

A REVIEW OF ORDINATION

In the Early Seventh-day Adventist Church, 1844–1881

This paper addresses the following questions identified by the North American Division Theology of Ordination Study Committee (2012–2013):

- What was the concept of ordination in the early Seventh-day Adventist Church?
- How was it practiced? Who was eligible?
- What was the theological basis for ordination?
- What was the organizational need giving rise to ordination?
- To what extent did the early Adventist church follow precedent of the churches they came from?
- What were the differences between ordained and non-ordained clergy?
- How did they resolve any differences between various understandings of ordination?
- How did the three tiers of ordination develop?
- What was the role of women in ministry in early Adventist community?

ORDINATION IN THE EARLY ADVENT MOVEMENT

The anti-organizational Adventist Movement relatively quickly embraced the roles of elders and deacons and the value of “setting apart” those called to ministry. Any inconsistencies between their strongly held opposition to church organization and this level of church structure were not as important as the needs of local congregations. The earliest stated motivation for such offices and actions highlighted the needs of new believers, especially their vulnerability to the many “false preachers” trying to confuse

them. Repeatedly in the pages of the denomination’s periodical, *Review and Herald*, James White justified this concession to organizing as preferable to falling into ecclesiological chaos. Although Adventists saw themselves as having left the Babylonian churches with their creeds and hierarchies of church authority, Adventists were not to leave Babylon only to join Babel as churches in confusion. Some type of acknowledged authority was necessary. The earliest Adventist references to those called by God did not typically use the words *ordained* or *ordination*, but rather *setting apart* or *laying on of hands*. Such actions were deemed appropriate given the needs of local congregations.

Because there was such suspicion of human structures, every precaution was made to avoid drawing unnecessary lines of power. For example, J. N. Loughborough recalled his first years within the Advent Movement (1849–1852) as a time when no records of church membership were kept, no church officers were appointed, and “no ordination of any kind except that of one preacher” was performed. Apparently that one preacher urgently requested ordination. After a group of leading ministers reluctantly agreed to ordain the man in 1851, Loughborough recalls it as almost a non-event: “Instead of its being a solemn and impressive ceremony before the body of believers, the ministers waited until the congregation had left, when one of the ministers offered a dry, formal prayer. There was no laying on of hands; no charge given” (*Review and Herald*, May 28, 1901). No one would mistake this

event as embracing any kind of apostolic succession, even if it did require the prayer of a minister. Everett Dick's *Founders of the Message* (Review and Herald, 1938) tells of Loughborough's own ordination, which took place following camp meeting in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1854. Rather than a grand ceremony before the group of gathered believers, his ordination occurred "at a home after the tent had been taken down" (*Founders*, 273).

The First Ordinations by the Sabbatarian Adventist Movement: Authority to Administer the "Ordinances of the Church"

Many people, including James White, joined the Advent Movement having already been ordained within the churches they had left. Washington Morse may have been the first person "set apart" by the Sabbatarian Adventist Movement. Although Morse's own recollection was that this took place in 1852 ("Ordination" in *SDA Encyclopedia*), an eyewitness contributed her reflections on the event to the August 19, 1851, issue of *Review and Herald*. Sister F. M. Shimper said: "After baptizing six of our number, our dear Bro. Morse was set apart by the laying on of hands, to the administration of the ordinances of God's house[.] The Holy Ghost witnessed by the gift of tongues, and solemn manifestations of the presence and power of God. The place was awful, yet glorious. We truly felt that 'we never saw it on this fashion'" (*Review and Herald*, Aug. 19, 1851).

The reason for ordaining Morse was not specified. Was he ordained in response to the gifts of the

Spirit? Was he ordained because of his effective ministry that had drawn people to accept baptism? Was he ordained in order to regularize the six baptisms he had just performed? Is the authority to baptize part of "the ordinances of God's house"? Or would that come later? This is a particularly interesting account, since two years later James White would argue the wisdom of ordaining preachers so that they might promptly baptize those who accepted the church's message. By 1858 it would be noted 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" (*Review and Herald*, July 8, 1858). Morse would reflect on his ordination thirty-seven years afterward in the pages of the denomination's periodical. Morse recalled that after sharing the Sabbath truth with a company of new believers in Vermont, "The following summer, I was duly ordained to the ministry, and received the most unmistakable evidence of the approbation of God" ("Items of Advent Experience During the Past Fifty Years," *Review and Herald*, Oct. 16, 1888).

