

**SETTING APART FOR THE MINISTRY:
THEORY AND PRACTICE IN
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM
(1850-1920)¹**

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Introduction

Sabbatarian Adventism² emerged in a milieu that was strongly antagonistic toward established religious bodies and any organizational form going beyond local church structures.³ Their antiorganizational attitude was based on the belief that elaborate organizational structures were markers of apostate churches. Since this attitude was common to all groups stemming from the

¹This article was originally commissioned by the Biblical Research Committee of the Inter-European Division of Seventh-day Adventists in 2012 and accepted by the Committee on 26 March 2013.

²The term “Sabbatarian Adventism” refers to Seventh-day Adventism before the formal organization of the church in 1863. Although the name “Seventh-day Adventists” had been used already since 1853, it was not applied unanimously to the body of believers until 1861. See S. T. Cranson to James White, 20 March 1853, printed as “From Bro. Cranson,” *Review and Herald*, 14 April 1853, 191. That is why in this paper the first term is used for Seventh-day Adventists before 1863 and the second term is employed for the church after 1863.

³This antagonism grew out of the events in 1843, when the Millerites shifted their focus to the time aspect of the prophecies, which resulted in tensions with the denominational leadership and subsequent expulsions of church members and dismissals of ministers. Charles Fitch interpreted these measures as a rejection of the Advent truth, indicating the transformation of the religious bodies into the apocalyptic Babylon. Thereupon, George Storrs started a vigorous antiorganizational campaign. Cf. Ellen G. White, “Dear Brethren of the General Conference,” *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 29 January 1893, 22; David Tallmadge Arthur, “Come out of Babylon: A Study of Millerite Separatism and Denominationalism, 1840-1865” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Rochester, 1970); Clyde E. Hewitt, *Midnight and Morning: An Account of the Adventist Awakening and the Founding of the Advent Christian Denomination, 1831-1860* (Charlotte, NC: Venture Books, 1983), 264-287; Andrew G. Mustard, *James White and SDA Organization: Historical Development, 1844-1881*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, 12 (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1987), 114, 118; Don Neufeld, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, M-Z*, 2d rev. ed., Commentary Reference Series, 11 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1996), 254; George R. Knight, “Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination, 1844-1863,” in *Women for God: Historical, Biblical, and Theological Resources for Decision-making*, ed. Nancy Jean Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1998), 100; George R. Knight, *William Miller and the Rise of Adventism* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2010), 132, 234-235.

Millerite movement,⁴ it comes as a surprise that James and Ellen White as early as 1850 began calling believers to adhere to “gospel order,” a principle illustrated in the order in heaven, among Christ’s disciples, and in the early NT church.⁵ Although it took some time for other members of the movement to warm to this recommendation, by the early 1860s the antiorganizational attitude among members of the movement as a whole had dissipated enough for Sabbatarian Adventism to formally establish itself as a church. Over the years, the ecclesiastical structure of the Seventh-day Adventist Church underwent various changes and developments, as may be seen in the establishment of publishing, health, and educational institutions, as well as in the creation of unions and divisions and in the integration of numerous associations and societies into the church structure as departments.⁶ These changes from rudimentary local structures to highly complex global structures were paralleled by changes in the distribution of work, responsibilities, and authority within the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

As the ecclesiastical organization of the movement grew and developed, so too did the movement’s understanding and implementation of the act

⁴Ellen G. White, “Dear Brethren of the General Conference,” 22; J. N. Loughborough, *The Church: Its Organization, Order and Discipline* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1907), 89-90.

⁵James White, “The State of the Cause,” *Present Truth*, May 1850, 80; idem, “Our Visit to Vermont,” *Review and Herald*, February 1851, 45; idem, “Publications,” *Review and Herald*, March 1851, 54; idem, “Oswego Conference,” *Review and Herald*, 16 September 1851, 32; idem, “On Our Tour East,” *Review and Herald*, 25 November 1851, 52; idem, “[Note],” *Review and Herald*, 17 February 1852, 96; idem, “[Note on Pultney Meeting],” *Review and Herald*, 19 August 1852, 64; idem, “[Note on Pultney Meeting],” *Review and Herald*, 2 September 1852, 72; idem, “[Reply to S. W. Rhodes’ Communication],” *Review and Herald*, 14 October 1852, 93; idem, “Western Tour,” *Review and Herald*, 7 July 1853, 28; idem, “Eastern Tour,” *Review and Herald*, 18 October 1853, 117; idem, “Eastern Tour,” *Review and Herald*, 8 November 1853, 140; Horace W. Lawrence, “From Bro. Lawrence,” *Review and Herald*, 8 November 1853, 142; James White, “Gospel Order,” *Review and Herald*, 6 December 1853, 173; idem, “Gospel Order,” *Review and Herald*, 13 December 1853, 180; idem, “Gospel Order,” *Review and Herald*, 20 December 1853, 188-190; idem, “Gospel Order,” *Review and Herald*, 27 December 1853, 196-198; H. S. Gurney, “From Bro. Gurney,” *Review and Herald*, 27 December 1853, 199; Ellen G. White, *Supplement to the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White* (Rochester, NY: James White, 1854), 12, 15; Joseph Bates, “Church Order,” *Review and Herald*, 29 August 1854, 22-23; J. B. Frisbie, “Church Order,” *Review and Herald*, 9 January 1855, 154; R. F. Cottrell, “What are the Duties of Church Officers?” *Review and Herald*, 2 October 1856, 173. Articles and communications on the topic continued to appear until the formal organization of the church in 1863.

⁶See, e.g., Mustard, 143-278; Barry David Oliver, *SDA Organizational Structure: Past, Present and Future*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, 15 (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1989), 40-322; George R. Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil: The Development of Adventist Church Structure*, Adventist Heritage Series (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2001), 48-151.

of ordination. In the beginning, when Sabbatarian Adventists first united themselves around the beliefs of “present truth”⁷ in the late 1840s, there was no formal process of ordination. The majority of the leading persons were ministers who had been previously ordained in their former denominations,⁸ and they undertook the responsibility of sharing their beliefs with other former Millerites and drawing new members for the Sabbatarian Adventist movement through a traveling ministry. A problem soon developed, however: other travelling preachers who had not embraced the Sabbatarian Adventist message followed the same procedure, frequently promoting erroneous and heretical views, and it became difficult to distinguish between authentic Sabbatarian Adventist leaders and other travelling ministers who represented alternative doctrines. Problems arose not only from outside but also from within, as several self-appointed and self-confident preachers inside the Sabbatarian Adventist movement began to generate “confusion and disunion.” Thus, Ellen and James White suggested that such persons were “not called by God,” lacked judgment and wisdom, were “unqualified to preach the present truth,” and had not been “acknowledged by the church or [the] brethren generally.”⁹

For this reason, Sabbatarian Adventists began to see the need to apply the principle of “gospel order” and develop some way of certifying acknowledged

⁷Initially, the term “present truth” referred to recently discovered theological truths such as the extended atonement ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, the seventh-day Sabbath, the third angel’s message, and the sealing message. It was later enlarged as Adventists made new discoveries.

⁸Thus, James White and Joseph Bates had been ordained to the gospel ministry in the Christian Connection. Frederick Wheeler and John Byington had been set apart to the ministry in the Methodist Episcopal Church, and A. S. Hutchins as a minister in the Freewill Baptist Church. See James White, *Life Incidents: Connection With the Great Advent Movement, as Illustrated by the Three Angels of Revelation XIV* (Battle Creek: Steam Press, 1868), 1:104; idem, *Life Sketches: Ancestry, Early Life, Christian Experience, and Extensive Labors, of Elder James White, and His Wife, Mrs. Ellen G. White* (Battle Creek: Steam Press, 1880), 79; License to preach for John Byington, issued by the Methodist Episcopal Church, West Potsdam, 25 May 1840, Center for Adventist Research, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Mich. [hereafter referred to as CAR]; S. B. Whitney, “Life Sketch of Elder Frederick Wheeler,” *Review and Herald*, 24 November 1910, 24; Arthur W. Spalding, *Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1961), 1:295. Cf. Knight, “Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination, 1844-1863,” 103; Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream*, 2d ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 290; Gary Land, *The A to Z of the Seventh-day Adventists*, The A to Z Guide Series, 43 (Lanham: Scarecrow, 2009), 218.

⁹Ellen G. White, *Supplement to the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White*, 15-18; James White, “Church Order,” *Review and Herald*, 23 January 1855, 164; cf. Lewis H. Christian, *The Fruitage of Spiritual Gifts: The Influence and Guidance of Ellen G. White in the Advent Movement* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1947), 118.

leaders of the group in order to protect the believers from “false brethren.”¹⁰ This objective was accomplished through the establishment of a procedure for the ordination, or “setting apart,” of individuals for the ministry. The present paper builds upon previous historical studies to discuss various elements and developments of this process of ordination in the Sabbatarian Adventist movement and in the Seventh-day Adventist Church from the early 1850s to the early 1920s.¹¹

*The Rationale for and Objectives of
the Practice of Ordination*

The first step toward a process of certification was made when those who were well known among Sabbatarian Adventists began to issue recommendation cards to trustworthy ministers. Thus, in January 1853, James White and Joseph Bates signed a card and handed it over to J. N. Loughborough.¹² A second step was taken in the late fall of that year when the leaders of the Sabbatarian

¹⁰Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil*, 34-35, 37-38; Land, 218. In 1853, the first offshoot, the Messenger party, caused Sabbatarian Adventists considerable trouble. See Theodore N. Levterov, “The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White’s Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889” (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 2011), 81-83.

¹¹H. Eugene Miller, “The Development of the Ordination of Ministers in the Seventh-day Adventist Church” (Term paper, Andrews University, 1964); Bob Hunter, “A Study of the Qualifications for Ordination to the Gospel Ministry During the Years 1853-1861 and 1902-1903” (Term paper, Andrews University, 1972); Carlos E. Garbutt, “Rite and Recognition, Rite or Recognition: The Early Development of the Theology of Ordination of the Seventh-day Adventist Church” (Term paper, Andrews University, 1991); Gerald T. du Preez, “A Survey of Selected Aspects of the Practice of Ecclesiastical Appointment in the New Testament, Early Christian, and Seventh-day Adventist Church” (M.Div. thesis, Andrews University, 1994); Knight, “Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination, 1844-1863,” 99-113; Denis Fortin, “The Concept of Ordination in the Writings of Ellen G. White,” in *Women for God: Historical, Biblical, and Theological Resources for Decision-making*, ed. Nancy Jean Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1998), 114-132; Jerry Moon, “A Power That Exceeds That of Men: Ellen G. White on Women in Ministry,” in *Women in Ministry: Biblical & Historical Perspective*, ed. Nancy Jean Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1998), 187-209; William Fagal, “Ellen G. White and Women in Ministry,” in *Prove All Things: A Response to Women in Ministry*, ed. Mercedes H. Dyer (Berrien Springs: Adventists Affirm, 2000), 273-286; Levterov; David J. B. Trim, “Ordination in Seventh-day Adventist History” (Unpublished manuscript, Silver Spring, MD, [2013]).

¹²Loughborough, 101; Everett N. Dick, *Founders of the Message* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1938), 183; Mustard, 124; du Preez, 55-59; Knight, “Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination, 1844-1863,” 105; idem, *Organizing to Beat the Devil*, 37.

Adventist movement began “setting [men] apart to the ministry.”¹³ From the beginning, they used this phrase interchangeably with the terms “ordain” and “ordination.”¹⁴ Although a first ordination had admittedly occurred already in July 1851, it was not until 1853 that the leaders of the movement instituted a proper and intentional practice of ordaining men for the ministry.¹⁵

A Biblical Rationale for the Practice

In the 1850s, Sabbatarian Adventist literature did not indicate the use of any sources “beyond the Bible” in justifying “the developing position on ordination.”¹⁶ During that time, it was consistently emphasized that ministers had to be ordained according to the NT pattern, for they considered the practice an application of the principle of “gospel order.”¹⁷

James White saw the precedence for ordination in Jesus’ commissioning the twelve disciples to preach, teach, and baptize believers in his name (Matt 28:19-20). Then, he referred to such biblical texts as Mark 3:14; 1 Tim 4:11-16; 2 Tim 1:6; Titus 1:5, 7; and 1 Pet 2:25, suggesting that those “who are

¹³James White, “Eastern Tour,” *Review and Herald*, 20 September 1853, 83; idem, “Eastern Tour,” *Review and Herald*, 15 November 1853, 148.

¹⁴See, e.g., *ibid.*, 148; N. Fuller, “The Cause in Southern N.Y., & PA,” *Review and Herald*, 17 September 1861, 126.

¹⁵Washington Morse had been encouraged by James White “to engage in public labor in preaching the message.” See G. W. Morse and Lizzie J. Morse, “A Pioneer Gone to Rest,” *Review and Herald*, 23 December 1909, 17. Thus, in July 1851, G. W. Holt discretely set him apart “by the laying on of hands, to the administration of the ordinances of God’s house.” See F. M. Shimper, “From Sister Shimper,” *Review and Herald*, 19 August 1851, 15. While the report itself remains ambiguous as to whether he was ordained to the ministry or as an elder, a later account suggests that it was in 1851 that he began working as a minister. See Washington Morse, “From Bro. Morse,” *Review and Herald*, 4 October 1853, 103; cf. Neufeld, 254; Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil*, 35-36. The 1888 recollection that dates his ordination to the summer of 1853 is most likely a slip of memory because the contemporary sources point to 1851 and the 1888 report also contains other dating problems. See Washington Morse, “Items of Advent Experience During the Past Fifty Years, No. 4,” *Review and Herald*, 16 October 1888, 643; Knight, “Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination, 1844-1863,” 104. Loughborough later claimed that his ordination was the first of its kind; yet, there is no contemporary evidence. He joined the church in 1852 and was not ordained until 1854. See J. N. Loughborough, *Miracles in My Life*, comp. Adriel Chilson (Payson, AZ: Leaves-of-Autumn Books, 1987), 39; Knight, “Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination, 1844-1863,” 104.

¹⁶Knight, “Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination,” 102.

