⁵⁵

Conclusion

As the “female ordination” issue is once again on the agenda at the 2015 Session of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, to convene in the United States, this investigation is significant. For the first time—in a privileged position—we have had the opportunity to hear and engage with narratives from female pastors in the South Pacific Division. The women revealed painful conflict in regard to call and ministerial identity formation—they exposed an educational system that is prescribed and male-directed and revealed both hostile church settings and church organisation. The picture they collectively paint is disturbing—yet these women have made and continue to make valuable contributions in their faith communities.

Twenty-five years ago Zikmund, Lummis and Chang reflected that clergywomen, against great odds, have made unique contributions, and have expanded the traditional understanding of religious life in ministry. They stated:

The experience and sense of calling among clergy women in the 1990s shows that clergy women are not merely survivors, nor are they breaking down barriers simply to get into a vocation shaped and still dominated by male perspectives. Rather, clergywomen are reinventing ministry for the future.⁵⁶

I would like to thank all the women who participated, who openly and honestly shared their lifeworlds and who place their trust in the wider organisation to make positive changes that will enable them to function better in their “called” pastoral roles. I would also like to thank the South Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church for addressing already significant issues that were revealed by this research project,⁵⁷ and which

Disarray,” *Ecclesiastical Law Journal* 15 (May 2013): 167.

55 *Ibid.*, 173.

56 Zikmund, Lummis and Chang, *Clergy Women*, 133.

57 This paper is part of a doctoral thesis that was completed in 2008 with Middlesex University in London, England. The educational institution in Australia acted as a primary stakeholder to this project. From this project various initiatives took place, some are outlined below:

1. Educational Institution in Australia: Library was resourced to house a Feminist/Womanist perspectives, the theology curriculum was revised that added feminist epistemology to units, a gender focused unit was developed *TH230*

today still continues to do. Their actions acknowledge that there is a bigger picture that needs to be addressed globally and ordination for women is just one part of it. No doubt this small but significant study offers to Adventism some insight, a starting point and a framework for constructive dialogue and future direction.

Gender, Theology and Ministry, a female lecturer was added to the faculty and a letter from the faculty was written to the South Pacific Division outlining concerns for female graduates in theology and placement issues.

2. Australian Union Conference (AUC) and South Pacific Division (SPD): A conference was organised for female theological students that openly discussed issues they would face. The Division and the Union Ministerial Directors were invited to hear concerns and seek future directions, and the researcher was invited to present research findings at the AUC Ministers Conference 2008.

3. The South Pacific Division: The researcher and SPD looked at policies in relation to maternity issues, mentoring and volunteer positions in ministry.

Chapter 12: Reflections on the Ordination of Local Church Departmental Leaders

Ronald G. Stone

Trans Pacific Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventists

It was the first Sabbath of January 1991. The new church officers for the Nuku'alofa Seventh-day Adventist Church were called to the front of the church for a special dedicatory prayer. They came forward and knelt in a circle. The pastor prayed and laid his hands on one of them to signify the blessing of God being given to all of them. This special event was touching and inspiring. It affirmed to the new officers that the church was serious about their assigned responsibility and valued their contribution.

Although most members appreciated this thoughtful and new ministerial initiative, some did not like what was done and they started to raise some questions: First, is this the biblical way of commissioning new officers of the church? Second, what is the difference between this practice and the ordination of deacons, elders, and pastors? Third, should the church ordain all the leaders of each department seeing that the church is doing the same to the Secretary and President of the Mission when they are newly appointed? Whatever the intention or the purpose of the program, the implications and debate that arose indicated that this practice was not acceptable to all.

In view of these concerns, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the range of passages about ordination¹ in the New Testament (NT) in order

1 It is important to note that the word "ordination" is not found in the Bible. It derives from a Latin word which means to put someone into a position of rank. Such a meaning is not present in the NT. For a detailed discussion of the use of the word "ordain/ordained" in the KJV, see "Theology of Ordination" by John McVay, accessed October 2012, <http://www.scribd.com>. In light of this, it is important to state the understanding of the SDA Church when it uses the word "ordination." The SDA Church understands ordination as an act that "acknowledge[s] God's call and set[s] the individual apart and appoint[s] that person to serve the church in a special capacity. The person thus set apart becomes an authorized representative of the church. By this act, the church delegates its authority to its ministers to proclaim the gospel publicly, to administer

to determine whether the leaders of each department in the local church structure today should be ordained. It is noted that there is little evidence of a matured form of a church structure in the NT period. Therefore a brief analysis of its development is needed to find any basis for ordaining departmental leaders in a fully matured NT church. In this paper the instances of ordination recorded in the NT will be investigated.

It is paramount to note that the purpose of this paper is not to provide a thorough and comprehensive exegetical study of the meaning, practice, and the application of ordination in the NT. Instead, it focuses only on the possibility of ordaining leaders in addition to elders and deacons in the local church structure today.

The Appointment of the Twelve Disciples

As it is recorded in the Gospel according to Matthew 10:1–5, the appointment of the Twelve uses the root word of the Greek verb, *kaleō* (to call), to indicate the way in which the twelve disciples were chosen before they were invested with the authority to cast out evil spirits and to heal any kind of sickness. This verb appears 30 times in the NT and has the core meaning of calling someone to oneself or to be invited to the caller. It is noteworthy that the Matthean account of the appointment of the disciples does not include the laying on of hands. As Matthew recorded it, they were called first and later Jesus commissioned them and invested them verbally with authority.

Luke 6:13–16, uses a different Greek word – *prospōneō* – to recount Jesus’ calling of his disciples. It is interesting that Mark 3:13–19 uses yet a different word – *poieō* – to signify the calling of the twelve disciples. This verb can be translated as ordain but its core meaning is “to make or to appoint.”

It is evident that the Gospel writers used a variety of words to explain how Jesus commissioned his twelve disciples. It is also apparent that the way Jesus invests the disciples with authority does not reflect the current practice of ordination. When the disciples followed Jesus, they were able to carry out their responsibility with power and authority, apparently without the laying on of hands. For this reason the question arises, why cannot those who are called or appointed by the church today function without this ritual? The disciples were the first group that Jesus appointed and yet he did not lay his hands upon them.

its ordinances, to organize new congregations and, within the parameters established by God’s Word, to give direction to the believers.” General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Ministerial Association, *Seventh-day Adventist Minister’s Handbook* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, 2009), 86.

The Ordination of Deacons

Acts 6:1–6 records the first initiative of the twelve disciples to enlarge the administrative structure of the Church. Since the appointment of the twelve disciples by Jesus there had not been any consideration to select or to appoint any other members to manage the affairs of the Church and its administrative responsibilities (except for Judas' replacement). This did not occur until the complaint was brought to the attention of the twelve disciples by the Hellenistic Jews that their widows were being neglected in the daily serving of the food.

In Acts 6:1 it is stated that the main reason for the negligence was the “influx of so many members,”² although racial discrimination could also be another factor. The total number of men at this time was about 5,000 (Acts 4:4). We are not told the number of women, but it could be a similar figure. The verse that follows the selection of the seven spirit-filled men (Acts 6:7) reveals that this phenomenal growth continued and that even some of the priests and religious leaders who opposed Jesus became obedient to the faith. Hence it had become clear that there was a need for more leaders to be appointed.

It is of interest to note that when the congregation agreed to the proposal from the disciples to select seven men of good reputation, full of Spirit and of wisdom, they were not called deacons. Instead, they were only identified with the work that they were asked to do. Serving people (*diakonein trapezais*) was their main and first duty—they were later called as deacons. The Greek word for deacons is *diakonos* in singular form and *diakonous* in the plural form. This Greek word can also be translated as servant or servants and the main role of the deacons was to serve. However, this service was later expanded to involve Bible study, preaching, prophesying, and performing miracles and signs and wonders. Stephen and Philip were involved in these ministries (Acts 6:8–9:31).

At this stage, it is important to note that in this paper the Greek verb *diakoneō* is understood to mean “to serve as servant” or “to minister as minister.” The emphasis is on responsibility or ministry and not so much on the office of a deacon which denotes the hierarchical authority of the office, though it does also carry the connotation of authority. According to Cooper Abrams, “The word in the Greek text absolutely does not refer to an official ruling position. It simply means a person elected to serve in a particular

2 General Conference Ministerial Association, “Deacons: Servants of the Church,” *Elder's Digest* 19, no. 1 (2013): 22.

ministry.”³

It is worth noting that these seven deacons were ordained by the disciples by laying their hands upon them (Acts 6:6). This is a contrast to the ordination of the disciples, where the laying-on of hands was not performed on them. Their ordination became valid when Jesus called them to follow him as his disciples. As has emerged from the previous discussion, it appears that there were two methods that were used for ordaining workers in the first Christian Church. Furthermore, these ordinations were performed in response to the increase of the administrative and pastoral needs of the Church.

