

<sup>1</sup> For a concise discussion on this matter see Jan Barna, *Ordination of Women in Seventh-day Adventist Theology: A Study in Biblical Interpretations* (Belgrade: Reporod, 2012), 264, 275–277 and 269–272.

However, there is still potentially a fatal hitch in this scheme. The way this model works is prone to overlook the fact that the interpretative process must not only include considerations relating to the *text* (exegesis) and the *reader*

In this scheme, the researcher starts from individual texts, which are carefully investigated through a well-defined semantic and historical interrogation process, and once there is reasonable clarity as to *what the text meant*, the researcher moves into *what the text means* today. While the second step is less 'objective,' being often defined as 'art' in traditional textbooks on evangelical interpretation, it is nonetheless based on the 'scientific' first step that should ensure that the application does not go wrong.<sup>1</sup>

Traditionally, in evangelical circles constructing theology has been understood as proceeding in two major steps—as moving from *exegesis*, which investigates individual texts, words and their backgrounds to *systematic theology*, which aims to provide a present-day doctrinal application. Thus 'theology' has been assumed to be the application step proceeding from the exegetical investigation of the text.

Jan Barna

## TOWARDS A BIBLICAL- SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY OF ORDINATION: WHAT THE THEOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTIVE TASK CANNOT NEGLECT

(application/theology), but also considerations concerning the *perspective of the author* who wrote the text (biblical theology). The basic fact is that, when biblical authors wrote their ‘texts,’ they wrote them with specific thematic contexts already in mind. Individual texts therefore are part of larger diachronic canonical themes that transcend even individual books of the Bible.<sup>2</sup> Overlooking this fundamental interpretative and theological reality could lead to a fatal mistake in constructing a theology of ordination.

## Defining the task

In this sense, it is not a straightforward undertaking to construct a biblical-systematic theology of ordination,<sup>3</sup> primarily because the task of biblical theology, which provides the foundational platform for systematic theology, is to integrate biblical themes and motifs that arise from the biblical material itself. Biblical theology attempts to map out the overarching perspective of the Bible, including the longitudinal themes or motifs which diachronically run across the canon.<sup>4</sup> However, when it comes to the topic of ordination, the task

<sup>2</sup> There has been an increase in scholarly works that call for the need to pay attention to the thematic and thinking context of biblical authors. For example, Walter C. Kaiser Jr. and Moises Silva, *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, Revised and Expanded Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), especially 67–94.

<sup>3</sup> Adventist scholars have been calling for a theology of ordination since the 1970s. And yet, Adventist scholarship has somehow not been able to arrive at a satisfactory theology of ordination. In 1978 Raoul Dederen attempted to provide an initial framework for a theology of ordination in an article in *Ministry*. This was shortened to few pages and voted at Annual Council in 1991 and appeared in the *Minister's Manual* the following year. However, the officially voted document simply attempted to provide a biblical justification for the current practice of ordination. In this sense the document, just like the previous larger document, does not provide a developed biblical-theological investigation. The latest official document which appeared on the subject, once again from the pen of Dederen, in the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, does not even address the matter of ordination and even the three-fold structure of ministry (deacon-elder-pastor), which was at the heart of ordination theology previously, is left completely untouched in the *Handbook*. See Raoul Dederen, ‘A Theology of Ordination,’ *Ministry* (Supplement), February 1978, 24K–24P; *Seventh-day Adventist Minister's Manual*, 1992 edition, 75–78 and ‘Church,’ in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, vol. 12 of Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, 538–581. See also Raoul Dederen, ‘Theology of Ordination,’ in *The Role of Women in the Church* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1995), 183–195.

<sup>4</sup> In this essay biblical theology is understood in its technical meaning as a theological discipline of ‘Biblical Theology proper’ rather than in its more generally assumed meaning of ‘theology that is in accordance with the Bible.’ For a discussion on the definition of Biblical Theology, see Walter C. Kaiser Jr. and Moises Silva, *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, Revised and Expanded Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 68–69. For the potential of biblical theology to provide the platform for considering any theology see: Ján Barna, ‘The Grand Story,’ *Ministry*, March 2012, 21–22, 24. In the Adventist tradition Ellen White has quietly insisted that it is both possible and necessary to learn to trace the central biblical themes. See Ellen G. White, *Education*, chapter 13, 123–127.

is less than apparent—not only because the subject of ordination has taken on external meanings that are foreign to the Bible itself, but also because the canon of Scripture does not even contain the word 'ordination.'

