

LONGING FOR THE PASTORATE: MINISTRY IN 19TH CENTURY ADVENTISM

Introduction. Would Ellen White today counsel the SDA church to ordain qualified women to pastoral ministry? While the question may be presumptuous, this writer believes that the guidance of the Lord through the past ministry of Ellen White allows that question to be answered with a resounding yes!

The key must lie in Ellen White's perception of ministry. And it is clear that Ellen White favored an active role for women in ministry and maintained no inhibition against the act of ordaining women in the church. Indeed, she actually advocated ordaining women to the most vital ministry of the 1890s, the Christian Help ministry.

Since there were no settled pastors in the Adventist church of the 19th century, it becomes necessary to examine the nature of ministry during that era in order to translate its principles to our age. This writer has attempted to survey the relevant ministries during that past century and has found no ministry within the SDA church that its women did not actively participate in and receive Ellen White's fullest support in that participation. Ellen White clearly considered women as full-fledged ministers in the 19th century SDA concept of ministry. The relevant thing to Ellen White was upon what women could do as ministers and not upon the question of ordination.

An examination of ministry in 19th-century Adventism reveals an intimate relationship between its central theological focus and definition of ministry. When the church centered primarily upon a law-oriented, doctrine-proving concept, pastoral-caring functions were sharply downplayed or not present. When its orientation became more Christ-centered, that perspective was dearly reflected in its perception of ministry.

Evangelists or Pastors: "Conversion" of James White. The SDA church, in its initial understanding of ministry, focused entirely upon the newly-discovered third angel's message and effectively evangelized midwestern America during the

1850s and 1860s. James White made one of the earliest attempts to define Adventist ministry: the duty of the minister was “to preach the word, to teach faithfully the plain declarations of the word of God” and when that initial duty was performed the minister should move on. He urged SDA ministers: “Should you enter into all the particulars of the duty of your brethren, you would be sure to get in the way of ministering angels, and take their work out of their hands.” If evangelists became “pastors” and settled down in the churches, they would emulate the fallen churches because “the church would look to you instead of the Lord.”¹ The Millerite experience, where many believers had been disfellowshipped, reminded Adventists of church authoritarianism and was a factor moving SDAs away from stationary pastorates.

Within its initial evangelistic perspective, however, there were attempts to incorporate a caring, pastoral ministry. It appears that women, as members of husband-wife evangelistic teams, performed such roles. A number of teams functioned during the 1860s and '70s and James White described a typical effort:

Iowa seems to be a very encouraging field of labor. . . . The way is open for Bro Cornell to labor successfully in this part of the State. Sister Cornell has well acted her part. The mode of warfare is something as follows: Bro Cornell goes out alone into a new place, perhaps puts up at the tavern, preaches a few days, when friends appear to invite him to their houses; and when the work is well under way. Sister C[ornell] joins her husband, and labors from house to house as they are invited. And when Bro Cornell's work is done, it is a good place for Sister C to remain and defend the truth in private conversations, and bear responsibilities of the work in the midst of young disciples. In this way both can bear a part in the good work.²

The woman member of the husband-wife team was vital then and would translate into a major role today. Throughout most of the 19th century, the woman partner in the husband-wife team came the closest to our understanding of pastoral ministry. The husband-wife team sought to combine the need of the church for both evangelistic and pastoral ministries. James White considered the ministry of the woman important to this extent:

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.³

While James White continued to define his concept of ministry throughout the 1860s primarily in evangelistic terms, the church began to see more clearly a necessity for pastoral ministry: churches were being disbanded, children were rejecting the religion of their parents, churches were being plagued by disunity. So, attempts were made to enhance pastoring. Conferences began to district their territories to allow for systematic visiting of churches, a column was established in the Review that reported “Labor Among the Churches.” quarterly meetings of local churches were attended by ministers and pastoral concerns would be the primary focus.

It appears to have been Ellen White counsels that pushed the church toward major ministerial reform. Mrs White made significant addresses concerning ministry at both the 1870 and 1871 GC sessions and sought to move the church from its preoccupation with a debating ministry toward more pastoral concerns. In the aftermath of Mrs White's urging for a more “qualified” ministry, the session established a committee to outline a course of study for ministers.⁴ In addition, a ministerial lecture course for both men and women who were planning ministerial labor was held after the 1871 session. It is interesting that the price of membership in the Minister's Lecture Association was \$5 for men and \$3 for women. James White outlined the purpose of the ministerial lecture course: “There are a hundred young men and young women who should attend a thorough course of lectures” that would “qualify them to teach the word to others.”⁵

At the 1871 GC session, Ellen White seemed to exhibit a new focus to the assembled ministers:

I never realized more than I do today, the exalted character of the work, its sacredness and holiness, and how important that we should be fit for the work. . . .

There is a word more I had almost forgotten. It is in regard to the influence the minister should exert in his preaching. It is not merely to stand in the desk. His work is but just begun there. It is to enter into the different families, and carry Christ there; to carry his sermons there; to carry them out in his actions and

his words. As he visits a family, he should inquire into the condition of that family. Is he the shepherd of the flock? The work of a shepherd is not all done in the desk. He should talk with all the members of the flock; with the parents, to learn their standing; and with the children, to learn theirs. A minister should feed the flock over which God has made him overseer.⁶

Apparently reacting to the Ellen White admonitions, the 1871 GC session delegates voted that “means should be taken to encourage and properly instruct men and women for the work of teaching the word of God.” The resolution called for a course “to instruct our devoted young men and young women, all over the land. in the principles of present truth, and the best methods of teaching them to the people.”⁷

In 1873, George Butler, president of the General Conference, defined the purpose of the ministerial lectures as “to furnish instruction in the theory of our faith to those who wish to enter into the ministry immediately” and in that same issue of the Review the General Conference Committee told why the SDA church was then allowing its women to receive training and licensing to the ministry: “It is well known to most of the readers of the Review that our cause stands in great want of laborers properly qualified to present our views to the people who are everywhere ready to listen to them.” The central administrative body of the church “believed there are those among us who have ability sufficient, could they have the proper instruction” to become successful evangelists of the SDA message.⁸ This appears to have been the earliest attempt to provide formal training for the ministry. It would be several years before Battle Creek College was established for that purpose. About this time, the New York-Pennsylvania Conference licensed Sarah Lindsey, who was thus officially qualified to preach and hold evangelistic meetings.⁹ We thus see that between 1865, when James White defined the ministry and 1871. an apparent widening of the SDA ministerial doors to women. They received training and were licensed as ministers.

By the last year of his life, James White seems to have moved ever closer to a perspective of ministry that more nearly anticipates 20th century views.

His concept seems to have been conditioned by his increasingly Christ-centered focus. James called upon the ministry to “preach Christ more,” and proclaimed that he believed “that we have a testimony for our people at this time, relative to the exalted character of Christ, and His willingness and power to save.” He believed that the church was focusing too prominently on “extending the work and leaving our ministers in want and discouragement and our churches to scatter.”¹⁰ In one of his last articles, he reflected the dilemma of the church with its need to make constant compromises between evangelistic and pastoral concerns:

Our efforts as a people should be directed to hold what we have, and gain all we can in new fields. But, at present, we are evidently losing nearly as much in old fields of labor as we are gaining in the new. ... It is now evident that we are occupying too much ground. ... In the present state of things, should not our ablest men, those who have the ability to build up the cause, as a rule, labor where they can accomplish most?¹¹

D M Canright, then considered one of Adventism's most perceptive and successful ministers, observed that while it was one thing to plant a church, it was “quite another thing to water it and cultivate it, so that it will continue to grow and bear good fruit.” He concluded that both must be done. “The history of our own churches, like that of all others, shows that they must be cared for if they are expected to thrive.”¹²

It was while James White and the church were moving toward a more pastoral orientation that White died. Canright made this observation about the last phase of the ministry of James White: “As all will remember, wherever he preached the past few months, he dwelt largely upon faith in Christ and the boundless love of God.”¹³ The aftermath of the Christo-centric focus of 1888 would also move the SDA church toward a more pastoral orientation in its definition of ministry.