Commissioning of Paul and Barnabas

The commissioning of Paul and Barnabas by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:1–3) presents a different aspect of ordination. While the prophets and the teachers of the church at Antioch were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit told them to “set apart” Paul and Barnabas for the work to which he had called them. Those that were mentioned as prophets and teachers included Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, and Saul. It is noteworthy that these were already known to be prophets and teachers, though we are not told when they became prophets and teachers or how they were installed. Nonetheless, the Holy Spirit wanted two of them to be set apart for the work to which he had called them and the rest did so accordingly. Verse 3 records that “when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”

In view of this, there are number of things to be noted. First, Paul and Barnabas were already known as prophets and teachers. Second, their selection was directed by the Holy Spirit but effected by the rest of the prophets and teachers. Third, it seemed that the people who carried out the ordination were of equal ministerial authority, carrying out similar Church responsibilities to Paul and Barnabas before the commissioning was done. Fourth, Paul and Barnabas were commissioned to work regionally and not locally

3 Translating “the verb *diakoneō* into ‘office of a deacon’ does not distinguish which meaning is correct. History shows that probably under the influence of the Church of England and Protestant churches, whose roots are found in Roman Catholicism, the word was understood incorrectly as referring to an official office which supported their ‘unbiblical hierarchical system of church government. These churches established ‘deacons’ as official ruling officers in their churches.” Cooper B. Abrams, “A Biblical Look at Deacons,” accessed March 2012, www.bible-truth.org/deacon.html.

like the deacons. Fifth, the commissioning process included fasting, praying, and the laying-on of hands, in contrast to the processes of the calling the twelve disciples and the ordination of the seven deacons. The list above highlights some unique features of this commissioning and the fact that Paul and Barnabas were sent to work as itinerant apostles. On the other hand, it seems to appear that as time progressed, new facets were added to the process of commissioning.

Retrospectively, one needs to ask why there was a need to lay hands on Paul and Barnabas when they had been perceived already to be prophets and teachers. Was their commissioning as prophets and teachers enough to indicate their authority to carry out their new ministerial work? Was the laying-on of hands a sign of the rite of ordination or was it only to bless them before they left for their missionary work?⁴ Why was there a need to lay hands on Paul and Barnabas this time when they had already been recognized as prophets and teachers?

The local leaders in the church at Antioch had not seen the need for the Gospel to be taken out to the wider community. It was the Holy Spirit that initiated this and prompted the leaders to act. Thus, if the Holy Spirit is present and continues to do the same work today, then he can still do the same to anybody today. The Holy Spirit can still inspire the leaders of each local setting to do the same. Furthermore, it appears that the Holy Spirit's intention was not to create another level of administration but to facilitate the spreading of the Gospel.

Choosing of the Elders

After the setting apart of Paul and Barnabas they went on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:4–15:35). While on this journey they appointed elders in every church, commending them to the Lord with prayer and fasting (Acts 14:23). It is noticeable that they did not wait for any complaint, suggestion, or to see the number of the members increase before they chose any elders. From this account it appears that once they established a church they chose elders and it seems that they had accepted what had been done

4 Note that Paul wrote to Timothy later and alerted him to the fact that he was appointed as a preacher, apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles (1 Tim. 2:7). He repeated the same when he wrote from Rome (2 Tim. 1:11). Though it is not clear of which appointment he was referring to, based on the text he could be referring to the event in Acts 13:1–3. Ellen G White supported this and referred to it as the ordination of Paul. She indicates that this marked the beginning of the apostleship of Paul. Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1911), 164.

before to them as the method for commissioning or ordaining leaders. Furthermore, deacons and elders seemed to be the only offices that were ordained or commissioned. In addition, in this commissioning or ordination ceremony there was no mention of any laying on of hands as compared to Paul and Barnabas' commissioning. Prayer and fasting are mentioned but not the laying on of hands.⁵

Nonetheless, the most important point to note here is that Paul chose elders in every church to look after each church while they moved on with their mission. There is no mention of any deacons chosen. From the passage in the letter addressed to Timothy while he is at Ephesus that reminds him of the spiritual qualifications of deacons we may conclude that deacons had also been chosen (1 Tim. 3:8–13).⁶

Conclusion

It is apparent that there is no single method used for commissioning or ordaining God's workers in the NT. As time progressed, more processes and formalities were introduced. In New Testament times, it appears that even though the laying-on of hands was not performed on some they were perceived as being ordained. Moreover, the selections of the twelve disciples, deacons, the apostles Paul and Barnabas, and the church elders were based on the need to cater for the increase in numbers of the members locally and regionally and the facilitation of the spreading of the Gospel. It is important to note that these actions all lead to good organization. Therefore, if the NT Churches grew in a way similar to what we see in the Church today, it would also be appropriate today to ordain the departmental leaders in local churches.

5 "The verb used for "appointing" is used only this once in the NT. In classical Greek usage, this word meant raising the hand as to vote. Whether it meant anything different, such as laying on of hands, in Paul's Christian ecclesiastical usage, we have no idea. In any case, the appointment of local church elders as part of church organization seems to be clearly in view." Nancy Vyhmeister, "Ordination in the New Testament?" *Ministry* 74, no. 5 (May 2002): 26.

6 Note that Paul did not mention any induction ceremony for the offices of deacons and elders when he wrote to Timothy regarding their spiritual qualifications. He only alluded to it when he advised Timothy not to lay hands prematurely on the new converts lest he share the responsibility of the sins of others (1 Tim. 5:22). Possibly, Paul could have told Timothy already of how to officiate in an ordination ceremony of elders and deacons but it is not recorded. That may be why he made a passing comment to him regarding the premature laying on of hands on new converts.

Chapter 13: “Temple of God” Ecclesiology and an Adventist Theology of Ordination

Peter S. Marks

Adventists at the present time have a unique opportunity to adopt a theology of ordination and associated practical guidelines that seek to embrace all and promote unity among all. A dynamic and Spirit-led model of mission and ministry was discarded soon after Apostolic times. Over a period of several centuries a sacramental/institutional model of ecclesiology was developed in its place. Nowhere is the character of such a model better illustrated than in the development of the theology and practice of clerical ordination.¹

Protestant Reformers undid some of the accretions of power and lordly spiritual authority that had accrued to the priestly/clerical class.² Adventist pioneers, in their turn, faced the need to build their polity and gospel order from the foundations. Their accomplishments in this arena were undertaken

1 For an outline of such developments see Darius Jankiewicz, “The Problem of Ordination: Lessons from Early Christian History,” (A General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Biblical Research Institute Paper, March 2013). See also Daniel Augsburg, “Clerical Authority and Ordination in the Early Christian Church,” in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 77–100. Harold Hill describes clericalisation as a sociological phenomenon, present across the centuries in the Christian Church. He maintains that “clericalisation is simply religious specialisation... a by-product of institutionalisation... The early church was egalitarian... As it institutionalised over its first few centuries, it accommodated to traditional religious expectations, to hierarchical society, and the Roman State... The danger with leadership, however, is that rather than being merely a means of maintaining authenticity, it can come to identify itself as central to it, the means becoming the end. This is clericalisation.” Harold Hill, “The Language of Ordination: The Clericalising of the Salvation Army,” (A Transcript of the Booth College Association Lecture for September 25, 2008), accessed January 26, 2013, <http://rupebainenglish.blogspot.com.au/2010/03/cleralising-of-sa.html>.

2 For a further discussion of this see Darius Jankiewicz, “The History of Ordination,” (online video at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sckb3tell.m1)

in pragmatic fashion and have served Adventists well. However, the almost inevitable drift toward institutionalisation and clericalisation³ may well have created subtle, even sinful changes in attitudes and modes of operation which are best addressed by a studied renewal and reformation.

The aim in this paper is to contribute to the understanding of the theology of ordination within the Adventist context. The following sequence of steps is used for this purpose. First, a helpful understanding of the church, based on the frequent New Testament (NT) “temple of God” metaphor will be outlined. Second, an explanation of two important biblical teachings highlighted in such an ecclesiology will assist in the creation of a useful theology of the laity. Third, a number of practical and organizational principles may be drawn from such a theology of the laity which may be used to inform an Adventist theology and practice of ordination. Finally, several pointers arise from such a theology of the laity that may assist in the quest to implement a renewed understanding of the theology and practice of ordination.

The “Temple Of God” Ecclesiology

An intriguing Bible passage captures well the frequently used NT metaphor⁴ that describes the people of God as a building, or as a temple:

Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God *and* precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ...But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light. (1 Pet. 2:4, 5, 9; emphasis added).⁵

This passage contains several mixed metaphors. Christ is to be to his people as an attractive gem flashing with living colour, emanating light from within himself. His people will emerge from darkness, as it were, being drawn into his marvellous light, and so reflect the light of Christ to others, as they are being used as building blocks in the creation of a glorious temple. The assembled church, the “temple of God,” does not exist for itself, but so

3 Harold Hill, a retired New Zealand Salvation Army officer, recently stated that “the process of institutionalisation and clericalisation in the church can be seen as a successful reconquest of the new community by the old structures of domination and power.” Hill, “The Language of Ordination,” 4.

4 See especially Eph. 2:19–22; Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 3:9, 16–17; 1 Tim. 3:15. It is acknowledged that this NT metaphor is just one of many that is used to describe the people of God.

5 All Biblical references in this study paper are taken from the NKJV.

that others may be attracted to their heavenly Father. Therefore it is fitting, from another perspective, that all of God's special people are to be a royal priesthood offering up their spiritual gifts in ministry and sacrificial living to the praise of their Father, within this edifice.⁶ In this way, the metaphors contained in this passage highlight the fact that the twin biblical teachings of the priesthood of all believers and spiritual gifts belong together.

Beyond this passage, the NT asserts that the Church has been assigned the responsibility of continuing the ministry and mission that Jesus began. His ministry of teaching the Gospel, blessing and healing did not end with his ascension. He solemnly assured his disciples, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in me, the works that I do will he do also, and greater works than these will he do, because I go to my father" (Jn 14:12).