In September 1853, *Review and Herald* carried the account of another gathering where the Spirit was present. The Pottsdam Conference was held on John Byington's front lawn. Approximately eighty people gathered, and J. N. Andrews spoke in such a way that the people listened with rapt attention. On the second day of the conference, "the Spirit of God was graciously poured out. The whole congregation

was at times in tears.” In this context, James White recalled: “It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us, to set apart our dear Bro. Lawrence to the work of the gospel ministry, to administer the ordinances of the church of Christ, by the laying on of hands. The church was of one accord in this matter. We hope our dear brother will be able to give himself wholly to the study, and the preaching of the word; and wherever he may labor, give from the word alone the reason of his hope.” Brother Lawrence was “set apart” for training in careful Bible study in preparation for his work as an itinerant preacher.

Combating False Teachers: Ordination as the Authority to Preach and to Baptize

Two months later, the church periodical told of more people who were “set apart” (*Review and Herald*, Nov. 15, 1853). The New Haven Conference met in a packed schoolhouse. After the official close of the last meeting, discussions continued among some until 1 a.m., with James White reporting that “the Spirit of God was poured out upon us.” In their extended discussion, “the wants of the cause were considered. And it was decided that there were those present that should be ordained to the work of the gospel ministry.” The leaders sensed a need to ordain people to serve in the area, especially since some teachers were “not worthy,” and it would distinguish the two groups. Later in his report, James White described two such unworthy teacher-preachers and noted: “Probably the cause has suffered more by individuals moving out of their place, and taking upon themselves the work to teach, than by any other cause. Satan, doubtless, pushes out some to take this stand.” Those who led the conference and debated these issues decided to sleep on it and returned at eight in the morning, “when the subject of ordination was again taken up.” At that time, the group not only unanimously decided

to “set apart to the work of the ministry” J. N. Andrews, A. S. Hutchins, and C. W. Sperry, but also to enhance the work throughout Vermont by setting apart E. P. Butler, Elon Everts, and Josiah Hart.

The next month, on consecutive weeks, James White published a two-part series titled “Gospel Order” for the benefit of Adventist readers (*Review and Herald*, Dec. 13 and Dec. 20, 1853). The two articles began the same way by quoting from 1 Corinthians 14:33: “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.” Knowing that his second article would call for particular parameters for those ordained, White’s first article emphasized his continued conviction that churches whose organizational structures demanded creeds in order to maintain church unity would never succeed. However, White was also convinced that unity and order were demanded within the fellowship of believers. The anti-organizational convictions of the early Adventists needed modification, or at least nuance.

White set up his second article by saying he would be discussing “the calling, qualifications, and the duties of a gospel minister.” He then used a string of quotes from different New Testament works to support his convictions that “God calls men to the work of the ministry” and that those who go out to “teach all nations” should be able to baptize the people who repent and believe. “Why should repenting, believing souls wait six months, or even one day, to see whether they will backslide or not before being baptized? Rather let them have the benefit of this, and all other gospel ordinances, to keep them from backsliding. This seems to be gospel order.”

But then White asks: “Who should administer the ordinance of baptism? We have seen that this ordinance is closely connected with teaching. ‘Teach all nations, baptizing them,’ said our Lord. Then those, and those only, should administer this ordinance

who have been called of God to teach his word.” After finding support in Titus and 1 Timothy, White concluded: “From this we learn that the order of the gospel is that men who are 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. Not that the church has power to call men into the ministry, or that ordination makes them ministers of Jesus Christ; but it is the order of the gospel that those who are called to the ministry should be ordained, for important objects.” Then White listed three such important reasons: (1) “That those who go out into a cold world to teach the Word of God may know that they have the approbation and sympathy of ministering brethren of the church”; (2) “To produce and secure union in the church. The laying on of hands should be done, we think in behalf of the church. A united expression of the church in this thing would certainly have a tendency to unite the people of God”; and (3) “To shut a door against Satan.” This was a major concern, given the amount of space allocated to its explanation. New believers suffered because “false teachers” confused and distorted the teachings of the church. Those whose ministries were affirmed by the church must be distinguished from those preaching falsehood in order “to save the flock from imposition of this kind.” The article then included a string of Bible quotes proving that the qualifications of such teachers were clear from Scripture (references to 1 Timothy, Hebrews, Matthew, 1 Peter, Titus); and that their duties were preaching the Word with knowledge and boldness.