The Question of Scriptural Authority. An intense analysis of the question of scriptural authority in matters of church polity arose during the discussions about church organization in the late 1850s and early 1860s. Major arguments favoring organization were pragmatic and designed to prevent the “apostasy, disunion and peril” then troubling the church. Organization was also proposed to

prevent additional church buildings from being lost because of the failure to register church property with the state. Those opposed considered that such ties with the state were not authorized by Scripture and would move the church toward “Babylon.” Opposing that rationale, James White argued: “We should not be afraid of that system which is not opposed by the Bible, and is approved by sound sense.” He continued:

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.¹⁴

That argument by James White was rejected by very prominent SDA ministers. Those who opposed White claimed to be the voice of traditional Adventism and were indeed so, since their position regarding “Babylon” had been the position of the church for over a decade. R F Cottrell, major spokesman for this group, argued against incorporating as a religious body because of lack of scriptural mandate. He further argued that the church would thus have to assume an official name and since all scriptural names were taken, the church would accept an unscriptural name.¹⁵ Cottrell mounted other arguments that convinced him that insuring church property was anti-scriptural.¹⁶ T J Butler, who later led the Gilboa, Ohio, church out of the denomination, presented the resolution of that church to the 1860 general conference: “Resolved, That we are highly favorable to such organization, and such only, as the Bible authorizes and recognizes.”¹⁷

It was in response to this widely debated question of scriptural authority that James White formulated the following general principle that emerged as the response of the early SDA church:

If it be asked. Where are your plain texts of scripture for holding church property legally? we reply. The Bible does not furnish any. . . . The church is left to move forward in the great work, praying for divine guidance, acting upon the most efficient

plans for its accomplishment. 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.¹⁸

Mrs White lent her support to that position and to the pragmatic necessity for church organization in referring to a vision of August 3, 1861:

I was shown that some have been fearing they should become Babylon if they organize; but the churches in Central New York have been perfect Babylon, confusion. And now unless the churches are so organized that they can carry out and enforce order, they have nothing to hope for in the future. They must scatter into fragments. Previous teachings have nourished the elements of disunion.¹⁹

It will be observed that Ellen White claimed divine authority as she involved herself in the church policy issue of organization and she did so despite the position that many prominent Adventists had taken that for the church to move on that issue, explicit scriptural authority was required. It would appear that Mrs White treated such issues of practical church polity on a different level from that of doctrinal issues. It was in matters of the practical outworking of scriptural principles that Mrs White claimed specific authority within the church. Mrs White, more than anyone within the church, worked to shape the SDA concept of ministry.

Women and Ministry: the Ministerial “License to Preach.” Over 20 SDA women were licensed as ministers during the period from the 1870s to the ending of the 19th century. 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 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.

The nature of the ministerial license had been defined prior to the reception of women of that license. While some of the pioneer ministers were

ordained before 1844, a more formal means of determining membership in the SDA ministry began with the general organization of the church from 1861 to 1863.²⁰ The Michigan Conference Committee in 1872 concisely defined the license to preach. Its definition was consistent with that of all conferences:

In reference to our young licentiates, it should be understood that the proper place for them to labor is in new fields. They have received licenses to try their gift, in order to ascertain if they are qualified to present the truth. The only proper place for them to do this is in new fields.²¹

The above statement clearly reveals the lack of pastoral focus in this early phase of denominational understanding of ministry. It is apparent that the way that the ministry was tested was through evangelism. It was during this early period that a number of SDA women who held the ministerial license proved themselves successful evangelists and thus proved their ministry as the church then defined ministry.

In 1873, President George Butler again evidenced the official status that the ministerial license carried:

[Conference Committees] should be exceedingly careful not to stand in the way of those who could help the cause, but should encourage such, while they should not grant licenses or credentials until they have some evidence that the applicant would be of real benefit to the cause. In case of those with whom we are unacquainted, and who know but little of our doctrines or the spirit of our work, we had better wait till we can act understandingly. A person who goes forth duly accredited with a license to represent us may, in presenting our views, leave impressions which will ever keep those receiving them from having favorable views of us. . . . We are in crying need of laborers, but we want the right kind.²²

The Michigan Conference reflected the general importance in which the church held to the issuing of official ministerial credentials:

WHEREAS, We learn to our great regret that some of our churches have encouraged individuals to preach for them who, either because of unsoundness in matters of doctrine or on account of some other disqualification, have not been licensed, or have had licenses or credentials withheld from them; therefore—

RESOLVED, That we express it as the sense of this Conference that it is the duty of all the churches belonging thereto to respect its action in this matter by refusing to encourage individuals to preach to them who have not been licensed, or who have had their licenses or credentials withheld from them [except

by the full approval of the Conference Committee], Passed as amended.²³

The license to preach or ministerial license was thus taken seriously by the church. In 1878 the Michigan Conference renewed the ministerial license of Mrs E S Lane and that same year, Julia Owen received a license from the Kentucky-Tennessee Conference. Both were wives of ordained ministers and had exhibited a calling to ministerial labor.²⁴ Kansas and Minnesota joined the list of conferences licensing women in 1879 and Illinois issued licenses to Helen Morse and Ida Ballenger in 1881. By the time of the GC session of 1881, at least six conferences had issued ministerial licenses to a dozen or so women ministers.

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. In addition, reports concerning the issuing of ministerial licenses appeared regularly in the Review. At the Kansas Conference of 1879, the committee on credentials and licenses made its initial report after which it was observed, "Sister White spoke at some length on the subject of licenses." At the afternoon meeting, the committee submitted further report that contained ten additional names, including that of Hattie Enoch. In 1893, Mrs White spoke approvingly of the ministerial license held by Dr Margaret Caro of New Zealand, observing that "she has a ministerial license and bears many burdens of their church at Napier. She speaks to the people, is intelligent and every way capable."²⁵

Two of the original 24 members inducted into the Michigan Ministerial Association in 1882 were licensed women ministers. One of those, Ellen Lane, was called upon to make presentations before that association. The association was open for membership to "any ordained or licensed minister of the SDA Michigan Conference" and its purpose was the "mutual instruction and improvement of its members in all that pertains to the work of the gospel minister."²⁶ Women

continued to be licensed by the SDA church as the ministry continued to be upgraded throughout the 19th century.

Various issues concerning licensing, ordination and general policies were discussed at the 1884 and 1885 GC sessions and resulted in the 1886 publication “The Church: Its Organization, Ordinances, and Discipline,” by J H Waggoner. Waggoner commented on the ministerial license:

The Conferences always give licentiates to understand that the first giving of a license is only a trial. ... By giving him a license [however], they strengthen his conviction that it [is] his duty to preach.²⁷

By 1881, George Butler observed that Smith Sharp, president of the Kansas Conference, made special use of licentiates in a newly-developing concept of ministry that focused more along pastoral lines. Butler made this comment to Ellen White concerning those licentiates:

Among these are Marshall Enoch and his wife who is a public speaker and who labors with her husband. Elder Cook [Kansas minister, soon to become president of the conference] thinks she is a better laborer in such things than any minister in the State.²⁸

Butler observed that there were other “promising licentiates coming up” in Kansas and mentioned “a young lady, a Presbyterian, a school teacher, who was candidate for County Superintendent of Common School.”²⁹

Ellen Lane Example. Mrs Ellen Lane began her ministerial experience during her husband's ministry in Ohio. Initially assisting him during a time of illness, Mrs Lane attained increasing proficiency as a speaker. As early as 1872, the Review gave reports of various discourses by Mrs Lane. She took over her husband's evangelistic meetings in 1873 when he became ill with diphtheria. Beginning in 1874, the workers' reports that appeared in the Review are no longer signed solely by E B Lane, but are jointly written. The husband-wife teams of the Lane's and Corliss' pioneered the work in Virginia, where there was not one known SDA in 1876. Mrs Lane was certainly considered a minister in her own right. Notice these reports from Virginia signed by J O Corliss and E B Lane. They dearly reveal that non-Adventists respected her ministry. At times she was

able to hold separate meetings to extend the evangelistic labors of the group. Mrs Lane was indeed a full-fledged minister within the evangelistic definition of ministry. It can be seen that she was also involved in the pastoral definition of ministry that was being more and more consistently advocated by Ellen White:

Our average congregations are about sixty. There is great excitement over the Sabbath question. Mrs Lane is holding prayer-meetings from house to house, to get the young and others into the work of praying and speaking in meeting. She has had excellent success.³⁰

During the last week we have held 10 meetings in the tent, and Mrs Lane has held three at Soliloquy.³¹

On Sunday, Mrs Lane addressed an assembly numbering 650. This we regard a large congregation for a country place; for our tent is pitched on a farm. Some 20 have decided to keep the Sabbath, and we expect others.³²

Mrs Lane by urgent request, spoke in a United Brethren church, at Grove Hill; the house was crowded, and only about half were able to get in.³³

Mrs Lane's husband died while he was conducting meetings in Camden, Michigan, while she led meetings at Casnovia. Both Mrs White and Mrs Lane were widowed on the same day and both continued their work long after the deaths of their husbands. The definition of ministry in the 19th century SDA church allowed this significant Ellen White observation to be realized:

I was instructed that there are matters that need to be considered. Injustice has been done to women who labor just as devotedly as their husbands, and who are recognized by God as being as necessary to the work of ministry as their husbands.³⁴ The method of paying men-laborers and not their wives, is a plan not after the Lord's order. Injustice is thus done. A mistake is made. The Lord does not favor this plan. This arrangement, if carried out in our Conferences, is liable to discourage our sisters from qualifying themselves for the work they should engage in. . . . The Lord has put His Spirit upon them both. If the husband should die, and leave his wife, she is fitted to continue her work in the cause of God. and receive wages for the labor she performs.³⁵

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. She was a member of the Michigan Ministerial Association, attended ministers Bible Schools, led out in quarterly meetings, preached evangelistic sermons on all phases of denominational teaching, lectured to large SDA and non-SDA audiences on health and temperance, conducted revival meetings, made pastoral visits to languishing churches, maintained excellent contacts (through her interest in temperance) with many non-SDA churches, and was even considered non-threatening enough to be asked by fellow ministers to finish their evangelistic meetings when they were called elsewhere. In the fullest sense of the meaning of ministry in the 19th century, Mrs E S Lane was an SDA minister.