Both of the Apostles Peter and Paul clarified what happened at the ascension of Christ and the subsequent installation of Christ as our High Priest. Paul quoted from Psalm 68:8— "When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts to men" (Eph. 4 :8) — to emphasize the point. Peter likewise asserted on the Day of Pentecost, "Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he [Christ] poured out this which you see and hear" (Acts 2:33).

Furthermore, Paul assured the saints at Ephesus that these gifts were given to "each one of us...till we all come to the unity of the faith...to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:7, 13). As this spiritual goal is yet to be reached, one may safely conclude that these spiritual gifts will be essential throughout the Christian era. These gifts are sent by Jesus himself, who at the right hand of God functions as the High Priest of all humanity. In addition the Spirit serves as the Vicar of Christ on earth as he conveys the spiritual gifts of blessing and strength to the royal priesthood, his saints. In the strength of such spiritual gifts and blessings, God's people are to bring to completion the essential ministry of offering Christ's salvation and all its benefits to sinful humanity.

Thus the "temple of God" ecclesiology highlights two biblical teachings. First, it focuses on a wholistic understanding of the people of God, in which all believers individually but unitedly function as priests of the Most High. Second, the service and ministry of all such priests is performed through the empowerment of the Spirit, and through the spiritual gifts he imparts. These spiritual gifts are available in perpetuity until the end of the age.

6 See also the Apostle Paul's reference in Rom. 12:1 to God's people presenting themselves sacrificially to God.

Towards a Theology of the Laity

The two biblical teachings, the priesthood of all believers and the granting of spiritual gifts, offer a rich basis from which to move towards a renewed theology of the laity. The central perspective that informs the following discussion is that the whole people of God have been called by God, individually and corporately, to continue the mission and ministry of Christ.

Called to be a Priestly People

The biblical teaching of the priesthood of all may be said to have two fundamental aspects. First, each believer-priest is to enjoy free and direct access to the forgiving heart of God through their High Priest, Jesus Christ. Each one is also to enjoy access to the enlivening Word, aided only by the Spirit of God and their High Priest. Believer-priests, both individually and corporately, ought to understand truth and the will and purpose of God for themselves. Second, each believer-priest is called to receive the blessings of strength and fruitfulness in their lives. They are to be engaged in the mission and ministry of Jesus, through a life of service according to the various gifts and capacities they have been given. The life and ministry of Jesus introduced a new mode of human relationships, that of serving and ministering to others. Only the Spirit of God can empower such a lifestyle.

Indeed, after reflecting on Jesus' life, Hendrik Kraemer said that “the totality of life is put under the principle of *diakonia*, of which ‘ministry’ is the usual translation, but which...could perhaps be better translated by ‘servantship.’”⁷ Hence, all Christian believers are to be *diakonoi*, or ministers. Such a spirit of service is to empower each individual believer. Kraemer emphasises this by reference to Ephesians 4:11–12. He writes of “the essential oneness and the wholeness of the church”⁸ in that Christ provides apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor-teachers “for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry” (Eph. 4:12a).⁹ In this phrase, “all the stress was on the *diakonia*, the ministry of the whole membership, be-

7 Hendrik Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College, 2005), 139.

8 *Ibid.*, 139.

9 Interestingly, the KJV translates this phrase: “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry.” Notice two significant differences here. First, the “saints” are a distinct group apart from “the ministry.” Second, this distinction is reinforced by the use of the comma after “the saints.” More modern English versions have rarely, if ever, rendered the phrase in this way. Yet curiously, the understanding of “the ministry” is still widespread in Christian circles.

cause the Church as a whole stood under the same token as its Lord, i.e., ‘servantship.’”¹⁰ But for centuries the term *diakonia* has been translated by the word “[the] ministry,” often conceived of as a special subset of the people of God, known as “the ministry.”

Observe what Ellen White taught on this topic. She too affirmed the calling of all believer-priests. According to Denis Fortin, two passages of Scripture, more than others, helped her express this concept.¹¹ The first was 1 Peter 2:9, on which a reflection is given in the first section of this paper. The second was John 15:16: “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed [ordained in the KJV] you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you.” In this way, Ellen White taught that all believers were to engage in wholehearted Christian service. For example, she wrote, “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.”¹²

In support of this teaching Ellen White maintained that every believer is ordained by Christ. She is emphatic about this:

Have you tasted of the powers of the world to come? Have you been eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of God? Then, although ministerial hands may not have been laid upon you in ordination, Christ has laid His hands upon you and has said: “You are my witnesses.”¹³

Ellen White affirmed that such was the experience of Paul and Barnabas. Thus she wrote concerning their fruitful ministry in Antioch that “neither of them had been formally ordained to the gospel ministry...But Paul and Barnabas had already received their commission from God Himself.”¹⁴ Ellen White also asserted that “the Lord ordained me as His messenger” at the beginning of her prophetic ministry though she was never ordained by human hands.¹⁵

10 Ibid., 140.

11 Denis Fortin, “Ordination in the Writings of Ellen G. White,” in *Women in Ministry, Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 117.

12 Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1911), 110.

13 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948) 6:444.

14 White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 160–161.

15 Ellen G. White, Letter 138, 1909, cited in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Later Elmshaven Years, 1905-1915* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1982), 211.

However, Ellen White valued what she called “gospel order,” including the ordination of people for a diversity of ordained ministries to lead the people of God in their mission and ministry. This is why she recommended that as well as ministers of the gospel, both missionary physicians and women engaged in the nurture of the sick, the young and the poor, be “set apart by the laying on of hands” for their specific work.¹⁶ Such examples of an evolving Adventist polity resonate well with “the appointment of the seven” in Acts 6:1–7. This was “an important step in the perfecting of gospel order.” The growth of a better organization to facilitate “the future prosperity of the church” and to care for the poor is laudable.¹⁷

In summary, Ellen White made three important points concerning believers and ordination. First, all believers are priests and thereby qualified to engage in Christian service. Second, in a very real sense, every believer is ordained as a priest by God himself. Third, though ordination within the Church is significant, it is not an essential prerequisite for service, else a great proportion of God’s people could rightly feel excused from God’s service.¹⁸ Each of these points is upheld by Scripture.

The Call of God is in the Gifts of God

The call of God to trust in him comes to individuals as they each accept the gift of salvation. In a similar way, the call of God to service and ministry enfolds within it the particular gifting of skill and ability to minister to and to serve humanity and the Church of God. Together with such gifts there comes a compelling sense that God is with each believer in the performance of their ministry, by his Spirit. The calling is in the gifting. God is the source of them both. Any and all believers thus gifted are thereby called to the ministry. Each one is to live in active obedience to the will and purpose of God for them. Raoul Dederen provides the following helpful insight into the nature of the call of God to ministry.

The call to the ministry is only partly a call from the church [often this is termed the outward call]. It is also, and first of all, an inward call, an inner assurance on the part of the individual that it is God’s will

16 See Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1946), 546; and Ellen G. White, “The Duty of the Minister and the People,” *Review and Herald* 72, no. 28 (July 9, 1895): 433–434.

17 White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 8–89. She further states that “The organization of the church at Jerusalem was to serve as a model for the organization of churches in every place...” *Ibid.*, 91.

18 Denis Fortin makes these three points. See Fortin, “Ordination,” 118.

that he should make himself useful in the role to which the church has summoned him.¹⁹

The Apostle Paul emphasized the united purpose of the individual gifts that are given as the Spirit wishes it. “There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all” (1 Cor. 12:4–7). Each differing gift and ministry is part of a united whole. Each is essential for the efficient functioning of this united whole.²⁰

Furthermore, the Apostle Peter emphasized the fact that there are many differing gifts and graces of God. “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks ... [or] ministers, let him do it as with the ability God supplies” (1 Pet. 4:10–11a). In these passages and others,²¹ the wide variety of God’s gifts for service to one another and to the world is emphasized.

It is also apparent that each list of the various spiritual gifts is different. One may conclude that no list is complete or definitive. Individuals at one point may have one or other gift or gifts. At a later point in time they may be given a different gift or cluster of gifts, as the Spirit wishes and as individuals mature. Thus the nature of their service and ministry may change accordingly.

However, several biblical passages affirm that some individuals are called of God to wider spheres of service and leadership than others.²² The gifts that facilitate such service may be termed “leadership gifts.” 1 Corinthians 12:28 lists three such gifts—apostles, prophets, and teachers. Ephesians 4:11 has a different listing—apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers. Again, such variation hints at the incomplete and less than exhaustive nature of such lists. Such leaders are to labour “for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12). Thus, while the role and function of those with leadership gifts are highlighted, the ministerial work of all believers is clearly in focus.

19 Raoul Dederen, “The Theology of Ordination,” in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 3. It is acknowledged that Dederen would reserve such a call to that of ordained minister. The present author sees no reason why the call of God is not equally compelling if it is delivered by a local church nominating committee, for example, to each believer in the congregation.

20 See 1 Cor. 12:12–25.

21 e.g., see Rom. 12:3–8.

22 See 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11–16.

Finally, these leadership gifts and the resultant call of God constitute an invitation to responsibility, not to lordly authority; to duty not to power; and a to specific role and function not to a higher status. The Apostle Peter reflected on just such a leadership style: the elders of the churches were to “shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock” (1 Pet. 5:2,3).

The Apostle Paul, in addressing the elders of the church of Ephesus, also affirmed the fact of their being overseers and shepherds of the Church of God, just as Peter did. And he wrote that the Holy Spirit has made them so, presumably through the calling and gifting of God (Acts 20:28b). Paul then spoke about their specific responsibility to protect the people of God from false teachers who would appear after his departure (Acts 20:29). Earlier in his speech he had spoken of his life among them, claiming to have been “serving the Lord with all humility” (Acts 20:19). Peter and Paul are thus agreed on the required leadership style to be exhibited by leaders among the Church of God.