Other services ordaining ministers and deacons

Ordination to gospel ministry did not become a general practice among Sabbatharians until the autumn of 1853. . . . The key elements of the ordination service . . . were prayer and the laying on of hands by the other ministers. Thus there was nothing unique in the ordination service of Sabbatharian Adventists. They were quite in harmony with the practices of the evangelical churches of their time.

followed. According to George Knight in his chapter “Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination,” in *Women in Ministry: Biblical & Historical Perspectives* (Nancy Vyhmeister, editor, 1998, 106), “Ordination to gospel ministry did not become a general practice among Sabbatharians until the autumn of 1853.” Knight explains: “The key elements of the ordination service in these reports and the many others provided by the *Review* were prayer and the laying on of hands by the other ministers. Thus there was nothing unique in the ordination service of Sabbatharian Adventists. They were quite in harmony with the practices of the evangelical churches of their time” (Knight, 107).

Ordaining Deacons and Elders

The week after James White’s second “Gospel Order” article, H. S. Gurney, in a letter to White, wrote about his church having felt impressed to set apart two men as deacons in order to serve the Lord’s Supper when “the messengers are called to travel.” They saw their actions in harmony with “Gospel Order” and with Acts 6:1–7. In a Sabbath afternoon service, Frederick Wheeler “set apart

The threat of false teachers who confused believers and caused chaos in congregations was considered a major reason to set apart those who had received the church's official approval.

those brethren, by prayer and laying on of hands. While thus engaged, the Spirit of God was manifestly present, to bless. And we felt that in answer to prayer the work was ratified in the Heavenly Sanctuary. The peace of God rested upon us" (*Review and Herald*, Dec. 27, 1853).

By January 1855, new practical pastoral questions about church order had naturally grown out of several years of the "Gospel Order" practices advocated by James White in the pages of the denominational paper and supported by Ellen White in her work "Gospel Order" (see *A Supplement to Experience and Views*, printed in 1854 within *Early Writings*). John Byington asked Adventist readers: "Are Elders and Deacons to be appointed in every Church where the number, talent and graces of individuals are sufficient for the work? And if so, by whom should it be done? Should brethren who are traveling at large do it? It appears to me that the little Churches in many places are in a distracted and discouraged condition. The ordinances to a great extent are neglected. What shall be the remedy?" (*Review and Herald*, Jan. 23, 1855). The response was in the affirmative: "they should be set apart to their work by those of experience and sound judgment, whom God has called to labor in word and doctrine, after being selected by the voice of the church" (Jan. 23, 1855). Although it was not yet clear what the division of duties would

be between traveling ministers, elders, and deacons, the three-part language began to enter the church and is particularly confusing because initially *elder* seemed to refer to the traveling minister, then later it also meant someone whose primary task was the welfare of a local congregation. The pastoral epistles were used repeatedly in articles by both James White and J. B. Frisbie (see especially a series by Frisbie in *Review and Herald*, June-July 1856).

To expound on the tasks of the "elder" or "bishop," Frisbie used the language of "shepherd," who tended to the flock through teaching as well as exhorting. While the affirmation process paralleled that of the traveling minister—God gifted, the Holy Spirit gave authority, and the church gave official approval—the description of "elder" began to sound much more like the position of contemporary "pastors." In yet one more complicating nuance, Frisbie suggested a relationship between "elders" and "elderly men and women in the church" (July 3, 1856). Stated Frisbie: "The younger members of the church should esteem and call each other brother and sister, while the elders should be regarded as fathers and mothers. And would it not be well for the churches abroad to appoint at least one of their number, whose duty it shall be to have an earnest care for the little flock around them where they live, who may generally see that the meetings are appointed and led. One in whom the brethren have confidence, who may exhort, admonish, and watch for the best interest of the cause; who may have judgment, wisdom and piety, having their children in subjection."