Women and Ministerial Reform. In August of 1878, Mrs White made an urgent call to the church for ministerial reform and the rationale focused upon Christ. “I see that great reformation must take place in the ministry before it shall be what God would have it,” Mrs White informed the church. She again analyzed the results from the debaters that caused ministers to “behave like theatrical performers,” as they preached “too many long doctrinal sermons” without saying anything “of the love and compassion of Jesus Christ.” She made this call for a more compassionate definition of ministry:

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.³⁶

Concomitant with a general examination of the nature of ministry came the question of the role of women in ministry and ordination. Shortly after the Ellen White call for reform, the 1878 GC session issued two resolutions concerning ministry:

RESOLVED, That those who apply for a license to preach the third angel's message, should, before they receive a license, be examined by a competent committee in regard to their doctrinal and educational qualifications.

RESOLVED, That we have a committee of three to suggest a course of study for all our ministers, that committee to report at some future meeting of this session.³⁷

The fact that women continued to be licensed as SDA ministers after passage of these resolutions further evidences their status as full-fledged ministers. Meeting at about the same time as the 1878 GC, the Michigan Conference approved a resolution that clearly had pastoral implications. Ministers were no longer to roam widely throughout their state, but were to labor within an assigned section of the field for the entire year. The rationale was explained:

If a man embraces the truth, he should be looked after, visited, and instructed until he becomes thoroughly settled in all the principles of the faith. If eight or ten or more receive the truth, they need constant watching and care for the first six months at least.

All over the country we find little companies that have been brought into the truth by a tent effort or a month's course of lectures, and then the minister has left them. No one has visited them again for six months, and sometimes not for a whole year. The result is always the same.³⁸

It was in December of 1878 that Stephen Haskell, considered by Ellen White as one of the major denominational leaders on scriptural analysis, was asked by "Brother" White³⁹ to provide an analysis of the role of women in biblical times. After a lengthy analysis of the prominence of prophetesses during Old and New Testament periods, Haskell turned to the Pauline writings and emphasized Romans 16 in affirming that "Paul has very much to say about women laboring in the gospel." Haskell quoted the 19th century commentator Bloomfield:

According to the constitution of the primitive church, there was an order of women discharging part of the public business of the church consisting of two kinds, (1) Elderly women presiding over and superintending the morals of the other female Christians; (2) Deaconesses who discharge some of the offices of the ministry, as baptizing the female converts; and who also collected and distributed the contributions for the relief of the sick and poor females, besides other offices less important.⁴⁰

Haskell observed that there were at least six women mentioned in Romans 16 as laborers: "Three in the 12th verse which labored much in the Lord." He interpreted that "those who are called laborers and helpers are spoken of as addicting themselves to the work of the ministry" and concluded that Phoebe "and certain women traveled to different churches and labored in a manner which was

especially to assist the women especially to build up some kind of enterprise which involved means.”⁴¹

In his analysis and from the commentator he quoted, Haskell was certainly considering a major role for women that would involve such ministerial duties as baptizing women and other pastoral functions. He also seemed prepared to see women serving as elders to local congregations.

Ellen White also looked for a more pastoral, personalized ministry that more directly involved women. In early 1879, she urged:

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 continued diligence in our sisters toiling for the spread of the truth would be wholly successful, and would astonish us with its results.⁴²

Mrs White focused upon another phase of ministry that would attain ever increasing prominence in the SDA church for the remainder of the 19th century:

We are lacking in deeds of sympathy and benevolence, in sacred and social ministering to the needy, the oppressed, and the suffering. Women who can work are needed now, women who are not self-important, but meek and lowly of heart, who will work with the meekness of Christ wherever they can find work to do for the salvation of souls.⁴³

She wrote to Haskell that “there must be more visiting the churches and caring for those already raised up” and expressed to her family her ideas of a new definition of ministry: “There are needed not only ministers, but those who can act as missionaries.—men and women of good understanding, of moral worth with moral backbone who can circulate around among the people and shed light, precious light everywhere.”⁴⁴ Mrs White appears to be calling for both men and women to serve as itinerant pastors during the era when there were no stationary pastors.

When Mrs White observed a tendency for an elder in a local church to “dictate and control matters” to the detriment of the sisters within that church, she suggested: “It is not always men who are best adapted to the successful

management of a church.”⁴⁵ In the setting of the times, the premise that women could “successful[ly] manage” the affairs of a local church strongly suggests her assumption that they could serve as local elders. In the 19th century setting, when there were no stationary pastors, church elders were the local managers of the church. It would appear that Mrs White, along with Haskell, considered that women were eligible for major roles in church ministry. In 1882 she perceived that colporter work was a valuable preparation for both men and women for it was a work "which will educate men and women to do pastoral labor."⁴⁶

The Question of Ordination. The following resolution was discussed at the 1881 GC session: “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.” Since 1878 various tests had been applied to candidates for the ministry. They were examined concerning their doctrinal and educational qualifications. Scriptural knowledge, spiritual well-being and success in ministry. All during this period women continued to be licensed by the state conferences. The resolution thus strongly implies that at least its framers considered that there were women who did indeed possess the necessary qualifications for ordination to the Christian ministry. The qualification of women was not the issue; the question that was debated was the “perfect propriety” of ordaining women. If women had not been considered ministers, the issue of their ordination could not have arisen.⁴⁷

It has been argued that the silence of Ellen White concerning the 1881 resolution offers greater evidence that she considered rejection of ordaining women a proper decision than that she believed the church had done a disservice in not ordaining its women. After all, did not Ellen White consistently speak out against injustice within the church? Because of the importance of the issue that surfaced at the 1881 GC, it is useful to examine the context of that session.

Mrs White did not attend the 1881 session. Besides the recent death of her husband, there were perhaps other factors that kept her away. Her son, Willie White, then 27, was an astute observer of the session, however. He had attended GC sessions since 1870 and was active as a delegate since 1877. White reported that delegates at the 1881 session had lined up in competing “progressive” and “conservative” camps and there was “likely to [be] lively times” before the session was over.⁴⁸

Disunity within the denomination was rampant in 1881. The situation was so perilous at the headquarters location that Mrs White wrote in April of 1881 that she could not “see any way to help matters.” Indeed, she reported that she “dare not give counsel, even to my brethren. It is a perilous time. There was never such a state of things as now in Battle Creek.”⁴⁹ The burning issues of the school situation at Battle Creek College⁵⁰ and the severe animosity between J H Kellogg and James White brought Mrs White to observe. “There is no genuine faith in my testimonies in the Sanitarium.”⁵¹ Kellogg had actually threatened to rehash the divisive issues during the 1881 session, with its implied attacks upon both Ellen and James White, despite the trauma of the recent death of James.⁵²

In June, 1881, Mrs White wrote to Butler and Haskell that “the difference in your views and my husband upon important points is a great burden to me.” She had hoped for a harmonious way for the trio to solve their differences, but she was “disappointed, sadly disappointed” and saw rather a “spirit in you that prefers the present state of disunion rather than harmony.” Mrs White reminded Butler and Haskell that she had previously “told you both unless there could be union, I should withdraw myself from the field of labor” and “yet you have not made the least effort to harmonize.” Mrs White “was surprised” that Butler and Haskell “should manifest so little interest to secure harmony of action” and she extended her observation to the church at large: “The people everywhere are discouraged [over] the harm which this disunion is creating.”⁵³

Disunity had so pervaded the denomination that the General Conference president asked Mrs White: "Are we going to have a split among us. Sister White? For my part, I cannot tell what we are coming to."⁵⁴ Both the state of the cause and the low esteem placed upon the ministry of Ellen White militated against a dispassionate decision concerning ordaining women in 1881.

A situation somewhat similar to the 1881 GC session occurred during several GC sessions in the 1870s involving the introduction of the modern tithing system as understood by SDAs. R A Underwood, who introduced resolutions that would have modified the prevailing system of systematic benevolence to more nearly reflect our current understanding of tithing, reported that such delegates as S H Lane, J O Corliss and S N Haskell argued that since Ellen White had endorsed and supported the previous system of systematic benevolence, tithing could not be correct. Not only was Underwood's resolution voted down, but it was removed from the minutes of the session. That removal reflected the accepted policy of not reporting issues where a divided opinion was apparent. Underwood reported that "Elder White said that if we reported only what passed the Conference it would show that the Conference was a unit and all agreed on its moves." He also reported that "that method of reporting actions of the General Conference was followed by George Butler."⁵⁵

The example concerning tithing illustrates not only the importance that leadership placed upon the semblance of unity, but also that Ellen White didn't necessarily resolve issues, even when they involved a misinterpretation of her own position. We just cannot assume that if something is important and there are varying positions on the subject, Ellen White will receive immediate, specific guidance on that point. The issue, in the opinion of this writer, is not why Ellen White did not specifically address the 1881 resolution, but rather Ellen White's attitude toward women as ministers.

