More than a card

Christmas card: $5. Postage to Togo: less than $3. A small gesture of love for a brother in prison: priceless.

There is something painfully disturbing about the idea of spending Christmas behind bars. It is, after all, the day that commemorates the beginning of Christ's earthly mission to "set the captives free". But for a second consecutive Christmas, this is the reality for Adventist pastor Antonio Monteiro and church elder Bruno Amah—imprisoned in Togo for poorly substantiated allegations of involvement in a blood trafficking network.

As the push for Pastor Monteiro and Mr Amah's release continues, Adventist leaders are urging Church members to send some encouragement to the men in the form of Christmas cards.

Click here for more information about “Operation Christmas Card” (not the official title). Also, keep reading this week’s edition of Record eNews for the latest Adventist news and views from the South Pacific.
AUC appoints new Youth director

Pastor Jeff Parker has been named director of the Australian Union Conference's (AUC) Youth Ministries department. Pastor Parker takes over the role left by Pastor Tony Knight, who was appointed manager of the Union’s Resource Centre.

Ordination study papers released

Following year-end meetings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific, the regional Biblical Research Committee has released the research papers it used in coming to the conclusion that it did “not see any scriptural principle which would be an impediment to women being ordained”.

Worthy honour

A set of “World War II Medal of Honor” United States commemorative stamps bear the name of a Seventh-day Adventist who received the nation's highest military honour, but who also refused to carry a weapon.

Watch/download InFocus

It's easy to just slide into a relationship. But are there risks involved in (not) organising your life this way? Family life educator Trafford Fischer presents the research. And Kylie Stacey shares her success in involving young children and parents in "playful worship".
Fire sparks Sanitarium factory evacuation

The Sanitarium factory in Auckland was evacuated on Wednesday after a fire broke out in one of the production lines.

More News

Adventist prostitutes and seventh-day thieves

How do you reach out to gang members and prostitutes—some of whom are Seventh-day Adventists—in one of the toughest towns on the planet?

More Features

Rehoboam's blunder

King Rehoboam chose the confidence of youth over the prudence of experience. In doing so, he turned a united and powerful Israel into a disconnected and feeble community. Are we in danger of repeating Rehoboam’s blunder?

Hint: there’s not much sitting around involved.

Record poll

What is most important in a pastor?

- Compassionate/caring
- Good preaching
- Organisational skills
- Evangelistic zeal
- Helps the disadvantaged

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Like RECORD magazine? Want to join in on the online conversation? Find us on Facebook!

Follow us on Twitter!
The Christmas card campaign

More than a year and a half has passed since Seventh-day Adventist pastor Antonio Monteiro and church elder Bruno Amah were imprisoned in a criminal case that Church leaders say is clearly flawed.

In Pakistan, another Adventist, Sajjad Masih, has been sentenced to life in prison for allegedly defaming the Prophet Mohammad in a case that falls under the country’s blasphemy laws.

Adventist human rights advocates are urging Church members worldwide to send some encouragement to Monteiro, Amah and Masih this December, in the form of Christmas cards. Cards for Monteiro and Amah should be sent to the Sahel Union Office and cards for Masih should be sent to the Pakistan Union Office.

“Everyone can do something for our members in prison. We want to show them that they are not alone; that they have brothers and sisters praying for them,” said Dr John Graz, director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty for the Adventist world church. “Every Christmas card they will receive will be an encouragement.”

In March 2012, a Togolese man implicated Monteiro and Amah as conspirators in an alleged blood trafficking network. A police search of the pastor’s home and local church headquarters produced no evidence but Monteiro and Amah have not been released.

Seventh-day Adventists around the world have rallied to show support for their brothers in Christ. Last December, a social media campaign calling for a day of prayer helped raise awareness of the situation in Togo. Facebook followers interacted with ‘Pray for Togo’ content more than 50,000 times while the Twitter event hashtag reached more than 7 million users.

**Antonio Monteiro / Bruno Amah**

Union du Sahal
B.P. 2157
Lomé, Togo

**Sajjad Masih**

Pakistan Union
Post Box 32
Lahore, Pakistan
Ringwood, Victoria

Pastor Jeff Parker has been named director of the Australian Union Conference’s (AUC) Youth Ministries department. Pastor Parker takes over the role left by Pastor Tony Knight, who was appointed manager of the Union’s Resource Centre.

The announcement comes as the AUC’s Executive Committee wraps up its year-end meetings today in Ringwood, Victoria.

Pastor Jeff Parker.

Pastor Parker has spent the past 15 years serving as a Conference Youth director, firstly in Tasmania and then in North New South Wales (NNSW).

After nine years at the NNSW Conference, Pastor Parker said he’s looking forward to helping young people in Australia “step up for Jesus and step up for service”.

The appointment of a new director marks the end of Pastor Knight’s 13 years at the helm of AUC Youth Ministries.

Pastor Knight’s legacy as a youth leader in Australia—which includes eight years at the Conference level (Western Australia) and 15 years at the Union level (Trans-Australia Union Conference, AUC)—is something not lost on Pastor Parker. “I’m really excited to be stepping into the role that Tony has set up so well within the AUC,” he said.

Pastor Tony Knight.

Reflecting on his 23 years in youth ministry, Pastor Knight said he has “loved every minute of the role”. However, he acknowledged “that the time has come to let another person with great gifts in ministry take the Youth department to new heights.”

Despite stepping away from his role as director, Pastor Knight will still be involved in youth ministry in his new position as AUC Resource Centre manager. One of the projects he will be working on is the development of a new Australian Bible study series for juniors, teens and young adults.

“I am hugely excited about this new opportunity,” said Pastor Knight.

Pastor Parker and his wife, Robyn, celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary this year. They will move to Victoria early next year with their 11-year-old son. The Parkers also have three adult children.
The AUC oversees the operations of the country’s nine Church conferences.
Ordination study papers released

Wahroonga, NSW

Following year-end meetings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific, the regional Biblical Research Committee has released the research papers it used in coming to the conclusion that it did “not see any scriptural principle which would be an impediment to women being ordained”.

A summary of each of the papers is listed below, along with links to the full text.

“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 symbolised 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. Full text


An examination of all the potential NT words for ordain/commission/appoint, together with a review of the practices 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. Full text

“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. This paper examines whether a biblical case can be made for ordination to be considered a sacrament. It notes that for ordination to be a sacrament it...
must have obvious symbolism, convey grace, be instituted by Christ, and convey a mark or seal that distinguishes between laity and clergy. The paper concludes that while laying on of hands is clearly symbolic, there is no other biblical evidence to support ordination as a sacrament. Therefore we must conclude that ordination in the Seventh-day Adventist Church should not be considered a sacrament. This has significant consequences for church practice. 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. Full text


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, with Christ not returning and all the leaders dying out, the church faced a crisis and developed 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. Full text

“'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 distinctive categories: a) personal experience, b) biblical reflection, and c) practical application; each of which demonstrates Ellen White’s 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” has the specific purpose of the awareness of one’s specific role, as indeed she was convicted of her own call. It is clear that in Ellen White’s understanding the intimacy of such an experience 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 is 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 people.

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 recognised 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 are 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. Full text

“The Ordination of Women: A Biblical-Theological Introduction,” David Thiele PhD, Pacific Adventist University.

There are really 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 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. Full text

The full text of the Biblical Research Committee’s report is here.
THE LANGUAGE OF APPOINTMENT TO OFFICES AND ROLES IN SCRIPTURE

Abstract

Verbs used in the Old Testament and New Testament for the appointment of people to a whole gamut of human offices and roles are identified and their used throughout the canon is then studied to clarify what the language actually implies for ceremonies of installation to office today. Potential ceremonial acts considered include the laying on of the hand(s), anointing with oil, causing the appointee to stand, filling the hand, and stretching the hand toward the candidate. Attention is given to the significance in understanding installation of verbs of giving, placement, sanctification, and making. There is no biblical basis for a distinction between ordination and commissioning, and certainly no basis for separating ceremonies of installation from the actual commencement of a ministry or role.

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 the traditional sense, 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 Kgs 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 (Mark 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. 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 and New Testament 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. The approach has been inductive and comprehensive. However, for the sake of the reader the whole study is not presented here, just the conclusions.

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1 E.g., in Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:1, 2; Tit 1:7; 1 Pet 2:25. Cf. Acts 1:20.

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

The section considers the practice of the laying on of the hand(s), a ceremony accompanying installation into office in both the Old Testament and New Testament. It then looks at anointing, a ceremony accompanying installation in the Old Testament but not in the New Testament. Causing an appointee to stand is part of Old Testament ceremonial on at least one occasion and may still have value today. It is unclear to what extent the filling of the hand of Old Testament 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 New Testament 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 (e.g., Gen 48:12-20).

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 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).

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 hod or

authority to Joshua so that the entire congregation of the children of Israel may hear or listen to him (cf. Deut 34:9).

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 Old Testament 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). 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, it is more precisely 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 New Testament, elders and deacons are not the only object of the laying on of hands. In Acts 8:17, 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 Heb 6:1, it is listed with the foundational matters of repentance, faith, baptism, resurrection, 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). Peter roundly rejects Simon's suggestion (vss. 18-24).

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4Note how Yahweh himself likewise gives unparalleled hōd to Solomon (1 Chron 29:25).

5A more literal rendering than the NIV's " 'Anyone who curses their God will be held responsible."

6That 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; Mark 5:23; 16:18.
Anointing the Appointee

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

The verb mšch, "to anoint," is frequently used of appointment to a particular office and roles. Priests are anointed,7 as are kings,8 prophets (1 Kgs 19:16), and promulgators of good news (Isa 61:1). The cognate noun, māšiach ("anointed one"), has come into English with reference to the ultimate davidic king as "Messiah."

The Greek equivalent of māšiach, Christos, has likewise come into English with reference to Jesus as "Christ" and is cognate to ("I anoint") and chrism ("anointing"). Jesus applies chriō to himself when he speaks of the Spirit having anointed him to proclaim good news (Luke 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 Old Testament times anointing was no mere metaphor. Actual oil was used often enough.9 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 his garments (Ps 133:2). In the New Testament, oil was apparently never used in ceremonies of installation into Christian office,10 perhaps because the sanctuary on earth was no longer in focus.11 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

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9Exod 29:5-7; Lev 8:10-12, 30; 10:7; 21:10, 12 1 Sam 16:13; Ps 89:20.
10Although the New Testament contains instruction for elders to use it during prayers for the sick (James 5:14). However, this act may have had as much to do with the perceived curative properties of the oil as with any supposed special spiritual significance.
11Indeed even in Old Testament times, Ps 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.
The Old and New Testaments 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`îl 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`îl of `md, or "stand," conveying the idea of causing people to stand. 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 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`îl 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), 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), and of the raising of an army (Dan 11:11, 13), and 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; Luke 12:42, 44). Appointment to wider responsibility is likewise in focus in the parable of the talents in Matt 25:21, 23. It is used with reference to the appointment of an arbitrator or judge with authority over another (Luke 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 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 strictly priestly. In Num 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 Old Testament 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.

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When priests are symbolically installed in office, the Hebrew often speaks of the "filling" 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 Exod 29:5-9 and the statement is made, "And thou shalt consecrate Aaron and his sons," says the King James Version, or more literally, "You will fill the hand of Aaron and the hand of his sons" (vs. 9).\(^{13}\)

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

**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 Cor 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.\(^{14}\) It is 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 New Testament to describe appointment to offices and roles emphasizes 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)

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).

Acts 14:23 indicates commitment into the care of God is a related symbolism of the word. 2 Cor 8:19 indicates that the focus is sometimes on a specified role rather than on an ecclesiastical office.

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**

\(^{13}\)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 Kgs 13:33; and 1 Chron 29:5. Cf. the passive "was consecrated" in Lev 21:10.

\(^{14}\)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.
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."

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 in 2 Kgs 23:12 and as with the appointment of Jeremiah as prophet in Jer 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 giving the Levites to help the priests (Num 8:19; 18:6; cf. 1 Chron 6:48) and of David appointing temple servants to the same end (Ezra 8:20; cf. Jer 29:26; Ezek 44:14). This is in line with the New Testament 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, 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 way that those fulfilling these offices and roles are a divine gift to the community.

The Language of Placement in Office

The Hebrew verb *śym* ("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. It denotes the diversity of the gifts that God has ordained in the church.

The Hebrew verb *śym* ("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; 15 Deut 17:15; 1 Sam 12:13; 1 Kgs 10:9; 2 Chron 9:8; Neh 13:26.)
22:7; 2 Sam 18:1). Yahweh 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 Kgs 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 to bring Judgment upon Judah (Hab 1:12). Yahweh's setting of Zerrubabel as a signet ring is synonymous with according him great authority (Hag 2:23). Mordecai is set over Haman's household (Esth 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 has 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. John 15:16 doesn't relate to the ordination of a particular group of believers, but to a role 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 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 Old Testament and the use of hagiazō in the New Testament show how God everyone 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,16 the dedication of the firstborn of humans and animals to Yahweh (Exod 13:1), and the appointment of priests.17 However, it can also be used with reference to enemies appointed to destroy the king of Judah (Jer 22:7). The Hiph‘il stem of qdš 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

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indicate that the office or role assigned is in process, rather than being immediately brought into effect.\(^\text{18}\)

Like the Hebrew word \(qd\), the Greek word \(hagiaz\̣\) expresses the idea of separation for a purpose. Jesus speaks of himself as being set apart and sent into the world (John 10:36) along with his disciples being set apart through God's word (John 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 (Mark 3:14) is suggestive of appointment to office from the beginning of the time a ministry starts, not from some later time.

The King James Version once translates the verb \(poie\̣\) 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 (Mark 3:14).

The verb \(poie\̣\) is generally translated as "do" or "make". It occasionally has the sense of assigning someone a new role or function, as here in Mark 3:13, 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; Mark 1:17). The Jews use it to describe Jesus' making himself God (John 10:33; 19:7), and John speaks of the one who does not believe God as making him a liar (1 John 5:10).

Mark 3:14 places this "ordination" at the beginning of the disciples' ministry. The use of the verb \(poie\̣\) is suggestive of appointment to office from the beginning of the time a ministry starts.

Conclusions

The laying on of the hand(s) is biblically 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 New Testament 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

\(^{18}\)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, \textit{An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax} (Winona Lake, ID: Eisenbrauns, 1990), §27.1c, 27.2c
Christians. No distinction can be made biblically 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 Old Testament. The physical act of anointing to office is not present in the New Testament. Anointing denotes the primacy and initiative of grace and divine call in appointment.

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

The consecration of Old Testament 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 Old and New Testaments. 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 emphasizes that divine calling comes from God. It denotes the diversity of the gifts that God has ordained in the church.

The Old and New Testament language of sanctification or separation shows how God everyone 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 (Mark 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 for 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.
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 diverse cultures, languages and historical perspectives. 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 is found in the scarcity of language in the Old and New Testament that clearly articulates what ordination is and the lack of a coherent service of ordination in the New Testament. We will examine the Scriptural data in the recognition that it is the Spirit who leads into all truth (John 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 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

Hence this paper will first engage in a lexical analysis of important words in an attempt to articulate the “first principles” of the New Testament 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.


A. The New Testament Background

There is no unambiguous and uniform evidence in the New Testament that supports the concept of ordination as it is currently practised in the SDA church. In fact the New Testament 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. The first evidence for commissioning known as ordination comes from Hippolytus’s *Apostolic Tradition* in the early third century A.D. Surprisingly, for all he wrote about the church, Paul makes no reference to ordination or 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 Johannine church. Jesus’ consecration of the disciples in John 20:22 did 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 John 2:27). While there may have been some sort of installation service for the elder (2 John 1; 3 John 1) nothing is explicitly mentioned. In sum, the early Matthean, Pauline, Johannine and Petrine churches may have conducted an ordination 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.