With the emergence of local elders, Frisbie specified deacons as those who see to "the temporal wants of the church" (July 31, 1856). Phoebe (Romans 16:1–2) was referenced as textual support for this important work of "helper" to Paul and to the whole church. Deacons were "servants, helpers or laborers with the

apostles in the gospel.” While their role as ministers in the absence of itinerant preachers slipped away, deacons were still associated with the Lord’s supper as those who distributed the blessed bread and took care of the poor in the community. By March 1857, the office of deacon would be designated as “subordinate.” However, both elders and deacons continued to be set apart in ordination services.

It is fascinating to read the account (*Review and Herald*, Nov. 25, 1858) of a company in West Union, N.Y., with approximately twenty new Sabbathkeepers who were eager to set up a church. After an unspecified struggle among the group, R. F. Cottrell reported: “An overseer and a deacon were chosen with much unanimity, and set apart to their work by the laying on of hands. And, after midnight, in accordance with the apostolic example at Troas, we broke bread and enjoyed a heavenly sitting together in Christ Jesus.” The account assumed that, while Adventist leaders and itinerant preachers would occasionally stop by to encourage this group of new believers, the local church began when an elder (overseer) and deacon were set aside for the ministry of this new congregation.

Some Observations from These Early Years of the Post-Disappointment Adventist Movement:

1. Initially, probably due to Adventism’s imminent eschatology, ministerial duties were either performed by those already ordained in other congregations prior to joining the Advent Movement, or there was no distinction in the duties performed by clergy and non-clergy.
2. The first ordination, in 1851, seems to focus on the need for the minister to be able to lead out in the ordinances of the church. Since the minister had already baptized people, “ordinances” refers to leading out in the Lord’s Supper; ordinations in September 1853 were also understood as authorizing people to celebrate the “ordinances.”
3. Those identified as gifted preachers and teachers were initially “set apart” by the “laying on of hands.” Although not specified, documents seemed to assume that this act would be performed by ministers who had already been ordained. Ministers were typically itinerant preachers.
4. Itinerant preaching created the necessity for cards of official approval from the Advent Movement. (According to Loughborough, the issuing of cards began in 1853 with signatures by James White and Joseph Bates. See “The Church: Its Organization, Order and Discipline,” *Review and Herald*: 1907, 101.) In November 1853, the authority to preach was associated with ordination in order to have a way of dealing with teachers who were “not worthy.”
5. In December 1853, the importance of ordination to allow ministers to baptize was mentioned specifically.
6. Also in December 1853, the “laying on of hands” by the church in affirmation of its itinerant preachers was expressed by James White as an opportunity to foster church unity. As preachers went out to new places, they went with the affirmation and official approval of their church.
7. The threat of false teachers who confused believers and caused chaos in congregations is again emphasized in December 1853 and was considered a major reason to set apart those who had received the church’s official approval.
8. Pastoral needs in the interims between visiting preachers created the occasion for the

ordination of deacons. In the absence of itinerant preachers, these church leaders were authorized to lead out in the Lord's Supper and to care for other pastoral needs of the congregation.

9. As the number and size of Adventist churches grew, a distinction was made between traveling preachers (elders) and those who ministered to the needs of a local congregation (also called elders). Both types of elders were ordained.
10. The earliest descriptions of the acts of "setting apart" and the "laying on of hands" consistently acknowledged the presence of the Holy Spirit. The displays of the Spirit at the time of these ordinations reveal an Adventism that was open to a variety of religious experience and expression.
11. To track early Adventism's understanding of ordination reveals a community that was suspicious of hierarchical structures even as it came to acknowledge the necessity of structure for its survival.
12. Early Adventist literature discussing ordination consistently emphasized the importance of acting in accordance with the New Testament and, in many ways, the development within Adventism from itinerant preaching ministers, to deacons caring for the needs of the community, to elders as stationary ministers paralleled development of the early Christian church.
13. There was flexibility in the early Adventist Movement. The new needs of a developing church required adaptation in approaches to ministry. These adaptations, in harmony with Scripture and mission, were not only supported but also advanced by both James and Ellen White.

No. 13 is not only true of the inclusion of traveling ministers, deacons, and elders. Ellen White would later encourage the ordaining of women and medical missionaries. In this July 9, 1895, statement in *Review and Herald*, she says:

Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands. In some cases they will need to counsel with the church officers of the minister; but if they are devoted women, maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in the church. This is another means of strengthening and building up the church. We need to branch out more in our methods of labor... . Not a hand should be bound, not a soul discouraged, not a voice should be hushed; let every individual labor, privately or publicly, to help forward this grand work.