So in the above, there are several important aspects of a theology of the whole people of God that have been reiterated. First, each individual believer within the people of God has a Spirit-initiated call to be engaged in continuing the mission and ministry of Christ in the Church and the world. Such work is a priestly work. Second, the Spirit of God empowers this new lifestyle of fruitful mission and service in which individual believers introduce others to their gracious God. No believer should excuse himself or herself from the Saviour’s commission, whether or not that individual has been specifically commissioned by the Church. Third, the call of God comes to each believer as an inner assurance that they have been equipped with a variety of spiritual gifts and abilities by the Spirit. Each believer may thus fulfil his/her particular role and function in the mission and ministry of Christ. In brief, the calling is in the gifting. Fourth, some have received the leadership gifts necessary to nurture and guide the people of God as under-shepherds. Thus, the people of God will be fruitful in the mission and ministry of Christ.

Practical Principles Arising from the Theology of the Whole People of God

The following practical organizational principles spring in large part from the foregoing theology of the whole people of God. Each has been selected for its ability to inform a more satisfying theology and practice of ordination within the Adventist context. These principles are by no means a comprehensive treatment of all that could be conceived.

The Principle of the Indivisibility of the People of God

The ministry of believers is not to be divided between those with a call to leadership positions, entailing an ontologically distinct status and labelled as such, and those who are otherwise spiritually gifted, but with no inner call to ministry, and who have a lesser status. All are called. To create such a bifurcation between the called *leadership class* and the uncalled *recipient class* is to counter all that is said above about the calling and ministry of the people of God. William Robinson wrote concerning this: “The New Testament is full of expressions referring to ‘calling,’ ‘being called,’ ‘to be called,’ and they always refer to *all* Christians and not what we style ‘ministers.’ All Christians are ministers, ‘called’ to a ministry.”²³ Indeed, it is a believer’s baptism by water and the Spirit that consecrates him as a priest of Christ. It is this that signifies our universal call to serve in the mission of Christ.

It should not be surprising that the word *laos* from which the word “laity” comes, refers to the whole people of God and not just the recipient part of the assembly of God’s people.²⁴ Any division of the indivisible people of God in terms of their status, as for example between clergy and laity, is misleading and unbiblical. Of course, there is a proper distinction that may be drawn between the role and function of leaders and those with other roles.

23 William Robinson, *Completing the Reformation* (Lexington, KY: The College of the Bible, 1955), 19–20, cited in Rex D. Edwards, *A New Frontier: Every Believer a Minister* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press), 79.

24 See Edwards, *A New Frontier*, 79 and Raoul Dederen, “A Theology of Ordination,” 1, accessed April 29, 2013, www.adventistarchives.org/theology-of-ordination.pdf. According to Dederen, “The Greek word *laikos* ...as used in the Scriptures...originally meant, belonging to the *laos*... It is significant that as early as the end of the first century A.D. the significance of *laos* and *laikos* is getting a turn different from its basic significance in the NT. Increasingly, “lay” will mean unqualified to speak or to judge, an ignorant or uneducated person,” *ibid.* See also Edwards, *A New Frontier*, 79.

Furthermore, if such a clergy class is entertained among the people of God, members of that class often seem to hold what amounts to life-long tenure on their role. Such status potentially comes with a very limited sense of accountability to either God or his people, through whom they have received their calling. In reality, no individual believer is indispensable in terms of their ministry and service. All serve as moveable parts in a divine design. The work of Christ is to be carried forward unitedly by the corporate body of believer-priests. Thus, God’s call to every believer may be thought of more accurately as a Spirit-empowered contract rather than the granting of tenure. God may at any time withdraw such a contract or transform it, according to his purposes.²⁵

The unfolding service of those with leadership gifts may take unexpected turns arising from personal circumstances and the Spirit’s leading. The Spirit of God opens opportunities for service to individuals and at times he closes opportunities. He takes individual believers from where they are and fits them for service where he designs. The body of believers is tasked with the responsibility to discern the mind of God concerning the sphere of service of individual believers. Such discernment will involve attention to individual circumstances.²⁶

The Principle of Mutual Interdependence

This principle stresses that the work of all spiritually gifted individuals, whatever their gift, is needed if the work of the one body of Christ is to be accomplished. No one is to act in such ministry independently, as a spiritual

25 A good example of how the Spirit of God can transform our calling is found in the life of Sir Patrick Allen, the present Governor General of Jamaica. Previously, he had served as a school teacher, then as an Adventist pastor, educational superintendent, university administrator and Church administrator. At each turn in his life, it appears that God granted him success as he was moulded for future service. Many times God has granted wider responsibilities, some to do with education and at other times to do with the Church and people of God. Then finally, God called him from his pastoral role and made him a minister of the state. I would assert that at each career transition God has called him. See Mark A. Kellner, “New Man at Jamaica’s Helm,” *Adventist World* 5, no. 7 (July 2009).

26 The recent “Consensus Statement on a Seventh-day Adventist Theology of Ordination,” issued on July 23, 2013 steers away from any direct reference to a “special calling of God” to belong to a special leadership class. Reference is made to “the specific work of ministry to which they were appointed,” accessed July 28, 2013, www.news.adventist.org/archive/articles/2013/07/13/study-committee-votes-consensus-statement-on-theology-of-ordination.

lone-ranger. After all, all are called to be believer-priests in his temple. Such mutual interdependence was enunciated by the Apostle Paul in Romans 12:4–8. Though Christ's followers belong together in one new society, each has a specific and differing function there, according to our gifting. These specific spiritual gifts are listed and each person is here encouraged to use their individual gifts in a context of mutual interdependence. This passage stresses that these interdependent gifts are *each* functions of the one unified organic whole. Adventist work on a global scale has expanded on this principle of mutual interdependence, rather than of independence.

The Principle of Authority

Mark 10:35–45 is the record of a discussion Christ had with his disciples regarding the nature of authority and leadership within his kingdom. Here he contrasted the worldly lust for power and lordly greatness with his own willingness to serve others, even as a slave. And he pointed to his own example of serving humanity, by becoming a slave.²⁷ Christ rebukes the wish for worldly authority and greatness with the words, “Yet it shall not be so among you” (Mk 10:43a). He invites those seeking authority and greatness to attain it by serving others.

These two contradictory attitudes are the foundation of two vastly differing models of ministry. In one of these, people attain greatness by ruling over others and having a higher ranking and status than others within authoritarian structures. Christ's way to greatness is different. He said, “Whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all” (Mk 10:43b–44). Christ himself has provided the greatest example of this in becoming the incarnate Christ²⁸ and in washing the disciple's feet on the evening before the crucifixion.²⁹ Christ functioned as a slave. He did not cling to his status as their master. In doing so he has provided us with an example.

Unfortunately, sinful people often succumb to the ideal of greatness attained by ruling others. Could it be that such an understanding forms the basis for an erroneous understanding of male headship?³⁰ Is it possible that

27 The Greek words for servant, *diakonos* and slave, *doulos* are similar in meaning. Christ invites us all to become slaves of a world in need.

28 See Phil. 2:5–11.

29 See Jn 13:5–17.

30 Further discussion of the Biblical teaching of male headship is not possible here. For a helpful discussion see Richard M. Davidson, “Headship, Submission and Equality in Scripture” in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 259–295.

the authoritarian control some men wield over their families and even the Church of God results from such erroneous thinking? Perhaps the kind of submission God requires is submission to the needs of the Church and of the world?

Though Christ carried forward his mission and earthly ministry as a servant, he affirmed at the end of that ministry that “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me” (Matt. 28:18). It was with this authority that he commissioned his disciples to engage in making disciples (Matt. 28:19–20). In this way he commissioned his first ministers as his agents in this work. He commissions us in a similar way, because “[He] is with us always, even to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20b).

It is the believer’s commission from Christ that authorizes that person to make disciples. Their ministry is legitimate only as Christ is working through his agent. The authority of the believing agent is solely the authority to fulfil that person’s commission from Christ. Authority is not abstract. It is the authority to do something with legitimacy, to perform a function. Clearly, the particular role or function any individual fulfils will vary according to his or her gifting. Those with leadership or other gifts will use them as Christ has commissioned them. The authority an individual believer has to execute his or her commission accompanies the role and function that believer fulfils. The authority does not reside within the person.

If such were the case it might be acquired through a once-and-forever act of consecration or ordination. The concept of once-ordained, always-ordained is erroneous because it totally overlooks the fact that one has authority and is authorized by Christ himself to perform a function in the global outreach of making disciples. No such authority resides intrinsically within the believer. Given such an understanding, it may be that individuals may be consecrated and appointed to various functions at many points throughout their life journeys.³¹

The Principle of Unity and Harmony without Uniformity

Christ’s high-priestly prayer, as given in John 17, is a prayer for unity among his believer-priests. Perhaps the concept of harmony best captures the essence of Jesus’ prayer, which was offered in response to his disciples who at that time had debated their relative greatness. They had visions of hierarchies in which they individually were in places of honour and control

31 The above discussion of Christ’s authority, and the believer’s commissioning and function is based on James Wibberding, “Women in Ministry: Framing the Conversation,” accessed June 3, 2013, www.gleaneronline.org/2012/11/36107879347.

over others. Jesus, however, envisioned a harmony of loving unity, and a pressing onward toward one goal. Within such harmony and loving unity, each believer-priest can exercise their individual role, according to their particular gifting.