1. Lexical Analysis

There are four different Greek words found in different contexts in the New Testament writings that point to the idea of “ordain.” The King James Version (KJV) is most helpful in this regard.

1. Mark 3:13, 14 – “And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth (προσκαλεῖται) unto him whom he would: and they came unto him. And he ordained (ἐποίησεν) twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach.” Jesus goes up into mountain which is traditionally the place of communion with God and for receiving authoritative revelation in Jewish tradition (Exod. 19:3-6, 16-25; Deut. 32:48-34:9 and Mark 9:2; 13:3). The word *προσκαλεῖται* is translated “calleth” in the KJV and “summoned” in the NIV. The NIV translation better reflects the intent of the word as it is stronger than the verb “call” (*καλεῖν*) used in the previous call narratives (Mark 1:20; 2:17). The word *προσκαλεῖται* has connotations of a summons to teach or

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instruct or of an invitation or call to a special task (see also Mark 3:23; 6:7; 7:14; 8:1; 10:42; 12:43; 15:44).\(^5\)

The word τοιέω, from which ἐποίησεν derives, means “to do” or “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 here in Mark. The choosing of twelve disciples is not arbitrary, but evokes biblical connections with God’s covenant people in the Old Testament.\(^7\) 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.\(^8\)

2. Acts 1:22 – “beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained (γενεσκαί) 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 γενεσκαί 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 (ἐποίησεν) to portray what Jesus did for his disciples in Mark 3:13-14 is closer to the idea present here in Acts 1:22 and may have been used to demonstrate continuity between the eleven disciples and the new disciple.

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\(^8\) 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: Fortress, 2007), 215-18. Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages* (Boise: Pacific Press, 1963), 296, writes: “When Jesus had ended His instruction to the disciples, He gathered the little band close about Him, and kneeling in the midst of them, and laying His hands upon their heads, He offered a prayer dedicating them to His sacred work. Thus the Lord's disciples were ordained to the gospel.”


3. Acts 14:23 – “And when they had ordained (χειροστοιχονήσαντες) them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.” Longenecker maintains that χειροστοιχονήσεως means “to choose” or “elect by raising hands” but it can also mean “to appoint” or “install.” It seems that it is the latter that Luke has in mind since it is coupled with prayer and fasting. Longenecker maintains that ceirotoneo means “to choose” or “elect by raising hands” but it can also mean “to appoint” or “install.” It seems that it is the latter that Luke has in mind since it is coupled with prayer and fasting. 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.

4. 1 Tim 2:7 – “Whereunto I am ordained (ἐπηρέασα) 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. Further the verb ἐπηρέασα is in the passive, indicating that Paul’s ministry “was not of his own choosing but of God’s.” The same root word, τίθημι, is also used in 1 Tim 1:12: “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting (θέμενος) me into the ministry.” The word τίθημι 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.

5. Titus 1:5 – “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain (καταστήσας) elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:” According to Knight, the word καταστήσας is an aorist subjunctive and means here appoint.

From this brief excursion into the New Testament literature we can conclude the following: First, the call of the disciples, not just to follow Christ, but to be with Him, is in its primary sense a call to witness to His ministry and be able to pass on authentic traditions about Him

12 This is a convincing argument made by Nichol (ed.), SDA Bible Commentary, 301.
13 Donald Guthrie, The Pastoral Epistles, TNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 83.
15 See also 2 Tim 1:11 where the same word is used once more.
17 Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 288, understands this passage as pointing back to Acts 6 and Acts 13 and suggests that the verb χειροστοιχώμενα could be rendered “lay on hands” or “ordain.”
(see Luke 1:2). In a plenary sense I would argue that this summons in Mark 3:13-14 is what SDA’s call the “inner call” of God that a man or woman receives to gospel ministry. This call is a call 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.

Second, 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. This inner call of God established Paul in the ministry of herald or proclaimer of Jesus and His truth.

2. Laying on of Hands
After careful research on the subject of “laying on of hands” in both the Old and New Testament 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. In examining the role and function of the 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.

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

1. Acts 6:6 – “They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them (προσευξάμενοι ἐπέθηκαν αὐτοῖς τὰς χεῖρας).” This is the first mention of the

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18 David E. Garland, Mark, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 129.
20 Ibid., 66.
The laying on of hands here in Acts 6 is indicative of the apostles delegating their authority to the seven selected by the church. \(^{22}\) The episode in Acts 6:1-6 is the first time that the concept of the ministry of the word is mentioned. The apostles state clearly that they have a “ministry of the word” which they cannot neglect and hence it is imperative that they find others to engage in the ministry of service. The phrase ἐπέθηκαν αὐτοῖς τὰς χεῖρας indicates that the apostles set the seven men apart for the work of ministry.

2. Acts 13:1-3 – These verses recount the sending of Paul and Barnabas as missionaries to Cyprus. In all likelihood one of the prophets received the message from God about ordaining Paul and Barnabas while the whole church were fasting and praying. \(^{23}\) F. F. Bruce avers that the “laying on of hands” imparted to Paul and Barnabas no authority or spiritual gift that they did not already possess. The church at Antioch expressed its fellowship with and recognition of these men and their spiritual gifts. They were sent out by the whole church and returned to the whole church to report on their missionary exploits. \(^{24}\)

3. 1 Tim 4:14 – “Do not neglect your gift (ἐν σοὶ χαρίσματος), which was given (ἐδόθη) you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you (μετὰ ἐπιθέσεως τῶν χειρῶν).” 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. \(^{25}\) A number of scholars have drawn attention to the fact that the laying on of hands (ἐπιθέσεως τῶν χειρῶν) is preceded by μετὰ in

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\(^{21}\) Nichol (ed.), 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 practise of ordination referencing 1 Tim 4:14; 5:22 and 2 Tim 1:6.


\(^{25}\) The aorist passive ἐδόθη indicates the gift was given by God.
1 Tim 4:14. C.K. Barret asserts that the laying on of hands is not a means but rather “an accompanying act” for the endowment on Timothy of charism, for “μετὰ with the genitive must mean ‘with’ not ‘through.’” Timothy is given a gift that comes with prophecy rather than through the laying on of hands which only accompanies the prophecy.

An important question emerges in our study. Is what took place in the early Church normative for the church at all times? Can someone in the local church today have their gift confirmed prophetically? Can what happened in the book of Acts, for example, happen again? Every feature in the early Church does not function as the norm for practice and experience in the contemporary church. A lot of what the early Church did was for pragmatic reasons rather than following 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.” 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 found 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). They laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. While they had been baptized into Christ they had not yet 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. In Peter’s sermon in Acts 2 forgiveness and the gift of the Spirit are twin blessings that one receives upon repentance and baptism (see Acts 2:38; Romans 8:9, 14-16; 1 Corinthians 6:19; Galatians 3:2, 14; 4:6).

Since this was the first time the gospel was going out of the boundaries of Jerusalem, God delayed the gift of the Holy Spirit to ensure “the acceptance of these

27 Benjamin Fiore, The Pastoral Epistles: First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus, SP 12 (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2007), 96, writes: “Here the preposition διά (through) indicates that the prophecy was effective in the transmission of the charism and task to Timothy, although the imposition of hands appears to be an ‘accompanying’ (meta) act rather than an effective gesture...”
28 Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 106.
converts by believers in Jerusalem.” God worked in ways that were conducive not only for 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 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 Timothy 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 expressed the church’s approval of his appointment as a church leader.” The prophetic message of Timothy’s gifting, however, is an exception.

4. 1 Tim 5:22 – “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 Tim 5 suggests that Paul is speaking to Timothy about how to handle public accusations and appoint leaders. He advises 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. In verse 22 Paul is admonishing Timothy not to lay hands on someone aspiring toward leadership too quickly since he could share in their sins. This reference is important in demonstrating that there needs to be a time of examination and reflection and that stringent cautionary measures need to be put in place for someone aspiring to leadership who has been involved in a damaging public or personal dispute that jeopardizes the advancement of the kingdom.

The New Testament evidence suggests on the basis of Acts 6 that the concept of “laying on of hands” refers to the delegation of a specific task and the authority to function and carry out

29 Longenecker, Acts, 359.
the duties required for that task. In Acts 13 it is the whole church that sends Paul and Barnabas out into the mission field, a task initiated by the Holy Spirit. The laying on of hands functions in this text to confirm the direct message of the Holy Spirit and functions to set Paul and Barnabas aside for missionary work. While the prophetic confirmation of Timothy’s leadership in 1 Tim 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 in an ability to discern the divine will. The overall thrust of Scripture is that every member of the church must have 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 in the case of 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; I Cor. 11:11-12; Gal 3:13, 28, 5:1).

The New Testament evidence seems to suggest 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 New Testament demonstrate. There is no evidence that the authenticity of the inner call is questioned or debated in the New Testament. 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; John 15:1-11).

There is no evidence in the New Testament that the inner call of God is gender biased. The cross eradicated class and racial distinctions of “Jew and Gentile, slave and free” (Gal. 3:28).31 Christ came to establish a new community built on mutual respect and mutual

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31 Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 280-81, 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 it also well to be aware that Paul is not suggesting here the obliteration of
submission (Eph. 5: 21) through a new covenant. The Old Covenant was a sexually distinctive one in that the mark of entrance into it was by circumcision. However, in the New Testament the mark of entrance into the new community is by baptism, a non-sexual distinctive. Both sexes enter the Christian community on an equal footing based on accepting Christ as Lord and Saviour.

While there are different roles and functions for God’s leaders in the New Testament (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
This paper has examined the New Testament evidence and found that the strongest evidence for ordination is 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.

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...

32 John Stott, Ephesians, BST (Downers Grove: IVP, 1979), 213-220, 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.
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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Introduction

Ordained ministers are considered 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. Nevertheless, many Protestants have retaining the term sacrament to describe the rites of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Seventh-day Adventists, at least in theory, 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, lingering traces of sacramentalism can be identified in their church practices. Furthermore, the current debate around women's ordination has revealed

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² Ministerial Association of Seventh-day Adventists. Seventh-day Adventist Minister’s Manual (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, 1992), 77.
that many of the underlying assumptions in relation to current ordination practices and pastors roles also appear to have a sacramental basis. This disconnect between theory and practice 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 therefore to examine the nature of sacraments, and then use this framework to consider biblically whether ordination in the Seventh-day Adventist church should be considered a sacrament.

**Understanding the Term 'Sacrament'**

The term sacrament lacks precision due a complex history in which its definition was subject to frequent revision and debate. Translated from the Latin sacramentum it is entomologically derived from sacrāre denoting the concept of consecrating, or setting apart for a divinity. 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 in a lawsuit, a military oath of allegiance to the emperor, or an oath of allegiance amongst other groups such as thieves or philosophers.

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3 For example, sacramental theology underlies practices such as the necessity for a pastor must be in the font when a non-ordained individual baptizes a candidate, the burning of left over bread from the Lord’s Supper, and the limitation on those involved directly in the ordination services of new pastors. It is also associated with a perceived difference in status and prerogatives between pastor and clergy in many parts of the world church. Other denominations have also noticed the tendency for a disconnect between practice and theory in relation to ordination.


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. The individual who won the case got their deposit back while the losing party forfeited their deposit, which was added to the temple coffers.

7 G. Bornkamm, "Musterion,"Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel (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.

The earliest Christian writer to employ the term *sacramentum* is thought to be Tertullian (c.150-c.220). Tertullian linked the idea of sacrament to commitment and allegiance to the church. Consequently, he used the term to label objects and rites that are sacred or consecrated such as the rite of baptism. However, Tertullian also expanded the classical meaning of *sacramentum* by using it to identify many of rites of the Old Testament that prepared for the coming of Christ.  

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. As symbols, Augustine understood that they are an outward or visible reminder of the reality of Christ’s work of redemption, containing both an internal seal and God’s grace.

The Middle Ages saw ongoing revisions of the understanding of the nature and function of the sacraments based on Augustine’s framework. These revisions in turn 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 identified a total of seven sacraments: baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, confession, marriage, ordination and anointing of the sick. They affirmed that sacraments were signs or symbols and insisted that all sacraments must be instituted by Christ. The council further affirmed that sacraments are necessary for salvation and in particular for the grace of justification. Hence in some sense the sacraments became remedies against sin. Reacting to the accusations of the Protestant reformers, the council also made clear that the sacraments contained grace, which the council declared was imparted *ex opere operato*. Literally meaning "by the work performed" this property in essence meant that

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9 Tertullian *On Baptism* 8; *Against Marion* 3.16, 4.40. A similar range of meanings appear in the works of other prominent Anti Nicean 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. Plin, *Epistolarum libri decem* X.96 in Henry Bettensen & Chris Maunder, eds. Documents of the Christian Church, (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.

12 Key scholastics in the medieval revision of the ideas of sacraments included Hugo of St Victor (d. 1141), Peter Lombard (c1100-c1164), and Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). 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 final pronouncements of Trent however 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.
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. The canons are emphatic that this grace is only obtained through partaking of the sacraments and hence could not be obtained by faith alone. Finally, the canons of Trent note that the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and ordination confer an indelible mark on the soul of the participant.

The Protestant reformers challenged several aspects of the scholastic understanding of sacraments in particular the idea that grace was imparted *opere operato*. Consequently Luther highlights the role of faith in the efficacy of the sacraments. However, he still considered sacraments were physical signs instituted by Christ which had power to forgive sins. 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. He rejected any notion that sacraments bestowed grace or forgiveness of sins, returning instead to the original idea of sacraments as oaths or pledges.

The disagreement between the reformers has contributed to a lack of unanimity amongst Protestants in regard to the nature, function and even number of sacraments. Most Protestants however will agree that there are two critical 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. Instead, Protestants suggest that

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16 This invokes a rather mechanical understanding of the sacraments, which Catholics attempted to remedy in Vatican II. 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* 4 Dec 1963.
17 Council of Trent, Session VII. Canon IX.
18 Martin Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520).
20 Ibid.
participation in the sacraments is helpful for the growth and development of faith. The sacraments are not considered 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.\(^{22}\) An ordinance it must only fulfil two simple requirements: it must have been initiated by Christ, and it 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 used most commonly for laws, the radical reformers acknowledged the Biblical command to perform these rites, 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, the continuing use the word sacrament implies 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 which has already been bestowed upon the individual.

**Ordination as a Sacrament**

The identification of ordination as a sacrament that 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 Old Testament idea of priesthood to bishops. Consequently, it was understood that in presiding at the Eucharist, bishops actually offered a real

\(^{21}\) 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 Schleitheim signed by Swiss Anabaptist Pastors in 1527.

sacrifice and thus in some special sense represented Christ. In order to fulfil this priestly role it was considered that the bishop needed special grace. Such grace it was suggested could be received by a sacramental understanding of ordination.

The sacramental understanding of ordination is also associated with the idea of an indelible mark being placed upon the recipient. The indelible mark is considered one of spiritual character in which in the individual becomes marked as a permanent member of the clergy. Thus a sacramental understanding of ordination results in the idea that clergy are considered to have some special status that separates them from those who are not ordained. 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." This then enables them to act in each of the priestly, prophetic and kingly roles of Christ. 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.

Based on the preceding sections we can conclude that four major conditions appear to be necessary for ordination to be considered a sacrament. 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.

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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.

26 Ibid., 1551. Pannenburg in his Systematic Theology argues that Vatican II did away with this spiritual distinction, but this is does not appear to be the case based on a careful reading of the Vatican II documents and current catechism.


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 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*, 1548-50.