Also, the issue in 1881 was not the question of whether women were qualified by virtue of their performance for ordination to gospel ministry, but

rather the propriety of their being ordained. If the Review report of the 1881 action is accurate, it would mean that the question of “propriety” of ordaining women was to be decided by the three-man General Conference Committee of George Butler, Stephen Haskell and Uriah Smith and their decision seems to have been that it was not propitious.

Concerning that propriety, W H Littlejohn, writing in the Review in 1887, observed that, while some SDA churches had elected “one or more women to fill a position similar to that which it is supposed that Phoebe and others occupied in her day.” “it has not, however, been the custom with us to ordain such women.”⁵⁶ It appears that no SDA woman was ordained to any position until after the Ellen White landmark 1895 statement and even that statement appears to have been lost to most of SDA history. The 1976 edition of the SDA Encyclopedia reads “Since in the New Testament there is no record of deaconesses having been ordained, they are not ordained in the SDA Church.”⁵⁷ The issue in 1881 seems to have been the “propriety” of a woman being ordained and Ellen White a decade and a half later resolved that issue, despite the fact that it was apparently contrary to the past history of the church. Before considering the 1895 situation, it would be useful to look at certain developments in the SDA approach to ministry.

New and Innovative Ministries Developing. Soon after the 1881 GC session, several innovative developments occurred in the SDA understanding of ministry. The Vermont Conference, in 1882, came close to accepting a proposal that would later be re-enunciated by W C White, namely that a local conference should license a minister to serve as a stationary pastor.⁵⁸ When the Vermont Committee on Credentials and licenses recommended that “Bro F Gould,” whose health prevented traveling, receive a license as an “exhorter,” the proposal for a formal license was rejected. The conference did, however, grant Gould the informal “privilege of exercising his gift by talking to the church where his lot may be cast, the same as he has done before.”⁵⁹

W C White, at a meeting of the General Conference Committee in 1890. suggested training local preachers and others “to prepare themselves to preach in their own churches and in neighboring churches, and thus build up a class of local preachers who can do good pastoral work.”⁶⁰ Again the next year, W C White “believe[d] that the day is not far distant when we shall license local preachers, and then we shall give more credit and honor to men doing work of that sort.”⁶¹ While it appears that nothing came of the idea, such proposals illustrate the dilemma of the 19th century SDA church and its intense need of a pastoral ministry.

Not only was the SDA ministry weak in its approach to the Scriptures, Mrs White told the ministers at the 1883 institute that preceded the session, but it continued to be tied to an ineffective concept of ministry. It had developed in a defensive atmosphere where the focus was upon protecting doctrines and hence stressed argument to the exclusion of practical Christianity. It lacked the essence of all relevant religious thought, the Christ of the Scriptures. “Our duty is not simply to preach, but to minister, to come close to hearts, to put forth personal efforts by the fireside,” Mrs White told the ministers.⁶² She urged a new methodology: “If you would preach fewer sermons, and do more personal labor in visiting and praying with individuals, your ministry would be more like that of Jesus.”⁶³

An entirely new concept of ministry seemed to be springing up before the eyes of the 1883 GC delegates. Earlier that year, Stephen Haskell introduced a Bible readings plan that broadened concepts of ministry and included numbers of women in a ministry of city missions. Ellen White praised the “plan of holding Bible readings” as a “heaven-born idea.” and urged “both men and women” to engage in that branch of work that “workers may be thus developed.” After having seen the successful demonstration of the value of the Bible reading plan during the Institute, the delegates “recommend[ed] that [the plan] be encouraged in all parts of the country.”⁶⁴

Haskell, the ardent promoter of the city evangelistic center plan, defined its function to be that of blending “pastoral work,” distribution of publications, instruction in and effective presentations of “interesting Bible readings” and effective preaching. City missions also were designed to be training schools for workers in those various phases of this new ministry and women were vital to all its phases. Given the pastoral aspects of the city mission ministry, wives of ministers as well as trained Bible workers, were an integral element of the program from the beginning. Within a year from its inception, missions had been established in Chicago, St Louis, New York City, Buffalo, Syracuse, Boston, Portland [Maine], San Francisco and Portland [Oregon].⁶⁵ In 1891, GC secretary W A Colcord, observed that it was in the city mission ministry where SDAs came the closest to having a stationary pastorate: “Unlike most other Protestant denominations, Seventh-day Adventists have no located pastors except in certain large cities where they have missions established.”⁶⁶ The work in the Chicago Mission during the summer of 1891 was supervised by a committee of five, four of whom were women.⁶⁷

As Mrs White focused upon the potential of the local churches for developing its laity and as she related to the absence of stationary pastors, she called for a force of workers “to go into the churches, large and small, to instruct the members how to labor for the upbuilding of the church, and also for unbelievers.” The local church needed to be educated in such matters as “personal piety and home religion,” understanding the ministry of Christ, how to give Bible readings and do missionary work.⁶⁸ That working-training force, according to Ellen White, should include both men and women and was designed to perform the functions we today usually assign the trained ministry.⁶⁹

Ellen White, Minneapolis and a Refocus of Ministry. Mrs White discussed her conceptions of ministry several times during the Minneapolis GC session of 1888. She informed the assembled ministers that “there is something more to the ministry than sermonizing.” “Many, many discourses,” she informed them “like the

offering of Cain, are profitless because Christless.” Again striking at the debating methodology that had permeated the church, she sought to shift concepts of ministry in another direction: “A minister is one who ministers. If you confine your work to sermonizing, the flock of God will suffer; for they need personal effort.” Because of the lack of a pastoral, caring ministry, “the Lord [was] not pleased with the loose way in which the churches are left.” She urged the “brethren and sisters” to take the “iron” out of their souls and “out of our manner of work” and to not “hold yourselves as though it were a condescension to come in contact with poor families.”⁷⁰

Shortly after Minneapolis she pleaded for the ministry to recognize that “there is pastoral work to do.” Ministry meant more than converting others to Adventism; “We are not to go away and leave them. and have no further burden for them. They are to be looked after. They are to be carried as a burden upon the soul. and we must watch over them as stewards who must render an account.”⁷¹ The painful experience at Minneapolis would provide a new impetus to the development of a pastoral ministry within Adventism. Mrs White defined the methodology: “The Bible will be opened from house to house, and men and women will find access to these homes, and minds will be opened to receive the word of God.”⁷²

As Mrs White reflected upon the post-1888 focus upon justification by faith, she dearly perceived its implications concerning the nature of ministry:

We must look more to the presentation of God's love and mercy to move the hearts of the people. We must have a sense of both the justice and mercy of God. Those who can blend together the law of God and the mercy of God can reach any heart. For years I have seen that there is a broken link which has kept us from reaching hearts; this link is supplied by presenting the love and mercy of God.⁷³

Nine days after that statement Mrs White addressed the ministers at the 1891 GC session and conveyed the sentiments of that address to her diary. The statement transcends all arguments concerning the ordination question and seems too beautiful to even use in a paper that is arguing such a cause. It is used, however, as an illustration of the marvels of the ministry of Ellen White to the

SDA church. Ellen White is not here espousing a cause for she penned the following to her diary as her understanding of the nature of ministry:

The Lord has given Christ to the world for ministry. Merely to preach-h the Word is not ministry. The Lord desires His ministering servants to occupy a place worthy of the highest consideration. In the mind of God, the ministry of men AND WOMEN existed before the world was created.⁷⁴ He determined that His ministers should have a perfect exemplification of Himself and His purposes. No human career could do this work; so God gave Christ in humanity to work out His ideal of what humanity may become through entire obedience to His will and way. God's character was revealed in the life of His Son. Christ not only held a theory of genuine ministry, but in His humanity He wrought out an illustration of the ministry that God approves. Perfection has marked out every feature of true ministry. Christ, the Son of the living God, did not live unto Himself, but unto God.⁷⁵

The Australian Model and “Working Along Christ's Own Lines.” The Australian years seemed the ideal opportunity for Ellen White and SDAs to implement their emerging concepts of ministry. “I dreaded to come to Australia,” Ellen White told those present at the Napier, New Zealand, campmeeting in 1893. She decided to go, she told them, because of her conviction that she would have a special work there and her work concerned her concept of ministry.⁷⁶

In Australia, Ellen White saw a “new world, and a very great work to be done,” and considered that “The Lord designs that there shall be a true pattern in Australia, a sample of how other fields shall be worked,” and she called for a “symmetrical” development of the work in that new world.⁷⁷

A hint of the team approach to evangelism and the pastoral, one-to-one method of contact that would be developed in the Australian model was presented to Ellen White in a dream September 29, 1886:

I dreamed that I was walking with a large company of men and some women. We were looking to find fruit of some kind to gather. . . . There were many young men and women in the company to help in the work of gathering the fruit. We seemed to be in a city. ... [I told the workers] the Lord has placed these fruit-bearing bushes right in the midst of those thickly settled places, and he expects you to find them.⁷⁸

It was a “ministry of compassion” that Ellen White believed would be the best solution to the dilemma of 19th the century and also the means of bringing

Adventism into the cities. It was working in “Christ's own lines,” “working as he worked,” ministering to the needs of others. It was the outworking of the plan of salvation: “Love awakens love.”⁷⁹ It was the consequence of the new focus upon “Christ and the gospel” sounding more loudly within the church after 1888 and it came at the very time Mrs White was completing her major book on Christ, The Desire of Ages.