Adventists seek to move forward in this fashion as they engage with the opportunities and challenges involved in fulfilling the mission and ministry of Jesus in the world. These mission opportunities and challenge exist in widely different and ever-changing cultural settings. In this setting it is important to respect both delegated responsibility for mission and a participatory framework for collective decision-making in this global family. In such an environment of mutual love and respect for all members and segments of this united global family, careful speaking and listening is essential to the continuing health of the whole. Acknowledgement of differences and disagreements and a resolution process are also essential.³²

Mark Finley, Adventist evangelist and Church administrator, summarized his thoughts on unity within the global Adventist family, and while doing so, expressed his concept of unity within the context of the experience of the early Christian Church:

The essence of unity is not uniform action; it is respecting one another enough to listen carefully, respond thoughtfully and decide together... Insurmountable difficulties were resolved as early church leaders met together, prayed and surrendered their personal opinions to the decisions of the larger corporate body.³³

The experience of the early believers at the so-called Jerusalem Council recorded in Acts 15 is perhaps the best biblical illustration of this principle. These believers were seriously divided over what practices were essential for salvation. Unity was achieved as the gathering discerned that the Spirit of God was leading them to mutual agreement on several core essentials, while guaranteeing freedom in matters beyond these core essentials (Acts 15:24-29). Unity was not achieved by legislating or even anticipating uniformity within the Church. The following assertion by the Annual Council of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists reflects on this biblical incident:

32 This paragraph is based on the “Annual Council Statement in Regard to Ministerial Ordination,” *Adventist Review Online Edition*, accessed May 19, 2013, <http://www.adventistreview.org/article/5766/archives/issue-2012-1528/28cn-ac-statement-in-regard-to-ministerial-ordination>, 1-2.

33 “After Debate, Annual Council Votes Statement on Church Polity,” *Adventist News Network*, accessed May 20, 2013, <http://news.adventist.org/en/archive/articles/2012/10/16/after-debate-annual-council-votes-statement-on-church-polity>, 2.

In the New Testament Church, unity does not always require uniformity (See Acts 15). Instead, unity is based upon mutual commitment to Jesus Christ, to His Word, His mission, and to the community of believers. One of the ways by which unity is demonstrated is seen in the process of making decisions that affect the whole community—a process of deciding together. The resulting decisions may recognize the legitimacy of practices that do not always reflect uniformity.³⁴

Such “unity in diversity” welcomes moments of tension as keys to learning and enhanced relationships. Adventist polity must continue to encapsulate such a dynamic balance.

The Principle of Functional Pragmatism and Adaptability

This principle maintains the primacy of the role and function of spiritually gifted believer-priests in the temple and Church of God. James Wibberding, an American Adventist pastor, neatly summarized this concept:

The New Testament church did not think in terms of offices or titles but of functions. This appears in the way that church offices developed pragmatically around the needs of the mission. . . This functional pragmatism suggests that they were not concerned about office boundaries but interested in serving the function that the mission required.³⁵

The early Church that was established by Christ and the apostles was mission-driven and service-focused. Repeatedly, the early Church faced needs which became crises. But the Holy Spirit guided the assembled believers toward solutions. These solutions were then endorsed by the Church or the apostles.³⁶

Another indication of the functional pragmatism and adaptability of the early Church may be seen in the increasing size of the apostolate. Initially, Jesus appointed twelve disciples. When they were sent out on their missionary journeys they were known as apostles.³⁷ Matthias was later welcomed into this inner circle. When Paul insisted that his apostleship be recognized, many resisted initially.³⁸ Later, both Paul and Barnabas were called apostles.³⁹ The Apostle Paul refers to a handful more in his epistles.⁴⁰

34 “Annual Council Statement in Regard to Ministerial Ordination,” end-note 1.

35 Wibberding, “Women in Ministry.”

36 See Acts 1:21–26; Acts 6:1–7; Acts 15 as prime examples of this pattern.

37 See Mk 6:30. The Greek word for apostle is *apostolos*, literally meaning “the one who is sent out.”

38 See 1 Cor. 9:1–2.

39 See Acts 14:4, 14.

40 Among them were Apollos (1 Cor. 4:6, 9); Silvanus and Timothy (1 Thess. 1:1); Titus (2 Cor. 8:23, Greek) and Ephaphroditus (Phil. 2:25). The case

Ellen White refers to the fact that “the apostles were led by the Holy Spirit to outline a plan for the better organization of all the working forces of the church.”⁴¹ She adds, “Later in the history of the early church...the organization of the church was further perfected, so that order and harmonious action might be maintained.”⁴² For Ellen White the issue of ordination was part of the question of Church organization and the particular functions of those within it. The early Adventists, especially in the years before 1863, were often slow to recognize the leading of the Spirit to adapt their structures and polity so as to perfect such gospel order among them as the early Church had done.⁴³

The Principle of Biblical Pragmatism

Two hermeneutics may be used to guide the response to issues of Church organization and polity as Adventists seek to discern the Spirit’s leading in these matters. On the one hand, it is possible to allow only things that are explicitly sanctioned by Scripture. On the other, one may approve of anything not directly contradicted by Scripture and good sense. The first mentioned hermeneutic is restrictive, the second less so. The early Adventist pioneers followed the lead of James and Ellen White in adopting this second, more creative hermeneutic. Without such a mentality, Adventists would not have had a weekly periodical, a printing press, church buildings and much more. Is such a principle any less useful in the creation of a biblical and rational solution to the ordination issue?⁴⁴

of Junia is especially interesting, as many believe that she was a female apostle. See Robert M. Johnson, “Shapes of Ministry in the New Testament and the Early Church” in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 47.

41 White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 88–89.

42 *Ibid.*, 91–92.

43 “Gospel order” is a term well used by Ellen White. See, for example, White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 89. For further insights into the experience of the early Adventists see George Knight, “Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination, 1844–1863,” in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 101–114.

44 The above paragraph is based on Knight, “Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination,” 121, and also Russell L. Staples, “A Theological Understanding of Ordination,” in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 150.

Summary

The foregoing discussion of practical organizational principles concerning the whole people of God may be summarised briefly. First, individual believers are indivisibly united by the call of God to ministry and services. Their individual roles differ according to their spiritual gifts. Their status does not differ, for the Spirit of God contracts all into his service. Second, the Spirit of God impels believers in a spirit of mutual interdependence as they use their particular gifting unitedly for the good of all. Third, Christ contrasted two models of authority and ministry. Worldly authority operates with power and control. However, Christ invited all to seek authority and greatness by serving others. Furthermore, his followers are not to garner authority to themselves. They are to serve empowered by his servant authority.

Fourth, the unity that Christ prayed would exist among his followers may well be expressed as harmony and a dynamic blending of decision and action, rather than rigid uniformity. Fifth, the NT Church was mission-driven and service-focused. Thus it was concerned with the role and function of believers and not with their individual office or status. Such a perspective introduced an element of flexibility into its ecclesiastical structures and polity. Contemporary Adventists would benefit from adopting the same perspective. Sixth, choosing the path of biblical pragmatism which approves of anything not directly contradicted by the Scriptures may be realistic. The alternative is an expectation that the Scriptures will address directly every issue that believers confront.

Practical Outgrowths of a Spiritual Gifts Model of Adventist Ecclesiology

Undergirding these practical outgrowths is the understanding that an ecclesiastical system of credentials and licences, such as we have now for Church leaders, is essential for the good order of believers and their leaders. However, it is time to make the use of the term “ordination” optional among Adventists and to cease from making a hierarchical distinction between “clergy” and “laity” whereby the “clergy” are seen to be a priestly class above the rest of the *laos*, or the people of God.

The use of such terms throughout the centuries has facilitated the development of the sacramental model of ecclesiology. Hence such terms carry too much baggage when used outside their NT meaning. Consequently, “temple of God” ecclesiology could well be implemented in the Adventist communion to advantage. By using this approach, All members would be organized for service and empowered for mission. Such ecclesiology is

particularly well positioned to embrace the simple biblical terminology of “the laying on of hands” as the name of the rite by which the body of believers affirms the gifting and calling of God on any member for any task. It makes provision for such a rite to be carried out whenever Adventist leaders, whether pastors, evangelists, administrators, teachers, or specialist resource persons undertake new or expanded roles. Finally, it opens up the possibility that “the laying on of hands” will also affirm local congregational leaders whom the congregation recognizes have been gifted and thus called into ministry. For example, a local congregation could conduct a time of worship where “the laying on of hands” is extended to all ministry leaders in that congregation.

Church leaders and scholars need to continue to explore ways to provide guidance, based on a “temple of God” ecclesiology, as to how Adventists could affirm people with particular spiritual gifts, for use in both church leadership and team leadership, through the laying on of hands.

Chapter 14: Moving Forward in Unity

Barry D. Oliver¹

South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists

The question to be addressed in this paper is straightforward. With respect to the practice of ordination for Gospel ministry, can diversity be respected and unity maintained in the Seventh-day Adventist Church so that the Church and its mission are strengthened?

The Purpose of the Paper

The purpose of this paper is to respond to this question by proposing that the Church can maintain its unity and adopt a position which allows for diversity in practice with respect to ordination to the Gospel ministry without gender distinction.