30 I exclude the ideas of necessity for salvation, and working *ex opere operato* since these are rejected by Protestant definitions of sacraments.
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 in order to determine if ordination should be considered a sacrament within the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

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 laying on of hands in conjunction with the setting apart for a task since laying on of hands is so central to our current concepts of ordination, that many equate the two ideas.31

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 Thus in the biblical context references to hands evoked ideas of power, strength, authority, and grace. These images are further intensified in passages which refer specifically to the right hand which is often used to indicate favour or prominence.34

The specific act of 'laying of hands' upon a person or object can be found in both the Old and New Testaments 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

1. 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: blessing, healing, arrest, in cultic sacrifice, and for invoking the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the

References:
31 V. Norskov Olsen. Myth and Truth: Church, Priesthood and Ordination. (Riverside, CA: Loma Linda University, 1990), 125.
34 Leland Ryken et al, 360. Such metaphorical use is also common in other Ancient Near Eastern cultures where body parts were commonly used to portray various attributes. Thus we find God described as supporting, protecting and saving Israel with his right hand. Se for example Ps 18: 35, Ps 20:6
35 More than one form of phrase is used to indicate laying on of hands in the Old Testament. The verbs šīm (put), shīr (place) are used with the idea of blessing, whereas cultic associations use the verb sāmek (laid or leaned upon).
majority of instances of laying on of hands in Scripture have nothing to do with setting apart for a task, or installation to office. The following section discusses three of these purposes which provide background for understanding the possible symbolism associated with the laying on of hands in commissioning for a task. The ideas of arrest and healing are not discussed because they appear to have little relevance for this paper.

Blessing of the first born 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 and blessing also appears in the New Testament 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 along with healing accounts for the majority of instances of where the laying on of hands occurs in the New Testament.

By comparison, the great majority of the Old Testament uses of laying on of hands, relate to a very 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. Scholars however, are divided in their opinions about the significance of this gesture. 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. But, many 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. This

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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.


38 David P. Wright, "Hands, Laying on of (Old Testament)," in David Noel Feedman, Gary A Herion, David F, Gaf et al, eds, Anchor Bible Dictionary, Vol 3 ( New York: Doubleday, 1992), 47-48. Adventist OT scholar Roy Gane argues clearly that "it is not necessary to prove that hand-leaning 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 NIV Application Commentary, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zonderzan, 2004), 67.

39 Gane, 67. Gane likens this to the modern analogy of signing over a car or house title.
later view best explains the range of offerings that required the ritual of placing hands upon the animals, while at the same time providing 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. Nevertheless, it should be noted that in the day of Atonement ritual laying of hands upon the scapegoat clearly symbolized a transfer of sin to the animal (Lev 16:20-22).

In the New Testament we also find that laying on of hands was 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. There are two examples where the apostles discovered new believers who had not received the Holy Spirit. Scripture records that the apostles prayed and placed their hands upon them with the result 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.

2. Laying on of Hands to Commission for a Task or Role

We now turn to an examination of the narratives which discuss commissioning for specific task. These will be reviewed in the context of the other functions of laying on of hands, in order to 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. 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

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40 Wright, 47-48.
41 Some have tried to uses 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 Mattingly has argued convincingly against this. See Keith Mattingly, 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 New Testament era is unclear from the limited references we have to baptism in the New Testament.
43 I do not include Timothy in this list because of the ambiguity surrounding the context of the hands laid upon Timothy as will be discussed in the following section of this paper.
take the place of the firstborn sons of Israel in serving God in the sanctuary. Thus commentators are therefore generally in agreement that the symbolic nature of the laying on of hands here is one of identification and representation. The Levites are identified as those who will serve God as representatives of the people, and are empowered to 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 of Moses appointing Joshua as his successor (Num 27:18-23; Deut 31). 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 further identified as full of the Spirit. But despite his 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 similar manner to the previous narrative, this ceremony publically acknowledged and identified Joshua as God's choice as Moses successor, while at the same time ensuring 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 listen to him.

The New Testament also provides two instances where 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

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45 Joshua's commissioning is unusual in the context of the Old Testament. Priests, prophets, and kings and other leader 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, Dissertation, Andrews University, 1997).
laid hands upon them.\textsuperscript{46} The context suggests that the laying on of hands publically 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 Holy Spirit indicated that they were to be set aside for a work he had called them to. This was accomplished with prayer, fasting and laying on of hands by the congregation. After which they started on a missionary trip guided by the Holy Spirit. In this instance the hands laid upon the apostles appear to be an identification of God’s calling and blessing of them, along with the identification and blessing of the church for their mission.

3. 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 have either been divinely identified as being called to a particular task, or as full of the Holy Spirit. Laying on of hands then first of all recognizes and symbolically affirms 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.

At the same time, 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 totality. 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, this meant the people obeyed him. Such public acknowledgment should prevent any questions about whether or not the individual should be performing these tasks.

\textsuperscript{46}The ambiguity of the Greek is not obvious in the New International Version, but is more evident in other English translations.
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 is required by 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 finding 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 criteria 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 that of 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.” (NAS) The arguments is generally bolstered by citing it in conjunction with 1 Tim 1:18 and 2 Tim 1:6. At first glance it can be seen 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 if 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 if the gift is equivalent to the special grace referred to in the sacramental view of ordination, and finally, we must examine the historical context to determine if the example of Timothy should be considered normative when discussing ordination.

1. **The Context of Hands Being Laid upon Timothy**

Most commentators assume that the passages in Timothy refer to Timothy’s ordination or at the very least his installation into church office. 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 two

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centuries after this passage was written.\textsuperscript{48} Therefore, to read ordination into this passage is an anachronism. Commissioning for a task is still a valid possibility, but we have already noted that the meaning of the phrase ‘laying on of hands’ in the New Testament is not restricted to being set 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 ideas such as 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 an affirmation that Timothy has the gifts to accomplish what God would have him do in the church. The context of the laying on of hands however 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 do so based upon the facts that Timothy is in a 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 hands laid upon him on two separate occasions. First, by Ananias at the beginning of his Christian journey for healing and the reception of the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17) and later, when 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 episode.\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{48} 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 where there is a discussion the order of service for ordination of the bishops, presbyter and deacons. See Hippolytus \textit{Tradition of the Apostles} Part I.

\textsuperscript{49} Moreover, the New Testament 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).
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 in 1 Tim 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 unless there was “special efficacy and significance in earlier setting apart of elders and deacons.” But his conclusion is dependent upon the assumption that 1 Tim 5:22 is describing an installation to office, an assumption which is highly disputed. Some scholars believe 1 Tim 5:22 is discussing 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. Most recently it has been suggested that 1 Tim 5:22 is a warning against premature accusation of sin. The ambiguity of this text means that it cannot be used confidently to bolster support for reading 1 Tim 4:14 as installation to office.

Finally, the fact that a spiritual gift is imparted is likewise is 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 New Testament 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

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51Dibelius & Conzelmann. *Commentary on 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 be 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 somewhat 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. LXXXI, 2.
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.

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 event occurring for reception of the Holy Spirit at the time of initiation into the
faith.53

2. 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 1Timothy 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 Tim 1:6,
Timothy is reminded to use the gift "which is in you through [dia] the laying on of my hands."54
This appears to put a different spin on the relationship. Dia used with the genitive of person
generally denotes agency, instrumentality or causation.55 While dia can mean attendant
circumstances as Ferguson argues, Warkentin observes that this is rare with the genitive, and in
the New Testament this meaning only occurs when dia is used with the genitive of thing, not the
genitive of person.56 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.57 Therefore, if we

53 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.
54 Because 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.
57 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 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
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.58

3. The Gift and Grace

In 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 it one step further arguing that this indicates that sacramental "grace of the office" is transferred.59 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 amongst New Testament scholars. The first suggests as do Dibelius and Conzelmann that sacramental grace of office is transferred.60 A second suggestion is that the gift should be considered a spiritual gift which equips Timothy for service, but which is not sacramental in nature.61 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 as described by the Catholic and Orthodox traditions. By contrast, the third approach seeks to distance itself from any conferral of grace by minimizing any suggestion of a special gift, focusing instead on the ideas of blessing and prayer that is associated with the laying on of hands.62 While the later position is appealing because it avoids ideas which might be mistakenly considered to support a sacramental approach, it appears

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58 This is in contrast to the SDABC 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. Nicole 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.
59 Warkentin 175-6; Dibelius and Conzelmann, 70.
60 Dibelius and Conzelmann 70
62 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."
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 grace. Grace is therefore integral to the gift, which is thus a favour one receives without any merit of his own. Spiritual gifts could thus be correctly conceived as an expression of God's grace. Therefore, if we conclude that it was at least possible that Timothy received a spiritual gift as a result of the having hands laid upon him, we must also concede that accepting this possibility means that Timothy received grace due to the laying on of hands. But is this grace a special grace, or a grace of office that imparts an indelible mark upon him as a sacramental view requires?

When we examine the context of 1 Tim 4:14, we note Paul advised Timothy to devote himself to "public reading of Scripture, preaching and teaching." (v13) This is followed immediately by the admonition "do not neglect your gift. . ." (v 14) and subsequently by a call to diligence and wholehearted application to these matters (v 15). The context thus suggests that the gift that Paul is referring to may be one of teaching or preaching, or indeed both of these. The context of 2 Tim 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 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.

4. 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, we have one text which may be of relevance. Deut 34:9 attributes a spirit of wisdom to Joshua as a consequence of Moses

64 See discussion of special grace in the next section.
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 itself. 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, that of 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.”

5. Conclusions about Ordination and the Transfer of Grace
In this section we have noted that the 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 further, that this gift is not characterized as one of special grace that results in an indelible mark on the soul. Together these argue against using these passages in Timothy to support a sacramental view of ordination. Furthermore, the absence of any mention of the transfer of grace or spiritual gifts in relation to the laying on of hands in the other New Testament narratives where individuals are set apart for a task provides evidence that even if the example of Timothy did indicate a transfer of grace, this should not be considered normative.

Thus we must conclude that there is no firm evidence to support the normative transfer of grace by laying on of hands, and more specifically, that there is no evidence for the transfer of special grace by the laying on of hands in ordination.

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65 White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 162. She does not comment specifically on the verse we are examining in 1 Timothy.

66 There are several other good reasons that 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, Paul clearly 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 talks 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 laying on of hands is patterned after that of Moses and Joshua.
Christ and the Laying on of Hands

The third condition for a sacramental view of ordination is that the practice be instituted by Christ. Review of the gospels show that Christ laid hands upon children to bless them (Matt 19:13-15), and laid hands upon individuals for healing (Mark 6:5; Mark 8:22-25; Luke 13:13). While Christ is noted as appointing the twelve disciples and the seventy-two, in neither of these instances is the idea laying on of hands or associated prayer specifically noted, nor are these ideas implied from the verbs used. *Epiο̅e̅̅̅e̅̅̅̅̅n* 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, and simply means assigning as task.\(^{67}\) Hence, we can conclude that while Christ recognized the need of leaders and the need for individuals to undertake certain tasks, attributing ordination to him is going beyond the available evidence.

Is there a Distinction between the status of Clergy and Laity?

The fourth criteria for understanding ordination as a sacrament is that ordination must confers an indelible mark or seal upon the ordinand which results in a distinction between clergy and laity that allows them alone to specifically represent Christ and dispense grace. This argument cannot be sustained directly with biblical evidence for while the New Testament indicates that all believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of Gods 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.\(^{68}\) This is offered in conjunction with an argument that contrasts the Old Testament priesthood and the priesthood of Christ in order to suggest that 1 Peter 2:5,9 should be understood to mean that the regular member is a priest in some sense 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."\(^{69}\)

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\(^{68}\) Sacerdotalism understands clergy to have a priestly role that involves the offering of sacrifices.

\(^{69}\) *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1539-1550.
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 New Testament 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 New Testament.

1. A Priesthood of all Believers

While the Old Testament Levitical priesthood defined a 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 united with Christ participate in a priesthood derived from the priesthood from Christ, enabling Peter to write "You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession" (1 Pet 2:9). Thus while the New Testament 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 believers 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 those with some sort of superior status. It was a function of the entire church. Indeed, God's calling of all believers is repeatedly emphasized in the New Testament, especially in the writings of Paul. 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. The diverse gifts given by the Holy Spirit ensure that the church lacks nothing it needs to fulfil its role in the world.

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71 See for instance Acts 8:4 where those who moved because of persecution preached wherever they went; and 1 Cor 11 & 14 which also allow speaking, prophesying and praying by members provided it is done in a specified manner and order is maintained.
72 See for instance Rom 11:29; Gal 1:6; Gal 5:8; Eph 1:18, 4:1; 1 Thes 5:24; 2 Thes 1:11.
73 1 Cor 12; Rom 12:6.
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 when the founder moved on to preach elsewhere. Furthermore, the presence of leaders encouraged order in the church, something that was encouraged from its very inception so that the church could best fulfil its mission.  

2. 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 New Testament uses the Greek word *kleros* 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. In contrast to the regular contemporary usage of the term clergy, the New Testament never uses the term *kleros* 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 *kleros*

An examination of the Greek *laos* from which the English word laity is derived is also helpful. *Laos* takes on several meanings in the New Testament. The gospel writers use it to describe a group of people or a crowd, and more specifically when discussing the nation of Israel. In the rest of the New Testament the word often moves beyond both these meanings to signify the idea of the Christian community as a whole. Christians are thus rightly called the *laos* of God.

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74 See for instance 1 Cor 14.
77 Ibid., 4:54-57. This is a natural extension of Paul's appropriation of the Old Testament 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, Tit 2:14, 1 Pet 2:9.
Thus both the words *laos* and *kleros* are used in ways that signify the Christian community as a whole. The New Testament context then does not support a difference between them.

Changes in the meaning of both 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. Thus the idea of a distinction between clergy and laity emerged in the post New Testament church.

3. *The Vocabulary used in Association with Church Leaders*

A third line of evidence that the New Testament 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." Included in this group of omitted words are the words *archē, archōn, and timē*. The Greek *archē* always denotes the idea of primacy whether in time, rank, or power. It is frequently used of Roman and other Gentile authorities, and in the Septuagint, is also used for Jewish leaders such as the priests and Levites. However, it is never used in the New Testament of Christian leaders. In the same word group, the Greek *archōn* is defined as an individual who is a ruler, or who exercises power and authority. It is used frequently in the New Testament for Roman and Jewish officials of various kinds, of supernatural powers, and also of Christ. But once again we find no evidence

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82 Ibid.
83 *archē* is however used of Christ in Col 1:18
84 Delling, *TDNT* 1:488.
for its application to Christian leaders. 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 New Testament to indicate what Christ deserves, what all Christians should give each other, and what husbands should give their wives. While it is also used in 1 Tim 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. The only New Testament 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 officers of the New Testament Church. Thus the vocabulary used of leaders in the New Testament church does not support any status differences between them and other members of the church.

4. 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. Catholics 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 mediatory human priest, and that the New Testament 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.

Further we have seen that the distinction between clergy and laity emerged in church history in the centuries after the New Testament. The New Testament uses both *laos* and *kleros* to describe all Christian believers and hence does not support boundaries and or status differences between them.

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85 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 better captures 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 BDAG includes 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.


87 See Schneider *TDNT* 8:176. This text is contentious and interpretations vary from honorarium, to double pay, to honour and pay, or to simply to double honour. Given the contextual clues, the lack of other supporting suggestions of honour associated with office, and the overall picture painted of NT leaders, the ideas of honorarium or double pay would seem to be the more likely interpretations.
Finally, we have noted that words that ascribe status differences in secular administration are not applied to the leaders of the New Testament church. We can thus conclude that there is no evidence of an implied difference in status between leaders and the members they shepherd. As Papandrea acknowledges, the only distinction in the apostolic church was "between those who knew Jesus and those who did not (Acts 1:21-22)."  