From Australia, Ellen White informed the church that “the Lord is in need of workers who will push the triumphs of the cross of Christ,” and declared that “in every department of the cause of God, there is need of men and women who have sympathy for the woes of humanity.” Tragically, she observed, however, “such sympathy is rare.” Urging the church to respond to the more Christ-centered approach, Mrs White saw its implications concerning ministry:

Christ drew the hearts of his hearers to himself by the manifestation of his love, and then, little by little, as they were able to bear it, he unfolded to them the great truths of the kingdom. We also must learn to adapt our labors to the condition of the people,—to meet men where they are. While the claims of the law of God are to be presented to the world, we should never forget that love—the love of Christ—is the only power that can soften the heart, and lead to obedience. All the great truths of the Scriptures center in Christ; and rightly understood, all lead to him.⁸⁰

It was the “ministry of compassion” that naturally brought women to a prominent role in the ministerial team efforts. Mrs White consistently applied that developing ministry to the kind of ministry that Christ exhibited:

There were whole villages where there was not a moan of sickness in any house, for [Jesus] had passed through them, and healed all the sick. His work gave evidence of his divine anointing. Love, mercy, and compassion were revealed in every act of his life. . . .

The more we study the divine character in the light of the cross, the more we see mercy and forgiveness, blended with equity and justice, and the more clearly we discern innumerable evidences of a love that is infinite, and a tender pity surpassing a mother's yearning tenderness for her wayward child.⁸¹

Ellen White, Personal Labor and Ordination. Ellen White was concerned about the concepts of ministry that some who had been sent from America to Australia were practicing. In fact, it was “by revelation of the Spirit of the

Lord” that she perceived those defects. She observed that one defective minister “preaches to the people, but makes no after effort to follow up the sermons given.” Indeed, this minister “just despised that kind of labor” that involved visiting families. “You can imagine the condition of a flock unvisited by the shepherd,” observed Mrs White. The ability to sermonize, according to Mrs White, constituted less than half of the true purpose of ministry. True ministry was personal labor and already-ordained ministers needed to be educated to that ministry. Notice how Mrs White in her understanding of ministry shifts the test to include pastoral concerns while the church had tested its ministers almost solely on their performance in evangelism:

I have repeatedly had this matter presented before me that these men who are ordained to preach the word, should be educated to make full proof of their ministry in their personal labors in families, talking with the members of the family, understanding their spiritual condition, encouraging, reproofing with all long-suffering and doctrine, praying with them, binding up his interest with their heart and souls. This is the work of a faithful shepherd. . . .

Men who are accepted to preach, and not to minister, better not go into foreign countries. Better have one thorough shepherd who will care for the flock as a faithful shepherd should, than to have twenty sermonizers who will excuse themselves, saying. It is not in my line to visit; I can not visit the church in their families. Then let there not be a moment's hesitation in telling them, we do not propose to accept you, and give you credentials.⁸²

... If a man fails to do this part of the work he can not be a minister after God's order. . . . Better, far better, have less preachers and far more earnest humble .God-fearing workers.⁸³

Mrs White went so far as to challenge the concept of ministry of A G Daniells, then president of the Australia Union Conference. Daniells, who had made his reputation in denominational service as an evangelist, was seen by Mrs White to have labored in New Zealand as a failure because he had not labored along personal lines. “We must get acquainted with the people in their homes,” she told Daniells. “If far less preaching has to be done, this part of the pastoral work is not to be neglected.” Indeed, Mrs White affirmed, “The results of this work will testify that it is the most profitable work a gospel minister can do.”⁸⁴

From Australia, Mrs White was consciously attempting to change the SDA definition of ministry. Indeed, she really declined to consider the previous focus upon doctrines as true ministry: “There has been so much preaching to our churches that they have almost ceased to appreciate the gospel ministry. The time has come when this order of things should be changed.”⁸⁵ it seems relevant that it was at about this time when she was suggesting a “new order” of ministry that she would likewise see the “propriety” of the ordination of SDA women. The woman was “recognized by God as being as necessary to the work of ministry” as her husband for she was trained “to continue her work in the cause of God” if her husband should die. The church was “to do [its] duty to the women who labor in the gospel” because “their work is just the work that must be done” to “carry the truth into families.” It was this advanced perception of ministry that caused Ellen White to exclaim “The way is open for consecrated women.”⁸⁶

Because Mrs White considered that the personal contacts were the most valuable facet of ministry, she perceived that the experience gained in the canvassing work would be “of the greatest value to those who are fitting themselves for the work of the ministry” and that it was the “accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God.”⁸⁷ When Ellen White considered that women could become “pastors of the flock of God” she was clearly assigning to women that facet of ministry that she knew the local congregations most needed.

Ordination to the Christian Help Work. Conditions in Australia provided the backdrop for the development of an SDA ministry of compassion. Mrs White exclaimed, “The poor are everywhere. The banks have ruined the country.” She noticed that financial distress was everywhere and as she perceived the desperate personal needs she received divine insight:

Yesterday it all opened before me that in this very line of hospitality, I have been repeatedly shown that we can unite the people with us, and can have twofold influence over them. This was unfolded before me in the first experience in this work, many years back, and we have ever linked our interest with humanity.⁸⁸

The needs of the poor meant that “the human agents are to be laborers together with God, doing the same kind of work that he came into our world to do.” The destitute, hungry, afflicted and oppressed were to be ministered to by the church: “I can see no way but to help these poor souls in their great need, and I shall do this if the Lord will. And he does will.” Mrs White feared the discouragement that would press upon those afflicted who, during their distress, could join the ranks of Satan. “As long as it is in our power to help the needy and oppressed,” she affirmed, “we must do this for the human beings whom Christ shed his own blood to save from ruin.”⁸⁹ Mrs White recognized that she could not “sway back the wave of poverty which is sweeping over this country,” but vowed that “just as far as the Lord shall provide us with means, we shall break every yoke, and let the oppressed go free.”⁹⁰

Mrs White assigned to women a major role in the kind of ministry she proposed for Australia. She regretted that Sister Walker had been taken from the Kellyville-Prospect-Parramatta area for that left the area without a woman worker. “Why did they let her go?” asked Mrs White for she insisted “the work done and to be done in families is increasing, and calls, urgent calls, are made for Bible readings and this is doing a precious work.”⁹¹ Notice Mrs White's concept of ministry and her perception that women as well as men should be involved in this kind of pastoral labor:

I am now paying the expenses of two workers in Ashfield and Petersham. They are capable men, but the Conference had not money to pay them, and rather than go in debt deeply, they thought of dispensing with their labor....

The two men, Bro Collins and Bro Pallant, who are paid from my purse, have been doing visiting, getting access to families, interesting them by personal labor, and giving them Bible readings. Both are capable men, and will soon be ordained to the ministry. As much depends upon the work of visiting, talking and praying with the people, and opening the way of truth to them, as in giving discourses, and I could not let them go out of the work. . . .

There are women of excellent ability, who, I think, should be connected with the work. . . . [One] sister, Edwards by name, is a prepossessing woman of excellent qualifications; and if I could make my purse stretch a little further, I would say, “Sister Edwards, take right hold, and visit the families you know are interested in the truth, and talk with them.” We have no women

workers here now, since we let Sister Walker go up to Queensland at the earnest call of Bro Starr for women workers in the homes of those who are interested hearers of the truth.⁹²

Notice that these men, who were soon to be ordained, were actually being dispensed with by the conference because there was insufficient funding for them. Notice also that Ellen White personally paid them, perhaps from her tithe funds, to do work along pastoral lines similar to the kind of labor she would also pay women to do. She felt it her duty “to create a fund from my tithe money, to pay these women who are accomplishing just as essential work as the ministers are doing, and this tithe I will reserve for work in the same line as that of the ministers, hunting for souls, fishing for souls.”⁹³ Mrs White saw the kind of ministry the church needed and was restricted neither by formalized definitions nor gender.