¹⁷James White, “Gospel Order,” *Review and Herald*, 20 December 1853, 188, 189; Frisbie, “Church Order,” 9 January 1855, 153-155; James White, “Re-Ordination,” *Review and Herald*, 6 August 1867, 120; J. H. Waggoner, *The Church: Its Organization, Ordinances, and Discipline* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1886), 15-16; Loughborough, 66-71; cf. Knight, “Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination, 1844-1863,” 102.

called of God to teach and baptize, should be ordained, or set apart to the work of the ministry by the laying on of hands.” Further, he argued that Eph 4:11-16 showed the continuance of the offices of preaching and evangelism in the church until the end of time.¹⁸ Ellen White described the situation of the NT church even more. As the church was assailed by false teachers, the practice of setting apart ministers by the laying on of hands was God’s solution to that problem.¹⁹ Shortly afterward J. B. Frisbie pointed to three NT examples: the choosing of an apostle to replace Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:20-26); the setting apart of Paul and Barnabas for the ministry (Acts 13:1-4); and the subsequent ordaining of other men for the cause of Christ by Paul and other early Christian leaders.²⁰ Since the Holy Spirit was the causative power in all three examples, he argued that “the power and authority to ordain elders or bishops in the church came” not by human invention, but “from the Holy Spirit of God” (Acts 13:2).²¹

In later years, Ellen White made several further-reaching remarks about ordination in her writings about biblical themes and events, indicating her belief in the biblical origin of the basic practice. The earliest example she provides for an ordination is found in God calling, commissioning, and ordaining Moses “to his great work.” She emphasized Moses’ “deep sense” of his “own weakness and unworthiness” when God called him.²² Ellen White saw the next example in Jesus’ ordination of his disciples, yet the example she cited was not the giving of the gospel commission in Matthew 28, to which James White had referred, but an ordination that came earlier in Jesus’ ministry, after his initial calling of the disciples and his early instruction to them about the duties and responsibilities of their mission. It was during this time that Judas Iscariot pressed self-confidently into the group of disciples, exemplifying an attitude very different from that of Moses and the disciples. Then, Jesus gathered them around him, bowed in their midst, laid “his hands on their heads, offered a prayer, dedicating them to this sacred work. Thus,” she stated, “were the Lord’s disciples ordained to the gospel ministry.”²³

¹⁸James White, “Gospel Order,” 20 December 1853, 189; idem, “Eastern Tour,” 15 November 1853, 148; cf. Knight, “Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination, 1844-1863,” 102-103.

¹⁹Ellen G. White, *Supplement to the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White*, 19.

²⁰J. B. Frisbie, “Gospel Order,” *Review and Herald*, 19 June 1855, 62-63; idem, “Church Order,” *Review and Herald*, 26 June 1856, 70-71; cf. Knight, “Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination, 1844-1863,” 102.

²¹Frisbie, “Church Order,” 26 June 1856, 70.

²²Ellen G. White, “The Call of Moses,” *Signs of the Times*, 26 February 1880, 85.

²³Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy: The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan. Life, Teachings, and Miracles of Our Lord Jesus Christ* (Battle Creek: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Assn., 1877), 2:203; idem, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), 293-294, 296, 298; idem, *Education* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1903), 93; idem to E. S. Ballenger and E. R. Palmer, Sanitarium, CA, 2 February 1905 (Letter 53, 1905), Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, MD [hereafter referred to

Later, she termed the initial calling of the disciples “ordination” and an “appointment to the work of the gospel ministry,” thus suggesting an initial ordination at the calling and a formal ordination after their instruction.²⁴ A third reference to a biblical precedent for ordination is found in her description of the “ordination of Paul and Barnabas,” covering an entire chapter in *The Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 3, in 1878.²⁵ Ellen White remarked that the leaders of the church in Jerusalem and Antioch ordained Paul and Barnabas only after they had been “made thoroughly acquainted” with the details of their divine calling and the mission given to them by the Holy Spirit. Thus, the ordination of Paul and Barnabas was an “open recognition” that the two had been truly chosen by the Holy Spirit for this special mission. When the elders of Antioch laid their hands on them, they asked God to bless them in the work assigned to them by the Spirit. Ellen White spotted the original pattern for the practice of the laying on of hands in the OT—a father laying his hands on his children to bless them and a priest laying his hands on the head of a sacrificial animal. In the NT, it became an “acknowledged form of designation to an appointed office.”²⁶

Interestingly, in all three references she emphasized that it was God who had called and set apart, explicitly equating the terms “commission” and “ordination.”²⁷ In the context of the ordination of the disciples and that of Paul and Barnabas, she suggested that the “ordination from above precedes [a formal] ordination by the church.”²⁸ She described Paul’s ordination by human hands as a “formal ordination.”²⁹ Like Ellen, James White also denied the idea that the church had the power to call people into the ministry or that its act of ordination made them ministers of Christ. Rather, the church was to ordain those who had already been called into the ministry by God.³⁰ This

as EGWE]; idem, “The Selection of the First Ministers of Apostolic Times,” *Review and Herald*, 11 January 1912, 19.

²⁴Ellen G. White to Ballenger and Palmer, 2 February 1905; idem, “The Regions Beyond,” *Pacific Union Recorder*, 4 December 1902, 1.

²⁵Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy: The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan. The Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ* (Battle Creek: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Assn., 1878), vol. 3, chap. 27; idem, *Sketches from the Life of Paul* (Battle Creek: Review and Herald, 1883), chap. 4.

²⁶Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, 3:348-349; idem, *Sketches from the Life of Paul*, 43-44; cf. idem, *Acts of the Apostles in the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 160-161; idem, “Separated Unto the Gospel,” *Review and Herald*, 11 May 1911, 4; idem, “Lessons from Paul’s Ministry,” 27 July 1903 (MS 74, 1903), EGWE; idem, “Proclaiming the Truth Under Difficulties,” *Review and Herald*, 18 May 1911, 5.

²⁷Ellen G. White, “The Call of Moses,” 85.

²⁸Fortin, 116.

²⁹Ellen G. White, “Separated Unto the Gospel,” 4.

³⁰James White, “Gospel Order,” 20 December 1853, 189.

aspect is significant when we begin to discuss the authority and power of ordained ministers.

The Benefits and Objectives of the Practice

If God was ultimately the one who called and set apart, this raised the question of why a formal ordination by the church was necessary at all. Responding to this question, James White pointed to three objectives of the practice: (a) the candidate receives confirmation of the approval and sympathy of both his colleagues and the church; (b) by the laying on of hands, the church shows its united agreement with the ordination of the respective individual, thereby producing and securing union in the church; (c) ordination solved the urgent need for some kind of authentication. This third objective received the bulk of James's attention, and he explained at length how ordination would prevent the influence of false teachers who brought reproach on the present truth and the cause of God.³¹ Similarly, Ellen White remarked that the application of this NT practice would signify "the approving voice of the church" and "secure the peace, harmony, and union of the flock."³² Interestingly, even those who opposed the establishment of any formal church structure, such as R. F. Cottrell, affirmed the practical need for and biblical foundation of the ordination of ministers.³³ Bates added that the NT depicted ordination as a means of choosing or appointing a person to an office, an aspect that was basically also supported by Ellen White.³⁴

The Qualifications of the Candidate

The above biblical considerations served as the theoretical basis for developing practical criteria for the qualification of a candidate for the ordination to the ministry. These criteria were developed further over the years as practical circumstances called for additional refinements and clarifications.

A Calling of God

When Sabbatarian Adventists began setting men apart for the ministry, they emphasized that a divine calling to preach was one of the most important prerequisites for ordination. This idea was derived from the biblical examples shown above and supported with texts such as Luke 6:13; Mark 3:14; Matt 10:16; 28:16-20; Gal 1:11-12; 1 Cor 10:2; and Eph 4:11-16. James White

³¹Ibid.; idem, "Eastern Tour," 15 November 1853, 148; cf. Knight, "Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination, 1844-1863," 102-103.

³²Ellen G. White, *Supplement to the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White*, 19.

³³Cottrell, 173; cf. Knight, "Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination, 1844-1863," 102.

³⁴Bates, 22. Bates supported this conclusion with John 15:16; Luke 6:13; Mark 3:13-14; Acts 1:20-24; 2 Cor 8:19; Acts 6:3-6; 14:23; 2 Tim 2:3-4; Titus 1:5. Cf. Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, 3:348-349; idem, *Sketches from the Life of Paul*, 43-44.

suggested that these texts were still applicable in the present time because “the church has never arrived at the state of unity and perfection” predicted in these passages.³⁵ The need for a divine calling was repeatedly emphasized in subsequent years.³⁶ James White asked churches to recognize the responsibility that God had laid upon one of their members and to urge that person into the field of labor.³⁷ After these individuals had proven to have “received their commission of God,” the church was, said Ellen White, to acknowledge the divine calling by setting them apart.³⁸ Almost four decades later the General Conference stated that candidates had to be sure about their call of God to the work of the ministry.³⁹

Evangelistic/Ministerial Experience

The most feasible way to prove one’s calling was by entering new fields where the present truth was still unknown, and thus a period of “labor[ing] publicly in the cause of God”⁴⁰ became a second prerequisite for ordination. This period of labor, sometimes called a time of “improving,” was usually marked by missionary activities in untrodden fields, often lasting one or two years, so that the church could recognize the candidate’s calling and ordain him.⁴¹ Ellen White compared this time of “improving” to the Waldensian practice

³⁵James White, “Gospel Order,” 20 December 1853, 188-189.

³⁶See, e.g., James White, “Re-Ordination,” 120; Uriah Smith, “To Correspondents,” *Review and Herald*, 27 June 1878, 4; G. I. Butler, “Ordination,” *Review and Herald*, 13 February 1879, 50-51; J. H. Waggoner, 19; Uriah Smith, “In the Question Chair,” *Review and Herald*, 20 October 1891, 648; F. M. Wilcox, “Ordination to the Gospel Ministry,” *Review and Herald*, 9 July 1925, 10.

³⁷James White, “Gospel Order,” 20 December 1853, 189.

³⁸Ellen G. White, *Supplement to the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White*, 19.

³⁹“General Conference Proceedings: Eighteenth Meeting,” *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 6 March 1893, 483.

⁴⁰James White, “Eastern Tour,” 15 November 1853, 149.

⁴¹James White, “The Ministry, No. 3,” *Review and Herald*, 1 August 1865, 68; Smith, “To Correspondents,” 4; W. H. Littlejohn, “The Church Manual,” *Review and Herald*, 11 September 1883, 586; F. M. Wilcox to W. C. White, Battle Creek, Mich., 10 January 1895, EGWE; cf. W. W. Prescott, “The Calling and Work of the Ministry,” *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 24 March 1891, 221-222, 226; Wilcox, “Ordination to the Gospel Ministry,” 10. Yet, in the mission field there occurred exceptions to this guideline as, e.g., G. H. Baber’s ordination of a newly baptized former Methodist preacher out of sheer necessity because other people would “soon require baptism, and the distance” was “too great” for Baber “to be made often.” See G. H. Baber, “Progress of the Cause: Chile,” *Review and Herald*, 9 February 1897, 89. Similarly, Louis C. Sheafe’s ordination in 1899 was an exception to the rule since the former successful African-American Baptist minister had just recently converted to the Adventist faith. See “Another Glorious Day,” *General Conference Bulletin*, 5 March 1899, 145.

of holding off on “ordination to the sacred office” until the candidates had completed a three-year missionary experience in the outside world. The rationale was that being accompanied, trained, and mentored by an experienced minister taught candidates how to deny themselves, sacrifice, preserve the truth in its purity, and let their light shine in darkness.⁴²

After the official organization of the General Conference, it was decided that individuals who wanted to engage in evangelistic work and prove their divine calling should receive licenses which would certify their status as Adventist “messengers or preachers.”⁴³ Later, in 1886, it was recommended to the General Conference Committee that the Committee prepare and publish standards of “attainment to be required of those who receive a license,” as well as establish “a course of study to be pursued by licentiates before [their] ordination,” and “a course of study in our schools, not to exceed two years, especially adapted to ministers and workers.”⁴⁴ This indicates that the licentiate could be considered an apprentice who tried to improve his knowledge, skills, and faculties to prove worthy to be given a position of trust within the church.⁴⁵ Yet, prior to their ordination licentiates were not authorized “to celebrate the ordinances, to administer baptism, or to organize a church.”⁴⁶

Beliefs and Actions in Harmony with the Main Body

A third prerequisite for ordination emphasized by a variety of early Adventist leaders was that candidates adhere to sound biblical doctrine. For example, James White suggested that “gospel order” required teachers of the Bible to be “in union in sentiment and in their course of action” to avoid divisions and confusion among church members.⁴⁷ Shortly afterward, Frisbie emphasized

⁴²Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy: The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan from the Destruction of Jerusalem to the End of the Controversy* (Battle Creek: Steam Press, 1883), 4:76; idem, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan During the Christian Dispensation* (Battle Creek: Review and Herald, 1888), 70-71; idem, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan: The Conflict of the Ages in the Christian Dispensation* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 70-71.

⁴³John Byington and Uriah Smith, “Report of General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists,” *Review and Herald*, 26 May 1863, 205.

⁴⁴G. I. Butler and Uriah Smith, “Twenty-Fifth Annual Session, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists: Fourteenth Meeting, December 6, 1886,” Battle Creek, GCA.

⁴⁵Cf. Trim, 19-20. That was probably the reason why James White suggested to give them a license that they may “improve their gift” by laboring for the salvation of souls. See James White, “The Ministry, No. 4,” *Review and Herald*, 8 August 1865, 76.

⁴⁶G. I. Butler and Uriah Smith, “Twenty-Fourth General Conference Session, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists: Fourteenth Meeting, December 2, 1885, 9:30 a.m.,” Battle Creek, GCA.

⁴⁷James White, “Gospel Order,” 20 December 1853, 188.

that the NT provided the basis for the “theoretical and doctrinal qualification” of a candidate for the ministry.⁴⁸ James Sawyer promoted a similar view when he referred to 1 Tim 4:12, 15 and stressed the need for ministry candidates to be an example in word, in spirit, and in faith.⁴⁹ In 1878, church leaders resolved to grant licenses to those who want “to preach the third angel’s message” only after they were examined as to “their doctrinal and educational qualifications.”⁵⁰ In the mid-1880s, the General Conference saw the need to respond to the problem of several ordained ministers leaving the ministry by recommending to ordain only those persons that were both willing and able to devote their time to the work of the ministry and “sound in faith and practice upon all Bible doctrines as held by Seventh-day Adventists.”⁵¹ This was of considerable importance because ordained ministers filled “offices of trust in God’s work.”⁵² In the early 1890s, the General Conference resolved that the committee would require satisfactory evidence for the candidate’s standing on “various points of present truth, especially in regard to Spiritual gifts, tithing, health reform, or any other distinctive feature of our faith or of our work.”⁵³ The repeated emphasis of this aspect may be indicative of a specific need among Adventist ministers.

Intellectual and Spiritual Fitness

Closely related to the emphasis on sound biblical doctrine was the stress laid on intellectual and spiritual fitness as a prerequisite for ordination, based on the criteria laid down for church leaders in the NT. James White adopted the NT criteria for “elders” and “bishops” and applied them as qualifications for modern ministers.⁵⁴ Ellen White similarly sought to apply these NT criteria, thus urging leaders to see if the candidates were able to rule well their own family and preserve its order, and if they “could enlighten those who were in darkness.”⁵⁵ She stated further that those whose judgment and intellect had

⁴⁸Frisbie, “Gospel Order,” 19 June 1855, 62-63.

⁴⁹James Sawyer, “Counsel from Paul,” *Review and Herald*, 26 July 1864, 66.

⁵⁰James White and Uriah Smith, “Seventeenth Annual Session of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists: Seventh Meeting, October 11, 1878, 8:30 a.m.,” Battle Creek, GCA.

⁵¹G. I. Butler and Uriah Smith, “Twenty-Fourth Annual Session, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists: Seventh Meeting, November 23, 1885, 9:30 a.m.,” Battle Creek, GCA; cf. James White, *Life Sketches*, 406-407.

⁵²Butler and Smith, “Twenty-Fourth Annual Session, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists”; cf. James White, *Life Sketches*, 406-407.

⁵³“General Conference Proceedings,” 6 March 1893, 483.