**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. Ordination and licensing however 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. This early decision is consistent with biblical evidence examined in this paper.

While laying on of hands is clearly symbolic, 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 of ordination by Christ and a spiritual distinction between 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.

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89 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. *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, September 20, 1853.

This conclusion has implications not only for the pastors' view of themselves, but also for the way the ordination is carried out. 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 in to 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.
The Problem of Ordination: Lessons from Early Christian History  
By Darius Jankiewicz  
Introduction

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

At the same time, however, we do not find in Scripture an unambiguously clear theology of either pastoral ministry or ordination. Aside from the scarcity of theological data, readers are immediately confronted with additional difficulties. These include the following: (1) the modern notion of the pastor’s office does not readily correspond to the position of leaders or elders in the early Christian Church; (2) there appears to be little scriptural evidence for the three-fold ordination of the pastor, elder, and deacon as it is practiced today; (3) while it is often assumed, there is no direct Scriptural evidence that the local elders or bishops were actually “ordained” through the laying-on-of-hands;¹ (4) 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; (5) there appears to be no Scriptural warrant for limiting certain “ministerial” functions to those who have been “ordained”; and, finally, (6) 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 there are denominations; and there tend to be as many views on pastoral ministry and ordination as there are church members within a particular denomination.

¹While it is commonly assumed that elders were appointed through the laying-on-of-hands, the New Testament 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 Corinthians 8:19). A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (1957), s.v., “χειροτονέω,” 889.
This is the situation in which we, as Seventh-day Adventists, find ourselves today. Like most modern Christian denominations, Seventh-day Adventists acknowledge the pastoral call through the rite of ordination. We have also adopted the three-fold structure of ministry in the church—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 meaning of and qualifications for ordination of pastors, elders, and deacons. It is undisputable, and Scripturally warranted, that Christian community needs its authoritative leaders in order to function and propagate its mission in the world, otherwise chaos would reign. The question before us is, however, what is the nature of Christian ministry and how much has our understanding of ministry in the Church been influenced by Christian tradition?

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 early Christian Church.

Setting forth of the Problem

In 379 AD Jerome stated: “There can be no Christian community without its ministers.” By Jerome’s time, however, the Christian Church had moved far from the descriptions of the early Christian community found in the pages of the New Testament. It 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, making the presence of the ministry 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

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that in such a relatively short time, from the death of the last apostle (late 90s) 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 of the laying-on-of-hands ritual as it is found in the Holy Scriptures.

**Laying-on-of-Hands: The Biblical Precedent**

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

Like in the Old Testament, the New Testament mentions the laying-on-of-hands in many different circumstances. In the New Testament the phrase actually occurs about 25 times and is most often associated with healing and blessing (for example, Mark 10:13-16; Luke 4:40, and Acts 28:8). Several times the laying-on-of-hands occurs in association with the reception of the Holy Spirit following baptism. In Acts 8:17 and 19:6, the Samaritans and the converts in Ephesus receive the Holy Spirit through the laying of Paul’s hands. In Hebrews 6:2, the laying-on-of-hands also appears associated with baptism. In only two instances the laying-on-of-hands is clearly associated with en-
dorsement of Christian servants, i.e., the setting apart of the Seven (Acts 6) and the commissioning of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13 to fulfill a missionary task. Several Pauline passages indicate a possible reference to the leadership installment ceremony. The first of these (1 Tim 4:14) refers to the laying-on-of-hands on Timothy by the elders. Unfortunately, it is not known if, 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 by Timothy through the laying-on-of-hands suggests this second 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 laying-on-of Paul’s hands upon Timothy. Finally, 1 Tim 5:22 simply lays down the rule that the 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 installment into an ecclesiastical office. On the basis of known evidence, however, such a conclusion may not necessarily be warranted.

In view of this, several questions must be asked: first, where do we get our 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 help us to address these questions. Let’s begin with the origin of the very word “ordination.”

**Terminology**

The modern term “ordination” comes from the Latin, ordo (order, class, rank), and its derivative ordinatio appears to refer in ancient Rome to installment or induction, appointment or accession.4

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4It is important to note that in neither case did the laying-on-of-hands indicate appointment to an office; neither do the people mentioned receive a special rank or status within the Christian community. The Seven are chosen to “serve the tables” (Acts 6:2), a task performed by the Apostles until this time, and Paul and Barnabas are selected for a specific missionary task.
sion to rank. It is well attested historically that pagan Roman society was ranked according to various strictly separated classes, which were called “orders” (from the Latin plural *ordines*). 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 senatum* – the highest class, *ordo equester* (the knights), and plebs—the lowest class of the society. It was eventually accepted that within Roman society there was *ordo et plebs*, i.e., the higher class of citizens and the lower class. If, by any chance, a person was destined to move upward in rank, he—and in the Roman Empire it was always a "he"—was to go through the process of *ordinatio*. *Ordinatio* appears to have also been used as a classical way of installing imperial officers and for the promotion of officers to a higher rank in the army. Finally, the idea of ordination appears also to have been used in the cultic context of pagan Roman Society. Here, a person would be ap-

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8 Thus, in *Historia Augusta*, it is stated that 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*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 159.

9 Thus, for example, the Roman historian Seutonius (ca. 69-ca. 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 praeficerem Mettium Rufum* ("why he should next ordain Mettius Rufus prefect of Egypt"). Seutonius, *Lives of the Caesars*, vol. II (Cambridge: 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* ("whenever [Alexander] desired to appoint any man governor or a province or appoint him a procurator"). “Life of the Alexander Severus” in *The Scriptores Historiae Augustae* (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1947), 270; cf., Otto Hirschfeld, *Die Kaiserlichen Verwaltungsbeamten: Bis Auf Diocletian* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Verlagbuchhandlung, 1963), 443; Hezser, 86; Ludwig Friedländer, *Roman Life and Manners Under the Early Empire*, vol. 4 (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1928), 53.

10 The author of *Historia Augusta* reports that prior to becoming a Roman Emperor, Publius Helvius Pertinax (126-193 AD) sought to be ordained to a command in the ranks. *Historia Augusta*, vol. I (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 315. The exact phrase reads: *ducendi ordinis dignitarem petit* ("he sought an appointment to a command in the ranks").
pointed to the cultic office received from the gods of the ancient world.\textsuperscript{11} All this suggests that when the word ordino was used in the ancient world, it clearly indicated a movement upward in ranks and status.\textsuperscript{12} Once a man was ordained he held some kind of office that not only separated him from ordinary people but allowed him to exercise governmental, jurisdictional, or cultic authority that demanded submission of others. Through the work of second-century Christian writers, and especially the writings of Latin apologist Tertullian (ca. 160-ca. 220 AD), these concepts and ideas seeped into the Christian psyche. Eventually, the post-Constantinian 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 defending 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.\textsuperscript{13} The opulent list of nouns and verbs Tertullian introduced into Christian vocabulary also includes ordo and ordino.\textsuperscript{14} Being intimately familiar with the way in which the Roman Empire was run, Tertullian apparently had no qualms

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\item \textsuperscript{11}In one of the interesting anomalies of ancient literature, the Latin word ordino found its way into the writings of Greek Stoic philosopher Epictetus. Thoroughly familiar with Roman civic and cultic life, Epictetus imports this Latin word into the Greek language and endows it with cultic importance. See Epictetus, \textit{The Discourses} (London: William Heinemann, 1928), 222. It must be noted, however, that since religion and culture were intimately connected in the ancient world, the cultic meaning of ordino in some way extended to all orders of society. Thus, higher orders were endowed with more important religious duties.
\item \textsuperscript{12}The authors of the official Roman Catholic Catechism thus express a universally accepted fact 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 \textit{Catechism of the Catholic Church} [paragraph 1537] (Liguori: Liguori Publications, 1994), 384.
\item \textsuperscript{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, \textit{Christian Theology: An Introduction} (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 249.
\end{itemize}
applying these words to Christian ministry as he understood it.\textsuperscript{15} Thus P. M. Gy states that “with the emergence of Christian Latin in Tertullian, we see that the analogy of the *ordo* and the people of the city of Rome was taken up to describe the relationship of the clergy to the people of God.”\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{17} On the other hand, some words and concepts came into Christianity loaded with cultic meanings and connotations.\textsuperscript{18} The latter applies to *ordo* and *ordinatio*, which appear to have carried a specific baggage when they entered into Christian vocabulary. This would suggest that when Tertullian used these words for the first time and applied them to Christian ministry, he knew exactly what he was doing. As in the Roman Empire, ordination for him implied a movement from a lower to a higher position and from having no sacral responsibilities within the religious community to acquiring responsibilities for their performance. It represented status and ranking that did not appear to exist among New Testament Christians. This is also why the rite of laying-on-of-hands was eventually limited

\begin{thebibliography}{15}
\item Osborne, 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. Being himself a lawyer and teaching law prior to becoming a Christian, Tertullian must have been keenly aware of the close relationship between the way society was governed and its religion. As a Christian apologist, he saw parallels between Rome and Christianity and thus had no qualms using Roman governmental structures and applying it to Christianity. Cf., Robert L. Thomas and F. David Farnell, “The Synoptic Gospels in the Ancient Church,” in The Jesus Crisis: The Inroads of Historical Criticism into Evangelical Scholarship, ed. Robert L. Thomas, F. David Farnell (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1998), 51.
\item Gy, 99.
\item In Acts 19:32 the word *ecclesia* is used in its regular meaning as “assembly.” It appears that, at the time, this term does have any cultic associations. In Ephesians 5:25 Paul uses the same word, this time as a technical term designating the Christian Church.
\item For example, the word *sacramentum*, also introduced by Tertullian, was loaded with cultic meaning when, 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*, 1995, ed. Richard McBrien, s.v. “Sacrament.”
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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 a 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 to ministry in the Church; thus, only the main points of this development will be highlighted.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 fully understand the early Christian rite of ordination, thus, we must first briefly explore the developing theology of ministry.

The Christianity of the post-apostolic era found itself under much pressure. The issues Christians struggled with included the following: Jesus did not return, as expected; the first generation of leaders disappeared, leaving Christian communities with a problem of viable leadership; Christianity was pressured both externally, by persecutions initiated by the Roman authorities, and internally, by various dissentions, heretical movements, and schisms. In such circumstances, maintaining the unity of the church became a major issue. Virtually all Christian authors writing during

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²⁰The 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 Tit 1:5-9.
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. As it spread, historical circumstances, such as an attraction to the pagan system of governance as well as inattention to the witness of Scripture, gradually pushed Christianity towards what later became the papal system of church organization. This movement began innocuously enough.

Two of the earliest Christian writings that document the gradual changes in the theology of ministry are 1 Clement and the Didache. 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. 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 evangeliza-

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21 Campenhausen, 76.
22 Catholic scholars readily admit that while the movement from the simple New Testament 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. The current papal system of church governance constitutes, therefore, the will of God for the Church. Sullivan, 217-236; cf., Richard McBrien, Catholicity (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 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 documents 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, ed. and trans., J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 23-27. The Didache, the full title of which reads The Teaching of the Lord to the Gentiles Through the Twelve Apostles, is an important document of Christian antiquity and can be seen 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. Idem, 246-249. Philip Carrington, The Early Christian Church, vol. 1, The First Christian Century (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 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, 381-382.
tion in the middle of the century, when the Apostles “went through the territories and townships preaching, [appointing] their first converts . . . to be bishops anddeacons 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 (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 sequested their own interests. One of the answers offered is an efficient presbyterate, i.e., 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

26 Schillebeeckx, 19.
27 1 Clement 44, in Staniforth, 46.
the correct performance of the rites during the worship service. In order to perform all the ordinances in a proper way, the church needed a special type of leaders. Presbyters, having attained their position by popular election (which was still practiced 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 and Third Century Developments in the Theology of Ministry

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

It appears that already, by the beginning of that century, the presbyterate became 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 (ca. 160–ca. 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. Although, as many scholars contend, only a few decades separate Ignatius from the writings of the late part of the first century, he is often viewed as the first unambiguous representative of the episcopal type of church polity. While on the way to Rome to face martyrdom, Ignatius desired to encourage congregations in each city he passed through and produced a series of letters dedicated to each church he and his party of Roman soldiers passed on the way.

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.” Second, he also desires that his fellow Christians remain steadfastly faithful to Christian teachings in the face of heresy. Notwithstanding his noble intentions several departures from the New Testament may be detected in Ignatius’ writings. These departures 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. 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 Ignatian letters appear to exist at the bottom of the hi-

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32 Very little is known about Ignatius, who is considered to have been bishop of Antioch in Syria. While some biographical information may be found in his letters, most of the information about Ignatius comes from the 4th century Christian historian Eusebius of Cesarea. Cf. Hermut Löhr, “The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch,” in The Apostolic Fathers: An Introduction, ed. Wilhelm Pratscher (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010), 91-113.

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, who reigned from 98 to 17 AD, although there is scholarly debate suggesting a 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, ed., and tr., Michael W. Holmes (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006) and Löhr, 93-95.

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


36 Osborne, 52.
eralarchical ladder. For Ignatius, this three-fold ministry was grounded in a divinely ordained pattern and essential for the existence of the church.\textsuperscript{37} He thus 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.”\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{41} For this reason, the unity of church members with their bishop was the single most important duty of individual Christians.\textsuperscript{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 New Testament, there appear to be many bishops/presbyters in a particular city or region, apparently all having equal authority, the monepiscopal system changes that and introduces the rule of a single bishop per city. Only such a system, in which the believers are required to submit to the leading officer of the Church in all matters, had a chance to protect the unity of the Church and ensure peace and stability in a Christian

\textsuperscript{38}Ignatius \textit{Magnesians} 6.4, in Staniforth, 88.
\textsuperscript{39}Ignatius \textit{Magnesians} 6.1, in Staniforth 88.
\textsuperscript{40}Hatch, 89.
\textsuperscript{41}In the epistle to \textit{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” \textit{Magnesians} 3, in Staniforth, 87-88.
community.\textsuperscript{43} Through his insistence upon the authority 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, a heresy which had already shown its early precursors in the Apostolic era, had reached its peak and was threatening to engulf the Church.\textsuperscript{44} Facing the danger, the believers grew closer to their leaders.\textsuperscript{45} 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.\textsuperscript{46} By now, bishops came to be seen by the congregations as those who alone taught pure doctrine and defended the community against heretical teachings.\textsuperscript{47} The second century writer who greatly contributed to this development was Irenaeus.\textsuperscript{48} In the context of his struggle with Gnostic teachers, Irenaeus borrows the concept of successive teachers from Gnosticism and develops a theory of apostolic succession;\textsuperscript{49} 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.\textsuperscript{50} As one can expect, a side effect of the theory of apostolic succession, which eventually became one of the foundational doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church, was that it not only

\textsuperscript{44}The main focus of all forms of Gnosticism was on the acquiring of special knowledge as a requirement for salvation. Such beliefs naturally tended to elevate those who possessed that special knowledge above other believers. The influence of Gnosticism upon the governmental structures of Christianity is often underestimated in scholarly circles. For a comprehensive discussion on Gnostic influences upon Christianity, see Campenhausen, 167-170.
\textsuperscript{47}Campenhausen, 171.
\textsuperscript{48}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,” \textit{Encyclopedia of Early Christianity}, ed. Everett Ferguson (1999), 588.
\textsuperscript{49}The Catholic doctrine of apostolic succession, thus, traces its roots directly to the Gnostic idea that there exists a line of enlightened teachers who are charged by Christ with transmitting the true apostolic tradition. Campenhausen, 167.
\textsuperscript{50}Carlos Alfredo Steger, \textit{Apostolic Succession} (Berrien Springs: 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, early in the second century, and Tertullian, a younger contemporary of Irenaeus. It was Irenaeus, however, who developed it theologically. Campenhausen, 165.
strengthened the episcopal organization of the Church against heresy, but also elevated the position and authority of the bishop to a higher level than ever before.\textsuperscript{51} The ministry gained a new dimension. While for Ignatius, the episcopate represented the very center 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.\textsuperscript{52} 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.\textsuperscript{53}

Another interesting element found in Irenaeus’ writings relates to the special spiritual endowment that Christian bishops receive as they enter the chain of apostolic succession. Thus he writes 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 \textit{the certain gift of truth}, according to the good pleasure of the Father.”\textsuperscript{54} In this passage, some scholars find one of the first allusions to ordination, although the laying-on-of-hands is not explicitly mentioned.\textsuperscript{55} 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 \textit{charisma veritatis certum}), which enables bishops to teach the truth.\textsuperscript{56} Only bishops receive this gift and they can exercise it only if they are in communion with other bishops.\textsuperscript{57}

The remainder of the Catholic priesthood possesses it in a derivative way, as long as they stay in the


\textsuperscript{53}The doctrine of apostolic succession remains foundational for Roman Catholicism and some Episcopal Protestant churches. This is despite the fact that the New Testament and the early first century writers do not support the theory and that it is impossible to verify historically an unbroken chain of succession from apostles to bishops. This is well attested by Sullivan, 12–16; cf., \textit{Lumen Gentium} 20-29, in \textit{The Documents of Vatican II}, ed., Walter M. Abbott (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), 39–56.