Notice also that the previously quoted document reveals that “Sister Walker” was clearly called at the conference level from one area to another to perform pastoral-evangelistic labor. Mrs White even considered that Marian Davis, because of her work with and familiarity with Mrs White's writings that resulted in The Desire of Ages, was well qualified to instruct ministers on the nature of ministry: “Would not her presence in the morning Bible studies be of great advantage to the workers as Pallant, Collins, Byron Belden, Sarah [McInterfer], and Brother McCullagh, freshen up their minds, open up subjects of intense interest?” asked Mrs White.⁹⁴

Ellen White's perspective of a “ministry of compassion” resolved the pastoral-evangelistic dilemma of the 19th century and brought to the church a methodology for dealing with 20th century urban realities. Beginning in June of 1895, Ellen White wrote a series of articles that focused upon methodologies designed to evangelize the cities. One of the proposals made by Ellen White in her Review articles was that women involved in this evangelistic-pastoral methodology “should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands.”⁹⁵ When Ellen White's wording is compared to what she would later write

concerning women and tithes, true gospel ministry, etc, it seems to indicate that she considered women eligible for ordination to the most truly pastoral and relevant ministry then within the church. No matter how one interprets her Review statement, she clearly is proclaiming that it was now possible for SDA women to be ordained “with perfect propriety.” All evidence points to the fact that prior to this time, the church considered it improper to ordain women to any church role and it apparently was not done.

On June 11, 1895, Mrs White made it apparent that her focus was upon work “in our large cities.” She called for “labor from house to house, not neglecting the poor.” Since Christ preached the gospel to the poor, “we are to go and do likewise.” She considered that the cities “are not worked as they should be” and called for “earnest work, by hard, painful experience” to “reach the men and the women of our cities.”⁹⁶

On July 9, Mrs White proposed a general application within the church of “Christ’s methods” of ministry. The nature of the ministry Mrs White was proposing was clearly one already in operation in Australia and one that women were participating in at various levels. Margaret Caro, who held the ministerial license, operated a home for wayward girls, actively preached in her local church and according to Ellen White was “in every way capable.”⁹⁷ Some women, as Dr Abbie Winegar in the United States, went from church to church instructing the local churches on the nature of the Christian Help ministry. Anna Ingels, who administered the Australian Tract Society, encouraged the Christian Help Work in the Australian Bible Echo and traveled extensively in Australia to encourage that ministry. The dimensions of that work have been outlined by Arthur Patrick in his fine study of SDA women in the South Pacific Division and included Bible-readings, missionary letter-writing, distribution of reading matter as well as ministering to the necessities of the destitute and preaching the gospel to them. Because of the leadership provided, one small church of only 12 SDAs was able to

maintain relationships with 18 different families which consisted mainly of women and children.⁹⁸

Here, indeed, is a sample of the pastoring that Ellen White was calling for. Here was the kind of work that she considered it entirely appropriate for women to be ordained to for it was indeed gospel work. Notice the elements within Ellen White's statement concerning ordination of women:

Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands. In some cases they will need to counsel with the church officers or the minister; but if they are devoted women, maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in the church. This is another means of strengthening and building up the church, We need to branch out more in our methods of 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.⁹⁹

Mrs White is speaking of a kind of ministry that women would be “appointed” to provided they were able to “consecrate” some of their time to it. The manner in which ministry was defined in the 19th century was somewhat dependent upon the financial situation. During the severely depressed economic situation in the 1890s, especially in Australia, many ministers were asked to combine their ministerial work with other kinds of work so as to relieve the denominational treasury. Many ministers would thus work as ministers during some of their time and do self-supporting work for another part. All sorts of less than ideal situations occurred because of the lack of finances. Some women who maintained a ministry that visited the sick or who worked for the youth or who cared for the poor received conference tithe funds for so doing. Further Mrs White expressed her willingness to support some from her own personal tithe funds. She also did provide funds for some men who were doing a similar work.

Mrs White believed that those who felt called to this kind of ministry “should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands.” Even if the position is taken that Mrs White was here referring to volunteer labor from the

local church, there still remains the point that such local layworkers needed training and that was supplied from the conference level and those who did the training from the conference level should certainly be ordained. In this writer's opinion, Mrs White was saying to the church that it had for too long considered it inappropriate to ordain women to any kind of role.

Once it was recognized that a woman could be ordained to something, then the ordination question was resolved, because women were already licensed as ministers and defined by Mrs White to be appropriately involved in the most relevant ministries then embraced by the church. They were doing the vitally necessary pastoral labor, they were working along Christ's lines of ministry, they were preaching the spoken word, they were ministering in the fullest sense as defined by Mrs White. Indeed, observed Mrs White: "We need to branch out more in our methods of labor" and we should neither "bind" nor "discourage" those who embraced this kind of ministry either as ordained layworkers (those who labored "privately") or as ordained Conference employees (those who labored "publicly"), Notice again her full statement: "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." The nature of the Christian Help Work ministry clearly had both lay and official aspects and women clearly were eligible for ordination to it.

The fact that Ellen White spoke to the ordination question did not mean automatic implementation of the practice. In early 1896, the president of the Indiana Conference raised the following question to O A Olsen:

Quite a question has come to me recently in regard to a statement made by Sister White in the Review of July 9, 1895 in regard to setting apart some of our devoted sisters to the Christian help work by laying on of hands and prayer. One of our local elders desires to know if it would be proper for a local elder to ordain women to this work. We have not as yet carried into effect this instruction in this conference and I would like to know how you understand the matter and have you any further light on the matter, more than is stated in the Review as above cited?¹⁰⁰

Unfortunately, there seems to be no existing evidence of Olsen's reply to the question. Except for several examples of women who were ordained in Australia after 1895, there seems to have been no widespread knowledge or implementation of the Ellen White counsel concerning ordination until the 1970s.

Shortly after penning her ordination statement, Mrs White again outlined her definition of ministry:

In the fifth-eighth chapter of Isaiah, the work that the people of God are to do in Christ's lines, is clearly set forth. They are to break every yoke, they are to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to bring the poor that are cast out into their houses, to draw out their souls to the hungry, and to satisfy the afflicted soul. If they carry out the principles of the law of God in acts of mercy and love, they will represent the character of God to the world.¹⁰¹

The Christian Help ministry was the major SDA approach to proclaiming its mission to Australia during the 1890s. W C White observed that Australia at that time was a country “where there is much sickness and much need of medical help” and was convinced that “the most effectual way” of working was “in the way of Christian Help work” since that class of work “will appeal to their sympathy and will thus serve as an introduction to the people.” He observed that over 4000 had died of typhoid fever during 1897 and that the SDA local church members as well as denominational employees “are doing all they can in the Christian Help work.”¹⁰²

The Tithe Factor. The most relevant of Ellen White's statements on tithe usage occurred during her ministry in Australia. Indeed, in 1897, she wrote:

This is the Lord's special revenue fund, for a special purpose. I have never so fully understood this matter as I now understand it. Having had questions directed here to me to answer, I have had special instruction from the Lord that the tithe is for a special purpose, consecrated to God to sustain those who minister in the sacred work, as the Lord's chosen to do His work not only in sermonizing, but in ministering. They should understand all that this comprehends.¹⁰³

It seems highly significant that while Ellen White was stressing a singleness of purpose in the use of tithe funds, that she would broaden the potential recipients of those funds to include women who, until the Ellen White

statements, were ineligible for receiving those funds. It is even more significant when one considers that financial exigencies had vastly narrowed the availability of those funds. As the concept of women's ministry was expanding, however, it became apparent that Ellen White considered that ministry as much in the line of gospel ministry as those ministries considered conventional.

The binding element regarding those who qualified as tithe recipients to Ellen White seemed to be those who were directly presenting the gospel message to those who had not heard it before or to those who were involved in pastoral-instructional functions within the church. Thus minister's wives who were instructing other women in missionary work, women who were doing house to house labor in presenting the gospel to other women, women Bible teachers who were instructing student-workers regarding doctrines and methods of evangelism, women who were teaching other women in Bible reading and home visitation techniques, women who were laboring in "word and doctrine," women medical missionaries who were instructing others in Christian Help Work, all were eligible in Ellen White's thinking to receive tithe funds. The rationale for her call at the time she was focusing upon a "carefully guard[ed] tithe fund" that would be held "sacred for one purpose" was her expanded definition of ministry.