The Perspective of the Paper

The paper is written with deep respect for the differing positions held on the subject of the practice of ordination in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. However, at the outset it is important to indicate that the paper does reflect a definite viewpoint and it is appropriate that a number of pre-suppositional perspectives be articulated. They are as follows:

1. Uncompromising loyalty to the message and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
2. Full commitment to the God-given gift of global unity in this Church and respect for the mosaic of diversity within the global Church family.
3. Full commitment to the Seventh-day Adventist methodology of biblical interpretation referred to as the historical-grammatical hermeneutic.

1 Some thoughts contained in this paper reflect aspects of the chapter written by the author for George Knight's Festschrift: Barry D. Oliver, "Reflections on the Church and Unity" in *Adventist Maverick: A Celebration of George R. Knight's Contribution to Adventist Thought*, eds. Gilbert M. Valentine & Woodrow Whidden II (Nampa ID: Pacific Press, 2014), 185–194.

4. An understanding and respect for the reality that in the Church that there are different perspectives on ordination.²
5. Dependence on Scripture and the writings of Ellen G. White as they are applied to the needs of the Church and its mission. The pre-suppositions of, proposals advanced and conclusions made in this paper are not in any way drawn from the philosophies of feminism nor those theologies and practices which are not representative of the biblical understanding and accepted practices of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
6. A foundation in a biblical understanding of God's call to the ministry and the reaffirmation of the freedom of the Spirit to call and use whomever he chooses to minister to his Church and to be engaged in response to that call in the mission of the Church.
7. A desire to acknowledge the work of the Spirit in addressing misunderstandings of the nature of Christian ministry which have been introduced into the Christian Church over the centuries. This is a call to include in our agenda as reformers of the Christian faith the restoration of a truly Christian ministry as defined by Scripture under the leading of the Holy Spirit.
8. The assertion that this issue alone is under consideration. Any assumption of linkage between the topic under discussion and other problematic issues is not appropriate. Credence is not given to any attempt to draw conclusions about positions on other issues on the basis of discussion about this issue.
9. The recognition that because of differing religious contexts, history and experience, the meaning attached to ordination is influenced by culture. Different cultures appear to bestow a different status upon a minister at ordination.
10. A position of affirmation for the practice of ordination without reference to gender in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

2 The Theology of Ordination Study Committee Report of the North American Division has expressed it this way: "Because the Bible does not directly address the ordination of women, and because the principle-based evidence is neither complete nor irrefutable, it can be expected that differing conclusions may be drawn by equally sincere and competent students of God's Word." *Theology of Ordination Study Committee Report of the North American Division*, <http://static1.squarespace.com/static/50d0e8e4b0ceb6af5fdd33/t/5277fd8fe4b0c0a394822907/1383595407268/nad-ordination-01-summary.pdf>, 6.

Delimitation

This paper is written with full recognition that the purpose of the Theology of Ordination Study Committee is to give *study* to the topic of ordination and its practice in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Other ecclesiastical bodies will have the responsibility to assess and develop in more detail any recommendations which result from this study process. To that end, this paper is, in effect, a “broad brush strokes” case-study of how differing practices may be implemented in the Church.

Historical Reflections

Building on our Seventh-day Adventist History and Heritage

Whatever we do as we move forward we should ensure that we build on the foundation laid throughout our history and that we respect our Seventh-day Adventist heritage. Since the latter half of the nineteenth century, whenever we have had to make difficult decisions about matters of purpose and practice we have always asked the questions, “What does the Word of God say?” and “What is it that best serves our mission?” The same questions are to be asked as we move this discussion forward. Word and mission have been the ingredients of success for the Seventh-day Adventist Church that have distinguished the Church for the last 150 years.

The Principle of Flexibility in Practice

Further, in being true to our history and heritage we need to remember that appropriate flexibility of practice has been a significant reason for the continuing growth, development and sustainability of the global Seventh-day Adventist Church. That flexibility has been a direct consequence of our commitment to the Word of God and commitment to our mission as mandated by Christ himself. Our reading of Scripture makes it obvious that God himself used various patterns of organisation and leadership in his dealings with his people. He practised the principle of flexibility. In the era of the nation of Israel he used at various times the patriarchs, the judges, prophets, priests and kings. Then in the New Testament era (NT), while it is clear that principles of order and organisation were a part of God’s intent for his Church, he did not prescribe one inflexible form of order and organisation. There is no mention of Sabbath School, a church board or business meeting. There is no requirement that we have a church manual, or that we establish a whole range of church officers in order to facilitate the fulfilment of our mission. Indeed we believe that God has given the Church the authority to

establish such ecclesiastical practices and offices precisely because we are committed to the principles of Scripture and the fulfilment of our mission.

The words of the Apostle Paul himself are probably the most defining with respect to how we are to approach flexibility in practice:

¹⁹For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. ²⁰To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. ²¹To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law. ²²To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. ²³I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings (1 Cor. 9:19–23 NRSV).

Without taking the time to exegete this passage fully, two things are clear. First, our commitment to our mission determines our practice. Second, appropriate flexibility of practice is not only permissible, but in the context of mission, it is necessary.

Study of the history of the development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church reveals that we have generally well understood this principle of flexibility. In particular, this was the case in matters of Church order and organisation. For example, in 1855 James White was insisting that the organisation of the Church should be patterned after what he regarded as a “perfect system of order, set forth in the New Testament.”³ Just a few years later, as he came to realise that the NT was not so specific as to prescribe a non-negotiable system of order, he argued that “we should not be afraid of that system which is not opposed by the Bible, and is approved by sound sense.”⁴ While ordination was not the specific topic under consideration in White's discussion, the principle is established that change and flexibility for the sake of mission are entirely possible. Furthermore, wherever a definitive and unchallengeable view cannot be established on the basis of Scripture alone, we are to use “sound sense” as a guide.

Ellen White herself also demonstrated these principles in the counsel she gave to the leaders of the denomination. Her counsels to them took account of context and circumstances and while remaining focused on the essential principles, she was indeed adaptable. For example, in 1892 she gave some

3 James White, “Church Order,” *Review and Herald* 6, no. 21 (January 23, 1855): 164.

4 James White, “Yearly Meetings,” *Review and Herald* 14, no. 9 (July 21, 1859): 68.

very specific counsel with regard to the shape of Church organisational structure. Writing from Australia to the General Conference in session, (her letter was read to the delegates by O. A. Olsen, President of the General Conference), she explained:

We had a hard struggle in establishing organization. Notwithstanding that the Lord gave testimony after testimony upon this point, the opposition was strong, and it had to be met again and again. But we knew that the Lord God of Israel was leading us, and guiding by his providence. We engaged in the work of organization and marked prosperity attended the advance movement. . . . The system of organization has proved a grand success. . . . As we have advanced our system of organization has proved effectual. . . .

Let none entertain the thought, however, that we can dispense with organization. It has cost us much study, and many prayers for wisdom that we know God has answered, to erect this structure. It has been built up by His direction, through much sacrifice and conflict. Let none of our brethren be so deceived as to attempt to tear it down, for you will thus bring in a condition of things that you do not dream of. In the name of the Lord, I declare to you that it is to stand strengthened, established, and settled.⁵

This statement is obviously gives very strong support for the need for organization and the “system of organization” operative in the Church at the time of her writing. However, the time at which this was written should be noted. Ellen White wrote these words only nine years before the major reorganization of 1901–1903 during which organizational structures underwent major reform: Union Conferences were introduced and the auxiliary organizations were brought under the umbrella of the executive committee of the General Conference as departments.⁶ Obviously she did not intend that strong approval of the principles of organization or even of the specific system and forms of organization should preclude later changes when contingencies in the context of the world mission of the Church made change desirable.

In fact, on the day before the official opening of the 1901 General Conference session she declared, “God wants a change. . . . right here. . . . right now.”⁷

5 “Ellen G. White to Brethren of the General Conference,” December 19, 1892, Letter 32, 1892; *General Conference Bulletin*, 1893, 20–25.

6 The adoption of some of these structures became possible because there had been an earlier flexibility of approach which made their general adoption more acceptable.

7 “Talk of Mrs E. G. White, before Representative Brethren, In the College Library, April 1, 1901, 2:30 P.M.,” MS 43a, 1901. This manuscript together with MS 43, an edited edition of Ellen White’s speech, is available in Ellen G. White Research Centres.

The following day, when reiterating the concerns which she had communicated in no uncertain terms on the previous day, she added, “according to the light that has been given me—and just how it is to be accomplished I cannot say—greater strength must be brought into the managing force of the Conference.”⁸ She called for change and flexibility but did not attempt to dictate at critical times in our history the particular shape that structures were to take. She left that to due process.

It appears that for Ellen White, the bottom line with respect to practice was the facilitation of the mission of the Church. Structures which inhibited or detracted from task accomplishment, which led the Church to focus its time and attention inward rather than outward, were not at all appropriate. For example, soon after the General Conference session of 1901, Ellen White wrote to A. G. Daniells, the newly elected President of the General Conference regarding the work among the “coloured people” in the South. She admonished Daniells to be flexible in his administration because of the unique needs of the South. The Church was not to become “narrow” and confined by “regular lines.” Different methods of organization and approach were necessary in culturally diverse situations. For administration to be tied to an inflexible predetermined policy which could not adapt to diverse cultural and sociological needs was, for Ellen White, an abuse of administrative prerogative.⁹ The very same day, Ellen White wrote to her son, Edson, who was working in the southern part of the United States. Edson was inclined to be too adventurous in his innovations. Whereas Daniells the administrator had to be counselled to allow change and innovation in a different socio-cultural milieu, Edson had to be cautioned not to be too hasty. Ellen White wrote:

You need now to be able to think and judge with clear discrimination. Great care must be exercised in making changes which differ from the old-established routine. Changes are to be made, but they are not to be made in such an abrupt manner that you will not carry the people with you. You who are working in the South must labor as if in a foreign country. You must work as pioneers, seeking to save expense in every way possible. And above all, you must study to show yourselves approved unto God.¹⁰

If it was appropriate for Ellen White and the pioneers of the Church to demonstrate this level of flexibility in order to facilitate the unity and the

8 *General Conference Bulletin*, 1901, 25. By “greater strength,” Ellen White did not mean more authority. She was referring to the wider participation of other gifted people in the work of leadership in the Church.