⁵⁴James White, “Gospel Order,” 20 December 1853, 189-190. He referred to such texts as 1 Tim 3:1-7; Heb 13:17; Matt 5:10, 11; 1 Pet 4:14-15; 3:14-16; 2:12, 19-20; Titus 1:7-9.

⁵⁵Ellen G. White, *Supplement to the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White*, 19.

been weakened through their involvement in such errors as perfectionism and spiritualism were unfit for the ministry because they were unable to bear opposition, to avoid getting excited, and to remove objections with calmness and meekness.⁵⁶ She added that the church should examine the lives, qualifications, and the general course of the ministerial candidates to see if God had truly called them to the ministry.⁵⁷ In 1881, the General Conference resolved to examine all candidates for license and ordination “with reference to their intellectual and spiritual fitness” for the successful performance of their duties.⁵⁸

A Sense of One’s Own Weakness and Incompetence

In 1853, James White mentioned yet another criterion for ordination, though this criterion reappeared only seldom in later years. He suggested that the candidate should feel his own frailty and incompetence for the work,⁵⁹ an aspect that reminds of Ellen White’s later remarks about Moses’ deep sense of his own weakness and frailty that stood in stark contrast to Judas Iscariot’s self-confidence and pride.⁶⁰

A Special Circumstance: The Question of Women in Ministry and Ordination for Women

Although the criteria enumerated above established some basic prerequisites for ordination, a major question remained: Were women eligible for ordination to gospel ministry? The church’s handling of this subject was somewhat complex: ordination to gospel ministry was reserved for men, yet women were still invited to participate in preaching and evangelism. Indeed, when James White announced the establishment of the “Minister’s Lecture Association” in 1871, he invited both men and women to become members of the association and to enroll in a four-week term of lectures.⁶¹ With the establishment of Battle Creek College in 1874, both young men and young women began receiving educational and professional training to be able to work for the church in various lines.

Although the church allowed both men and women⁶² as “licentiates,” they did not practice the ordination of the latter. However, there was at least some

⁵⁶Ibid., 20.

⁵⁷Ibid., 18-19; cf. idem, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1923), 171-172; idem, *Pastoral Ministry* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1995), 42.

⁵⁸Haskell and Smith, “General Conference,” 20 December 1881, 392; cf. O. A. Olsen to W. C. White, Battle Creek, 21 September 1891, EGWE.

⁵⁹James White, “Gospel Order,” 20 December 1853, 189.

⁶⁰Ellen G. White, “The Call of Moses,” 85; idem, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, 2:203.

⁶¹James White, “Minister’s Lecture Association,” *Review and Herald*, 10 January 1871, 32.

⁶²The first female that received a ministerial license was Sarah A. Lindsey in 1869.

support for the idea of setting apart females for the ministry, as shown by the resolution at the 1881 General Conference session “that females possessing the necessary qualifications to fill that position, may with perfectly propriety, be set aside by ordination to the work of the Christian ministry.”⁶³ The proposal was referred to the General Conference executive committee, but obviously no further actions were taken in this regard.⁶⁴ The initial move may have been

See E. B. Saunders, “Report of the N.Y. and P.A. Conference,” *Review and Herald*, 12 October 1869, 126. In 1861, Uriah Smith commended a letter on female preaching and teaching that appeared originally in a newspaper. See J. A. Mowatt, “Women as Preachers and Lecturers,” *Review and Herald*, 30 July 1861, 65-66. For lists of females holding ministerial and missionary licenses, see “Women Licenses as Ministers, 1878-1975,” *Spectrum*, August 1985, 60; “Exhibits Relating to the Ordination of Women: From the Lifetime and Experience of Ellen G. White,” Ellen G. White Estate Shelf Document, Washington, D, 1990, 4; Josephine Benton, *Called by God: Stories of Seventh-day Adventist Women Ministers* (Smithsburg, MD: Blackberry Hill Publishers, 1990), 154-165, 229-233; Patricia A. Habada and Rebecca Frost Brillhart, eds., *The Welcome Table: Setting a Place for Ordained Women* (Langley Park, MD: TEAM, 1995), 359-363; Michael Bernoi, “Nineteenth-Century Women in Adventist Ministry Against the Backdrop of Their Times,” in *Women in Ministry: Biblical & Historical Perspective*, ed. Nancy Jean Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1998), 225-229; Fagal, 279-280; Ginger Hanks Harwood and Beverly Beem, “A Work for All to Do: Nineteenth-Century Adventism and Women in Ministry” (Paper presented at the meeting of the Adventist Society for Religious Studies at Chicago, IL, 16 November 2012), [25], [40]. Sometimes they were even referred to or listed among the “ministers.” See N. Battin, “Minnesota: Oronoco, Sept. 16,” *Review and Herald*, 25 September 1879, 110. Regarding Minnie Sype, Lulu Wightman, and Ellen Lane, Fagal, 279, stated that they “functioned effectively as public evangelists.” Regarding female preaching during the Millerite movement, see Catherine A. Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America, 1740-1845*, Gender & American Culture (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 307-335.

⁶³S. N. Haskell and Uriah Smith, “General Conference,” *Review and Herald*, 20 December 1881, 392.

⁶⁴Roger W. Coon, “Ellen G. White’s View of the Role of Women in the SDA Church” (Ellen G. White Estate Shelf Document, Washington, DC, 1986), 8; Emmett K. VandeVere, “Years of Expansion, 1865-1885,” in *Adventism in America: A History*, ed. Gary Land, rev. ed. (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1998), 54; Bull and Lockhart, 270. The explanations as to why the resolution was referred to the General Conference Committee are highly diverse. See Bernoi, 224; Randal R. Wisbey, “SDA Women in Ministry, 1970-1998,” in *Women in Ministry: Biblical & Historical Perspective*, ed. Nancy Jean Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1998), 235; Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, “Are Those Things So?—Part II: A Summary and Evaluation of Key Historical and Theological Arguments of Women in Ministry,” in *Prove All Things: A Response to Women in Ministry*, ed. Mercedes H. Dyer (Berrien Springs: Adventists Affirm, 2000), 293-294. While other resolutions at this session were “adopted,” this one was apparently not. Yet, the report of the business proceedings in the *Signs of the Times* creates some ambiguity for it suggests that the resolution was “adopted” without any

a response to Ellen White's call in early 1879 for meek and humble women to engage in instructing church members in matters of personal piety and home religion, to make up for the deficiency left by the debating-style method of the itinerant Adventist ministry.⁶⁵ She had argued that Mary Magdalene was

further discussion and revision. Strangely enough, the *Signs* did not print a correction regarding this resolution in subsequent issues. See "General Conference," *Signs of the Times*, 5 January 1882, 8. Referring matters to the General Conference Committee usually had the purpose of delegating the decision about the implementation and application of a resolution to that committee. See S. N. Haskell and Maria L. Huntley, "Fourth General Session of the General Tract and Missionary Society," *Review and Herald*, 11 December 1879, 185; James White and Uriah Smith, "General Conference," *Review and Herald*, 11 December 1879, 190; James White and Uriah Smith, "General Conference of S. D. Adventists: Business Proceedings," *Review and Herald*, 21 October 1880, 268; G. I. Butler and A. B. Oyen, "General Conference Proceedings: Twenty-Second Annual Session," *Review and Herald*, 20 November 1883, 733; G. I. Butler, "Changes in the Field of Labor," *Review and Herald*, 27 November 1883, 752. If the delegates were not satisfied with a resolution or desired a reformulation of a specific resolution, it was customary to refer it back to the Committee on Resolutions. See D. M. Canright and Uriah Smith, "Business Proceedings of the Fourth Special Session of the General Conference of S. D. Adventists," *Review and Herald*, 24 April 1879, 132; Haskell and Smith, "General Conference," 392; G. I. Butler and Uriah Smith, "General Conference Proceedings: Twenty-Fourth Annual Session," *Review and Herald*, 24 November 1885, 729. This could indicate that the resolution was referred to the General Conference Committee to develop some ways of implementing or applying the resolution. If that was indeed the case is, however, uncertain. David Trim drew a different conclusion and argued instead that the *Signs of the Times* report was wrong and that the referral of a resolution to the General Conference Committee was "a tactful way of rejecting them" ("The Ordination of Women in Seventh-day Adventist Policy and Practice, Up to 1972" [Paper submitted to the Theology of Ordination Study Committee, Silver Spring, MD, 2013, rev. and enl. ed.], 16).

⁶⁵Ellen G. White, "Address and Appeal, Setting Forth the Importance of Missionary Work," *Review and Herald*, 2 January 1879, 1; idem to S. N. Haskell, Denison, TX, 27 January 1879 (Letter 1, 1879), EGWE; cf. idem, "Women as Christian Laborers," *Signs of the Times*, 16 September 1886, 561-562; idem, "Work for the Church," *Review and Herald*, 15 May 1888, 305-306. Interestingly, it was during that time that several Adventist writers discussed the involvement of women in public labor. See, e.g., James White, "Women in the Church," *Review and Herald*, 29 May 1879, 172; "Women in the Bible," *Signs of the Times*, 30 October 1879, 324; S. N. Haskell, "Mrs. Wesley Outside of Her Family," *Signs of the Times*, 25 November 1880, 524; W. M. Healey, "Women as Teachers," *Signs of the Times*, 10 February 1881, 67; W. M. Glenn, "Woman's Position in the Church," *Signs of the Times*, 24 February 1881, 91; N. J. Bowers, "May Women Publicly Labor in the Cause of Christ," *Review and Herald*, 14 June 1881, 372-373. Cf. Beverly G. Beem and Ginger Hanks Harwood, "Your Daughters Shall Prophesy: James White, Uriah Smith, and the 'Triumphant Vindication of the Right of the Sisters' to Preach," *AUSS* 43 (2005): 41-58; Ginger Hanks Harwood and Beverly G. Beem, "It was Mary that First Preached a Risen Jesus:

the “first” that “preached a risen Jesus,” adding, “If there were twenty women where now there is one, who would make this holy mission their cherished work, we should see many more converted to the truth.”⁶⁶ In the 1880s and 1890s, Adventist periodicals sometimes reported about other denominations ordaining women as ministers, often without providing an evaluation or opinion.⁶⁷ Some Adventist writers explicitly expressed their disapproval of these procedures in other denominations, suggesting that it was one of the infidel goals of the women’s rights movement.⁶⁸

Early Seventh-day Adventist Answers to Objections to Women as Public Spiritual Leaders,” *AUSS* 45 (2007): 221-245.

⁶⁶Ellen G. White, “Address and Appeal, Setting Forth the Importance of Missionary Work,” 1.

⁶⁷“News and Notes: Religious,” *Signs of the Times*, 11 September 1884, 558; “News of the Week: Religious,” *Review and Herald*, 28 February 1893, 143.

⁶⁸E. J. Waggoner, “Back Page,” *Signs of the Times*, 8 June 1888, 358; idem, “How Readest Thou?” *Signs of the Times*, 29 December 1890, 602-603. Although Waggoner supported the commitment of females in “exercises purely religious,” he stressed that they “cannot occupy the position of a pastor or a ruling elder.” Thus, while females could engage in “the work of the gospel,” exhort, comfort, prophesy, pray in public, they were not to conduct “the duties of business meetings, . . . ruling elders, and pastors.” If females would engage in these duties, it “would be looked upon as usurping authority over the man,” which is prohibited in 1 Tim 2:12 and Eph 5:23 (“Woman’s Place in the Gospel,” *Signs of the Times*, 19 December 1878, 380). Similarly, his answer to the question if a sister could act as presiding officer in the business meeting of a certain church in case that church did not have an elder was revealing. He argued it would probably be better to choose a male member “to preside *for the time*, as moderator of that meeting,” since it may otherwise raise questions “which would be liable to lead to unpleasant results” (idem, *The Church*, 124-125, emphasis original). When invited to join the women’s suffrage movement, which sought to legalize the right of women to vote and to become political office holders, Ellen White declined because she believed that all of the church’s resources were to be employed for “the promotion of the kingdom of God and the hastening of Christ’s second coming” (Coon, 12). Cf. Ellen White to James White, Battle Creek, 10 July 1874 (Letter 40a, 1874), EGWE. In the early and mid-1860s, Ellen White suggested that spiritualists had associated themselves closely with the American costume and the women’s rights movement. Adopting that dress would have destroyed all influence for good because the public would then link Adventists to spiritualists (*Testimony for the Church*, no. 10 [Battle Creek: Steam Press, 1864], 30; idem, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948], 1:421). For the influence of spiritualism within the nineteenth-century women’s rights movement, see Laurel Ann Nelson, “Attending Spirits” (Research paper, Andrews University, 1975); Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women’s Rights in Nineteenth-Century America* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1989); Barbara Goldsmith, *Other Powers: The Age of Suffrage, Spiritualism, and the Scandalous Victoria Woodhull*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998); Laurel Damsteegt, “Spiritualism and Women: Then and Now,” in *Prove All Things: A Response to Women in Ministry*, ed. Mercedes H. Dyer (Berrien Springs: Adventists Affirm, 2000), 251-271.

Although women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church were generally excluded from ministerial ordination, the cases of Ellen White and Lulu Wightman may be mentioned at this point, since both constitute partial exceptions to that rule. Although neither was ever set apart by the laying on of hands, both nevertheless received ministerial credentials. Indeed, the Michigan Conference granted Ellen White the credential of ordained minister in 1871.⁶⁹ In subsequent years, she was listed among the conference's ordained ministers and later on also received ministerial credentials from the General Conference.⁷⁰ After the death of her husband in 1881, she received the salary of an ordained minister until she passed away in 1915.⁷¹ The church obviously had confidence in her work and recognized her divine commission and ordination.⁷² She herself stated that "the Lord ordained" her "as his messenger" in late 1844,⁷³ and it was he who had put her "into the ministry,"

⁶⁹Uriah Smith and Isaac D. van Horn, "Michigan Conference of S. D. Adventists: Eleventh Annual Meeting," *Review and Herald*, 14 February 1871, 69. Cf. D. E. Robinson to LeRoy Edwin Froom, 17 November 1935, EGWE; Arthur L. White to H. T. Elliot, n.d. [c. 1936-1937], EGWE; idem to C. A. Lashley, 1 October 1936, EGWE; idem to Herman Bauman, 13 December 1956, EGWE; idem to Edwin R. Thiele, 18 December 1956, EGWE.

⁷⁰See, e.g., Uriah Smith and J. R. Trembley, "Michigan Conference of S. D. Adventists: Twelfth Annual Session," *Review and Herald*, 10 September 1872, 102; Ministerial credentials of Ellen G. White, issued by the Michigan Conference, Battle Creek, 1 October 1883, EGWE; G. I. Butler and A. B. Oyen, "Twenty-Second Annual Session, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists: Twelfth and Thirteenth Meetings, November 19, 1883," Battle Creek, 1883, GCA; Ministerial credentials of Ellen G. White, issued by the General Conference, Battle Creek, 6 December 1885, EGWE; Ministerial credentials of Ellen G. White, issued by the General Conference, Battle Creek, 27 December 1887, EGWE; Ministerial credentials of Ellen G. White, issued by the General Conference, Battle Creek, 7 March 1889, EGWE; L. T. Nicola, "Nineteenth Meeting of the Conference," *General Conference Bulletin*, January-March 1897, no. 1, 65; Ministerial credentials of Ellen G. White, issued by the General Conference, 14 June 1909, EGWE; Ministerial credentials of Ellen G. White, issued by the General Conference, 12 June 1913, EGWE.