In addressing the question of the nature of the 19th century church and the question of tithe usage, Mrs White observed that she had received "light upon this subject" even prior to her going to Australia in 1891. She then made a statement that again reduces the ordination of women to a moot point:

Injustice has been done to women who labor just as devotedly as their husbands, and who are recognized by God as being as necessary to the work of ministry as their husbands.¹⁰⁴The method of paying men-laborers and not their wives, is a plan not after the Lord's order. . . . This arrangement ... is liable to discourage our sisters from qualifying themselves for the work they should engage in [i.e., ministry]. . . . This question is not for men to settle. The Lord has settled it. You are to do your duty to the women who labor in the gospel.¹⁰⁵

Mrs White would use tithe funds to pay women because she considered that indeed, there were "women who labor in the gospel" and "whose work testifie[d]

that they [were] essential to carry the truth into families.” She proclaimed, “Their work is just the work that must be done” and “the cause would suffer great loss without this kind of labor.” In identifying this pastoral labor Mrs White affirmed that “again and again the Lord has shown me that women teachers are just as greatly needed to do the work to which He has appointed them as are men.” She counseled that “there are women who should labor in the gospel ministry” and then defined the pastoral nature of that gospel ministry:

Those women who labor to teach souls to seek for the new birth in Christ Jesus, are doing a precious work. They consecrate themselves to God, and they are just as verily laborers for God as are their husbands. They can enter families to which ministers could find no access. They can listen to the sorrows of the depressed and oppressed. They can shed rays of light into discouraged souls. They can pray with them. They can open the Scriptures, and enlighten them from a “Thus saith the Lord.”¹⁰⁶

This kind of ministry was what Mrs White defined as “true ministry” and observed that it was the “accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors of the flock of God.”¹⁰⁷

Mrs White's next statement informs us why she was looking for “hundreds of laborers” where there was then one and again evidences the desperate need of the 19th century church for a pastoral-evangelistic aspect of ministry:

This house-to-house labor, searching for souls, hunting for the lost sheep is the most essential work that can be done. . . . There are ministers' wives, Srs. Starr, Haskell, Wilson and Robinson, who have been devoted, earnest, whole-souled workers, giving Bible readings and praying with families, helping along by personal efforts just as successfully as their husbands. These women give their whole time, and are told that they receive nothing for their labors because their husbands receive their wages. I tell them to go forward and all such decisions will be revised.¹⁰⁸ The Word says, “The laborer is worthy of his hire.” When any such decision as this is made, I will in the name of the Lord, protest. I will feel it my duty to create a fund from my tithe money, to pay these women who are accomplishing just as essential work as the ministers are doing, and this tithe I will reserve for work in the same line as that of the ministers, hunting for souls, fishing for souls. I know that the faithful women should be paid wages as is considered proportionate to the pay received by ministers. They carry the burden of souls, and should not be treated unjustly. These sisters are giving their time to educating those newly come to the faith¹⁰⁹ and hire their own work done. and pay those who work for them. All these things must be adjusted and set in order, and justice be done to all.¹¹⁰

Ellen White is clearly calling for a women's ministry that would combine the most relevant definitions of ministry of the 19th century, one that contained both evangelistic and pastoral functions. Her statement anticipates the 20th century church where such ministry is much more economically feasible. Indeed, Mrs White observed that “the women workers have not received pay, but this will be changed in due time.” The reason they had not then been paid, Mrs White stated was because “the cause [was then] hemmed in for want of means.”¹¹¹

Why Women Are Inherently Vital to the Gospel Ministry. Without mentioning the word women or addressing the issues of ordination or gospel ministry, Mrs White in the next two statements informs us why women are vital to the current ministry of the SDA church as "pastors of the flock of God." A mere reflection on the statements, in the opinion of the writer, provides proof of the premise:

[1] It is the glory of the gospel that it is founded upon the principle of restoring in the fallen race the divine image by a constant manifestation of benevolence.¹¹²

[2] The completeness of Christian character is attained when the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within.¹¹³

Conclusion. It is hoped that the reader has concluded that the evidence presented in this essay illustrates that however one defines ministry in 19th century Adventism and applies its relevant principles to the church of today, one will conclude that women were vital to all the relevant ministries when Ellen White lived and counseled the church concerning ministry. Women were ministers when the nature of ministry was almost solely evangelistic. Women were ministers when city missions were the sole Institutions where there were stationary, resident ministers. Ellen White allowed for the possibility of women being the leaders of local churches during the time when local elders were the connecting link to the everyday activities of the congregation. Women were “pastors of the flock of God” during the time when “pastoring” was a newly-emerging vital ministerial concept. And “men and women” who acted as the “Lord's helping hand” and who were working as Christ did in combining a pastoral-evangelistic ministry

to the “oppressed, rescuing those ready to perish” would be considered “priests of the Lord” and “ministers of our God,” according to Ellen White's analysis of Isaiah 61:6.¹¹⁴ Obviously Ellen White did not believe that because there were no women who served in the Old Testament priesthood, women were forever prohibited from the organized ministry.

The 19th century SDA church, largely because of the influence of Ellen White, was remarkably innovative as it grasped opportunities to exhibit a dynamic and versatile definition of ministry. Ellen White consistently defined ministry by those relevant functions its ministers performed. And it is obvious that women were allowed to perform all those relevant functions, excepting those which the church defined as belonging solely to the ordained minister.

When the church seemed to flounder on the question of whether or not women could be ordained, Ellen White, in 1895, resolved that issue. She went further as she described why the early Christian church ordained Paul and Barnabas. The principle she expressed has obvious relevance to the question of women and ordination to ministry: “In order that their work should be above challenge. He instructed the church by revelation to set them apart publicly to the work of the ministry. Their ordination was a public recognition of their divine appointment to bear to the Gentiles the glad tidings of the gospel.”¹¹⁵

Truly, Ellen White has fulfilled her mission to the church by pointing out the scriptural principles concerning ordination. Here, she applies scriptural principles to ministry as defined during the time she saw the Australian experience as a model for the church. She defines true ministry from Isaiah 58 and Isaiah 61:

If men and women would act as the Lord's helping hand, doing deeds of love and kindness, uplifting the oppressed, rescuing those ready to perish, the glory of the Lord would be their rearguard. ... Of those who act as his helping hand the Lord says, Ye shall be named priests of the Lord; men shall call you the ministers of our God.¹¹⁶

The history of the ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist church in the 19th century illustrates that women were indeed serving as “priests” and “ministers” of the Lord. Would we deny that heritage?

NOTES

1. James White, RH, April 1, 1858.
2. James White, RH, March 8, 1860, emphasis supplied.
3. James White, RH, Aug 13, 1867.
4. See 2T, p 498 ff and James White, J N Andrews, J H Waggoner, G H Bell, U Smith, "Course of Study for Ministers," RH, May 10, 1870.
5. James White, RH, Jan 10, 1871.
6. Ellen White, "Address to Ministers," RH, May 30, 1871, emphasis supplied.
7. Actions of the 1871 GC Session.
8. George Butler, RH, March 25, 1873; General Conference Committee, "Ministerial Lectures," RH, March 25, 1873.
9. See Brian Strayers excellent study, "Sarah A H Lindsey: Advent Preacher on the Southern Tier," Adventist Heritage. Fall. 1986.
10. James White, "Eastern Tour," RH, Feb 8, 1881.
11. James White, "The Cause at Large," RH, July 5, 1881.
12. D M Canright, "Planting and Watering Churches," RH, Aug 9, 1881.
13. D M Canright, "My Remembrance of Eld White," RH, Aug 30, 1881.
14. James White, "Yearly Meetings," RH, July 21, 1859, emphasis supplied.
15. It was not until 1861 that Sabbath-keeping Adventists accepted the name Seventh-day Adventists. It should be observed that Ellen White proclaimed that heaven endorsed that name, despite Cottrell's position that there was no explicit scriptural authority for such a name.
16. R F Cottrell, "Making Us a Name," RH, March 22, 1860 and June 5, 1860.
17. Ibid.
18. James White, "Making Us a Name," RH, April 26, 1860.
19. Ellen White, IT, pp 270-71.
20. See A W Spalding, Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists, Vol 1, p 295.
21. Michigan Conference Committee, RH, Oct 22, 1872.
22. George Butler, RH, June 17, 1873.
23. "Actions of Michigan Conference," RH, Oct 11, 1881.
24. RH, Oct 17, 1878 and Nov 14, 1878.
25. Ellen White, Mss 22, 1893.
26. "SDA Ministerial Association of Michigan," RH, Apr 11, 1882.
27. J H Waggoner, "The Church: Its Organization, Ordinances, and Discipline," P 19.
28. George Butler to Ellen White, May 24, 1881, GIB 1880-81 WE.
29. Ibid.
30. J O Corliss, E B Lane, "Virginia Tent," RH, Aug 10, 1876.
31. Ibid. Aug 17, 1876.
32. Ibid, Aug 24, 1876.