\textsuperscript{54}Irenaeus \textit{Against Heresies} 4.26.2 (ANF 1:497)


\textsuperscript{56}Eric Osborn, \textit{Irenaeus of Lyons} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 146.

\textsuperscript{57}Henri De Lubac, \textit{The Motherhood of the Church} (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 248; cf., \textit{Catechism of the Catholic Church}, [paragraph 1556-1558], 389.
communion with their local bishop. 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, thus, further elevated the authority of the bishops. 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.

This was the kind of ideological and theological context within which Irenaeus' younger contemporary, Tertullian, lived and worked. Interestingly, in his writings one encounters for the first time a statement that appears to ontologically separate clergy from laity. In his *Exhortation to Chastity*, he thus wrote: “It is the authority of the Church that instituted the distinction between clergy and laity [Lat.: *ordinem et plebem*] and the honor shown the ranks of the clergy made holy for God.” 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 Church.

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59 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, 116). 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, 520-525; Figueiredo, 32.

Roman Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{61} 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 \textit{summus sacerdos}, or the chief priest.\textsuperscript{62}

It is into this kind of theological environment that Tertullian introduced the loaded word ordination. While nowhere in his writings is the laying-on-of-hands referred to, it is reasonable to assume that both Irenaeus and Tertullian were familiar with the rite and that is how the ministry was installed into office during their times. Both of these thinkers, thus, lay 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 New Testament times.\textsuperscript{63}

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 resulted in the Christian ministry assuming the role of \textit{ordo senatorum} as in ancient Rome.\textsuperscript{64}

The writers of the third and following centuries built upon the foundation laid by Ignatius, Irenaeus, and Tertullian, and thus made 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,

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{61}The \textit{Catechism of the Catholic Church} thus 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.” \textit{Catechism of the Catholic Church} [paragraph 1547], 386. The quotations within the quote come from the Vatican II Document \textit{Lumen Gentium} 10 (\textit{Light of the Nations}) in \textit{The Teachings of the Second Vatican Council: Complete Texts of the Constitutions, Decrees, and Declarations} (Westminster: Newman, 1966), 85.

\item \textsuperscript{62}Tertullian \textit{On Baptism} 17 (ANF 3:677); cf. David Rankin, \textit{Tertullian and the Church} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 163.

\item \textsuperscript{63}A Catholic writer, Francis Sullivan, readily acknowledges that “the historical episcopate developed in the post-New Testament period.” Sullivan, 217. For an extended discussion on the episcopal office and powers, see \textit{Lumen Gentium} 20-27 (in Abbott, 39-52).

\item \textsuperscript{64}Gy, 100.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
we encounter the description of an actual ordination service. To these developments we now briefly turn.

**Further Developments in the Theology of Ministry and Ordination**

While no literary evidence from the late first or second century exist of the ministerial laying-on-of-hands ceremony, it is reasonable to assume this rite was practiced among the Christians of the second century. It is also plausible that it became increasingly limited to the ministerial *ordo*. The first complete description of the Christian ceremony of ordination, however, does not appear in literature until the beginning of the third century and is found in the *Apostolic Tradition*, a work attributed to Hippolytus of Rome (ca. 170–ca. 235 AD). In this work, we find a detailed description of early Christian ordinations, complete with a detailed theology of ministry and the liturgy to be followed in the ordination service. The document takes for granted the Ignatian three-fold structure of ministry, each necessitating a separate ordination service through the laying-on-of-hands and a separate set of prayers, with each order of ministry requiring a higher order to place hands upon the lower order. 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 the authority of the episcopal office than did Cyprian of Carthage (d. ca. 258 AD). Like his predecessors, Cyprian’s main concern was the unity of the Church. In fact, his most famous treatise is entitled *On the Unity of the Church*. While not being known as a theological innovator, his writings consolidate and

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67 Ibid., 2–18.
68 For a detailed description of these three ordination services, see Osborne, 117-129.
strengthen the ideas of his predecessors.\textsuperscript{69} Cyprian exercised his ministry during a very difficult time in the history of Christianity, when persecution, schisms, and heresies threatened the very survival of the faith.\textsuperscript{70} 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, where submission to the leadership of the Church was of utmost importance and insubordination was simply wrong.\textsuperscript{71} He believed that the Church was, above all, a concrete, visible community, a corporate body, with a clearly established structure and constitution 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.\textsuperscript{72} 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 bishop his spokesman. A bishop was thus the ultimate and virtually irremovable authority in the church, the center 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.”\textsuperscript{73} “The necessity for unity,” writes Edwin Hatch, “outweighed all other considerations. Henceforth, whoever in any city claimed to be a member of the Christian Church must belong to the established organization of

\textsuperscript{69}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, 266.


\textsuperscript{71}Peter Hinchliff, Cyprian of Carthage and the Unity of the Christian Church (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1974), 40-41.

\textsuperscript{72}Campenhausen, 269, 273.

\textsuperscript{73}Ferguson, “Bishop,” 184; J. B. Lightfoot writes that, “if with Ignatius the bishop is the center 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.
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.”74

Although, as noted above, Tertullian appears to be the first to use the term “priest” (Latin: *sacerdos*) in the Christian vocabulary, it was Cyprian who developed the theology of priesthood by a large-scale application of the Old Testament 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.”75 The new terminology applied especially to the Eucharist, of which, according to Cyprian, the bishop is the only celebrant.76 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 one was in unity with the bishop and belonged to the true Church, his salvation was doomed.77 The Church, consisting of the ministry and those in unity with them, was, for Cyprian, the divine “ark of Noah,” outside of which there was no possibility of forgiveness of sins, no true sacraments, thus, in short, no possibility of salvation.78 Thus he famously stated, *Quia salus extra ecclesiam non est!* (“Outside of the Church there is no salvation”).79 All this, of course, depended on the rite of ordination that the bishop received from the hands of other ordained bishops. In this fashion, Cyprian combined

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74 Hatch, 105.
76 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 presiders at the Eucharist, they too were finally called priests. In this way, “sacerdotalizing” enveloped all the ministers of the church.” See Schillebeeckx, 48-49.
77 Cyprian *Epistle 27.21* (*ANF* 5:383).
78 Cyprian *On the Unity of the Church 6* (*ANF* 5:423).
79 Cyprian *Epistle 72.21* (*ANF* 5:384). Throughout the centuries, and especially since the Second Vatican Council, both Catholics and Protestants wrestled with Cyprian’s exact intention 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*, ed. George F. McLean and John P. Hoga (Washington, DC: John Paul II Cultural Center, The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy,
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. 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, to 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” and the pope as “the visible sign and guarantor of unity.” Historically speaking, then, it could be said that when the emphasis on the clearly unscriptural kind of unity taught by the second- and third-century thinkers replaced the early Christian emphasis on the charity within the Church, the papacy was born! (Revelation 2:4).

Two more developments relating to ordination into Christian ministry must be mentioned. First, from the time of Augustine on, Christian writers began to write of ordination as the moment when the Catholic minister receives a special, permanent seal upon his soul. This indelible mark assures that the actions of the priest, such as baptism and administration of the Lord’s Supper, are valid in a sacramental sense, i.e., they convey God’s salvific grace. According to this view, ordination becomes one of the most important Catholic rites since it allows the Catholic priest to function as a

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80 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.’” Ibid. paragraphs 882, 883, 886, page, 234.


83 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,” in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 741-747.
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.”

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. 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 fulfill a particular task or minister to a particular community. It appears that, until the fifth century, only those who had been called by a particular community to be its pastor and leader, or to a particular missionary endeavor, were actually ordained. The rite was thus attached to the task at hand. It appears that only around the time of the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD) did it become widely accepted to practice absolute ordinatio. Ordination thus becomes attached to a person rather than a task.

The death of the last apostle and that of Cyprian in 258 AD are separated by approximately 160 years. It took, thus, only 160 years for the church to depart from its New Testament roots and

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94 Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 1558, page 389.
95 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, 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 communion with the bishop of Rome and to the priests who stay within communion with their bishop and who represent their bishop to the communities within which they perform their priestly duties. Michael G. Lawler, Thomas J. Shanahan, Church: A Spirited Communion (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 107; cf., Richard R. Gaillardet, Teaching with Authority: A Theology of the Magisterium in the Church (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), 58-59; Agostino Paravicini-Bagliani, The Pope’s Body (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 58-59.
96 Schillebeeckx, 38-41; the ontological distinction between ordinem et plebem that had already appeared in Tertullian, and was eventually accepted by Christian thinkers, made this development inevitable. Cf., Vinzenz Fuchs, Der Ordinationstitel von seiner Entstehung bis aug Innozenz III (Amsterdam: P. Shippers, 1963), 280; R. Paul Stevens, The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999), 151; Gary Macy, The Hidden History of Women’s Ordination: Female Clergy in the Medieval West (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 27.
thoroughly embrace sacramental ecclesiology, where 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 that the Church departed from a variety of biblical teachings such as the seventh-day Sabbath and the mortality of the soul. Interestingly, 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. The same Council, in Canon XXIX, forbade observance of the seventh-day Sabbath as the day of rest once and for all, designating all those who continue to observe the Sabbath as judaizers. “But if any shall be found to be judaizers, let them be anathema from Christ,” the council declared. Obviously, the Council’s message regarding the ordination of women elders did not receive widespread acceptance, since Pope Gelasius I, in 494 AD, felt it necessary to issue a strong condemnation in his letter to the bishops in Lucania (Southern Italy): "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." Other teachings, such as the seventh-day Sabbath and the mortality of the soul, were similarly rejected.

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88 Heidi Heiks, *AD 538 Source Book* (Ringgold: Teach Services, 2010), 252.

89 Deborah Halter, *The Papal No: A Comprehensive Guide to Vatican’s Rejection of Women’s Ordination* (New York: Crossroads, 2004), 50. Interestingly, 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 [Jul 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: 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
as various Marian doctrines, the cult of the saints, and veneration of 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 New Testament roots?

The Church, divided into two classes, ordo and plebs, continued throughout the centuries. The idea of ontological class division within the Church received a powerful jolt during the sixteenth century Reformation. However, not even the Protestant Reformation, with its emphasis on the priesthood of all believers, was able to break the grip of sacramentalism on Christian ecclesiology. On the one hand, the Reformers 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.”

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 . . .

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.

90 Martin Luther, Confessions Concerning Christ’s Supper, in Luther’s Works, ed. Eric W. Gritsch (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), 37:368. The fact that this statement appears 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.
to leave the church.”  

For Calvin, therefore, clearly there was no salvation outside of the Church.  

At the core of Calvin’s ecclesiology, as in Cyprian, however, lies deep concern for the unity of the Church.  

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.”  

While it is uncontestable that Calvin subscribed to the Protestant principle of the priesthood of all believers, he continued to believe in the elevated status of the Christian ministry, although not entirely in a Catholic sense.  

“The church,” he wrote, “can be kept intact only if it be upheld by the safeguards in which it pleased the Lord to place its salvation.” These “safeguards” were the Christian ministers who governed the church and who were, for Calvin, “the chief sinew by which believers are held together in one body.”  

The vestiges of Catholic sacramentalism thus hampered the Magisterial Reformers’ emphasis on the priesthood of all believers and their attempts to establish alternate governmental structures.  

As a result, the Reformers continued, albeit inadvertently, the Catholic tradition of separating clergy from laity through the act of ordination. Consequently, the elevated status and prestige of the Christian ministry was never fully repudiated, and ordination continued to separate clergy and laity into two separate castes of believers. Could it be that by leaving the traces of Catholic sacramentalism in Protestant theology, as

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92According to the analysis provided by the Reformed scholar Louis Berkhof, at the center of Calvin’s ecclesiology was the belief 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: Banner of Truth Trust, 1937), 238.  


95Calvin Institutes iv.iii.2 (McNeill, 2:1055). Not that it mattered to common, theologically untrained people, who were often forced to take on the religion of their magistrates.  

96Ibid.  

well as through the perpetuation of the non-biblical rite of “ordination” (as contrasted with the biblical laying-on-of-hands ritual) the Reformers inadvertently contributed to the faltering of the Reformation?

**Early Adventism, Organization, and Ordination**

As a result of the magisterial reformers’ hesitancy, various restorationist movements advocating a complete return to New Testament Christianity arose already during the life of the Reformers (most notably the Anabaptists) and throughout subsequent centuries. Many of these movements attempted 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 New Testament principle of the priesthood of all believers. Over time, some of these movements continued to maintain their anti-clerical 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. 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

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

99 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 (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1977), 147-148.
steps were taken during the mid-1850s. These eventually culminated in the achievement of formal organization in 1863.  

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 through the laying-on-of-hands. These moves 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. These laying-on-of-hands rituals were to follow the model found in Acts 13:1-3, where 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, however, Ellen G. White 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 re-

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100 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: Review and Herald, 2001).

101 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: Andrews University Press, 1998), 111.

102 Ellen G. White, Supplement to the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White (Rochester: James White, 1854), 18-19; cf., Knight, Organizing to Beat the Devil: The Development of Adventist Church Structure, 37.
ceived 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.103

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 more for pragmatic than theological reasons.104 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, as 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 New Testament custom 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 practiced within our denomination, in agreement with the biblical principle of the priesthood of all believers? Have we sufficiently freed ourselves from the shackles of sacramentalism bequeathed to us from other Christian churches? Have we 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). Finally, we must ask ourselves the all-important question: Does the current way of understanding and practicing ministerial ordination continue to serve the mission of the church?

103 Ellen G. White, Acts of the Apostles (Place: Publisher, Date), 162; emphasis mine.
In answering these questions, let the history of the organizational developments of the early church serve as a warning to us; for it did not take long for the persecuted church to become a persecuting church, with those who disagreed suffering much at the hands of the ordained clergy. This church, so enamored with its own institution and the protection of the powers of its clergy, ultimately lost its place in the divine scheme of things. There are no guarantees that history will not repeat itself again.