⁷¹D. A. Delafield to Kit Watts, Washington, DC, 25 August 1971, EGWE; Coon, 7.

⁷²Arthur L. White suggested that denominational leaders considered her ordination to be of a higher character and that it would have appeared anticlimactic for them to ordain her for the Lord's service although God himself had already proven beyond any doubt that he had called her and set her apart for his service (Arthur L. White to Lashley, 1 October 1936; idem to Bauman, 13 December 1956; idem to Thiele, 18 December 1956; cf. *A Critique of the Book Prophetess of Health* [Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1976], 93); Fagal, 279.

⁷³Ellen G. White, "Brethren and Sisters/An Appeal," St. Helena, CA, 19 October 1909 (Letter 138, 1909), EGWE; idem, "An Appeal to Our Churches Throughout the United States," *Review and Herald*, 18 May 1911, 3; cf. Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Early Years, 1827-1862* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1985), 1:234; idem,

quoting the words of 1 Tim 1:12.⁷⁴ However, while she sometimes gave the prayer at ordination services, it does not seem that she ever performed other functions of ordained ministers.⁷⁵

The other exception to the rule was Mrs. Lulu Wightman, who was reportedly the most successful minister in the New York Conference. In 1901, R. A. Underwood, president of the Atlantic Union Conference, stated his opinion in favor of her ordination. Yet, it was decided to refrain from ordaining Wightman because A. G. Daniells, then president of the General Conference, expressed his doubts about whether a woman could “properly be ordained, just now at least.” The conference nevertheless voted to pay her the salary of an ordained minister because they considered her work as “that of an ordained minister unquestionably.”⁷⁶

Lateral Entry of Ministers Previously Ordained in Other Denominations

In the early years, Adventists took no issue with admitting people to the ministry who had been previously ordained in their former denominations. While Sabbatarian Adventist ministers considered the denominations they had left in the mid-1840s part of Babylon, they did not renounce the ecclesiastical authority of these churches by seeking reordination, as the early Puritan ministers (who had previously been ordained by the Church of England) had done after their arrival in New England.⁷⁷ Thus, for several years, ministers of other denominations transferred into the Adventist ministry without having to be reordained. By 1862, however, the Michigan Conference no longer recognized

Ellen G. White: The Later Elmshaven Years, 1905-1915 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1982), 6:211.

⁷⁴Ellen G. White, “A Messenger,” *Review and Herald*, 26 July 1906, 9.

⁷⁵Ellen G. White to W. C. White, Mary K. White, and S. N. Haskell, Buffalo, NY, 16 September 1880 (Letter 41, 1880), EGWE; Arthur L. White to Elliot, n.d.; idem to Lashley, 1 October 1936; idem to Bauman, 13 December 1956; idem to Thiele, 18 December 1956; Coon, 7.

⁷⁶G. B. Thompson to John Wightman, 13 August 1901, GCA; John S. Wightman to S. H. Lane, Avon, NY, 2 September 1904, GCA. Cf. Bert Haloviak, “The Adventist Heritage Calls for Ordination of Women,” *Spectrum*, August 1985, 52-60; Coon, 3; Interview of Roger W. Coon with Armina L. Glascock [age 93], St. Helena, CA, 4 June 1986; Benton 219-222; Bert Haloviak, “A Place at the Table: Women and the Early Years,” in *The Welcome Table: Setting a Place for Ordained Women*, ed. Patricia A. Habada and Rebecca Frost Brillhart (Langley Park, MD: TEAM, 1995), 28, 30-31.

⁷⁷See Nathaniel Morton, *New England's Memorial*, 6th ed. (Boston, MA: Congregational Board of Publication, 1855), 96-99, 419; du Preez, 58, n. 2. In this context, it appears odd when J. N. Andrews remarked that the Protestant Reformers were unfortunately satisfied with their former “ordination as Catholic priests” and saw no need to be “set apart to the holy ministry by converted men” (*The Three Messages of Revelation 14:6-12: Particularly the Third Angel's Message, and Two-Horned Beast* (Battle Creek: Review and Herald, 1892), 69-70.

these ordinations and began requiring reordination for ministers who wanted to join the Seventh-day Adventist Church and to continue working as ministers. It was recommended that other conferences follow the same procedure, and by 1863 reordination became General Conference policy.⁷⁸ In 1867, James White argued that the ordination was invalid if not performed by the proper person. Referring to the Jewish priesthood in NT times, he suggested that even priests who, like Paul, might convert to the Christian faith were ordained again by the apostles for the new work, even though they were only taking a step “from light to greater light.” Yet, some ministers, James White argued, turned “from error to truth” when they joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which is why it was necessary for them to cast away the errors and “be set apart anew to the sacred work of the closing message.” He also stated that an ordination was no longer considered valid after a minister apostatized.⁷⁹

The Ordination Ceremony

The early ceremonies in which candidates were set apart for the gospel ministry were simple and stark, but these initial rites gradually developed into more elaborate and formal ceremonies. Initially, ordinations were often accompanied by manifestations of the Holy Spirit, though this changed over time. There were also gradual changes over time in regard to who was permitted to participate in the ordination ceremony and how the action of the laying on of hands was understood.

Elements of the Ordination Ceremony

Initially, the action of setting an individual apart for the ministry usually involved a prayer and the laying on of hands.⁸⁰ Later, the ordination ceremony

⁷⁸James White, “The Rise and Progress of Adventism,” *Review and Herald*, 29 May 1856, 43; Joseph Bates and Uriah Smith, “Business Proceedings of the Michigan State Conference,” *Review and Herald*, 14 October 1862, 157; Joseph Bates and Uriah Smith, “Michigan Annual Conference,” *Review and Herald*, 24 October 1862, 157; “Remarks on: To The Brethren in Ohio,” *Review and Herald*, 30 December 1862, 37; Byington and Smith, “Report of General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists,” 205; James White, “Re-Ordination,” 120; idem, “Report from Bro. White,” *Review and Herald*, 13 August 1867, 136; Smith and Trembley, “Michigan Conference of S. D. Adventists,” 102; cf. S. N. Haskell to Ellen G. White, Boston, MA, 30 March 1887, EGWE; Francis D. Nichol, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1951), 559. Thus, it is interesting to see that, in 1863, Frederick Wheeler was recommended for ordination and reception into the New York conference although he had been ordained previously in the Methodist Episcopal Church and worked among Sabbatarian Adventists since 1850. See A. Lanpear and J. M. Aldrich, “New York Conference Report,” *Review and Herald*, 1 December 1863, 3.

⁷⁹James White, “Re-Ordination,” 120.

⁸⁰On prayer, see Shimper, 15; James White, “Eastern Tour,” 15 November 1853, 148; A. S. Hutchins, “Report of Meetings,” *Review and Herald*, 25 June 1861, 40; James

grew more elaborate and came to involve an ordination sermon, the laying on of hands, a prayer, a charge, a “holy kiss,” and extension of the right hand of fellowship.⁸¹ However, even the later, more elaborate version of the ordination rite was still understood to be a “simple but impressive New Testament ceremony.”⁸² It certainly contained some elements—sermon, prayer, laying on of hands, and charge—that were also present in the ordination ceremonies of the mid-nineteenth-century Methodist Episcopal Church, yet it did not reflect the high-church elements found in the strongly liturgical Methodist rite.⁸³

White, “Re-Ordination,” 120; Uriah Smith, “Editorial Correspondence, No. 3,” *Review and Herald*, 8 October 1867, 264; “Ordination,” *Review and Herald*, 1 October 1872, 128; Uriah Smith, “Ordination and Baptism,” *Review and Herald*, 4 May 1876, 144; idem, “The Conference,” *Review and Herald*, 17 October 1878, 124; E. J. Waggoner, “General Meeting in Oakland,” *Signs of the Times*, 8 May 1884, 281; “Ordination,” *Review and Herald*, 12 November 1889, 720; J. N. Loughborough, “Ordination Service,” *Review and Herald*, 24 October 1893, 676; J. H. Durland, “Ordination Service,” *Review and Herald*, 5 December 1893, 772; Ellen G. White, “The Brighton Camp Meeting,” Middle Brighton, Victoria, Australia, 21 January 1894 (MS 3, 1894), EGWE; “Another Glorious Day,” 145; cf. Roger W. Coon, *The Great Visions of Ellen G. White* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1992), 66. For a later example of an ordination prayer, see “Missionary Farewell Service,” *General Conference Bulletin*, 25 April 1901, extra no. 20, 472.

On the laying on of hands, see Shimper, 15; James White, “Eastern Tour,” 20 September 1853, 85; idem, “Eastern Tour,” 15 November 1853, 148; Hutchins, 40; James White, “Re-Ordination,” 120; Smith, “Editorial Correspondence, No. 3,” 264; “Ordination,” 1 October 1872, 128; Smith, “The Conference,” 17 October 1878, 124; E. J. Waggoner, “General Meeting in Oakland,” 281; A. T. Jones, “The Camp Meeting: The New Lecture Course,” *Topeka Daily Capital*, 16 May 1889, 3; “Ordination,” 12 November 1889, 720; Loughborough, “Ordination Service,” 676; Durland, 772; cf. Coon, *The Great Visions of Ellen G. White*, 66.

⁸¹James White, “The Conference,” *Review and Herald*, 24 May 1864, 204; Uriah Smith, “Editorial Correspondence, no. 2,” *Review and Herald*, 1 October 1867, 248; idem, “Editorial Correspondence, no. 3,” *Review and Herald*, 8 October 1867, 264; D. T. Bourdeau, “The Vermont Conference,” *Review and Herald*, 2 November 1869, 150; “Ordination,” 1 October 1872, 128; Smith, “Ordination and Baptism,” 144; Ellen G. White to W. C. White and Mary K. White, to Rome, NY, 15 August 1876 (Letter 37, 1876), EGWE; Smith, “The Conference,” 124; W. H. Littlejohn, “The Church Manual,” *Review and Herald*, 17 July 1883, 458; A. T. Jones, “The Kansas Camp-Meeting,” *Signs of the Times*, 9 June 1887, 344; idem, “North Pacific Camp-Meeting,” *Signs of the Times*, 29 June 1888, 392; O. A. Olsen to W. C. White, Battle Creek, 21 September 1891, EGWE; idem, “Edwards, W. H.: General Conference Proceedings, Twentieth Meeting,” *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 7 March 1893, 493; Durland, 772; Ellen G. White, “The Brighton Camp Meeting,” 21 January 1894; J. H. Durland and F. M. Wilcox, *Records of the Foreign Mission Board from July 27, 1892 to November 2, 1896*, vol. 2 (Battle Creek, n.d.), 191; “Another Glorious Day,” 145; “Missionary Farewell Service,” 471-472.

⁸²“Ordination,” 12 November 1889, 720.

⁸³Cf. Matthew Simpson, ed., *Cyclopedia of Methodism: Embracing Sketches of Its*

Manifestations of the Holy Spirit

Initially, ordination ceremonies were accompanied by highly emotional manifestations of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, it was frequently stated that “the blessing of the Lord rested upon us,”⁸⁴ “a very tender, precious influence affected the hearts of all,”⁸⁵ and “the Holy Spirit fell sweetly and powerfully upon us.”⁸⁶ Visible signs of the Spirit’s moving were the gift of tongues, weeping, encouragement and rejoicing, and mutual testifying of the participants’ love for the truth.⁸⁷ These signs and results were regarded as a distinct divine approval “of the solemn and important step,” as a “signet” placed by the Lord upon the work, and as a blessing upon the candidate.⁸⁸ However, such manifestations vanished in later years.

Participants in the Ceremony

An important aspect of the ordination was the question of who was authorized to set a person apart for the ministry. Ellen White briefly and succinctly summarized the principles guiding the action as follows:

Brethren of experience, and of a sound mind, should assemble, and follow the word of God, and with fervent prayer, and by the sanction of the Spirit of God, should lay hands upon those who have given full proof that they have received their commission of God, and set them apart to devote themselves entirely to the work.⁸⁹

Rise, Progress, and Present Condition, with Biographical Notes and Numerous Illustrations (Philadelphia: Everts & Stewart, 1878), 682.

⁸⁴S. H. Lane, “Indiana,” *Review and Herald*, 4 March 1875, 78; cf. James White, “Eastern Tour,” 15 November 1853, 148; C. Kelsey and F. W. Morse, “Report of Conference at Ashland, Minn.,” *Review and Herald*, 15 October 1861, 160; “Ordination,” 1 October 1872, 128; E. J. Waggoner, “General Meeting in Oakland,” 281; Durland, 772; Wm. Covert, “An Ordination,” *Review and Herald*, 6 November 1900, 718.

⁸⁵G. I. Butler, “The Nebraska-Camp Meeting,” *Review and Herald*, 11 October 1881, 239; cf. idem to James White and Ellen G. White, Lincoln, NE, 28 September 1880, EGWE; James White, “Eastern Tour,” 15 November 1853, 148.

⁸⁶Hutchins, 40; cf. Ellen G. White to W. C. White and Mary K. White, Malvern, KS, 28 May 1876 (Letter 30, 1876), EGWE; Butler to James White and Ellen G. White, 28 September 1880; S. N. Haskell to Ellen G. White, Christiana, Norway, 17 June 1894, EGWE; cf. Knight, “Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination, 1844-1863,” 106.

⁸⁷Shimper, 15; James White, “Eastern Tour,” 15 November 1853, 148; G. I. Butler to *Signs of the Times*, Newton, Iowa, 5 June 1874, EGWE; Lane, “Indiana,” 78; Butler, “The Nebraska-Camp Meeting,” 239; Haskell to Ellen G. White, 17 June 1894.

⁸⁸Hutchins, 40; Fuller, 126; Lane, “Indiana,” 78; Ellen G. White, “Indiana Camp-Meeting,” *Review and Herald*, 23 August 1877, 69; Butler, “The Nebraska-Camp Meeting,” 239.

⁸⁹Ellen G. White, *Supplement to the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White*, 19.

Frisbie suggested that it was the presbytery (Luke 23:66; Acts 22:5; 1 Tim 4:4, 14) that had the authority to ordain elders or bishops. He added that this group of elders had been ordained or appointed by the church through a “vote taken by the lifting up of hands, according to the direction of the Lord.”⁹⁰ Initially, those that were both known to most church members and ordained in their previous churches were responsible for ordaining new ministers, but later ordinations were often performed by officers of the conferences or the General Conference.⁹¹ While in the early years ordination usually occurred in local churches with the members being present at this occasion,⁹² later ordination ceremonies were often integrated as a part of the annual sessions and camp meetings of the state conferences and the General Conference.⁹³ Thus, all ministers present at the meeting frequently joined in the laying on of hands.⁹⁴

It was customary to lay hands only on the minister that was to be ordained. Yet, in 1867, James White remarked that he had included the wife of a minister into the ordination “to the sacred office of the holy ministry by prayer and the laying on of hands” because he thought that “the minister’s

⁹⁰Frisbie, “Church Order,” 26 June 1856, 70; cf. A. T. Jones, “Church Officers,” *Signs of the Times*, 24 August 1888, 519.