What then does this mean for the task of constructing a biblical-systematic theology of ordination? What it means is that the investigation cannot start with the reader's assumption concerning which individual passages or texts should be chosen for the topic of 'ordination' (just because they may have been linked with the subject previously). Such a starting point would not only naively see texts as thematically neutral 'islands,' but, more importantly, it would also impose the reader's already present understanding of the topic on the texts. Effectively, it would be the reader, then, who assigns theological significance to texts by choosing which texts should be looked at and collected.

I would like instead to propose that the investigation of a biblical-systematic theology of ordination must start with mapping out the broad thematic frameworks. It must start from inner-canonical themes. These will provide the texts with a thematic home or room and consequently with theological significance or value for the topic under investigation. In this way biblical authors themselves will be 'in control' of the thematic rooms and not the readers' initial presumptions about the topic.

If we are not aware of the need to involve the authors and even the canon's broad themes or motifs, we can easily dislodge individual texts from their theological rooms and assign to them foreign or altered significance. The task of constructing a *biblical-systematic theology of ordination* must therefore start with understanding what we mean by *biblical theology* in the first place before the task can move to *systematic theology* or doctrinal application.

## Identifying the thematic contexts

From the definition of the task given above, it is clear that in this essay I will attempt to demonstrate the necessity of biblical theology for constructing a theology of ordination, or any theology for that matter. Such a methodological step would be well in line with the Adventist and generally Protestant confession of *sola, prima and tota Scriptura*.

Since our concern is for Scripture (*sola*), how can we uncover and map out the thematic contexts, themes, motifs or theological trajectories (*prima*) across the biblical canon (*tota*) which provide homes and rooms for individual texts?

Effectively, with a narrow topic like 'ordination,' there are two ways of starting the task. One would be to start the mapping out from the New Testament context, within which the practice of 'ordination' appears, and then work the discussion backwards with a kind of 'zooming out' view to the larger and antecedent thematic contexts.

If we followed this, with some simplification, we would observe that 'ordination' is part of the *mission of the church* theme, which is part of the *church* theme, which if further zoomed out is part of the *mission of Christ* theme, which if we zoom even further out is part of the *mission of God* theme.

However, to be able to do such 'zooming out,' one must already have in place a biblical theology framework derived from an inductive process of mapping out the biblical themes without specific regard to the theme of 'ordination.' Only an inductive thematic approach, which starts at the beginning of the biblical canon and works its way through the individual sections and books of the canon from the Old Testament to the New Testament, can provide the foundational framework for the 'zooming out' of a specific topic.

However, for all practical purposes and in view of the space limitations of this essay, it is impossible to start developing a fully inductive picture and demonstrate how we can arrive at a large biblical theology framework. Instead, I propose to combine the antecedent zooming out process with the inductive investigation of specific themes mentioned above. In this way it will be possible to arrive at a workable framework for the 'ordination' topic.

Thus, the specific thematic or theological rooms within which the specific practice of 'ordination' appears and which I will develop below are the themes of *God's mission*, *Christ's mission* and *the church's mission*. I propose that it is within these biblical themes that the individual texts relating to what we presently call 'ordination' could be biblically understood and then systematically or theologically applied.

## The mission of God as thematic context

The first two chapters of the Bible form the primary and the overarching context for understanding the contours of the theme of the mission of God.<sup>5</sup> In Genesis 1 God created the earth in six days and while many contemporary debates concentrate on the nature of these days, the impression the narrative conveys is that creation becomes a kind of sanctuary, a dwelling place for God with people. Adam and Eve, the human race, are co-dwellers with God but what is more, they are seen as 'priests'—mediators who are to mediate God's presence and who are then to rule as 'royals,' representing God's good rule to the creation on earth.