Two Models of the Church diagram

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104George Knight, “Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination,” 111.
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”. This paper aims to explore the meaning of this significant phrase in the framework of its contextual setting. Further, it aims to explore Ellen White’s understanding of the term “ordination” and its ecclesiastical function in God’s mission to the world. Finally, it aims to explore Ellen White’s practical application of the term “ordination” in the life and work of the church. For this purpose, this study examines the meaning of the phrase “the Lord has ordained me” 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.” 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”. On the way back home, and while visiting several camp meetings, Ellen

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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, WC 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?

Firstly, 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 She indicated more specifically, “Portland has been especially pointed out as a place that should be labored for without delay.” Secondly, 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 the 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 aged and were unable to do “much active work

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² Ibid.
³ Ibid.
⁴ WC 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 White, Letter, October 19, 1909.
⁷ Ibid.
for the cause.” In her mind God’s work in Portland needed a new sparkle of fire. She pointed out, “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.”

Specific needs coined with love and passion for God’s work triggered in Ellen White’s mind a vivid recollection of her childhood years, 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, and here my first labors were given to the cause of the present truth.” It is evident 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.

Twenty-five years later, prompted by the described circumstances, the mode of reflective reminiscing opened the scenes of God’s involvement in her life. In this succinct, yet full of conviction expression, Ellen White linked the notion of ordination with God’s actions, or God’s initiative, paving a specific purpose in her life, a role, which she defined as “His messenger”. Further, 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

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8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Ellen White, Travel Notes, Review and Herald, November 25, 1884
a rather plain and un-emotive manner, a matter of fact, based on an undeniable conviction.

Few months later, on January 20, 1910, Ellen White wrote another appeal to “all the churches throughout the United States.” 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.” At this point of time, the church still needed to raise $5848. The second letter had an ongoing motivational purpose. At the same time, Ellen White added more details to the descriptive recollections of this significant experience named “the Lord has ordained me”.

Firstly, she recalled her transition from the 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.” 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.

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11 Ellen White, Letter written from St Helena California, January 10, 1910.
12 Ibid.
13 WC White, Letter written 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 efforts. The tone of the letter suggests a dose of frustration. “I wish you would send us a particularized statement of what you have received from Mother and from our Conferences.
14 Ellen 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.
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 unfolds the heart of her transformational experience, the journey that eventually led to God’s specific call. Secondly, 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.”

It seems, the named events were part of the wider two-phase process associated with what she names as “the Lord has ordained me”. The two named experiences 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.” In the second letter, the added details move beyond the descriptive, state 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. Rather, her 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 nudging direct individuals towards His ordained purpose.

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17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 Noah Webster, Dictionary 1828, Ellen G. White Writings Comprehensive 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.
Further, 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 for 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. Finally, 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 with 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 the 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 with other major financial commitments, namely “Ingathering Campaign and the annual offerings”.23 However, he adds, “it did

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20 Ellen White, Review and Herald, July 26, 1906.
21 Ibid.
22 Ellen White, “An Appeal to Our Churches Throughout the United States”, Review and Herald, October 18, 1911.
23 W.C. White, Letter to Eld. O Montgomery, Feb. 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.
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.”  

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”.

Well over a year later, the building stood unfinished. She wrote, “Our people are now meeting in the basement.” 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 was burdened 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.”

Is it possible to consider 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 unfolds 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 twice she referred to the city of Portland, Maine. She warned of the dangers of “gathering too many responsibilities in one place” while the message should be proclaimed “in needy fields, yet unworked”. Here she called for a change in regard to “the work that God has pointed out to do in opening new fields”.

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 been hindered by men who are eager to use authority”.  

With this 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”. Further, she called for “an entire change based on thorough conversion,” a sway away from worldly attitudes and the spirit of self-exaltation.

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.” 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.

It may be noticed that in calling the church to refocus on what matters to God, Ellen White attributed the process of ordination to God’s actions or 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.” It may be said that 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. Ellen White understood this process from an all-inclusive perspective. “Thank God that His truth can be communicated by men and

31 Letter June 10, 1910.  
32 Ibid.  
33 Ibid.  
34 Letter, Dec, 21, 1909.  
35 Ibid.  
36 Ibid.
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 expand God’s vision, 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 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 mind. In doing so she aimed 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 Correctly Arthur White comments. “She encouraged the spirit of self-sacrifice” and reminded the church of “constant devotion to the needs of the world”.41

It may be concluded that 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 an awakening of a 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

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37 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
41 Arthur White, Volume 6, 209.
42 Ellen White, Letter, December 21, 1909.
The act of God’s ordination has a specific purpose, namely to connect other people with God. The next section aims to show how Ellen White’s biblical reflections affirm God’s involvement in the process of ordination.

**Biblically Reflective Perspective**

Ellen White’s biblical reflections reiterate that ordination involves the divine process through which God sets apart individuals to a life commitment and involvement in His mission to the world. At the same time, she highlights the church’s role, namely as the recognition of the divine call. This point is so emphatically stressed in her reflections on Paul’s ministry. “Paul did not depend upon man for his ordination. He received from the Lord his commission and ordination.” She then refers to his attitude in seeing the ministerial work “as a privilege” for “he labored for the souls of men.” Here she links ordination with the process through which individuals recapture God’s vision and a passion for the lost and 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.” She comments further, “He studied constantly how to make his testimony of the greatest effect.” 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 Timothy 1:12-17). God’s calling initiated in Paul’s life a transformation and commitment to God’s

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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 White, Letter, February 15, 1911 (Emphasis added).

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

45 Ibid.


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.”

In this context she highlights specific instructions relating to the church’s role in the divine process of ordination. Her comments on the narrative from 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.

a) 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”

b) After they have fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them.

c) 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 designation 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.

Firstly, she understood that ordination was simply a public recognition of the divine call. “Paul and Barnabas had already received their commission from God.” The question may be raised, 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.”

God foresaw the difficulties and “He instructed

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48 Ibid.
50 Ibid., 161.
the church by revelation to set them apart publicly to the work of ministry.” The main reason for this public action was to provide protection against external challenges. Hence, the prevailing circumstances compelled God to instruct the church to officially affirm, 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.

Secondly, she clarifies that the laying of hands “added no new grace or virtual qualification.” On this point she adds that with passing 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.” Further, her reference to “ones 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.” 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.

Through the laying of hands the church prayed for God’s blessings and for the continuity of His involvement in the designated task. This culturally ingrained practice

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.
had a future oriented bearing.\textsuperscript{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 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.”\textsuperscript{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.”\textsuperscript{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.”\textsuperscript{58} It appears her focus was not on the functions or rites. These should be understood only as means to an end. The main focus is on God’s action and on the ability to discern His movements in the lives of those He ordains. More so, 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

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid. This spiritual act was later distorted. It assumed the role of a rite which conferred holy orders or sacerdotal power.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 161.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 164.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
united in an organized and well-directed effort to give to the world the glad tidings of the grace of God."\textsuperscript{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 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 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. Further, it provided a mechanism for accountability protecting individuals from the danger of self-oriented independence. Finally, it had a unifying purpose through which the Holy Spirit guided all entities towards successful fulfillment 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 \textit{The Spirit of Prophecy}, published in 1878 she refers to the story of Paul and Barnabas’ ordination. Basically, she highlighted that “ordination was an open recognition of their mission, as messengers chosen by the Holy Ghost for a special work.”\textsuperscript{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.”\textsuperscript{61} Ellen White incorporated the same position in \textit{The Acts of the Apostles} published in 1911. However, in the later edition her biblical reflections included a more profound

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
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 theme to help the church 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, the next section explores Ellen White’s application of the named principles in the context of God’s missional vision.

Practical perspective

It appears the passion for the expansion of God’s work and the raising awareness of unopened fields preoccupied Ellen White’s thoughts during this time.

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 note of an 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, if God places a burden

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63 Ibid.
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? Further, did she see ordination as an exclusive process or did she see it from a more inclusive perspective? With these questions in mind one needs to explore her progressive thinking in the lights of the passion she had to see the progress of God’s work.

During her tenure in Australia, in 1896 she wrote an insightful note entitled “Remarks Concerning Foreign Mission Work” 64 The main thrust of her concern focused on the “many fields right around that ought to be worked that are not worked.”

The paragraph quote 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. 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 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 quoted extract from The Acts of the Apostles (1911). 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.” Her last statement is expressed so emphatically. “We have let the matter settle in minds altogether too strongly and too firmly.” In view of the new circumstance Ellen White

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64 Ellen White, Ms 75, November 12, 1896 (Previously Unpublished).
65 Ibid.
66 Ellen White, Letter October 19, 1909.
called for a change in the approach to the mission work. In fact, she proposed an innovative, all-inclusive alternative.

Firstly, 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.” 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.” In other words, she encouraged the church to note that changed circumstances opened ways to new opportunities

Secondly, 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 man to be ordained - some of them - why, ordain them.” 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.” 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 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.” She finds 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.

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67 Ms 75, 1896.
68 Ibid.
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.”\textsuperscript{69}

In this context Ellen White pushed the boundaries of the prevailing thinking even further. She argued that if individuals feel the burden for work and they lead people to conversion “To say [they] shall not baptize when there is nobody else, [is wrong].” Then she continued to make 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.”\textsuperscript{70} To support her position, again, she adheres 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.\textsuperscript{71}

It becomes evident that to Ellen White new circumstances create a demand for conceptual change, and what this study refers to as a 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 set them apart for a specific role by creating in their heart a burden for souls, she warned, “we must not put men in straight jackets.”\textsuperscript{72} Rather, she encouraged the church to affirm such a call and to provide support and nurture through earnest prayers.\textsuperscript{73}

Her openness to new possibilities stemmed from the urgency to expand God’s work in ‘unworked’ places and large cities. In 1909 she wrote, “The message that I am bidden to bear to our people at that 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

\begin{itemize}
  \item [69] Ibid.
  \item [70] Ibid.
  \item [71] Ibid.
  \item [72] Ibid.
  \item [73] Ibid. “We must lead this 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.”
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places but much more might be done.”

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?”

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.”

During the past years, and in the spirit of missionary urgency, Ellen White used a gender inclusive phrase, referring to both ‘men and women’.

Time and space does not permit for an extensive study of all the references. However, a selected sample unfolds her supportive arguments for the inclusion of women in all facets of ministry.

In ancient times the Lord worked in wonderful way 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.

Again, Ellen White highlights God’s initiative to work through consecrated women in what she considers as a primary role for the salvation of many lives. Then she adds 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

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74 Ellen White, Letter 168, December 1, 1909, To the Officers of the General Conference, Ellen White, Letter, Cir, 1910, to Dear Brethren and Sisters.
75 Ellen White, The 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 White, Letter to F.M. Wilcox, July 25, 1911.
76 Ellen White, Letter, May 7, 1911 (Letter writer to Loma Linda California)
the work to-day.”78 The context of the entire letter addresses the issues relating to the medical work in Loma Linda sanitarium. At the same time, the quoted reference 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 a 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.”79 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.”80 “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.”81 However, her call was not only to encourage the church at large in the work of sharing the gospel. This was the responsibility of every church member. “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."82 Rather, in unfolding an all-inclusive understanding of God’s vision, she weaved into the fabrics of her admonitions

78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
80 Ellen White, *Advance*, June 1, 1899.
81 Ellen White, *Advocate*, March 1 1899.
82 Ellen White, *Australasian Union Conference Record*, April 15, 1912.
subtle motivational gems. It may be suggested that through these sparkles of new ideas she endeavoured to open the 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.”\(^{83}\) On another occasion she 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.”\(^{84}\) 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.\(^{85}\)

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 is silent on any direct instruction regarding this matter. However, as shown she is 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 date, November 1, 1889 Ellen White refers to the visit by Brother Prescott, who at that time served as the President of the Battle Creek College.

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\(^{84}\) Ellen White, *Australian Union Conference Record*, July 1, 1902.

\(^{85}\) Ibid.
During the conversation he informed her about the “brethren’s” plans to ordain him and about his personal indecision on this matter.\textsuperscript{86} 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.” 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.” It is evident that in her understanding the practice of ordination extended beyond the scope of one specific role, namely pastoral ministry. Rather, it unfolds a more inclusive practice of ordination involving those in teaching-leadership ministry.

In a letter written to Kellogg in 1899 Ellen White referred to the work of the Holy Spirit enabling committed and humble individuals to gather harvest. She argued that fitness and success derives from the lessons “learned in the school of Christ”. She followed it with a rather interesting 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.”\textsuperscript{87} It is evident that in her understanding the success in reaching people depends totally on personal commitment to Jesus and on 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

\textsuperscript{86} Ellen White, Manuscript 23, 1889. 
\textsuperscript{87} Ellen White, Letter, January 14, 1899. Written to John H. Kellogg.
gather the sheaves should have the prayers of the whole church, that they may go as sharp sickles into the harvest field.”

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.” 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.” 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?

Ellen White supported her argument with the divine revelation “I was given light on this subject”. Firstly, due to fact that the wife’s commitment was taken for granted “injustice has been done to the women who labor just as devotedly as their husbands and who are recognized by God as being as necessary to the work of ministry as their husbands.” 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”. 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.”

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88 Ibid.
89 Ellen White, Letter, October 25, 1899, Sunnyside Cooranbong. Letter written to Brother Mountain.
90 Ibid.
91 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.
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 stems out of her further 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 an ordained ministers? Should it not command the hire of the laborer? Would not workers be defrauded if they were not paid?92

She concludes with a strong and convincing thus said the Lord. “The question is not for men to settle. The Lord has settled.” 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.”93 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

This research demonstrates that Ellen White does not delineate a theology of ordination. Rather, her experiential understanding of the phrase “The Lord had ordained me” coined with her biblical reflections and practical application clarifies the view of this vital experience in the life and ministry of the church. The explored data shows that circumstances prompted Ellen White to reflect on the experience of her call to the ministry as God’s messenger. Recalling this significant time, she describes 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

92 Ibid.
93 Ibid.
understood the phrase, “God has ordained me” in terms 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. Further, research has shown that Ellen White’s understanding of the 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. It was initiated by God’s revelation of His love and an awakening of a passion and burden for what God cares about, namely people.

Further, this research has shown that Ellen White’s biblical reflections about ordination affirmed her personal experience of God’s call. Reflecting on Paul and Barnabas’ ordination, she highlights two basic facts. Firstly, they received their commission and ordination from God. Secondly, new circumstances raised the need to provide a protective support against external challenges. Therefore, God instructed the church to confirm what He has 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. Here, God invited the church to a participative role in His mission, namely 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 fulfillment of God’s vision.
Finally, Ellen White’s experiential perspective, biblical reflections and God’s guidance expanded her understanding and application of the phrase “The Lord has ordained”. 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 and one 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 both males and female for ministry. 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 has already set in motion. Her last words ring the bell of convincing optimism. It seems, the question of ordination is not for men to settle. The Lord has settled it through His direct call – His act of ordaining or designating people for specific roles, namely to connect others with God.
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The Ordination of Women: A Biblical-Theological Introduction

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Introduction

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—inform...
not choose any women to be among his twelve disciples.\textsuperscript{3} Everything beyond this is a matter of interpretation, application and (sometimes) speculation. How, then, is it possible to go forward?

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 of datum forbids anything. They tell us 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 conclusions if theological conclusions 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 seeing as those who greeted him are representatives of the worshiping church community today, only men can be full members of the church? Absurd nonsense!

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 us to evaluate a number of possibilities: that women were physically disqualified, intellectually disqualified, spiritually or ontologically disqualified, or culturally disqualified.