Thirteen years later, in 1908, Ellen White recorded this statement (Manuscript 5, 1908):

"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" (Evangelism, 546).

A shifting approach to ministry within the Advent Movement had ramifications for women in ministry.

1840s—Millerite-Early Advent Movement

Women were very much involved in preaching and evangelism in anticipation of the return of Jesus:

- James White—had been an ordained minister of the Christian Connection
- Frederick Wheeler—had been an ordained minister in the Methodist Episcopal Church
- John Byington—had been an ordained minister in the Methodist Church
- A. S. Hutchins—had been a Freewill Baptist minister
- J. G. Matteson—had been a Baptist
- Roswell F. Cottrell—had been a Seventh Day Baptist

The following women are recorded as having served in a preaching ministry during this time (taken from “Route to the Ordination of Women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church: Two Paths,” by Bert Haloviak, March 18, 1985):

- Olive Maria Rice
- Lucy Stoddard
- Emily C. Clemens
- Sarah J. Paine
- Clorinda S. Minor

1850s–1860s—First Major Shift

An atmosphere of freedom to preach and use gifts, along with the itinerant nature of ministry and a resistance to organize, shifted to a sense of need for credentials due to “false teachers” and the needs of the members of local congregations.

While many Millerite women (and men) leaders were drawn into fanaticism, Ellen White continued as a leader within the Advent Movement. The Advent Movement did have to defend, at least occasionally, women’s freedom to preach:

We are informed on the authority of divine revelation that male and female are one in Christ

*Jesus; that in the relation in which they both stand to him, the distinction is as completely broken down as between Jew and Gentile, bond and free.... Experience has proved that many females have possessed the natural qualifications for speaking in public, the range of thought, the faculty of communicating their ideas in appropriate language, the sympathy with suffering humanity, a deep and lively sense of gratitude to God, and of the beauty of holiness, a zeal for the honor of God, and the happiness of his rational creatures—all these are found among the female part of the human family, as frequently and as eminently as among the men. Then let no stumbling-block be thrown in their way, but let them fill the place that God calls them to fill, let them not be bound down to silence by church rules (S. C. Welcome, “Shall the Women Keep Silence in the Churches?” *Review and Herald*, Feb 23, 1860, 110).*

James White’s concerns about the lack of control of itinerant preachers, who were causing chaos and confusion in new companies of believers, led him to the call for more church structure. This was met with resistance, given the anti-organizational convictions of the Millerites and the early Advent Movement. It had been the practice in the formation of the movement not to embrace language outside of Scripture. However, White defended his position: “True, the Bible does not say in so many words that we should have yearly meetings; neither does it say that we should have a weekly paper, a steam printing press, that we should publish books, build places of worship and send out tents. Christ says, ‘Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set upon an hill cannot be hid,’ ‘Let your light so shine before men,’ etc. He does not enter into the particulars just how this shall be done. The living

church of God is left to humbly move forward in this great work, praying for divine guidance, and acting upon the most efficient plan for its accomplishment” (White, “Yearly Meetings,” *Review and Herald*, July 21, 1859). Later White would repeat some of these same points, concluding with, “We believe it safe to be governed by the following RULE: All means which, according to sound judgment, will advance the cause of truth, and are not forbidden by plain scripture declarations, should be employed” (“Making Us a Name,” *Review and Herald*, April 26, 1860).

The next year, on Oct. 6, 1861, after the Michigan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists was established, it was decided that local churches would issue “ministerial papers” to ordained ministers. “It was also voted to grant to all Seventh-day Adventist ministers in the State who were in good standing, ministerial papers, consisting of a certificate of ordination, and credentials, signed by the chairman and clerk of the conference, which credentials should be renewed annually” (J. N. Loughborough, *Pacific Union Recorder* Vol. 11, No. 45 [June 6, 1912]).

At the 1862 annual meeting of the Michigan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, further resolutions regarding ordained ministers were passed. George Knight states: “First, it took a giant step forward when it decided that ministers would be assigned to their field of labor by the conference. Before that time every minister went where he thought he might be needed. The result was that some churches were consistently neglected while others at times had surplus leadership. Second, at the yearly meetings ministers would report their labors for each week of the year. And third, ordained ministers coming into the Adventist faith from other denominations would no longer automatically be able to perform ministerial functions in Adventist congregations. Such ministers

would now have to ‘give proof of being called to preach the message, and be ordained among us’” (Knight, 110).