⁹¹James White, “Eastern Tour,” 15 November 1853, 148; “Ordination,” *Review and Herald*, 6 June 1865, 8; G. I. Butler to James White, Battle Creek, MI, 15 October 1872, EGWE; “Ordination,” *Review and Herald*, 20 January 1876, 23; Smith, “The Conference,” 17 October 1878, 124; “Another Glorious Day,” 145; “Missionary Farewell Service,” 471; cf. Knight, “Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination, 1844-1863,” 106.

⁹²See, e.g., James White, “Eastern Tour,” 20 September 1853, 85; C. W. Sperry, “From Bro. Sperry,” *Review and Herald*, 19 March 1857, 158; Isaac Sanborn, “Interesting Meeting in Illinois,” *Review and Herald*, 29 March 1864, 142.

⁹³A. S. Hutchins, “Our Visit to Canada,” *Review and Herald*, 13 November 1860, 205; N. Fuller and R. F. Cottrell, “Fifth Annual Session of the N. Y. and P.A. Conference,” *Review and Herald*, 16 October 1866, 158; James White, “Western Tour,” *Review and Herald*, 4 July 1871, 20; C. W. Stone, “The Wisconsin Camp-Meeting,” *Signs of the Times*, 3 October 1878, 293; Jones, “The Kansas Camp-Meeting,” 344; E. J. Waggoner, “General Meeting in Oakland,” 281; idem, “Back Page,” *Signs of the Times*, 11 May 1888, 288; Jones, “North Pacific Camp-Meeting,” 392; O. A. Olsen, “Report of the General Conference Districts, Nos. 1 and 4,” *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 24 February 1893, 384; idem, “Edwards, W. H.,” 493; Loughborough, “Ordination Service,” 676; Ellen G. White to O. A. Olsen and Wife, c. October 1896 (Letter 80, 1896), EGWE; Covert, “An Ordination,” 718; A. T. Jones, “The Upper Columbia Conference Camp-Meeting,” *Review and Herald*, 18 June 1901, 399; idem, “The North Pacific Camp-Meeting,” *Review and Herald*, 2 July 1901, 429; idem, “The California Camp-Meeting,” *Pacific Union Recorder*, 23 October 1902, 4-5.

⁹⁴Bourdeau, 150; Durland, “Ordination Service,” 772; cf. G. W. Holt and J. Clarke, “Report of Business Meeting at Gilboa Conference,” *Review and Herald*, 13 November 1860, 206 [ordination of a deacon].

wife stands in so close a relation to the work of God, a relation which so affects him for better or worse, that she should, in the ordination prayer, be set apart as his helper.”⁹⁵ It does not seem, however, that this procedure became a general practice in the church.

Symbolic Action vs. Sacerdotal Rite

Apparently almost from the beginning, there existed two very different views as to the nature and meaning of the laying on of hands. All understood that ordination meant assigning a mission to the candidate or appointing the individual to an office, but there arose the question of whether the laying on of hands was merely a symbolic action or whether the act itself might actually impart a sort of mystical grace or power to the candidate. In the mid-1850s, Frisbie took the latter view and defined the laying on of hands as “the separating act by which the grace of God was imparted.”⁹⁶ In the late 1860s, G. I. Butler similarly expressed the idea that a person may be qualified and changed through the act of ordination.⁹⁷ In 1879, the General Conference suggested that the act of ordination confers “spiritual blessings which God must impart to properly qualify him [the candidate] for that position.”⁹⁸ Representing a similar view, former General Conference president O. A. Olsen referred to cases in which leaders of companies had administered baptism and the Lord’s Supper, even though they had not been “consecrated to such service by prayer and the laying on of hands.” He remarked, “That is wrong.” For in his opinion, “it brings the most sacred service of God and the most sacred ordinances to the level of the common affairs of life,” which Olsen compared to Nadab and Abihu offering strange fire in the tabernacle (Lev 10:1-3).⁹⁹ It should be noted that the wrongdoing Olsen pinpointed was not improper or irreverent administration of the ordinances, but rather the fact that someone who had not been ordained unduly claimed authority to baptize people or administer the Lord’s Supper. This reveals a view that attributes sacred qualities to both the ordination and the ordinances.

Beginning in the late 1870s, however, Ellen White began making statements that seemed to reject the above ideas. Thus, she wrote that in postapostolic times the ordination act was “greatly abused” by attaching “unwarrantable importance” to the laying on of hands, as if the act would transmit special power, virtue, and qualification. She emphasized rather that

⁹⁵James White, “Report from Bro. White,” 136.

⁹⁶Frisbie, “Church Order,” 26 June 1856, 70.

⁹⁷G. I. Butler to James White and Ellen G. White, Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, 15 March 1869, EGWE.

⁹⁸G. I. Butler, “Eighteenth Annual Session, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists: Twelfth Meeting, November 24, 1879, 7 p.m.,” Battle Creek, MI, GCA.

⁹⁹O. A. Olsen, “Qualifications, Duties, and Responsibilities of Elders and Deacons of the Local Church—No. 6,” *Church Officer’s Gazette*, October 1914, 1.

the act “added no new grace or virtual qualification.”¹⁰⁰ In the same vein, Uriah Smith emphasized in the early 1890s that if a minister has no divine call, “he has no authority to preach the gospel, no matter how many hands have been laid upon him, nor how pompous the ceremony of ordination performed over him.” Hence, the laying on of hands does not bring along a certain power, grace, or authority *ex opera operatum*. Rather, the authority of the minister to preach “rests upon a divine call to the work.”¹⁰¹ Similarly, Ellen White argued that “one may receive ordination for the ministry . . . but this does not give him the oil of grace whereby he may feed his lamp that it shall send forth clear rays of light.”¹⁰²

Authority and Responsibilities of Ordained Ministers

Once the Sabbatarian Adventists had developed a system for identifying qualified candidates and setting them apart for gospel ministry, questions arose as to the responsibilities and duties of an ordained minister. Among the questions were these: Which duties and responsibilities should be reserved for ordained ministers alone, and which positions and responsibilities were open to individuals who were not ordained? In what area was an ordained minister licensed to work? And finally, was ordination the sole door of entrance into leadership positions? In each case, the answers morphed over time, demonstrating that the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the nature and responsibility of ecclesiastical and administrative office was not static, but rather developed in response to changing circumstances.

Basic Responsibilities of Ordained Ministers

From early on it was suggested that those whom Christ called to teach had specific responsibilities and tasks (Matt 28:18).¹⁰³ Among the tasks and responsibilities of an ordained minister were (1) administering “the ordinances of God’s house,” referring to the Lord’s Supper and the baptism

¹⁰⁰Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, 3:348-349; idem, *Sketches from the Life of Paul*, 43-44; cf. idem, *Acts of the Apostles*, 160-161; idem, “Separated Unto the Gospel,” 4; idem, “Lessons from Paul’s Ministry,” EGWE; idem, “Proclaiming the Truth Under Difficulties,” 5. Talking about Christianity in the second century, E. J. Waggoner stated that the church introduced “mysterious forms of ordination,” connected them “with the Old Testament priesthood,” and attached to them “external tokens of peculiar sanctity” (“The Church—True and False,” *Present Truth*, 14 December 1893, 582).

¹⁰¹Smith, “In the Question Chair,” 648.

¹⁰²Ellen G. White to Byron Belden, Wellington, New Zealand, 23 April 1893 (Letter 6a, 1893), EGWE.

¹⁰³James White, “Gospel Order,” 20 December 1853, 189.

of those who repent and believe;¹⁰⁴ (2) keeping members from backsliding;¹⁰⁵ (3) preaching the Word of God, evangelizing, reproof, rebuking, and exhorting with all long-suffering and doctrine;¹⁰⁶ (4) giving himself wholly and entirely to the work;¹⁰⁷ and (5) establishing churches and ordaining local church officers (elders and deacons).¹⁰⁸ These functions of the minister were considered an implementation of “gospel order.”¹⁰⁹

Refinements Required by the Developing Organization and Growing Mission Work

When the churches in Michigan organized themselves as the Michigan Conference in 1861, they took the opportunity to more clearly define the duties and authority of ordained ministers. In particular, it was decided that (1) those holding lower offices could not perform tasks of a higher office unless they were ordained to that office, yet those holding higher offices could perform all tasks of the lower offices (minister, local elder, deacon); and (2) travelling ministers had to receive letters of recommendation from their local congregations to prevent “false brethren” and “strangers” from troubling the churches, which suggests that churches were still being disturbed by strange traveling preachers. It was also decided to issue to ministers “certificates of ordination and credentials to be signed by the officers of the conference,” which were “to be renewed annually.”¹¹⁰ Later, church entities

¹⁰⁴Shimper, 15; James White, “Eastern Tour,” 20 September 1853, 85; idem, “Eastern Tour,” 15 November 1853, 148; idem, “Gospel Order,” 20 December 1853, 189; Ellen G. White, *Supplement to the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White*, 19; Frisbie, “Gospel Order,” 19 June 1855, 62; Uriah Smith, “Business Items [to D. W. Emerson],” *Review and Herald*, 8 July 1858, 64; Hutchins, “Our Visit to Canada,” 205; Baber, “Progress of the Cause,” 89.

¹⁰⁵James White, “Gospel Order,” 20 December 1853, 189.

¹⁰⁶James White, “Eastern Tour,” 20 September 1853, 85; idem, “Gospel Order,” 20 December 1853, 190. He referred to 2 Tim 4:1-5; Titus 2:6-8; Acts 20:28; Heb 13:7, 17; 1 Pet 5:1-4. Cf. Frisbie, “Gospel Order,” 19 June 1855, 62; “Selections: The Sporting Clergy,” *Review and Herald*, 9 January 1855, 160; Frisbie, “Church Order,” 26 June 1856, 70-71; E. S. Lane, “Church Trials,” *Review and Herald*, 1 March 1860, 119; Hutchins, “Our Visit to Canada,” 205.

¹⁰⁷Ellen G. White, *Supplement to the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White*, 19; “Selections,” 9 January 1855, 160.

¹⁰⁸Frisbie, “Church Order,” 26 June 1856, 70; Cottrell, “What are the Duties of Church Officers?” 173.

¹⁰⁹James White, “Gospel Order,” 20 December 1853, 189.

¹¹⁰Knight, “Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination, 1844-1863,” 108. See J. N. Loughborough, Moses Hull, and M. E. Cornell, “Conference Address,” *Review and Herald*, 15 October 1861, 156-157; Joseph Bates and Uriah Smith, “Michigan General Conference,” *Review and Herald*, 8 October 1861, 148-149; James White, “Organization,” *Review and Herald*, 30 September 1862, 140; J. T. Mitchell and M. B.

turned from issuing these ministerial credentials annually to issuing them only quadrennially.¹¹¹ In 1862, the Michigan Conference resolved to assign specific fields to every minister, changing the previous custom of ministers going wherever they thought they might be needed, which had resulted in some churches being continually neglected and other churches having more ministers than needed. Now, the conference also required ministers to provide work reports enumerating their activities of the past year at the annual meeting.¹¹² The policies and procedures of the Michigan Conference were subsequently adopted by other state conferences.¹¹³ Yet, it seems that, by the early 1880s, the wants of the churches were still not met systematically, which is why it was again recommended to allocate a certain area to each “ordained minister” for a specific period so that he could assist church members in their spiritual growth before he would again enter new fields.¹¹⁴

Authority to Administer Ordinances

In late 1853, James White insisted that only those called to teach God’s Word “should administer this ordinance,” supporting this principle by referring to Matt 28:18; Acts 2:28, 41; 8:12, 26-40; 9; 16:13-15.¹¹⁵ Similarly, Uriah Smith suggested in 1858 that “it is contrary to both the practice and views of the church, that any one should administer the ordinance of baptism who has not been regularly set apart to the work by the laying on of hands.”¹¹⁶ Yet, it seems that, until the late 1870s, there still existed some diversity among the conferences as to “who is authorized to baptize and administer the other ordinances.” To secure unity of action among the conferences and ministers, the 1879 General Conference resolved that “none but those who are Scripturally [*sic*] ordained are properly qualified to administer baptism and

Smith, “Doings of the Iowa State Conference,” *Review and Herald*, 17 February 1863, 91; J. N. Loughborough, *The Great Second Advent Movement: Its Rise and Progress* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1905), 353; cf. H. C. Whitney and R. S. Patterson, “Southern Iowa Conference,” *Review and Herald*, 1 April 1862, 142.

¹¹¹See, e.g., Ministerial Credentials of John N. Loughborough, issued by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1 June 1922, CAR.

¹¹²Bates and Smith, “Business Proceedings of the Michigan State Conference,” 157; Knight, “Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination, 1844-1863,” 109.

¹¹³John Byington and Uriah Smith, “Report of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists,” *Review and Herald*, 26 May 1863, 204-206; Knight, “Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination, 1844-1863,” 109.

¹¹⁴S. N. Haskell and Uriah Smith, “Twentieth Annual Session, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists: Eighth Meeting, December 9, 1881, 2 p.m.,” Battle Creek, MI, GCA.

¹¹⁵James White, “Gospel Order,” 20 December 1853, 189.

¹¹⁶Smith, “Business Items [to D. W. Emerson],” 64; cf. Bates and Smith, “Michigan Annual Conference,” 157.

other ordinances."¹¹⁷ In 1896, Ellen White made a statement in the context of foreign missions that was seemingly contrary to that resolution from the late 1870s.

Another thing I want to tell you that I know from the light as given me: it has been a great mistake that men go out, knowing they are children of God, like Brother Tay, [who] went to Pitcairn as a missionary to do work, [but] that man did not feel at liberty to baptize because he had not been ordained. That is not any of God's arrangements; it is man's fixing. When men go out with the burden of the work and to bring souls into the truth, those men are ordained of God, [even] if [they] never have a touch of ceremony of ordination. To say [they] shall not baptize when there is nobody else, [is wrong]. If there is a minister in reach, all right, then they should seek for the ordained minister to do the baptizing, but 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.¹¹⁸

Then, she added that "Philip was not an ordained minister," but he opened the Bible to the eunuch and did not see any hindrance to baptize him, again implying that ordination was not a prerequisite to conduct a baptism.¹¹⁹ Ellen White obviously considered it a legitimate human application of the divine principle of "gospel order" to limit certain tasks to the ordained ministry for the purpose of ensuring order and unity; yet, in the above remarks, she also emphasized that it would be wrong to conclude that these human applications constitute a divine imperative and that no person other than an ordained minister was allowed to perform the ordinances.

Positions of Leadership and Administration

Initially, ordination was not a prerequisite for holding positions of leadership in areas such as publishing, education, and church administration since individuals in these areas were not understood to be directly engaged in gospel ministry. Somewhat paradoxically, however, those who served in positions of leadership and administration and thereby demonstrated their fitness for that work were often subsequently ordained as a way of recognizing their calling from God to work in that particular position, and eventually ordination became a prerequisite for holding positions of leadership and administration in the higher levels of the church organization.