\textsuperscript{3} Some scholars have suggested that there were, in fact, female priests in Israel. See, for example, I. J. Peritz, “Woman in the Ancient Hebrew Cult,” \textit{JBL} 17 (1898): 111-48; F. M. Cross, Jr. “Priestly Houses of Early Israel,” in \textit{Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 195-215; B. J. Brooten, \textit{Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue}, BJS 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 Ex 38:8 and 1 Sam 2:22 refer to women ministering “at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting” does not establishes that they had a role inside the sanctuary. Similarly, the fact the Zipporah performs a circumcision (Ex 3:24-26) does not establish her priestly status unless it is assumed that only priests could perform this rite. The suggestion that Jael (Jud 5:24) may have been a priestess at a shrine connected to the terebinth of Elon-bezaanannim—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 Yahwish 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.
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 Heb 11:11 notwithstanding! This sort of sexual role is far removed from the Mosaic priesthood of the Old Testament. Such thinking would have been anathema in the Mosaic cultus—especially if the re-enactment 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 Old Testament legal corpus not specifies “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

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” (I 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 forty years since I heard the sermon.
the population, and not the reality in each individual case. The terrible unfairness of this sort of argument can be seen immediately when it is transposed into the area of race.⁷

The only physical requirement for the Israelite priesthood were linage 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 was prohibited from performing key priestly duties. However, since women were created as women, by God, 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 area of relevance here is the attitude of the Old Testament to blood and the fact that women menstruate. In the Mosaic law menstruation made women ceremonially unclean

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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. M. Singham, “Race and Intelligence: What are the Issues?” Phi Delta Kappan 77/3 (1995): 200-209.

⁸ Unless otherwise indicated all scriptural citations are from the NIV.
(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 women (Ez 36:17) which shows how seriously this type of ritual uncleanliness was regarded. Indeed, Ezekiel includes disregard for the prohibition on sexual intercourse, during a women’s menstruation, among his list of reasons why God sent Israel into Babylonian captivity (Ez 22:1-16; note especially, Ez 22:10). Similarly, the bleeding associated with childbirth made a woman unclean. Giving birth to a girl resulted in a longer period of uncleanliness than giving birth to a boy (Lev 12:1-5). The issue is clearly that of blood causing uncleanliness (Lev 15:25). Why this should be is puzzle 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 Gen 9:1-7 provides a crucial insight. The passage is essentially a retelling of the primordial instructions and blessing given 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 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 comment 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.

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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 world views. Christians from such traditional cultures may well be quite bemused that Western Christians struggle to come to grips with these passages.
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) the 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 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 women who had been bleeding for “twelve years” (Matt 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:42-48) which presumably means she had been experiencing continuous menstrual flow throughout that twelve year 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 cleansed and healed her. In that one act, Jesus swept away the whole paradigm of women’s ritual impurity, with its possible implication of religious inferiority. When he acted in an analogous way, with regard to ritual cleansings, before eating, Mark explicitly signals that the repudiation the ritual defilement paradigm is entailed: “In saying this Jesus declared all foods ‘clean’” (Mark 7:20).13

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12 R. A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8.26*, WBC 34A (Dallas, TX; Word, 1989), 296.
13 This in no way undermines the health principles that undergird Seventh-day Adventist practice in regard to “clean” and “unclean” animals. However, regardless of whether or not an animal is fit to be
The Old Testament 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 New Testament, 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” (I 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 fulfillment (see Gal 3:26-4:6). In the light of this, it is surely illegitimate for us to attempt to extract a prohibitionary principle regarding the ordination of women from the holiness code.14

**Women as Intellectually Disqualified**

If women are not physically disqualified in scripture, from either the priesthood or apostleship, could it be that they are intellectual disqualified? The likelihood of this being the case, rests on the weakest of all supports: silence. Not one text in either the Old Testament or the New 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.15 A number of subtle, but none-the-less real, hints point away from female intellectual inferiority in the biblical picture.

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14 Paul who, as we have seen, dismissed circumcision (I 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).
15 This text is discussed in further detail, below.
It is undoubtedly a linguistic accident that both the Hebrew and Greek words for wisdom (חכמה; hokma, and σοφία sophia, respectively) are feminine nouns. No judgements regarding male and female should be made on this basis. However, there is other data which is not so easily dismissed. First, is the creation narrative, which sees Eve made from the same constituents as man. 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. 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. The Hebrew word חמה (helper) certainly does not necessarily connote inferiority of any kind. Words from this root can be applied to God in the Old Testament (Ps 10:14; 30:10; 72:11). The qualifying word (חמה; suitable) literally means “as in front of him” and thus indicates complementarity; “a corresponding to him, his counterpart.”

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 . . . ." 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.

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17 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.
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 character” (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 (v. 11), indicating that he “relies on her.”

Nor is this woman, a stay-at-home wife and mother. Rather she is actively involved in business interests – textiles (v. 12), property (v. 16), agriculture (v. 16) and trade (v. 18). She contributes significantly to the household economy (v. 11b). As a result of her activities, her husband’s status is elevated (v. 23).

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 tongue” (v. 26). “Whatever she has to say ranks as wisdom and reliable advice.” She is a woman who “fears the Lord” (v. 30), which is the essence of wisdom in Proverbs (1:7; 9:10; 15:33)—its “first principle.” Her worth is not based on such ephemerals, as “charm” and “beauty,” but on true wisdom (v. 30). There is not the faintest hint here that woman is intrinsically intellectually inferior to man—quite the contrary. Striking, 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).

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21 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.
22 McKane, *Proverbs*, 670. It is uncertain who exactly received these instructions with the women’s children, servants and friends all being suggested by various scholars.
The location of this extended portrayal of a good wife is also significant: it is the last twenty-two verses of Proverbs. Throughout the book, Wisdom has been presented as a women (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 “wife of noble character” as the final word of the book, the compiler of Proverbs presents this woman as the very embodiment of wisdom itself.24 (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).25

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 to 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).26

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 s one of equality.

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Women as Spiritually Disqualified

There are numerous stories in the Bible of women who were spiritually bankrupt and functioning as enemies of God and God’s people—Jezebel and Athaliah in the Old Testament; Herodias in the New. 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 spiritual 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 (Judges 4) is instructive in this regard. Deborah, the prophetess, was the” leader” (Judges 4:4, N. I. V.; Heb: נְסָתָה) of Israel at the time. Barak appears to be her Field Marshall. But the unfolding character development in the narrative runs contrary to stereotypical expectations: Where Deborah is confident and unwavering in her belief that God will give them victory (Judges 4:6-7, 14), Barak is timid and frightened. He will only go out to battle is Deborah accompanies him (Judges 4:8)—an attitude which earns him a mocking rebuke from Deborah (Judges 4:9). In the end, in keeping with this rebuke, Sisero 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 (Judges 4:22). The story, thus highlights, the two women as sensitive to hear 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 (Judges 13) has a similar feel. When the angel of Lord initially appears it is to Manoah’s wife, rather than to Manoah himself (Judges 13: 3). The angelic message is that she is going to have a son, despite the fact that she has been sterile and
childless (Judges 13:3-5). Manoah’s wife appears to manifest no doubt about this startling revelation but relates it to her husband in great detail (Judges 13:6-7). The situation is somewhat different with Manoah. He prays that God will send his messenger again and instruct them as to how to rear the child—despite the fact that his wife has already received such instructions (Judges 13:8 cf., 13:4, 6). When the messenger does return, he appears, not to Manoah but to his wife (Judges 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” (Judges 13:13).

One text in the New Testament—1 Tim 2:14—may suggest the inherent spiritual inferiority of women. However, the picture in the New Testament generally is very similar to that in the Old Testament. 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 New Testament. Women are the first to discover that Jesus had been raised to life, and are consequently, the first proclaimers of that good news (Mat 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 spiritual 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 New Testament is even more noteworthy in view of the fact that views deprecating the spiritual nature of women

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27 This text will be examined in some detail in the next section of this paper.
were certainly known within the Judaism of the New Testament era (see, for example, Sir 25:24 and Philo, *QG* 1, 33, 43).^{28}

**Women as Ontologically Disqualified**

To suggest that women might have been ontologically disqualified from the Old Testament priesthood or for membership of the Twelve in the New Testament, simply because God decreed it to be so, because he 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.”^{29} Nothing in the Old Testament suggests such a thought, but two New Testament texts (1 Corinthians 11:2-10 and 1 Timothy 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 obvious when they are viewed side-by-side (see chart below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Ontological Inferiority of Women: Three Key New Testament Texts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 Corinthians 11:2-10</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
</tr>
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| prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. 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. | Law says. 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. | 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. |

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”.

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 “having authority over a man”; but in 1 Corinthians 14 “authority is not explicitly mentioned.

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 women are to “learn” and this is also implied in 1 Corinthians 14 but is not mentioned in 1 Corinthians 11.

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6. Among of the three texts, 1 Timothy 2 suggests women 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).  

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, there is thus 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”.  

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 seems immediately relevant to the issue at hand. 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, mean that women should not teach men? What does “have authority over” (auòvtei`n) actually mean? In what sense will women be “saved through childbearing”, but only if they continue in the fundamental Christian virtues? All of these questions suggest that Paul is responding to a specific constellation of ideas, being faced in

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32 Zamfir and Verheyden, “1 Tim 2:8-10,” 397-98.

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 Tim 2:12 and 1 Cor 11:5. In 1 Timothy, Paul declares “I do not permit a woman to teach . . . ; she must be silent.” However, in 1 Cor 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 Cor 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). The clear implication of Paul’s permitting women to pray and prophecy in 1 Cor 11:5 is that the prohibition on them speaking at all in church (1 Tim 2:12) cannot be a universal precept. Rather the comment to Timothy, must be understood to

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mean, “In this particular case, I do not permit a woman to teach . . .” or “I do not permit these particular women to teach . . .”

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 Tm 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).

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

1. Hellenistic Judaism;
2. Proto-Montanism; and
3. (Proto-)Gnosticism.

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The great majority of scholarship sees a Gnostic or proto-gnostic background for these false teachings. 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. 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” (gnw`si~) was a crucial element of Gnosticism and that ‘knowledge was highly speculative.

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39 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-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. In may be that some of these first century “gnostic” elements For a thorough discussion of these issues see G. Quispel, “Gnosticism and the New Testament,” in The Bible in Modern Scholarship, ed. J. P. Hyatt (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1965), 252-71; R. McL Wilson, “Response to G. Quispel’s ‘Gnosticism and the New Testament’,” in Bible in Modern Scholarship, 272-78; H. Jonas, “Response to G. Quispel’s ‘Gnosticism and the New Testament’,” in Bible in Modern Scholarship, 279-93.


41 F. F. Bruce, The Epistles to the Colossians to Philemon, and to the Ephesians, NICNT (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 eons 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. This spiritual resurrection corresponds to the moment of enlightenment, the transferences from the death of ignorance to the life of knowledge.

The Old Testament was used in Gnosticism but it was turned upside down. Its heroes were regarded as villains and its villains as heroes. The God of the Old Testament was the demonic creator of inherently evil matter. Eve was particularly revered in Gnosticism. Not only

42 K. Rudolph, Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1987), 189-194. Rudolph (Gnosis, 190) quotes Ephephanius (“Panarion” 40.2.5) who summarizes gnostic theology at this point: “There is no resurrection of the flesh, but only of the soul.”
43 Ibid., 191.
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).

When viewed against such a backdrop as this, 1 Tim 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 gnosticing error but need to learn to 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.)

Far from child bearing being 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.

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45 For further discussion of the attitudes towards women in Judaism for further, below.
46 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 R. D. Putnam and D. 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 Timothy), 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.
The similarities of 1 Cor 11:2-16 and 1 Tim 2:8-15 are frequently noted. Indeed, the earlier text has been referred to as the “pre-text of 1 Tim 2:8-15.” It is thus necessary to examine this text also. (A helpful expanded paraphrase of this complex passage, by James Hurley, is found in an appendix to this article). 1 Corinthians 11 also stresses the priority of man’s creation over woman’s. 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 Gen 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 Gen 2 is secondary to that of the man, but the stress in this creation narrative (as noted above) is on the complementary nature 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 modern readers, the relation of any of these things to head coverings is far from clear. So it should be noted, that just like 1 Tim 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.”

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)

47 Zamfir And Verheyden, “1 Tim 2:8-10,” 389.
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.\(^{49}\)

What exactly Paul meant 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).\(^{50}\) What is undisputed is that Paul makes an explicit appeal to the custom of the day when he ask, “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 \textit{au natural} 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).”\(^{51}\) The fact that

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\(^{49}\) 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 B.C. and not 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 J. Murphy-O’Connor “Corinth,” in \textit{ABD}, 6 vol., ed. D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1: 1136. Barrett (\textit{First Epistle to the Corinthians}, 3) similarly observes that “In Paul’s day, Corinth was probably little better and little worse than any other great sea port and commercial center of the age.” However, that comment in itself suggests an environment well familiar with sexual immorality!


Paul evaluates behavior 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’s hair was worn long but tied up in a bun signifying her sexual unavailability. Chaste women’s hair 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). The fact seems particularly important in the context of 1 Corinthians which explicitly deaths with concerns about both sexual morality and ecstatic worship (including “prophecying”).

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. An alternative is suggested by 1 Cor 11:15b, ὅτι ἡ κομή ἀντὶ περιβολαίου δέδοται [αὕτη] which may legitimately be translated “because long hair is given to her instead of a veil.” The passage makes surprising good sense on the assumption that Paul is dealing with hair rather than veils.

54 Massey, (“Long Hair,” 52-55) rejects the interpretation given here but recognizes, none-the-less how difficult verse 15 is for those who interpret the passage in terms of veils. The key issue in in verse 15 in the meaning of the word ajnti; which may mean “instead of” but could equally be translated “as”.
Paul’s topic in this whole passage is “Propriety in Worship.” He opens with a key thought: “the head of every man is Christ” (v. 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 (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 (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 (5). This puts her virtually on a par with a woman whose head has been shaved—the prescribed penalty for adultery (5). Not only is her husband shamed by such behavior, she is also (6).

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

1. Man is the “image and glory of God”, but women 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”. There is a certain obscurity here: according to Gen 1:27-28, both man and woman were made in the image of God. However, the general point is clear. Paul


56 The reference to angels has been much discussed and absolute certainty regarding Paul’s means 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”, 209-11.
argues that the custom of the day (cf., “nature”, v. 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 was 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 (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 either. 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 (v. 8) but it is equally true that man comes from woman at birth (v 12). Male and female are not independent of one another but rather are dependent on each other (v. 11).

The situation in regard to 1 Cor 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 (v. 33) and that fact should be reflected in Christian public worship services. Women are to remain “silent” (v. 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” (v. 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 suggesting that women are ontologically disqualified from either the priesthood or the apostolate? There is no evidence to support this at all in the Old Testament, and the only texts that might appear to support it in the New Testament 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. There is nowhere in either the Old Testament or the New Testament when anything is 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 involve 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.”

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

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deliberate.”\(^\text{58}\) What was the reason for this deliberate exclusion of women priests? Otwell wisely cautions that all attempts to answer this question must be “conjectural.”\(^\text{59}\) 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 neighbours—were integral to fertility rites including sacred prostitution.\(^\text{60}\) However, “recent studies seriously question this widespread assumption.”\(^\text{61}\) 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 on-going fertility of this world to the sexual activities of those gods. Joan Westenholz allows that in Mesopotamia at least, a “sacred marriage ritual,” which did involve ritualized sexual intercourse, was carried out once a year as part of the New Year’s celebration.\(^\text{62}\) Both the plurality of gods and the importance of ritualized sexual rites were thus easily associated with those (fertility) religions with 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.\(^\text{63}\) She insists that concerns over “fertility” should not be

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\(^{58}\) Otwell, *And Sarah Laughed*, 155.