33. Ibid, Sept 7, 1876.
34. It seems to the writer that the underlined portion has already resolved the question of women being ordained to ministry in the SDA church. If God has recognized the vital role of women in ministry, does it not behoove the church to confirm what God has recognized?
35. Ellen White, Mss 43a, 1898, emphasis supplied.
36. Ellen White, "An Appeal to the Ministers," RH, Aug 8, 1878.
37. Actions of 1878 GC Session, Oct 11, 1878.
38. D M Canright, "A Move in the Right Direction," RH, Jan 30, 1879. It will be recalled that the Michigan Conference licensed Ellen Lane during this session.
39. This was probably W C White, then 24, and increasingly involved in administrative questions.
40. Stephen Haskell to Brother White, Dec 13, 1878, SNH 1878 WE; emphasis in original.
41. Ibid.
42. Ellen White, RH, Jan 2, 1879, emphasis supplied.
43. Ibid.
44. Ellen White to S N Haskell, Jan 27, 1879, HI-1879; Ellen White to Willie and Mary White, Feb 20, 1879, W15-1879.
45. Ellen White to Brother Johnson, [1879], J33-1879.
46. Ellen White, "Our Publications," RH, April 4, 1882. The issue here is not whether the pastors she was seeking were to be rated as official church workers or defined as layworkers, but whether such individuals were functioning as local church leaders to fulfill the desperate need of the local church for that pastoral labor. Mrs White's statements during the time when this kind of ministry flourished in Australia makes it apparent that she would use church funds to pay such workers. Indeed, Mrs White consistently revealed that she thought functionally, not formally in such situations.
47. Rather interestingly, the report of the 1881 GC session that appeared in the Signs of the Times reported that the resolution passed while the Review reported that it was "discussed by J O Corliss, A C Bourdeau, E R Jones, D H Lamson, W H Little John, A S Hutchins, D M Canright and J N Loughborough and referred to the General Conference Committee." While it would appear that the Review statement is the more accurate, lack of documentation leaves the issue unresolved and open to interpretation.
48. W C White to L E Froom, May 12y 1930, RG 58 [LEF], Interpretation, Development of folder, GCA; W C White to Mary White, Dec 2, 1881, WE.
49. Ellen White to W C and Mary White, April 19, 1881, W3b-1881.
50. Disunity concerning the school actually resulted in it being closed for a year.
51. Ellen White to Stephen Haskell, April 22, 1881, HI-1881.
52. J H Kellogg, 1907 Interview, p 89.
53. Ellen White to G I Butler and S N Haskell, June 20, 1881, B8-1881; Ellen White to Stephen Haskell, June 28, 1881, H2-1881.
54. George Butler to Ellen White, July 16 and Aug 2, 1882, GIB, 1882, WE.

55. R A Underwood to L E Froom, Nov 26 and Dec 8, 1930, RG 58, Interpretation, Development of folder; see also R A Underwood statement at 1919 Bible Conference, July 10, 1919. Underwood's application of this principle to the Butler administration creates a puzzle concerning the 1881 resolution on ordination, for Butler was then president.
56. W H Little John, "The Duties of Local Church Officers," RH, Nov 22, 1887.
57. Article "Deaconess," Rev Ed (1976), SDA Encyclopedia, p 379. It was not until 1984 that that statement was deleted from the official SDA Church Manual.
58. While W H Little John is sometimes considered as being a pastor to the Battle Creek church, his physical disability of blindness made his a special case.
59. Vermont Conference Proceedings, RH, Sept 26, 1882.
60. W C White statement. Minutes of General Conference Committee, July 16, 1890.
61. W C White to I D Van Horn, May 20, 1891.
62. Ellen White, "The Christian's Refuge," Nov 9, 1883, Remarks to ministers, RH, April 15, 1884 and "Consecration and Diligence in Christian Workers," Nov 18, 1883, Remarks to ministers, RH, June 24, 1884.
63. Ellen White, "Consecration and Diligence in Christian Workers," Remarks to Ministers at 1883 GC, Nov 18, 1883 in RH, June 24, 1884.
64. Nov 16, 1883 GC Resolution, GCA. Ellen White, "A Missionary Appeal," RH, Dec 15, 1885.
65. Article, "City Missions," SDA Encyclopedia; Stephen Haskell, "Our City Missions," and "The Work in Cities," RH, April 29 and June 24, 1884.
66. W A Colcord to New York Independent. "Seventh-day Adventists," Oct, 1891. RG 21, book 7, GCA.
67. George B Starr, "Chicago," Home Missionary. May, 1891.
68. Ellen White, "Work for the Church," RH, May 15, 1888.
69. Maria L Huntley was probably the foremost instructor in this branch of ministry until her death in 1890.
70. Ellen White, "Statement to Ministers," Oct 21, 1888, Ms 8a-1888 and "Remarks Concerning Missionary Work," Oct 23, 1888, Ms 10-1888.
71. Ellen White Sermon, Dec 1, 1888, Ms 13-1888.
72. Ellen White, "Religious Liberty," Dec 24, 1889, Ms 18-1888[sic], emphasis supplied.
73. Ellen White, Statement to General Conference Committee and Conference Presidents, March 3, 1891, GCC Minutes.
74. The premise that God had a preconceived concept of ministry for both men and women before He created the world destroys ideas of subordination and offers very telling evidence about Ellen White's concept of the role of women in ministry.
75. Ellen White, Diary entry March 12, 1891, Ms 23-1891, emphasis supplied. Ellen White's original diary entry did not contain the wording that included women within God's original concept of ministry, but the 1903 version

- did. Most likely Ellen White's experience in Australia brought her to include that significant phrase in her later editing.
76. W C White, Notes and Memoranda of Napier, NZ, Campmeeting, March 22-April 5, 1893.
 77. Ellen White to Mrs Jennie L Ings, Aug 4, 1894, 136-1894; to J H Kellogg, Jan 6, 1899.
 78. Address of Ellen White at Basle, Switzerland, March 7, 1887.
 79. Ellen White to Jennie L Ings, Aug 4, 1894, 136-1894.
 80. Ellen White, "How the Truth Should be Presented," Home Missionary. Dec, 1892.
 81. Ellen White, "God's Love for Man," Home Missionary. April, 1893.
 82. It seems to be within this context that Ellen White would later counsel: "Seventh-day Adventists are not in any way to belittle woman's work. ... If women do the work that is not the most agreeable to many of those who labor in word and doctrine, and if their works testify that they are accomplishing a work that has been manifestly neglected, should not such labor be looked upon as being as rich in results as the work of the ordained ministers? . . . You are to do your duty to the women who labor in the gospel, whose work testifies that they are essential to carry the truth into families. Their work is just the work that must be done. In many respects a woman can impart knowledge to her sisters that a man cannot. The cause would suffer great loss without this kind of labor. Again and again the Lord has shown me that women teachers [i.e. pastors] are just as greatly needed to do the work to which he has appointed them as are men." [Ellen White. "The Laborer Is Worthy of His Hire." Ms 43a-1898] Mrs White believed that this pastoral kind of labor should be done by the ordained minister, but had not been a part of the ministry for many and women were clearly performing that necessary labor which Mrs White considered the most significant part of ministry. Since Mrs White would pay such women from tithe funds, it seems to this writer that Mrs White clearly placed such labor within what we would consider the role of the local pastoral team. Not only that, but women who held the "license to preach," as did Margaret Caro were proclaiming the spoken word in church and also performing that kind of pastoral labor.
 83. Ellen White to O A Olsen, March 12, 1892, 050-1892, emphasis supplied.
 84. Ellen White to Elder and Mrs A G Daniells, May 11, 1893, D18-1893.
 85. Ellen White, Ms 45, 1895.
 86. Ellen White, "The Laborer Is Worthy of His Hire," Ms 43a, 1898.
 87. Ellen White, RH, Jan 15, 1901.
 88. Ellen White to W C White, Aug 6, 1894, W135-1894.
 89. Ellen White to H W Kellogg, Oct 24, 1894, K42-94.
 90. Ellen White to J H Kellogg, Oct 25, 1894, K46a-1894.
 91. Ellen White to W C White, Feb 19, 1895, W142-1895.
 92. Ellen White to Brother Harper, March 7, 1895, H31b-1895.
 93. Ellen White to Brethren Irwin, Evans, Smith and Jones, April 21, 1898, I191a-1898.

94. Ellen White to W C White, March 15, 1895, W145-1895.
95. Ellen White, RH, July 9, 1895.
96. Ellen White, RH, June 11, 1895.
97. Ellen White, Ms 22, 1893.
98. Arthur N Patrick, "Founding Mothers: Women and the Adventist Work in the South Pacific Division," Adventist Heritage. Fall, 1986.
99. Ellen White, RH, July 9, 1895.
100. J W Watt to O A Olsen, Jan 2, 1896, RG 21, 1896—Watt, J W.
101. Ellen White, "'Draw Out Thy Soul to the Hungry,'" RH, Aug 20, 1895.
102. WC White to Medical Mission Board, [Dec, 1897], WCW Book 11a.
103. Ellen White, Letter 40, 1897, emphasis supplied.
104. If ordination is defined as an official church recognition of a calling that was instituted by God, it would seem long past the time when the church should harmonize with that Divine perspective.
105. Ellen White, "The Laborer Is Worthy of His Hire," Ms 43a-1897, emphasis supplied.
106. Ibid, emphasis supplied.
107. Ellen White, "Canvassers as Gospel Evangelists," RH, Jan 15, 1901.
108. This seems to be another of those Ellen White counsels from this time period that has never really been implemented.
109. Ellen White is very clearly here valuing the contributions of women in a very clearly pastoral role.
110. Ellen White to Brethren Irwin, Evans, Smith, and Jones, April 21, 1898, I191a-1898, emphasis supplied.
111. Ibid. In 1898 the tithe available for ministry was \$432,000. Today the tithe totals well over \$500,000,000.
112. Ellen White, "The Needs of the Cause in Australasia: An Appeal," June 11, 1903.
113. Ellen White, "He That Loveth Not His Brother Abideth in Death," Aug 2, 1899.
114. Ellen White, Jan 17, 1901, B7-1901.
115. Ellen White, Acts of the Apostles, p. 161, emphasis supplied.
116. Ellen White, Jan 17, 1901, B7-1901.