On May 21, 1863, the church organized itself as the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Regarding ordination of ministers: “What had been developed over the previous decade and had been institutionalized by the Michigan Conference became the pattern for all local conferences affiliated with the General Conference” (Knight, 111). Knight concludes, “The Sabbatarian approach to ordination was pragmatic and eclectic rather than built upon a tightly-reasoned theology of ordination.... ordination was something that Adventists did, not something to which they gave a lot of theoretical thought” (111).

1870s–1880s—Second Major Shift

A second shift took place when the primary emphasis on preaching and tent evangelism moved to an emphasis on stationary ministries and local churches.

The first examples of local ministry (1860s) were deacons, elders, and teams of couples. One such couple was Brother and Sister Cornell (Iowa). After her husband finished preaching in a particular town and moved onto the next, Sister Cornell continued to work doing house visits, “defending the truth” in conversations and bearing “responsibilities of the work in the midst of young disciples” (James White, *Review and Herald*, March 8, 1860). “My views and feelings are that the minister’s 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” (James White, *Review and Herald*, Aug. 13, 1867, 136).

Women with a ministerial “license to preach” were involved in preaching and tent evangelism.

- 1871—After Ellen White addressed her concern for ministerial training, it was voted at the General Conference session that “means should be taken to encourage and properly instruct men and women for the work of teaching the word of God” (Bert Haloviak, *Actions of the 1871 GC Session*, in “Longing for the Pastorate,” 4). “Ellen White was informed concerning the licensing of women ministers. She routinely involved herself in the examinations that occurred prior to the issuing of licenses and she attended conference proceedings where ministerial licenses were issued to women” (“Longing for the Pastorate,” 9).
- 1873—Sarah Lindsey was licensed by New York-Pennsylvania Conference
- 1878—Mrs. E. S. Lane was licensed by Michigan Conference. In 1872–1873 Ellen Lane began to assist her ailing husband in ministry in Ohio; they participated in many evangelistic efforts. In 1876 they began the work in Virginia; she would preach to hundreds at a time (650 people reported at one gathering; at another the United Brethren Church was so crowded that only half those wishing to attend could get into the church).

Within seven years from the time the newly established Seventh-day Adventist Church first issued ministerial licenses, women were receiving them:

When the Michigan Conference met a month after the death of Ellen Lane’s husband, she was again voted her ‘license to preach.’ She was voted the ministerial license for the next seven years. Thus Mrs. Lane continued her work as a full-fledged denominational minister, except for her lack of ordination, which prevented her from organizing

churches, baptizing, or leading the ordinance services (“Longing for the Pastorate,” 11).

In 1882 Ellen Lane was one of two women among the original 24 members of the Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial Association of Michigan.

- 1878—Julia Owen was licensed by Kentucky-Tennessee Conference
- 1879—Hattie Enoch was licensed by Kansas Conference. Three years later, George Butler would report to Ellen White that Elder Cook, a minister in Kansas who would soon be the conference president, said that he “thinks she [Hattie Enoch] is a better laborer in such things than any minister in the state” (George Butler to Ellen White, May 24, 1881).
- 1881—Helen Morse was licensed by Illinois Conference
- 1881—Ida Ballenger was licensed by Illinois Conference
- 1884—Mrs. R. Hill was licensed by Kansas Conference
- 1884—Anna M. Johnson was licensed by Minnesota Conference
- 1884—Libbie Collins was licensed by Minnesota Conference
- 1886—Ida Hibben was licensed by Illinois Conference
- 1887—Mrs Ruie Hill was licensed by Kansas Conference
- 1887—Mrs. S. E. Pierce was licensed by Vermont Conference

For additional examples, see list in Appendix B of Josephine Benton’s book *Called by God* (1990).

Although the church did not agree on the question of their ordination, they were considered within the ministry of the church; they were not laymembers. Women were licensed and paid by

Women were involved in each aspect of ministry as the denomination in the late 1870s shifted its primary focus to emphasize the needs of the local churches.

the local conferences or the General Conference from tithe funds. They followed the same path to the ministry as that followed by men. The fact that some women were licensed for seven or eight years consecutively indicates that the local conferences considered them successful in ministry (“Longing for the Pastorate,” 7).