\(^{59}\) Ibid.


\(^{62}\) Westenholz, “Tamar,” 262.

thought of exclusively in terms of the land. Rather, especially in Palestine, they must have included questions of human fertility and population growth. Such concerns are reflected in a religion centering 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 sexual activity. It is scarcely surprising that the oneness of God was represented in Israel by a single gender priesthood. As the feminine gods vanished from the theology of Israel, the female priesthood vanished 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 (Mat 8:20). His opponents cast thinly veiled aspersions on his legitimacy, and by implication, his mother’s sexual history (John 8:41). 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

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64 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.


66 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, Matthew, Tyndale Commentaries (Leicester: Intervarsity, 1961), 32. For scholarly reservations regarding this idea see, R. H. Gundry, Matthew: A Commentary on his Literary and Theological Art (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 15; E. Schweizer, The Good News According to Matthew (London: SPCK, 1975), 24-25.
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.\(^67\) (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 by two women—Pricilla and Maximilla. He could not escape the charge of “reeking of every impurity and licentiousness.”\(^68\) Nor could his female companions!\(^69\)

There remains a further issue: Palestinian Judaism in the New Testament 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.\(^70\) 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 women to pronounce the blessings


\(^{68}\) David Wright attributes this accusation to Cyril of Jerusalem and suggests that little weight should be given to it. See, D. F. Wright, “Why Were the Montonists Condemned?” Them 2/1 (September 1976): 18.


of purification, which were integral to ritual washings. 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.

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 participant in events in first century Palestine, especially the Jewish revolt of A.D. 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 A.D., and the century before, a number of prominent women are mentioned—Alexandra, Queen of the Jews; Mariamme, Wife of Herod the Great; Salmone, the sister of Herod; Antonia, a Roman noblewoman who saved the Jewish prince Agrippa; Herodias, wife of Philip; Berenice, the daughter of Herod Herod Aggipa I and the supposed lover of the future Ceasar Titus; Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt; and Poppaea, wife of Nero. All of these women—Jews and Gentiles alike—are members of royalty. Josephus refers to no women exercising authority in Palestine as either warriers 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 New Testament, specifically the four gospels. Like Josephus, the Gospel writers describe events

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72 This leaves aside the question of how significant such evidence would be even if it were present. If community represented some sort of reformist sect at the time, how representative should we understand its practices to be?
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, 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 to 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 given 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 Tannanim 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.73 Significantly, however, all of her sources, except for one fourth century inscription, come from outside Palestine. This is not simply because of a lack of inscriptions in Palestine. Brooten is able to document numerous inscriptions testifying to female donors to synagogues in Palestine.74

73 Brooton, Women Leaders, 1-99.
74 Ibid., 157-65.
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” (sunergw’n; see Phil 4:2-3)—a clear reference to ministry. Why is Paul willing to act so differently to 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.\(^{75}\) There was also a clear, even if regionally diverse heritage of female leadership in the Greco-Roman world.\(^{76}\) If this reconstruction is valid, then two conclusions can be drawn for the contemporary church: 1) there is no reason why women could not be ordained for the ministry if such an action were acceptable in the cultural context in which it were happening; and 2) 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.

\(^{75}\) Ibid, 1-99.
\(^{76}\) B. Witherington, III, Women in the Earliest Churches. SNTSMS 59 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 5-23
Appendix: Expanded Paraphrase of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

I am glad that you try in every area to remember what I said and that you hold fast the traditions just as I handed them on to you. I praise you for your faithful efforts. I would, however, have you know that of every man, Christ is head; the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. It is clear that any man who prays or prophesies with his hair up as a woman’s announces that he is under the authority of a man and thereby dishonors both himself and Christ, under whose authority alone he ought to stand. Conversely, any woman who lets her hair hang loose dishonors both herself and her husband. By letting her hair down, she puts on herself the sign of an accused adulteress. If she herself does that, it is as if she had been convicted and shaved. If, then, a woman will not wear her hair up to show her proper relation to her husband, let her shave it off. It is shameful to have it clipped or shaved off, let her wear it up!

A man should not have his hair up because his dominion reflects God’s and by his exercising of it he honors God. His wife, on the other hands, honors him by her obedience. The bare head and loose hair of the man show his place under God’s authority and his own authority in relation to his wife. Because of her different role the wife wears her hair differently. She wears it up as a sign of ‘authority.” It signifies her husband’s authority over her and her authority over the angels.

The subordination of women to their husbands does not mean that the men are of higher value than the women. In the Lord neither the man is independent of the woman nor the woman independent of the man. From creation it was His design that there should be an authority relation between them but that they should be of equal value. Thus the woman was taken from the side of the man to be his helper, but men are born of women. Within the church we see this pattern continuing until the Lord returns, in that both men and women are the source of prayer and prophecy through the gifts of the Spirit and at the same time the husband is that head of the wife.

You asked me to judge whether it is proper that a woman pray to God uncovered. I’ve told you enough that you can see to judge for yourselves. God’s plan in nature shows you the way. A man is shamed if her has long hair, while the same long hair brings glory to a woman. You can see that hair is given to be a sign of the distinction between men and women. This natural sign of long hair is also sufficient covering and there is no need for a shawl.

If anyone still wants to argue about the need for a covering he should know that neither we nor the churches of God have any other custom than that women should pray and prophesy with their heads covered . . . by their hair.

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Fire sparks Sanitarium factory evacuation

Auckland, New Zealand

The Sanitarium factory in Auckland was evacuated this morning after a fire broke out in one of the production lines.

According to The New Zealand Herald, fire crews spent more than an hour containing the blaze, which began just before 9 am.

“We’re pleased to report that all staff members are safe and accounted for, which is most important thing,” said Sanitarium National Category Development manager Mark Roper.

An initial damage assessment has linked the fire to the oven-exhausts in the cornflake production line.

While it is still too early to estimate the cost of the damages, the health-food company doesn’t expect the fire to have a major impact on supplies.

“The other lines were not affected,” said Mr Roper. “Our expectation at this stage is to have the them up and running in 48 hours. It will be business as usual.”
"My husband calls me ‘little miss Friendly’,” laughs Jasmin Simyunn, ADRA country director for Papua New Guinea. It's an interesting response to my question about how this genteel woman knows prostitutes and gang members in Lae—one of the toughest towns on the planet.

“When I’m in the community conversations normally just start with a smile. And from there a relationship develops. People living in the streets are human beings just like anyone else. And so when you’re friendly, they are friendly back. Over time you get to know each other. And just like any friendship, you begin to share about your life.”

One of the startling things she has learned is that some of the prostitutes and petty criminals are Seventh-day Adventists. “They don’t want to be doing this but they are really so poor,” she says. “You have to understand what it means to be unemployed, without job skills and feeling like you’ve got nowhere to turn. The women particularly break my heart. Many of them are pimped by their husbands. Imagine your own husband selling you to other men. It's sickening.”

It's so hard to imagine that I have to ask who would be buying sex from married women in Lae. “You’d be surprised,” she says. “It's local men, Australian men, Asian men—a broad cross section.” And what of the growing rates of HIV/AIDS? “Many people aren’t well educated on the risk. One woman our staff recently talked to was gang raped by 30 men. It was brutal and horrific in every way. I doubt those men will ever be caught and punished in this life. But what they didn’t know is that she is HIV positive. So each one of them may now be infected. And if they are, they will take it home and keep spreading it. It's a terrifying reality. Evil brings even more evil, and more and more innocent people are devastated.”

It’s all starting to feel a bit hopeless. Where do you even start when men stoop to the level of prostituting their own wives? It turns out Jasmin is the right person to ask.

Jasmin Simyunn, ADRA country director for PNG.

Born in the Philippines, she has been working in aid and development for a while now. After studying finance she first served ADRA in Sri Lanka following the 2004 tsunami. Australian couple Michelle and Chris Abel-Jensen then convinced her to join the ADRA Mongolia team and seven months ago they encouraged her to go to PNG to serve as country director. “I knew this wasn’t going to be an easy assignment,” she says, “but the need is so great and the difference ADRA is making is so dramatic that I am just loving it. And the friends I am making—whether in the church or in the street—are very precious to me.”

So back to the question: how do you anything to help the thieves and prostitutes—whether they are Adventists or not? “The first thing I’ve noticed about Adventist thieves,” Jasmin says, “is that they often say they try to avoid robbing fellow Adventists. Of course that’s a moral absurdity, but it does indicate they have not completely lost a sense of ethics—even if it's very twisted. The second is that every one of them wishes they weren’t involved in crime. These are not hardened criminals or sociopaths. They are simply very desperate people doing
very desperate things.”

Helping them gives her a great deal of satisfaction. “The pathway out of crime and prostitution is paved by economic opportunity,” she says, “and economic opportunity requires basic skills—as basic as literacy, numeracy and simple skills that allow someone to create value. The literacy programs ADRA is involved in are very literally changing the lives of women. Once they can read they can absorb a broad range of information that helps in every facet of life. Simple things like doing a budget become possible. We also run programs to teach people skills like market gardening, small engine mechanics, basic computing, catering, making pavement blocks and the basics of running a micro-enterprise. All of these things might seem simple but when you are illiterate and living on the streets they are skills that can liberate you.”

So is it working? “I had a moment of mixed emotions the other day,” Jasmin says, “when Rita Maruha, ADRA’s HIV/AIDS prevention coordinator, told me about a woman who, after completing ADRA training successfully, is running a micro business. ‘My husband is happy now,’ she told Rita, ‘because he no longer has to prostitute me.’ I am happy too—but it still disgusts me that any man would do that in the first place. Still, we live in a very messy, sometimes very ugly world. And every woman ADRA frees from prostitution, every man ADRA frees from the incredibly dangerous world of crime, it's a victory for the light, for the good, it's a victory for humanity that our Saviour gave His life for. And that's what makes my life and my work here in PNG worth it.”

As we wrap up our time together I pause to take in all Jasmin has told me. It's easy to admire Christ mixing with prostitutes and others on the margins of society, but how many of us actually do that? And not just mix, actually reach out and rescue people from the cycle of poverty and desperation that has trapped them. I may not be a Jasmin but I am thankful to God that I have a chance to support what she and the rest of the ADRA PNG team are doing. They are the hands of Christ, reaching out with practical love to broken lives in some of the toughest conditions in the world.

James Standish is editor of RECORD.
“My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions.” Or so said King Rehoboam, beginning a rather unfortunate, if predictable, series of events.

It turned out people did not want to be scourged with anything—and certainly not with scorpions. So first the people outside Jerusalem rebelled. Rehoboam sent out a taskmaster to bring them into line. It didn’t work as Rehoboam expected. Rather, people stoned the taskmaster to death, thereby sending a rather unambiguous message back to the crown. The message wasn’t well understood. The king himself ventured forth to subdue his rebellious subjects. He was unceremoniously chased back to Jerusalem with his tail between his legs.

And that was just the beginning of Rehoboam’s woes.

Eventually he lost control of the northern 10 tribes of Israel. His little kingdom, in constant fear of its northern brethren, was so weakened that when the Egyptians invaded he gave them all they demanded—even the treasures from the temple his father Solomon had built. Rehoboam ended up an emasculated pawn in a vassal state of Egypt.

And yet all of this, and much more, could have been avoided if Rehoboam had simply listened to the right people. The old advisors told him to deal mercifully with his subjects. After all, his name meant “he who enlarges the people”. Why not begin his reign by doing just that? The people would love him in return. But the young men, surging with testosterone and pumped up on privilege, gave the opposite advice. They told him to be tough. Show some swagger. Let the little people know who’s boss.

Rehoboam chose the confidence of youth over the prudence of experience. He must have felt quite the big man when he delivered his scorpion line, along with boasting that his little finger was stronger than his father’s torso. Forget the old man. Throw out the dusty aged advisors. It’s a young man’s world and Rehoboam was at the reigns. Like a character out of an Ellie Goulding song, he was going to “burn so bright they’d see him in outer space, coz Rehoboam baby, was the star of the human race”.

Until he wasn’t.

Are we in danger of repeating Rehoboam’s blunder?

We live in a society where youth is routinely prized over experience. Attributes like prudence, wisdom, perspective and thoughtfulness—attributes that often sharpen with age—are not the flavour of the day. We live in a society, like Rehoboam, confidently embracing ideas untethered from the wisdom of the ages. We can expect a similar return on investment.
But it isn’t just our society at large. I get many compliments from church members that I have a “young team”, as if that is something good in and of itself. Why is having a young team better than having a team of experienced veterans? I’ve asked, and what I get are vague notions about creativity, exuberance, relevance and just all round wonderfulness. Yes. But are older people lacking in all these?

Of course young people can be creative but plenty aren’t. And some of the most wonderfully creative people on earth are old. Frank Gehry, arguably the most influential architect of our time, is in higher demand now than ever—and he’s 84 years old! His masterpiece, the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, was built when he was 68; his 8 Spruce Street, New York residential tower, which won the Emporis Skyscraper Award for “world’s best skyscraper”, was completed when he was 81 years old; his striking design for three towers in Toronto is so thoroughly original it’s currently the subject of intense public debate that will determine if it’s allowed to be built; and his controversial structure for UTS Sydney is currently under construction. Are you still going to tell me older people aren’t creative?

But just as importantly, why does society routinely assume open-mindedness and flexibility are more valuable than perspective and wisdom?

A well-balanced church values the creative, the experienced, the energetic, the prudent, the young and the old. And when people with experience, people with runs on the board, those who have built the house that we currently inhabit . . . when they speak, a wise person—whether old or young—listens carefully. If only Rehoboam had done the same. He would have kept his scorpions to himself, and by so doing, built a strong, vibrant legacy of a united nation dedicated to glorifying God.

Let’s not repeat Rehoboam’s blunder.

James Standish is editor of RECORD.
Adventist Doss honoured on back of US stamp

Silver Spring, Maryland, United States

The back of panes carrying self-adhesive “World War II Medal of Honor” US commemorative stamps released in Washington, DC, on November 11, 2013, bear the name of a Seventh-day Adventist who received the nation’s highest military honor, but who also refused to carry a weapon.

Desmond T Doss, Sr, was a lifelong Adventist who in World War II was credited with saving the lives of 75 wounded soldiers during a battle on Okinawa. He was the first conscientious objector to receive the Medal of Honor, presented to him by then-US president Harry S Truman in a White House ceremony. He was one of 464 people to receive the Medal of Honor during the conflict.

Doss, who died in 2006 at the age of 87, was the subject of a 2004 film, *The Conscientious Objector*, and his story was widely known in Adventist circles. He credits early childhood images of Jesus and the Ten Commandments with forming his resolve as an objector.

Part of the pane of Medal of Honor stamps issued by the US Postal Service. Rear sheet inscription mentioned Desmond H Doss, the Seventh-day Adventist conscientious objector who received the Medal of Honor for his heroic service on Okinawa.

According to a US Postal Service announcement: “The first side of this four-page design highlights historical photographs of the last living recipients of the Medal of Honor from World War II. One stamp features a photograph of the Navy version of the Medal of Honor. The other stamp features a photograph of the Army version of the Medal of Honor. The Air Force version was not created until 1965. The two center pages list the names of all 464 recipients of the Medal of Honor from World War II. A short piece of text and a key to the names of the recipients pictured in the cover photos are included on the second page. The remaining 18 stamps are found on the back page.”

Commemorative stamps such as the “Medal of Honor” issue are now denominated as “Forever” stamps, meaning they will always be valid to carry one ounce of first-class mail, regardless of the prevailing rate at the time of mailing. The stamps should be available at US Post Office locations nationwide.