9 See Ellen G. White to A. G. Daniells, June 30, 1901, Letter 65, 1901.

10 Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, June 30, 1901, Letter 62, 1901.

mission of the Church it is no less so today when the level of diversity and complexity in the world Church is so much greater. Yes, it is important to act together and it is important to hold dearly to those things which make Seventh-day Adventists who they are. But in the context of diversity when Scripture is not definitive, surely all can agree to act in a manner consistent with that of the Church's pioneers as we work together under the leading of the Holy Spirit.

The mission of the Church is realised to the extent that we are loyal to our understanding of the teachings of Scripture and we translate those beliefs into appropriate praxis within the diversity of cultures and environments in which we share the love of God. To the extent that we continue to be successful in doing just this, to that extent we will continue to flourish and be instrumental in fulfilling the commission that Christ has given us.

The Way Forward

The principle of flexibility in the pursuit of mission as it was experienced in the time of Ellen White's leadership has served the Church well during the decades that have followed. Subsequent to an earlier discussion in 1975 on the role of women in the Church, and following careful study of Scripture, the General Conference Executive Committee at its Annual Council in 1984 took action with respect to the appropriateness of ordaining women as local church elders. While a number of guidelines for the implementation of the decision were included, the substance of the action is stated in the minutes as follows:

To advise each division that it is free to make provision as it may deem necessary for the election and ordination of women as local church elders.¹¹

This action has served the global Church well. There have been no deep schisms. Indeed, it has promoted the preservation of unity of the Church and enabled mission to flourish by encouraging appropriate flexibility in practice. Time has shown that it was a wise decision in the face of the diversity of the Church on the issue of the role of men and women in the local church. It has not fractured the unity of the Church and neither has it damaged the message and mission of the Church. It is my observation that in the places where it was possible to implement the decision the Church has been blessed.

Given the ongoing nature of the global discussion and the deliberations of the Theology of Ordination Study Committee the challenge again faces

11 General Conference Committee Annual Council, October 14, 1984.

us as to how to preserve unity while accommodating differences. In order to do that it is here recommended that the global Church take an enabling action which gives a similar flexibility to global Church practice with reference to the ordination of Gospel ministers. Such an action could be worded something like this:

That each division be given the prerogative to determine and make provision as it may deem appropriate within its territory for the ordination of men and women to the gospel ministry.

How would this work in practice? Subsequent to an enabling action, the primary operational documents of the Church (*The Church Manual* and *General Conference Working Policy*) would need to be adjusted and appropriate wording found in order to express the principle of flexibility and permit freedom for the relevant various organizational entities of the Church to exercise their conscientious conviction on this matter. For the sake of the unity of the Church it is important for us to find the means of expression which bring the Church together—especially when there is difference such as is the case in this instance.

As an example of how this wording might be adjusted, it could be stated that while all ordination as such is for the world Church (deacons, elders and pastors), the scope of authority to perform the functions of an ordained person is determined by the appropriate authority-granting entity. For example, a person who is ordained as a deacon or an elder is authorised to function in those capacities only when elected to do so by a local church, for a specified period of time. If such an ordained person were to move to another local church anywhere in the world, they would only be granted the authority to function as an elder or deacon in that local church if elected through due process to do so. They would not need to be ordained again. On the other hand, if they were not authorised to function in those capacities by a local church, they would not function, even though ordained. The same would apply to pastors. Although the ordination of a pastor is a form of recognition for ministry in the global Church, authorisation to exercise the functions of an ordained pastor would be granted by the body authorised to issue the ministerial credentials to individuals, whether male or female, within the territory in which they reside or are employed.

In fact there is a sense in which this principle is already at work. Ordination does not automatically enable a male pastor to minister in any part of the world. A process of careful selection still needs to occur to prevent a person from being appointed to a place or responsibility for which he or she is totally unsuited. It is always appropriate to ensure that the most appropriate

person, ordained or otherwise, is appointed to fill any vacancy. Credential-granting entities should always exercise their prerogative to meet the needs of their constituents in the best way for them and the Church.

On the basis of the changes made to documentation, each Division would then have the prerogative to determine how the issue would be handled within its own territory. Some Divisions would continue to do as they do at present and ordain only men. Some will determine that they are going to ordain both men and women. It could be that some Divisions will determine that each Union or employing entity within the Division may make the decision and make provision as each may deem appropriate within its territory for the ordination of men and women. It would be important that assurance be given in each circumstance that there would be mutual respect and recognition of the actions of each other and that within a Division, an employing entity's decision on the matter will not be overridden by the senior entity. There will be differences in practice just as there are right now with respect to ordination of local church elders.

These differences should not be seen as insurmountable problems. Ministerial credentials are issued by an employing entity (usually a Conference or a Mission) upon the endorsement by the relevant Union. The credential grants authority to perform the functions of an ordained minister within the territory of the issuing authority. Even now, while we say that ordination is for the world Church this does not mean that ordained ministers can organise or disband churches within a specific territory, for example, without the approval of the local Conference or Mission. We expect that every ordained minister will function within the parameters of formally expressed approval by the supervisory entity for that territory.

All employing entities would continue to exercise their prerogative to issue ministerial credentials to those they appoint. They will continue to be able to choose whom they transfer into their territories and to issue credentials accordingly. They will also continue to have the prerogative through the service request process to grant appropriate authority to guests from other places who are invited to visit within their territory.

Consideration would need to be given to the situation that might arise should a female ordained person be called to serve in the General Conference or even in a Division in which not all entities held the same position. The question to be faced in such a circumstance is whether holding a Ministerial Credential as compared to holding a Commissioned Minister Credential imposes any different or additional burden on any entity where ordination without gender-distinction is not accepted. This paper contends

that such should not be seen as an imposition because the functions unique to ministerial ordination (organising/disbanding churches; functioning as a president, etc.), can only be performed with the express consent of the supervising entity and the local membership group involved. A person from the General Conference and/or a Division cannot simply travel around undertaking those tasks indiscriminately. Ministerial ordination, while it is for the global Church, does not give authority for uncontrolled or unsupervised activity which is out of harmony with the wishes and convictions of the local entity. There are parameters in place at present which moderate the scope of activity of an ordained minister and such would continue to be the case. Furthermore, it should be noted that the widespread ministry and leadership of women who hold Commissioned Minister Credentials has not become a divisive issue in the Church. If some of these women or others holding similar positions were to receive ministerial ordination their functions with respect to their role in the global Church would really be unchanged.

The Outcome for the Church

It is important that it be made clear that any motion to be brought before the world Church will affect only those Divisions that are ready to proceed with the ordination of women. No entity which is opposed to ordaining women need be affected in its practice. But those entities which conscientiously believe it is imperative to include women in the ordained ministry could do so.

Unity does not mean uniformity. The essence of unity is not uniform action. The lessons of the Jerusalem Council make that abundantly clear. The Jerusalem Council did not consider uniformity to be the same as unity. It did not vote on the one hand that all members should be circumcised and on the other that all should be uncircumcised. The Jewish members could continue to practise circumcision while the Gentile members need not (Acts 15:19–35). Unity was obtained without uniformity.

No matter which position you or I personally take with reference to the discussion of ordination, as Seventh-day Adventists we have a responsibility to guard the unity and promote the mission of the Church. At this moment we are at a watershed. We have the opportunity to maintain unity. In fact we all have the responsibility to maintain the unity of the Church and promote its mission. Even though it may come at what some may consider a cost, to do nothing will come at a greater cost—a deep schism in the Church. I do not believe that is what any of us wants.

Conclusion

Finding a solution is the task to which the global Church must remain committed—if we are to remain a global Church family. Such a solution can maintain the integrity of our belief structure. The practice of ordination with or without gender distinction is not included within our statement of 28 fundamental beliefs. We can agree that the practice does not impinge on the content of our end-time message or on the fulfilment of our global mission, nor on our global unity. We can surely agree to modify our essential operational documents in order to reflect our mutual decision. Whenever in our history we have faced a situation such as this we have taken the decision which will best fulfil our mission. Our unity has always been a function of our commitment to the Word of God and the mission he has given to us.

The situation we face now is a threat to the unity of the Church, but I am confident that we will be able to avoid that outcome. Why? Because of our love and respect for God and one another—and our shared commitment to the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. These complementary allegiances are the two things which are an antidote to schism in this Church. They are twin sisters, foundational to unity. Both must be present. One without the other will not do it. Allegiance without involvement is pointless. Involvement without allegiance is aimless and most likely dangerous. In both instances unity is the casualty.

This Church exists because there are people who have given their allegiance to God and the Church, and they act on it. They come from “every nation, kindred, tongue and people” and they go to “every nation, kindred, tongue, and people” (Rev. 14: 6). They are one but they are different. Difference requires adaptation. Unity is ultimately dependent on the recognition that diversity exists. We pray that the Holy Spirit leads us to love and respect one another and to find a solution which works.