Ellen White and Ministerial Reform: Needs of Local Church Ministry

Both James and Ellen White expressed caution against embracing evangelistic efforts to the neglect of local congregations. “It is not enough to preach to men; we must pray with them and for them; we must not hold ourselves coldly aloof from them, but come in sympathy close to the souls we wish to save, visit and converse with them. The minister who conducts the work outside the pulpit in a proper manner will accomplish tenfold more than he who confines his labor to the desk” (Ellen G. White, “An Appeal to the Ministers,” *Review and Herald*, Aug. 8, 1878).

This second shift emphasized the needs of the local churches and, as had been the case since the

Millerite movement, women would contribute to this new phase of ministry:

“Women can be the instruments of righteousness, rendering holy service. ... If there were twenty women where now there is one...we should see many more converted to the truth. The refining, softening influence of Christian women is needed in the great work of preaching the truth. ... Zealous and continuous diligence in our sisters toiling for the spread of the truth would be wholly successful, and would astonish us with its results” (*Review and Herald*, Jan. 2, 1879, 1).

Women were involved in each aspect of ministry as the church shifted its primary focus. It was not surprising that two resolutions would be discussed at the 1881 General Conference Session:

“RESOLVED, That all candidates for license and ordination should be examined with reference to their intellectual and spiritual fitness for the successful discharge of the duties which will devolve upon them as licentiates and ordained ministers.

RESOLVED, That females possessing the necessary qualifications to fill that position, may, with perfect propriety, be set apart by ordination to the work of the Christian ministry” (*Review and Herald*, Dec. 20, 1881, 392).

While the first resolution was adopted, the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist church awaits the second. ■



Kendra Haloviak Valentine, Ph.D.

Kendra Haloviak Valentine is an associate professor of New Testament studies and chair of the Department of Biblical Studies at the H. M. S. Richards Divinity School at La Sierra University. Haloviak Valentine holds a doctorate in New Testament studies and ethics from The Graduate Theological Union at Berkeley, a master's in New Testament studies from Andrews University, and a baccalaureate degree in theology and English from Columbia Union College. Her recent publications include "The Book of Revelation," in *The Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, Joel Green, ed. (Baker Academic, 2011) and *Signs to Life: Reading and Responding to John's Gospel* (Signs Publishing, 2013).

- 1 Benton, Josephine. *Called by God* (Smithsburg, MD: Blackberry Hill Publishers, 1990).
- 2 Dick, Everett. *Founders of the Message* (Takoma Park, MD: Review and Herald, 1938).
- 3 Fortin, J. H. Denis. "Ordination in the Writings of Ellen G. White," *Women in Ministry: Biblical & Historical Perspectives*. Nancy Vyhmeister, ed. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998.
- 4 Froom, Le Roy. *Movement of Destiny* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1971.)
- 5 Haloviak, Bert. "A Place at the Table: Women and the Early Years," *The Welcome Table: Setting a Place for Ordained Women*. Patricia A. Habada and Rebecca Frost Brillhart, eds. (Langley Park, MD: TEAM Press, 1995).
- 6 "A Brief Sketch of SDA Ministerial Training" (unpublished manuscript). April 26, 1988.
- 7 "Longing for the Pastorate: Ministry in 19th Century Adventism" (unpublished manuscript). 1988.
- 8 "Route to the Ordination of Women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church: Two Paths" (unpublished manuscript). 1985.
- 9 Knight, George R. "Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination, 1844-1863," *Women in Ministry: Biblical & Historical Perspectives*. Nancy Vyhmeister, ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998).
- 10 Loughborough, J. N. *Pacific Union Recorder*, Vol. 11:45, June 6, 1912, 1-2.
- 11 "Ordination," *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, Revised Edition, Don Neufeld, ed. Commentary Reference Series Vol. 10 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1976).
- 12 *Review and Herald*, Issues from 1851-1881.
- 13 Watts, Kit, "Appendix 5," *The Welcome Table: Setting a Place for Ordained Women*. Patricia A. Habada and Rebecca Frost Brillhart, eds. (Langley Park, MD: TEAM Press, 1995).