As has been shown above, Ellen White is a prime example of one who received ministerial credentials without having been formally ordained. Up until the late 1870s, she was probably the only individual to be credentialed without ordination, but a certain piece of advice that the General Conference gave to its conferences in 1879 may be indicative of the existence of

¹¹⁷Butler, "Eighteenth Annual Session, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists."

¹¹⁸Ellen G. White, "Remarks Concerning the Foreign Mission Work," n.p., 12 November [1896] (MS 75, 1896), EGWE, emphasis supplied.

¹¹⁹Ibid.

additional cases by that date. Namely, the General Conference suggested to its constituent conferences that they refrain from granting “credentials to individuals to occupy official positions among our people, who have never been ordained or set apart by our people,” which suggests that such credentialing of unordained individuals was indeed occurring up to that point.¹²⁰ Six years later, the discussion resurfaced when the committee on resolutions suggested that credentials be given only to those who were willing and able to devote all of their time to the work of the gospel ministry. The resolution was revised and it was eventually decided that “exceptions to this rule” were possible, but should be made “very carefully.”¹²¹ So then, it appears that credentials were usually given only in conjunction with ordination, which was, in turn, a setting apart for the ministry or, in other words, an acknowledgement of a calling to the “work of the gospel ministry”;¹²² yet, there were apparently occasions on which credentials were given apart from ordination and the work in the gospel ministry.

To explain why this was so, it is worth remembering, as others have pointed out previously, that Ellen White employed the general words “minister” and “ministry” in three ways: sometimes to refer to a work that all believers should engage in; sometimes to refer to diverse ministries that augment the ministry of the Word; and sometimes to refer specifically to the gospel ministry of the Word commonly reserved for ordained ministers.¹²³

¹²⁰Butler, “Eighteenth Annual Session, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.”

¹²¹Butler and Smith, “Twenty-Fourth Annual Session, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists,” 23 November 1885; G. I. Butler and Uriah Smith, “Twenty-Fourth Annual Session, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists: Eighth Meeting, November 24, 1885, 9:30 a.m.,” Battle Creek, GCA.

¹²²See, e.g., James White, “The Age to Come,” *Review and Herald*, 24 July 1856, 96; “Ordination,” 1 October 1872, 128; “Ordination,” 20 January 1872, 23; E. J. Waggoner, “General Meeting in Oakland,” 281; Jones, “The Kansas Camp-Meeting,” 344; E. J. Waggoner, “Back Page,” 288; Jones, “North Pacific Camp-Meeting,” 29 June 1888, 392; Olsen, “Report of the General Conference Districts, Nos. 1 and 4,” 384; Loughborough, “Ordination Service,” 676; Durland, 772; A. J. Breed, “General Conference District No. 6,” *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 2 March 1897, 217; idem, “District 6,” *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 17 February 1899, 19; idem, “The Wisconsin Camp-Meeting,” *Review and Herald*, 11 July 1899, 448; Jones, “The Upper Columbia Conference Camp-Meeting,” 399; idem, “The North Pacific Camp-Meeting,” 2 July 1901, 429; idem, “The California Camp-Meeting,” 5; cf. Dick, *Founders of the Message*, 273; Coon, *The Great Visions of Ellen G. White*, 66.

¹²³See Moon, 188-189. As a result of his study, Moon concluded that Ellen White used the term “ministry” to designate the work of women in all three categories. See, e.g., Ellen G. White, “The Reward of Faithful Toil,” *Bible Echo*, 2 December 1901, 776; idem to Teachers in Emmanuel Missionary College, St. Helena, CA, 21 September 1903 (Letter 210, 1903), EGWE; idem, “The Laborer Is Worthy of His Hire,” 22 March 1898 (MS 43a, 1898), EGWE. Thus, she stated, e.g., that “Sister Robinson [is] doing the work of ministering, fully as valuable as any ordained minister,” which did

The distinction between ministers of the gospel and ministers of other ministries that merely augmented this primary ministry explains why those who had never worked in ministerial lines, but who served in publishing, administrative, medical, or educational lines, were usually not ordained—they were not regarded as ministers in the “work of the gospel ministry,” and therefore ordination was not needed.

A few examples may suffice to illustrate this fact. To begin with, prior to his ordination in 1874,¹²⁴ Uriah Smith served many years as editor of the *Review* (1855-1861, 1864-1869, 1870-1873, 1874) and for several periods as secretary of the General Conference (1863-1874). Since he had never worked as an itinerant minister, church leaders considered it unnecessary to ordain him for a number of years. There was a recommendation on at least three occasions that he “be set apart for the work of the ministry,” but it was not executed.¹²⁵ Instead, in 1868, Smith was “granted a license to improve” his “gift in preaching.”¹²⁶

A second example of a church administrator serving without being ordained is G. I. Butler, who in 1865 began serving as president of the Iowa Conference, even though he had “no experience as a preacher.” It was not until 6 June 1867 that he received a ministerial license, and it was not until September 28 of that year that he received ordination.¹²⁷ Interestingly, even after he had been elected conference president, the church saw no need to hurry his ordination, as they apparently did not see it as necessary prior to his beginning his service as president.

Besides these examples, it may be mentioned that a number of women served in various administrative, educational, and medical positions on

not mean that she was performing the exact same functions, but that her work of ministry (“visiting and giving Bible readings”) was as valuable as his. See *idem*, Diary entry for 21 May 1898 (MS 182, 1898), Sunnyside Cooranbong, Australia, EGWE.

¹²⁴Uriah Smith, “Camp-Meeting Notings,” *Review and Herald*, 18 August 1874, 68.

¹²⁵Uriah Smith and E. S. Walker, “Fourth Annual Meeting of the Michigan State Conference,” *Review and Herald*, 31 May 1864, 2; J. N. Loughborough and Isaac I. van Horn, “The Michigan State Conference: Its Eighth Annual Session,” *Review and Herald*, 26 May 1868, 357; Smith and van Horn, “Michigan Conference of S. D. Adventists,” 69.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, 69.

¹²⁷G. I. Butler and H. E. Carver, “Business Proceedings of the Iowa State Conference Held at Pilot Grove, Iowa, July 3, 1865,” *Review and Herald*, 1 August 1865, 70; G. I. Butler and A. A. Fairfield, “The Iowa Conference: Fifth Annual Meeting,” *Review and Herald*, 25 June 1867, 21; Smith, “Editorial Correspondence, No. 3,” 264; “Conference Proceedings: Twenty-Sixth Meeting,” *General Conference Bulletin*, 2 June 1913, 230. Cf. Emmett K. Vanderve, *Rugged Heart: The Story of George I. Butler* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Assn., 1979), 19; Mustard, 166; James R. Nix, *Early Advent Singing*, 2d ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 79; Gerald Wheeler, *James White: Innovator and Overcomer*, Adventist Pioneer Series (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2003), 161; Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil*, 68; Land, 50.

the conference, union, and General Conference levels without having been ordained or holding ministerial credentials. Some served as secretaries and/or treasurers of these entities or associated societies (later departments).¹²⁸

Although ordination was not a prerequisite for service in leadership and administration positions, somewhat ironically individuals who demonstrated capable service in such positions were often ordained, even if they had no prior experience in the gospel ministry of the Word and were not preparing for such ministry. An illustration of this point is Butler, who, as mentioned just above, had not been ordained at the time he was elected conference president, but was subsequently ordained two years later when his calling and fitness for the work became clear. Likewise, in 1889, the General Conference ordained W. W. Prescott, then president of Battle Creek College and education secretary of the General Conference, even though he had never served in ministerial lines. Witnessing the fruits of his educational work and his powerful preaching abilities, church leaders were more than convinced of his divine calling. “If he could serve the cause of God any better in receiving ordination and credentials,” Ellen White surmised, “it would be best” for him to be ordained.¹²⁹

Despite the fact that ordination was not initially a prerequisite for leadership positions in ministries not directly related to the ministry of the Word, the situation gradually changed, and soon ordination became a requirement for such positions. In the 1920s, for example, church leaders began to insist that leadership positions of the home missionary and missionary volunteer departments be filled “preferably” with ordained ministers and that

¹²⁸Various books and articles have been published dealing with this question. Just a few individuals may be mentioned at this point. Allie Guthrie was the secretary and treasurer of the North Missouri Conference as well as for the Tract Society of said conference (1910-1912). See *1910 Year Book of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1910), 35; H. E. Rogers, ed., *1911 Year Book of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1911), 26; idem, ed., *1912 Year Book of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1912), 26. Mrs. A. F. Harrison was the secretary and treasurer of the Sabbath School Association in the Southern District No. 2 in 1897. See L. A. Hoopes, “Mission Fields,” *General Conference Bulletin*, July-September 1897, no. 3, 110. L. Flora Plummer became the “organizing secretary” of the General Conference Sabbath School Department at its establishment in 1901 and was the secretary/director of that department from 1913 to 1936. See Coon, “Ellen G. White’s View of the Role of Women in the SDA Church,” 3. Adelia P. Patten-Van Horn and Minerva Jane Loughborough-Chapman served as treasurers of the General Conference. See *ibid.*, 2.

¹²⁹Ellen G. White, “Diary entry,” 3 November 1889; “Ordination,” 12 November 1889, 720; cf. *Seventh-day Adventist Year Book of Statistics for 1889* (Battle Creek: Review and Herald, 1889), 25, 31, 42, 62; *The Seventh-day Adventist Year Book* (Battle Creek: Review and Herald, 1887), 113; Gilbert M. Valentine, *W. W. Prescott: Forgotten Giant of Adventism’s Second Generation*, rev. ed., Adventist Pioneer Series (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2005), 47-67, 80-81.

educational departments be filled with those who had “practical experience in teaching and in soul-winning work.” The rationale behind this decision was to counter the increasing local church pastorates and to foster the idea that all departments are “soul winning agencies.” At the same time, the document, *The Work of the Minister*, was approved, which recommended to “every minister, whether resident pastor or a departmental secretary, [to] make it his objective to engage in aggressive effort to win new members to the faith.”¹³⁰ Since all ministries, even those not previously understood to be directly engaged in the ministry of the Word, were now encouraged to view themselves as active evangelists engaged in the ministry of the Word, ordination was increasingly thought appropriate even for leaders working in areas such as publishing, education, and administration. One significant result was that women, who were not eligible for ordination as gospel ministers, were therefore no longer able to fill such leadership positions. While women were still eligible to be church missionary secretaries on the local church level, they gradually disappeared from such positions at the conference, union, division, and General Conference levels as ordination became an entrance requirement for these positions.¹³¹

In sum, the early practice of the Seventh-day Adventist Church was to allow unordained individuals, both male and female, to serve in leadership positions in publishing industries, church administration, and education. However, as such leaders demonstrated their calling and fitness for their work, their call was often recognized and confirmed by ordination, even if they had never served in pastoral ministry. Since ordination was not initially required for service in these nonministerial leadership positions, women initially often filled these roles, but this practice changed over time and such positions became restricted solely to those who had been previously ordained as ministers.

Diversity of Ministries

Early Sabbatarian Adventists understood ordination to be particularly significant for the setting apart of preachers and evangelists; yet, they also saw that preachers and evangelists were not the only individuals in the NT who were ordained by laying on of hands. Indeed, the apostles also began ordaining

¹³⁰“General Conference Committee Meetings for 1923: One Hundred Eighty-Fifth Meeting, Milwaukee, WI, Oct. 10, 1923, 8:00 a.m.,” Milwaukee, WI., 447, GCA; cf. Bert Haloviak, “Adventism’s Lost Generations: The Decline of Leadership Positions for SDA Women” (Unpublished manuscript, Silver Spring, MD, 1990, 2; Kit Watts, “Moving Away from the Table: A Survey of Historical Factors Affecting Women Leaders,” in *The Welcome Table: Setting a Place for Ordained Women*, eds. Patricia A. Habada and Rebecca Frost Brillhart [Langley Park, MD: TEAM, 1995], 54; Bull and Lockhart, 270). In 1927, LeRoy Edwin Froom complained, “The Home Missionary Department was originally founded to lead the laity into service, but it has so far been absorbed by the financial endeavors of the movement that it has become really an adjunct to the treasury. We must emphasize anew the call of God upon consecrated men and women to witness for Him” (quoted in Haloviak, “Adventism’s Lost Generations,” 5).

¹³¹Ibid., 2; Watts, “Moving Away from the Table,” 54; Bull and Lockhart, 270.

individuals to serve as elders and deacons in order to address specific needs that arose in their first-century communities. As the Sabbatarian Adventists perceived similar needs arising in their own communities, they followed the NT model and likewise began ordaining elders and deacons. Later on, as the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church necessitated the creation of new offices and the further expansion of organizational structures, the church's understanding of which offices merited ordination likewise adapted. By the 1890s, for example, Ellen White suggested a broadened view of ordination that would allow for the setting apart and ordaining of individuals for a variety of lines of ministry, not just for the ministry of preaching. Thus, ordination came to be understood as an act that was not limited solely to the setting apart of clergy, but an act which could also be used to set apart individuals in other ministries as well, including those serving in the roles of deaconess, missionary, or medical physician.

Deacons and Deaconesses

In late December 1853, H. S. Gurney reported that churches had begun to set apart deacons "as denominated in the Bible" because ministers had been "called to travel" with no one left in the churches to fully maintain "gospel order."¹³² Six months later, Joseph Bates suggested the setting apart of individuals as deacons "by prayer and the laying on of hands," a practice that was founded on texts such as Acts 6:1-6; Titus 1:5-6; and 1 Tim 3:8-13.¹³³ He later emphasized that the apostles set apart deacons in answer to a real and practical need.¹³⁴ In early 1855, John Byington wrote to James White asking how the distraction and discouragement of the churches could be solved; he wondered if "every church" should appoint deacons and elders, and, if so, who should perform the setting apart. In response, James White stressed that the scriptural testimony was to be the foundation for any decision on this "subject of such vast importance." The problems would be solved if the churches would adopt "the all-powerful and perfect system of order, set forth in the New Testament." Thus, those who had been called by God and approved by the church to preach the Word and to set things in order in the churches should be the ones to set apart church officers. The qualifications of deacons were laid down in passages such as Acts 14:21-23 and Titus 1:5-

¹³²Gurney, 199. Cf. Neufeld, 254; Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil*, 37; Land, 218. It should be noted too that it was not until the 1920s that Adventist ministry changed from an itinerant-type ministry to a local church pastor pattern. See S. N. Haskell, "Present Duty in Reference to Our Periodicals," *True Missionary*, January 1874, 5; idem, "Our Periodicals," *Signs of the Times*, 22 April 1880, 188; A. G. Daniells (1912), quoted in Russell Burrill, *Revolution in the Church* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center, 1993), 41; Harwood and Beem, "A Work for All to Do," [18]; Knight, "Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination, 1844-1863," 106.

¹³³Joseph Bates, "Communication from Bro. Bates," *Review and Herald*, 30 May 1854, 148.

¹³⁴Bates, "Church Order," 22.

16.¹³⁵ At the same time, Frisbie, in outlining the offices of the NT church, pointed out that deacons were to take care of the “temporal affairs of the church [that were] essential to its prosperity.”¹³⁶ One and a half years later, he added, quoting from Adam Clarke’s commentary, that the early church also had deaconesses that “were ordained to their office by the imposition of the hands of the bishop.”¹³⁷ Yet, the church did not accept his argumentation and avoided the setting apart of deaconesses.