Appendix

Theology of Ordination: Report of the Biblical Research Committee South Pacific Division

November 2013

The Process:

The Biblical Research Committee of the South Pacific Division was tasked with examining the topic of ordination, first to determine what the Adventist theology of ordination actually is. This was not a simple matter, as it had not been done before. The church had inherited a tradition arising from pragmatic necessities during its infancy, but it did not found the practice of ordaining ministers on Biblical teachings per se. At its meeting in August 2011 the BRC chose a number of scholars from this Division to explore the topic and report back. In the two meetings of 2012, papers were read and a report sent to the General Conference's Biblical Research Institute. This process continued into 2013, with the discussions focussing more on the ordination of women, and a number of conclusions drawn up that are presented in this paper.

People Involved

The members of the Biblical Research Committee in the South Pacific are:

Barry Oliver (chair), David Tasker (secretary), Lawrence Tanabose, Jerry Matthews, Leigh Rice, Daniel Reynaud, David Thiele, Neil Watts, Wendy Jackson, Ray Roennfeldt, Ross Cole, Bradley Kemp, Jorge Munoz, Robert McIver, Drene Somasundram, and Branimir Schubert.

Papers Presented:

“The Problem of Ordination: Lessons from Early Christian History,” Darius Jankiewicz PhD, Andrews University.

This paper explores and compares ministry and ordination in the Bible and in the various epochs of Post Apostolic Christianity, including the early Adventist Era. In Scripture there is not an unambiguously clear theology of either ministry or ordination, and the office of pastor does not correspond readily to any position in the early Christian church. Further, there is no direct Scriptural evidence that local elders/bishops were actually ordained through the laying on of hands, nor is there evidence that only ordained pastors or elders laid hands on those being ordained, or that there are three levels of ordination: pastor, elder and deacon.

In the post-Apostolic era, after Christ had not returned, all the leaders had died, and persecution became more widespread, the church faced a crisis that it met by developing a leadership structure that continues to influence the church to this day. Institutional aspects of church replaced mission, and rank, status and position became more important than the gospel commission. Sacramentalism was used to protect the church structure, and the persecuted church became a persecuting church. That is what our church needs to guard against. We need to focus more on our roots when we were a movement with a mission rather than repeating the mistakes of the early church in being more interested in preserving the institution.

“‘The Lord Has Ordained Me’: Ellen White’s Perspective,” John Skrzypaszek, Ellen G. White/SDA Research Centre, Avondale College of Higher Education.

Although Ellen White does not delineate a theology of ordination her views on the topic fall into three distinct categories: a) personal experience, b) Biblical reflection, and c) practical application; each of which demonstrates her clear understanding of God’s involvement in the process. She encapsulates her conviction in the phrase “The Lord has ordained me as his messenger.” The context of her reflections suggests that the purpose of God’s act of calling or ‘ordaining’ primarily makes a person aware of their specific role. It is clear that in Ellen White’s understanding the intimacy of her own role as a messenger includes emotional struggles; “How clearly I remembered the experience of forty years ago, when my light went out in darkness because I was unwilling to lift this cross, and refused to be obedient.”

She sees a number of components in the act of ordination, first being the revelation of God's love, then a matured burden for people, followed by a clear understanding of the task ahead, and finally the outflow of active ministry striving for the conversion of the lost.

Her Biblical reflections reiterate that ordination is simply a public recognition of the divine call. She affirms that no virtue is imparted by the laying of hands (AA, 161-2). In fact, she recognized that with the passing of time "ordination by laying of hands was greatly abused" and that "unwarranted importance was attached to it as if a power came at once upon those who received such ordination" (p. 162).

The depth of Ellen White's sentiments regarding God's direct involvement in the process of divine ordination is clearly expressed in a letter written from Australia. "The Holy Spirit, attending the worker together with God, enables him to gather in the sheaves. It is not learned men, not eloquent men, who are to be depended upon to do the work now needed, but humble men, who are learned in the school of Christ...." It seems that in her later years she became more gender inclusive as she saw the "emergency situation" of a lost world and the urgency required to get as many as possible into the active service of preparing people for Christ's soon coming.

"A Biblical Theology of Ordination," Kyle de Waal PhD, Avondale College of Higher Education.

An examination of all the potential NT words for ordain/commission/appoint, together with a review of the practises of the early Christians and of course that of Jesus too. Also examined is the idea of the laying on of hands in Luke and Paul's writings as well as brief consideration of the role of women in the OT and NT. The paper argues for inclusivity in terms of the roles of male and female in the early church. Preliminary conclusions lean toward historic Christian understandings of the priesthood of all believers, the granting of the gifts of the Spirit to all believers and the equality of all believers before God and in the church.

"The Language of Ordination in Scripture," Ross Cole PhD, Avondale College of Higher Education.

An overview of what the OT teaches about "ordination." Although the word "ordination" as such is not found in the Bible, the laying on of hands is found in association with a number of offices and roles. Delegation of authority and the resourcing of the Spirit are fundamental elements symbolized in the act. Empowerment for a new role is always in view, not a reward

for having already done the job well. Symbolism is vital, but the reality is in some way present beyond the symbol. Standing the candidate before the people signals readiness to serve.

The themes celebrated as hands are laid include divine sovereignty, separation to the will of God, the diversity of the gifts placed in the body, and the generosity of God in providing officers, and in endowing His servants with all the resources necessary for ministry. There are also the themes of servanthood, delegated authority, and ministry as representation of God and humans.

“Should Ordination be Considered a Sacrament in the Seventh-day Adventist Church? An Evaluation in the Light of Biblical Data,” Wendy Jackson PhD (Cand.), Avondale College of Higher Education.

While Catholic theology places importance on the sacramental nature of ordination, Protestants have generally rejected the idea. Sacramentalism contains four elements: obvious symbolism, it conveys grace, it needs to be instituted by Christ, and it needs to make a distinction between laity and clergy. Seventh-day Adventists followed the Protestant tradition in rejecting sacramentalism, and went a step further, dropping sacramental terminology as well, preferring instead the term “ordinance” to describe baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and foot washing. However there may be lingering traces of sacramentalism in some church practices.

Therefore to prevent any vestige of sacramentalism, the Church needs to be careful of any suggestion that gives ministers higher status over and above laity. The process of ordaining ministers should not be seen as more important or special than the ordination of deacons and elders, and there needs to be some way to involve the congregation in the ordination process rather than restricting the proceedings to those previously ordained.

“The Ordination of Women: A Biblical-Theological Introduction,” David Thiele PhD, Pacific Adventist University.

There are only two unchangeable and irrefutable Biblical pieces of data that relate to the ordination of women: first, there were no female priests in the Mosaic cultus of Israel, and second, Jesus did not choose any women to be among His twelve disciples. However, neither of these points forbids anything; they merely relate what happened in the past. If we in fact applied this principle, then only males can worship Jesus, since only male shepherds and Magi were able to worship Jesus at His birth.

Scripture nowhere disqualifies women from ministering, physically, spiritually, ontologically, or culturally. It was the Greek philosopher Aristotle

who made the statement that “the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules, and the other is ruled.” The Gnostic heresy that plagued the early Christian Church, although heavily dependent on Greek philosophy, declared that women were above men as Eve had been elevated in status above Adam by eating from the tree of knowledge, prompting some of the apparently harsh words against women believers by the NT writers.

While Jesus may not have chosen women disciples because of the cultural taboos, Paul, ministering in a Gentile world, clearly worked with a number of influential women leaders. On that basis it is reasonable to accept ordained women in contexts where that is acceptable and not to force the issue in areas where it is not.

Observations for the Theology of Ordination Study Committee

Global Observations:

1. The foundation principle for the resolution of questions regarding ordination is the use of the correct hermeneutic.
2. The discussion is driven by our understanding of the nature of the church, its role and its function.
3. An Adventist theology of ordination will be based on Scriptural principles.
4. Where Scripture is silent on current issues, a theology of ordination must be based on the principles of Scripture, taking adequate account of what Scripture says as applied in its local or issue-specific contexts.
5. The words translated “ordain” have a very wide usage.
6. While the roots of many NT practices can be traced to the OT there is discontinuity between them. There is no practical connection for example, between priests, Levites, elders, and deacons.
7. Ordination is a practice driven by mission and practical needs—informed by Biblical studies and theology.
8. The Bible does not command ordination; however it does encourage the church to develop modes of maintaining order in the exercise of its mission. These modes may go beyond Biblical practice but must be consistent with it.
9. Ordination is not to be considered a sacrament. Biblical evidence supports the symbolism of the laying on of hands when appointing individuals for a task, but there is no firm evidence for the transfer of grace or virtue in this context. Consequently, we must reject attributing sacramental value to ordination.

10. The theology of ordination informs and is informed by the practical implementation of our ecclesiology, i.e., the global and local nature of the church, which, expressed in its various forms, facilitates mission.
11. The significance of ordination is influenced by culture. In some parts of the world, culture bestows inordinate status upon a minister at ordination.
12. Ellen G. White considers that ordination contains an experiential element that has its basis in a call from God. Although some women may not be concerned about non-ordination, for others it creates great angst because of their sense of their divine call, which the church does not seem to recognize.

Conclusions:

1. The Biblical Research Committee of the South Pacific Division does not see any Scriptural principle which would be an impediment to women being ordained.
2. The calling of the Holy Spirit needs to be recognized for both men and women. There is a sense of injustice that needs to be addressed.
3. The mission of the church is a primary determinant of praxis, both in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and in its climax as the Holy Spirit is poured out on both men and women during the latter rain.