In 1874, Butler found the biblical basis for deacons in 1 Tim 3:8-10 and Acts 6, indicating that they were responsible for the care of the church’s “temporal matters.”¹³⁸ A decade later, W. H. Littlejohn remarked that some Seventh-day Adventist churches elected “one or more women to fill a position similar to that which it is supposed that Phebe and others occupied in her day”; yet, he admitted that it was not the general “custom with us to ordain such women.” He underlined, however, that it was “highly probable” that the apostolic church had deaconesses.¹³⁹ Ellen White, meanwhile, encouraged the installation of deaconesses, suggesting while in Australia that “women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands.” She suggested that this would be “another means of strengthening and building up the church,” emphasizing that the church needs “to branch out more” in its “methods of labor,” indicative of her idea of a diversity of ministries.¹⁴⁰ Subsequently, a number of women were set apart in Australia and New Zealand in response to this advice.¹⁴¹ Yet, this

¹³⁵James White, “Church Order,” 23 January 1855, 164.

¹³⁶Frisbie, “Church Order,” 9 January 1855, 155.

¹³⁷J. B. Frisbie, “Deacons,” *Review and Herald*, 31 July 1856, 101-102; cf. Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments* (Cincinnati: Applegate, 1856), 4:167; Knight, “Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination, 1844-1863,” 107.

¹³⁸G. I. Butler, “Thoughts on Church Government—No. 5 [b],” *Review and Herald*, 8 September 1874, 92.

¹³⁹W. H. Littlejohn, “The Church Manual,” *Review and Herald*, 3 July 1883, 426; idem, “The Duties of Local Church Officers,” *Review and Herald*, 22 November 1887, 730.

¹⁴⁰Ellen G. White, “The Duty of the Minister and the People,” *Review and Herald*, 9 July 1895, 434, emphasis supplied; Coon, 8; Clarence C. Crisler to Mrs. L. E. Cox, Sanitarium, CA, 22 March 1916, EGWE; cf. Fortin, 126-127.

¹⁴¹About a month later, J. O. Corliss and Bro. McCullagh “set apart . . . deaconesses by prayer and the laying on of hands” (Report of nominating committee, Ashfield Seventh-day Adventist Church, 10 August 1895, quoted in Arthur N. Patrick, “The Ordination of Deaconesses,” *Adventist Review*, 16 January 1986, 18); cf. Coon, 8. In 1896, Bertha Larwood was ordained deaconess by J. O. Corliss to her duties in the church at Perth, Western Australia. See W. C. White to Members of the [Australasian] Union Conference Committee, Cooranbong, NSW, Australia, 15 July 1896, CAR. Three and half years later, on 6 January 1900, W. C. White ordained

phenomenon did not become an established practice within the Adventist Church, instead disappearing after a few years.

Later, Ellen White pointed out that the ordination of the seven deacons in the NT church was a “step in the perfecting of gospel order in the church” in that it developed a “plan for the better organization of all the working forces of the church.” While she suggested that the church in Jerusalem served as a model church, she added that in the later history of the early church “the organization of the church was further perfected” to maintain “order and harmonious action,” implying that additions or modifications to the NT leadership structure were both appropriate and necessary.¹⁴² She also spoke of the further perfecting of gospel order and organization in her current context.¹⁴³ Other Adventist writers had expressed the idea of perfecting the organization already since the 1860s;¹⁴⁴ likewise, James White moved from his early insistence on an organizational structure that did not go beyond the NT

Mrs. Brannyrane and Patchin as deaconesses at the Ashfield Seventh-day Adventist Church (Ashfield Seventh-day Adventist Church Minutes, entry for 7 January 1900, and W. C. White, Diary entry for 6 January 1900, both published in Patrick, “The Ordination of Deaconesses,” 18-19); cf. Coon, 8. For an example on the ordination of deaconesses in North America, see Douglas Morgan, *Lewis C. Sheafe: Apostle to Black America*, Adventist Pioneer Series (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2010), 276. Cf. Haloviak, “A Place at the Table,” 35.

¹⁴²Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 88-89, 91-92; cf. idem to the Leading Ministers in California, St. Helena, Calif., 6 December 1909 (Letter 178, 1909), EGWE.

¹⁴³Ellen G. White, *Christian Education* (Battle Creek: International Tract Society, 1893), 135; quoted in “Council Meeting, No. 2: Organization,” *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 29 January 1893, 21; Loughborough, *The Church*, 91; idem, *Heavenly Visions*, compiled Leah Schmitke (Mentone, CA: Compiler, 1984), 13.

¹⁴⁴H. J. Bonifield, “From Bro. Bonifield,” *Review and Herald*, 11 March 1862, 119; J. H. Waggoner, “Report from Bro. Waggoner,” *Review and Herald*, 24 June 1862, 28; Uriah Smith, “The Conference,” *Review and Herald*, 26 May 1863, 204; *Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists: With Reports of the European Missionary Councils of 1883, 1884, and 1885, and a Narrative by Mrs. E. G. White of Her Visit and Labors in These Missions* (Basel: Imprimerie Polyglotte, 1886), 110; “The Council Meeting,” *General Conference Bulletin*, extra, no. 6, 17 February 1895, 185; G. A. Irwin and L. A. Hoopes, “Statement Concerning Auditor’s Report,” *General Conference Bulletin*, extra, no. 6, 9 April 1901, 139; O. A. Olsen and L. A. Hoopes, “General Conference Proceedings: Ninth Meeting, April 9, 10:30 a.m.,” *General Conference Bulletin*, extra, no. 7, 10 April 1901, 169-170; “Summary of Proceedings of General Conference: On Organization,” *General Conference Bulletin*, no. 2, April-June 1901, 501; M. E. Kern, “Report of the Young People’s Missionary Volunteer Department,” *General Conference Bulletin*, no. 2, 6 June 1909, 327. The official establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church had “the purpose of securing unity and efficiency in labor, and promoting the general interests of the cause of present truth, and of perfecting the organization of the Seventh-day Adventists” (Byington and Smith, “Report of General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists,” 204-205).

model¹⁴⁵ toward recommending a developing organizational system “which is not opposed by the Bible, and is approved by sound sense.”¹⁴⁶ It seems that the structure and the offices of the church could be developed, expanded, and adapted to ensure order, unity, harmony, and efficiency as the church labored for the fulfillment of its mission, the proclamation of the message of salvation.

Elders

In 1855, about a year after some local churches began setting apart deacons, Frisbie expressed his opinion on the overlapping nature of the NT roles of bishops (*episkopoi*) and elders (*presbyteroi*). In his understanding, both were more or less elders, but he perceived “two classes of preaching elders” in the NT, namely, “evangelical or travelling elders or bishops” and “local elders.” The first class of elders functioned as supervisors over several churches, whereas the second class “had the pastoral care and oversight of one church.” Distinguishing the local elders from the deacon, Frisbie stated that the local elders had “the oversight of the spiritual,” while deacons took care of the temporal affairs.¹⁴⁷ Frisbie argued that specific people were called by God and afterward “chosen by the church and set apart by the laying on of hands of . . . elders and bishops.”¹⁴⁸ He added that the “churches chose, ordained or appointed by holding up their hands in voting their choice who should be messengers of the churches.”¹⁴⁹ The primary biblical passages used in support for these arguments were Acts 13:1-4; 14:23; 20:28; 1 Cor 12:28; 2 Cor 8:19; and Eph 5:11.¹⁵⁰ Sabbatarian Adventists saw the need to set apart elders because some churches had not celebrated the Lord’s Supper for numerous weeks or even years due to the lack of visiting ministers.¹⁵¹ By 1856, the setting apart of elders seems to have become a regular practice.¹⁵² In early October of that year, Cottrell added that elders had to perform all the

¹⁴⁵James White, “Church Order,” 23 January 1855, 164.

¹⁴⁶James White, “Yearly Meetings,” *Review and Herald*, 21 July 1859, 68, also reprinted in idem, “Yearly Meetings,” *Review and Herald*, 5 May 1863, 180; cf. Mustard, 131, 134, 171-172, 221-222, 231-232; Fortin, 120-121.

¹⁴⁷Frisbie, “Church Order,” 9 January 1855, 155; idem, “Church Order,” 26 June 1856, 70; Cottrell, “What are the Duties of Church Officers?,” 173; cf. Jones, “Church Officers,” 518-519; E. J. Waggoner, “The Office of Bishop,” *Present Truth*, 1 June 1893, 165.

¹⁴⁸Frisbie, “Church Order,” 26 June 1856, 70.

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

¹⁵⁰Ibid.

¹⁵¹Cf. S. N. Haskell to Ellen G. White, South Lancaster, Mass., 27 January 1887, EGWE.

¹⁵²J. N. Loughborough, “Oswego Conference,” *Review and Herald*, 27 December 1855, 101; S. N. Haskell to Ellen G. White, South Lancaster, MA, 20 March 1887, EGWE; cf. Knight, “Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination, 1844-1863,” 107, 112.

duties of the ordained minister (“travelling elder or evangelist”) in the latter’s absence, including duties such as administering the Lord’s Supper, baptizing new converts, receiving them into membership, building up the church, and preaching the truth.¹⁵³ Ellen White basically agreed with Frisbie’s distinction of local and traveling elders; yet, like Cottrell, she added that it was the duty of the local elders “to administer baptism . . . [and] to attend to the ordinances of the Lord’s house” if it were necessary and if the minister were absent. Both had been “appointed by the church and by the Lord” to oversee the spiritual concerns of the church. It seems that, in 1861, the Michigan Conference officially adopted Ellen White’s position of the overlapping duties of these two offices.¹⁵⁴ Interestingly, elders and deacons were frequently set apart by the laying on of hands at the same service, especially during the establishment of new churches.¹⁵⁵

In the mid-1870s, Butler added that a candidate for elder should be selected by a committee consisting of an ordained minister and two persons chosen by him, with the church accepting or rejecting this nomination. The elder was supposed to be set apart by an ordained minister, which allowed him to baptize, administer the ordinances, and perform all duties to be done “by those in offices lower than” himself in the church. It was his task to feed the church spiritually so that “the graces of the Spirit” (Phil 4:8) might become visible in them.¹⁵⁶ Accordingly, he had “a measure of authority superior to that of the private members of the church.”¹⁵⁷

At the 1885 General Conference session, delegates discussed whether an elder had to be reordained in the new church after moving from one place to another one. The matter was eventually referred to another committee.¹⁵⁸ The committee saw the value of confining the ordination of an elder to the church which elected him, but also saw the value of permitting the elder to act “as unrestricted as a minister.” The dilemma of what course to take led them to propose a sort of compromise between the two alternatives.

¹⁵³Cottrell, “What are the Duties of Church Officers?” 173.

¹⁵⁴Ellen G. White to Lewis Bean, n.p., c. September 1859 (Letter 20, 1859), EGWE; idem to Bro and Sr. Scott, Battle Creek, MI, 6 July 1863 (Letter 5, 1863), EGWE; Loughborough, Hull, and Cornell, “Conference Address,” 157; cf. Knight, “Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination, 1844-1863,” 107-108.

¹⁵⁵See, e.g., R. F. Cottrell, “A Short Tour Among the Saints,” *Review and Herald*, 25 November 1858, 4; Wm. S. Ingraham, “From Bro. Ingraham,” *Review and Herald*, 27 October 1859, 184; John Bostwick, “Conference in Lynxville, Wis.,” *Review and Herald*, 19 June 1860, 37; James White, “Western Tour,” *Review and Herald*, 6 November 1860, 196; cf. Knight, “Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination, 1844-1863,” 108.

¹⁵⁶G. I. Butler, “Thoughts on Church Government—No. 5,” *Review and Herald*, 1 September 1874, 85.

¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 92.

¹⁵⁸G. I. Butler and Uriah Smith, “Twenty-Fourth Annual Session, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists: Fifth Meeting, November 20, 1885, 9:30 a.m.,” Battle Creek, MI, GCA.

The committee stated: "All agree that it is to be regarded as purely a matter of church discipline, and we believe there is truth in both positions which may be combined into one consistent system." It then gave the following recommendations to the conferences: (a) the authority of an elder is confined to the church "which elected him as elder," except if the conference committee "under special circumstances" thought it advisable to send him to other churches; (b) an elder should not be reordained if he is properly elected or reelected in another church; (c) an elder should be considered a normal member upon his removal to another church or conference, and his qualifications should be evaluated just as if he had never been an elder before; (d) a ministerial license does not enlarge the sphere of an elder beyond his local church; (e) although the ordination of an elder is valid "for all time, except in case of apostasy," he cannot act as an elder beyond his allotted time, "unless he is reelected, or elected by another church." It was argued that the conferences' failure to conform to these recommendations "will open the way to disorder and confusion in our churches."¹⁵⁹

Missionaries to Foreign Countries

In the 1890s, the General Conference began setting apart individuals by the laying on of hands when the delegates decided to call these persons to a foreign mission field. The wives of these missionaries then received missionary licenses. Even if the missionary was to serve primarily in educational, publishing, or medical lines, he was still ordained on the grounds that it was quite possible that he might need to engage at times in ministerial activities, especially in the mission field.¹⁶⁰ Three examples may suffice to illustrate this procedure. First, the General Conference decided to send A. B. Oyen as a missionary to Norway to "labor in connection with the publishing work there and to obtain all the help possible in translating the important works . . . into the Danish language."

¹⁵⁹Butler and Smith, "Twenty-Fourth General Conference Session."

¹⁶⁰Butler, "Changes in the Field of Labor," 752; O. A. Olsen and L. T. Nicola, "Minutes of the General Conference Committee, Spring Session, 1893: Tenth Meeting, March 16, 1893, 10 a.m.," 19; Loughborough, "Ordination Service," 676; Durland, 772; L. A. Hoopes, "Proceedings of the Foreign Mission Board," *General Conference Bulletin*, July-September 1897, no. 3, 96; Z. G. Baharian, "Progress of the Cause: Turkey," *Review and Herald*, 18 April 1899, 252; A. G. Daniells and W. A. Spicer, "One Hundred and Thirty-First Meeting General Conference Committee: October 11, 1906, 2 p.m.," 216; A. G. Daniells and W. A. Spicer, "Two Hundred and Twenty-Fourth Meeting General Conference Committee: December 12, 1907," 392; A. G. Daniells and W. A. Spicer, "Three Hundred and Forty-Second Meeting General Conference Committee: February 23, 1909," 595; A. G. Daniells and H. R. Salisbury, "One Hundred and Thirty-Sixth Meeting General Conference Committee: Loma Linda, Calif., May 10, 1910," Loma Linda, CA, 238; A. G. Daniells and W. A. Spicer, "Fifty-Sixth Meeting General Conference Committee: September 14 [1911]," 83; A. G. Daniells and W. A. Spicer, "One Hundred Twenty-Seventh Meeting General Conference Committee: July 31, 1912," 234; Cf. Trim, 22-23.

At the same occasion, he was “ordained.”¹⁶¹ Another example is the ordination of Percy T. Magan. Although the General Conference committee initially decided to ordain Magan, “it was deemed expedient to leave the matter for the time being” “when he was connected with the school work.” After he had worked as head of the Bible and History department at Battle Creek College for about six years (1891-1897), the General Conference Committee decided again to ordain him in case he “be accepted by the Foreign Mission Board as its secretary.”¹⁶² Since Magan never assumed that position, it was decided not to follow through with the decision. Two years later, in 1899, he was ordained anyway, even though he was still not engaged in missionary work.¹⁶³ A third example is the ordination of Walter K. Ising in 1908. For three years, Ising had been the secretary of the German Union Conference, which included Russia, Austria, Hungary, and the Balkan countries. He was also editor of the German paper *Zionswächter* and other papers in Hungary, Russia, and Estonia. He was still regarded as “rather young and inexperienced in evangelical work.” But he believed that God had called him into that work and he was willing to commit himself entirely to “the work of the gospel [as] a missionary in Syria.” Thus, the leading brethren acknowledged his divine calling and ordained him on 4 March 1908.¹⁶⁴ These examples reveal that church leaders did not consider it necessary for workers in administrative and educational positions to be ordained. It was only when these workers wanted to enter foreign missionary work that the church deemed it important to set them apart for the gospel ministry.

Medical Missionaries

In 1893, Ellen White used the Holy Spirit’s call to set apart Paul and Barnabas for their specific mission as the biblical precedent for ordaining both men and women as medical missionaries.

¹⁶¹Butler, “Changes in the Field of Labor,” 752.

¹⁶²G. A. Irwin and L. A. Hoopes, “Minutes General Conference Committee: Battle Creek, Mich., June 17, 1897,” Battle Creek, MI, 4; cf. Trim, 23.

¹⁶³E. A. Sutherland, “[Obituary] Dr. Percy Tilson Magan,” *Review and Herald*, 29 January 1948, 20. Although some writers have claimed that Magan “was ordained to the gospel ministry” by either E. A. Sutherland or W. C. White on 27 July 1897, it may be questioned why then Sutherland himself suggested that Magan was, in fact, ordained by G. A. Irwin in 1899. See Merlin N. Neff, *For God and C. M. E.: A Biography of Percy Tilson Magan Upon the Historical Background of the Educational and Medical Work of the Seventh-day Adventists* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1964), 64; Ira Gish and Harry Christman, *Madison, God’s Beautiful Farm: The E. A. Sutherland Story* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1979), 64.

¹⁶⁴ “[Obituary] Walter Konrad Wilhelm Ising,” *Review and Herald*, 26 October 1950, 20; L. R. Conradi and Guy Dail, “Two Hundred and Forty-First Meeting General Conference Committee in Europe: Hamburg, March 4, 1908, A.M.,” Hamburg, Germany, 419-420; L. R. Conradi and Guy Dail, “Two Hundred and Forty-Second Meeting General Conference Committee in Europe: Hamburg, March 4, 1908, P.M.,” Hamburg, Germany, 423; cf. Trim, 23.

May the voice from the living oracles of God, the startling movings of providence, speak in clear language to the church, "separate unto me Paul and Barnabas." Holy and devout men are wanted now to cultivate their mental and physical powers and their piety to the uttermost, and to be ordained to go forth as medical missionaries, both men and women. Every effort should be made to send forth intelligent workers. The same grace that came from Jesus Christ to Paul and Apollos that distinguished them for spiritual excellencies can be reproduced and brought into working order in many devoted missionaries.¹⁶⁵

Interestingly, she used the same text and argumentation commonly employed to support the ordination of ministers, namely, the ordination of Paul and Barnabas. Similarly, Ellen White made an interesting statement in regard to the ordination of "missionary physicians" in 1908, when the medical work at the three sanitariums in California was still in its infancy:

The work of the true medical missionary is largely a spiritual work. It includes prayer and the laying on of hands; he therefore should be as sacredly set apart for his work as is the minister of the gospel. Those who are selected to act the part of missionary physicians, are to be set apart as such. This will strengthen them against the temptation to withdraw from the sanitarium work to engage in private practice.¹⁶⁶

Obviously, she had a broader understanding of ordination that allowed a specific setting apart with prayer and the laying on of hands for diverse ministries and not merely for the gospel ministry. While the ordination of a missionary physician for his work was comparable to the ordination of a minister for the gospel ministry, it did not make the physician a minister. Also, the setting apart of medical workers as missionary physicians was a tool to keep them spiritually and missionary minded in their work. In talking about the commission given by Christ to the first disciples, Ellen White suggested that both "men and women," if they yield to the consecrating influence of the Holy Spirit, are "ordained of God to bring salvation to human hearts and minds," confirming her view that ordination sets apart the ordained individual for a spiritual purpose, which apparently applied even to those primarily engaged in medical work.¹⁶⁷

Every Believer a "Minister"

With the growing missionary perspective of Seventh-day Adventists came also an understanding of the necessary involvement of every believer in the missionary work. Similar to Ellen White's threefold view of "ministry," A. T.

¹⁶⁵Ellen G. White to J. H. Kellogg and Wife, 19 February 1893 (Letter 35, 1893), EGWE, printed in idem, *Manuscript Releases* (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990), 6:226, emphasis supplied.

¹⁶⁶Ellen G. White, "True Medical Missionary Work," n.p., 23 February 1908 (MS 5, 1908), EGWE, published in idem, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1946), 546, emphasis supplied; cf. Ron Graybill to Robert H. Pierson, Washington, DC, 7 February 1973, EGWE; Fagal, 274-275.

¹⁶⁷Ellen G. White, "Notes of Travel," *Review and Herald*, 11 March 1909, 8.

Jones remarked that the word “ministry” in 2 Cor 6:3 does not merely refer to the “ordained ministry of the pulpit,” but to everyone who received God’s grace. Based on 1 Pet 4:10, he suggested that it was the task of every believer to participate in this ministry of grace.¹⁶⁸ Later, he seemed to emphasize that “ordained and licensed workers” mutually engage in missionary work, but when these workers leave an established church to enter a new field, it is up to the remaining, unordained church members, men and women, to engage in various lines of ministry in order to continue what the paid workers started in their community.¹⁶⁹ In 1894, S. N. Haskell wrote about an ordained minister from Russia who was frequently ordered to leave the country after making new converts in a certain area. Then, his wife would return to the place because the authorities were not used to women missionaries and did not act against them as they did against men. After she took the place of her husband, Haskell stated, she made “more converts than he [did].”¹⁷⁰

Although Ellen White suggested that ordained ministers should act as representatives of God on earth, she also emphasized that every believer is Christ’s representative.¹⁷¹ It should also be noted that Ellen White employed the term “pastor” not as an equivalent for ordained ministers, but rather to refer to a person who does the personal, spiritual work and care that is often neglected by the ministers. In her view, women were especially suited to the role of pastor.¹⁷² She pointed out that many are “laborers together with God” that are not discerned by leaders and members because they have never been formally ordained for the work; yet, they carry Christ’s yoke and exert a saving influence.¹⁷³ Also, she repeatedly encouraged people to actively engage in the

¹⁶⁸A. T. Jones, “The Third Angel’s Message, no. 3,” *General Conference Bulletin*, 8 February 1895, 50-51; idem, “Receive Not the Grace of God in Vain,” *Review and Herald*, 22 September 1896, 605; idem, “Receive Not the Grace of God in Vain,” *Present Truth*, 12 November 1896, 726.

¹⁶⁹A. T. Jones, “To the People of the California S. D. A. Conference,” *Pacific Union Recorder*, 13 March 1902, 4; idem, “The California Conference,” *Pacific Union Recorder*, 27 March 1902, 12; idem, “Self-Government Means Self-Support,” *Review and Herald*, 3 June 1902, 10.

¹⁷⁰S. N. Haskell to W. C. White, Copenhagen, Denmark, 5 June 1894, EGWE.

¹⁷¹Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 359-371; idem, “A Preparation for the Coming of the Lord,” *Review and Herald*, 24 November 1904, 7; cf. Fortin, 115, 128-129.

¹⁷²Ellen G. White, “The Work of the Church,” Adelaide, South Australia, 11 October 1892 (MS 7, 1892), EGWE; idem, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:723; idem, *Gospel Workers: Instruction for All Who Are “Laborers Together with God”* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1915), 337; cf. Fagal, 276-277.

¹⁷³Ellen G. White, “Testimony to the Battle Creek Church,” 3 August 1894 (MS 33, 1894), published in idem, *Special Testimonies to Ministers and Workers*, Series A, no. 3 (n.p., 1895), 12-13; idem, “The Need of Home Religion,” *Review and Herald*, 29 June 1905, 8; idem, *Acts of the Apostles*, 355; idem, *Daughters of God: Messages Especially for Women* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1998), 75.

cause and mission of the church and stressed that “ordination” was not a prerequisite for such work.¹⁷⁴ If willing individuals asked God in faith, trusted in Christ’s merits, and depended upon Christ in a consecrated, self-denying, and self-sacrificing spirit, God would fit them for that work and give them the Holy Spirit.¹⁷⁵ Many souls would be saved “as a result of men looking to Jesus for their ordination and orders.”¹⁷⁶

She suggested that a minister’s wife who “devotes her time and strength to visiting” families, “opening the Scriptures to them, although the hands of ordination have not been laid upon her,” could accomplish a work in the line of ministry. Accordingly, she should be paid a salary proportionate to the time spent. Ellen White argued that God regarded it an injustice for such a woman to be treated as another minister’s wife who did not engage in the work at all.¹⁷⁷ While the church used tithe money only for the support of the ministers,¹⁷⁸ she recommended that wives who actively supported their minister-husbands and women who engaged in missionary work should also receive a wage from the tithe.¹⁷⁹ It seems that her concept as described above is in harmony with the Protestant idea of the priesthood of all believers.¹⁸⁰ Thus, it seems reasonable when she says, “All who are ordained unto the

¹⁷⁴Ellen G. White, “Our Obligation to Improve Our Talents,” *Signs of the Times*, 23 January 1893, 183; idem to J. H. Kellogg, 14 January 1899 (Letter 10, 1899), EGWE; idem, “Faithfulness in Service,” *Youth’s Instructor*, 6 February 1902, 43; idem, “A Preparation for the Coming of the Lord,” *Review and Herald*, 24 November 1904, 7; idem, “The Great Commission, a Call to Service,” *Review and Herald*, 24 March 1910, 3; idem, “Work in the South,” *Field Tidings*, 8 June 1910, 1; idem, “Work for the Master,” *Bible Training School*, 1 March 1912, 194.

¹⁷⁵Ellen G. White to Kellogg, 14 January 1899; idem, “Faithfulness in Service,” 43; idem, *Acts of the Apostles*, 40; idem, “Work for the Master,” 194.

¹⁷⁶Ellen G. White, “Consumers, But Not Producers,” 25 April 1901 (MS 35, 1901), EGWE.

¹⁷⁷Ellen G. White, “The Laborer Is Worthy of His Hire,” published in idem, *Manuscript Releases* (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990), 5:29-30, 323-324; idem, *Daughters of God*, 110-111; cf. idem, “A Collection of Manuscripts on Auditing,” n.p., c. 1903 (MS 142, 1903), EGWE; idem, *Gospel Workers*, 452-453.

¹⁷⁸See, e.g., Breed, “General Conference District No. 6,” 217; idem, “District 6,” 19.

¹⁷⁹Ellen G. White to G. A. Irwin, I. H. Evans, U. Smith, and A. T. Jones, Stanmore, Australia, 21 April 1898 (Letter 137, 1898), EGWE; idem, “I was instructed in America,” Cooranbong, Australia, 24 October 1899 (MS 149, 1899), EGWE; Cf. Fagal, 282.

¹⁸⁰This was pointed out in Fortin, 115-116. Cf. Ellen G. White to Bro. and Sr. Maxson, Adelaide, South Australia, 12 October 1896 (Letter 73, 1896); idem, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, 212-213, 441; idem, *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:169 [1868]; 6:123, 274 [1900]. She repeatedly quoted and alluded to 1 Pet 2:9 and John 15:16.

life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow-men.”¹⁸¹ The gospel commission is therefore not only addressed to the twelve initial disciples, but to all believers, even though they may not have been set apart with human hands.¹⁸² They may nevertheless look “to Jesus for their ordination and order,” knowing that he “has laid his hands” upon them.¹⁸³

Summary

When Sabbatarian Adventists began setting apart people for the gospel ministry in the early 1850s, they supported that practice primarily from the NT. They saw the need to apply NT passages regarding ordination or the laying on of hands in order to create order, unity, and harmony among the believers and to prevent the influence of false teachers. While early on they did not want to go beyond the pattern outlined in the NT, they later modified this position and began to allow for adaptation of NT patterns in order to accommodate changing circumstances, insisting merely that all new developments be in harmony with the Bible even if they were not an exact reflection of biblical precedents. Practical necessities, the growing mission of the church, and its increasing organizational structures led them to create new offices, positions, and ministries. Often new regulations were not supported by any biblical passages, but they were justified on the grounds that the new regulations and refinements were not so much biblical prescriptions, but valid human applications of the principle of gospel order to ensure unity, order, and harmony in the church. Reflecting this openness to development, the ordination ceremony itself, which was initially very simple, gradually became more elaborate and came to reflect some basic elements present in the Methodist Episcopal ordination rite.

Though some individuals suggested that baptism was a sacred ordinance that could be conducted only by an ordained minister, Ellen White argued against this. Although she agreed that church members should, for the sake of order, allow the minister to perform the baptism, it was not wrong for them to do it in case of his absence.

While Seventh-day Adventists generally followed the practice of ordaining only those individuals for the ministry that had proven their divine call in evangelistic or ministerial field work, they sometimes also ordained individuals that did not have any experience in these lines of the work. When these individuals had proven their abilities and skills in other lines of

¹⁸¹Ellen G. White, “Our Work,” *Signs of the Times*, 25 August 1898, 2. In this quotation, different shades of meaning of the word “ordain” become visible. While she used the term in referring to the appointment of someone to an office/mission or the practice of laying on of hands, she also used it to mean “to command or decree” and “to order or organize.” See Fortin, 117-118.

¹⁸²Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 110; idem, “A Preparation for the Coming of the Lord,” 7.

¹⁸³Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:444 [1900]; idem, “Words to Our Workers,” *Review and Herald*, 21 April 1903, 7.

the work (e.g., education, administration), the church frequently decided to set them apart too. Interestingly, although ordination eventually became a requirement for serving in administrative or educational leadership positions, ordination was not initially a prerequisite for these positions because these were distinguished from the gospel ministry. Seventh-day Adventists were generally open to the engagement of women in various lines of ministry; yet, it was not their practice to ordain them for the gospel ministry. In earlier years, they practiced only the ordination of ministers, elders, and deacons; yet, by the 1890s, Ellen White recommended the ordination of people, both male and female, for various lines of ministry. Thus, she emphasized that ordination was not an act linked solely to the clergy, but she envisioned ordination as a practice that set apart and committed people to various specific lines of ministry such as deaconesses, missionaries, and medical physicians. Setting people apart for a specific ministry did not automatically turn that person into an ordained minister. Although the church began to implement some of these recommendations, it seems that it never really effectuated them entirely.

In summary, the general Seventh-day Adventist practice of ordination was specifically based on NT passages; yet, the practice and its implications developed over time and were influenced by external necessities and the growth of the church structure and the mission of the church.