Scholars have observed that there are important hints in the text that show that the arrangement of the Garden of Eden resembled the later Old Testament sanctuaries. In Genesis 2:8, 10 the garden appears to be the dwelling place of humans that is attached to Eden—the place where God's presence is. There are several textual parallels between Eden and later sanctuaries which support this view: (1) both Eden and later sanctuaries were entered from the east; (2) cherubim guard the entrance to Eden and they also 'guard' the entrance to the holy of holies; (3) the *menorah* in Hebrew tradition symbolised the tree of life; (4) the Hebrew verbs with which God commissions humans in Genesis 2:15 *bd* ('to work'), and *shmr* ('to watch')—together are used only in a sanctuary context in the Pentateuch; (5) the precious stones gold and onyx mentioned in the garden are also used extensively in sanctuaries.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> While it is traditionally assumed that the mission of God begins in Genesis 3 with the 'proto-evangelium' promise, this is not the case. In Genesis 3, as I will argue later, the mission of God will be narrowed and redirected, but it does not start there. The term 'mission of God' has been coined by German missiologist Karl Hartenstein as expressing the idea, reflecting Karl Barth's suggestion, that 'mission is grounded in an immanentist movement of God himself and that it expresses the power of God over history' to which obedience is the only appropriate response. See L.A. Hoedemaker, 'The People of God and the Ends of the Earth,' in *Missiology: An Ecumenical Introduction*, ed. A. Camps, L.A. Hoedemaker and M.R. Spindler (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 163. Also, for a brief survey of the history of the term, see David J. Bosch, *Transforming Missions: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 389–393. On the need to take the Bible as a whole for constructing a theology of mission, see: Charles Van Engen, 'The Relation of Bible and Mission in Mission Theology,' in *The Good News of the Kingdom*, ed. Charles van Engen, Dean S. Gilliland, and Paul Pierson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 27–36. Similarly argues Christopher J.H. Wright in his magnum opus: *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> See Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: Exploring God's Plan for Life on Earth* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008); Desmond T. Alexander, Simon Gathercole, and G.K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God. New Studies in Biblical Theology*, vol. 17, (Leicester, England: Apollos, 2004; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004).

The point of all this is that the Garden of Eden becomes the blueprint for how the whole earth should be: a sanctuary where humans live with God. The commission of Adam and Eve in this sanctuary missionary context is to be mediators of God's presence—'priests,' and also rulers who represent the good rule of God to creation, hence they are also seen in this thematic context as 'royals' (Gen 1:26, 28).

*The first narrowing of the mission of God theme: the fall (Gen 3)*

Immediately after introducing the grand mission blueprint, the Bible story takes an unexpected turn. In Genesis 3 the text introduces a change in the status and condition of humans who are now unable to provide what was originally expected of them. Adam is not in a position to extend God's presence, because he is now hiding from it. The serpent brings disunity between God and humanity. He convinces them that they are not made for what God told them, they are actually equal to God, hence their purpose and mission is higher. Tragically they pulled out of God's mission blueprint.

Within this secondary context the theme adapts to include undoing the human-divine disunity. At its very heart is Genesis 3:15, which presents an embryonic statement about an individual, a promised seed that would come from Adam and Eve and that would defeat the serpent, his lies and what he brought to the world. The seed would bring back harmony and God would once again be present in the world. God's mission, interestingly, is channelled through Adam and Eve's broken humanity.

The theme further develops from Genesis 3 through specific attention being paid to 'seedline' characters, who are followed in Genesis 5–11 with dogmatic attention from generation to generation, starting with Seth (second) and going through Enoch (seventh) and Noah (tenth) and eventually ending with Abraham (twentieth). When Abraham appears on the scene the mission theme becomes once again more specific.

*The second narrowing of the mission of God theme: Israel (Gen 12 and Ex 19)*

Abraham is to be a blessing to other nations and he himself will become a nation. His mission will be to extend the 'blessing'—an echo of the creation ideal (Gen 12:1–3, 15 and 17).

The seedline, as promised, over time multiplied into the nation of Israel and the words and the actions of that seedline nation are now seen in the light of the Abrahamic commission. Their function is no different from Abraham's or Adam's and Eve's for that matter. Israel is the collective seed of Abraham, and Adam and Eve, and is now operating on a 'global' scale as a nation. They are to

unmask the lies of the serpent about God, tell the true story of God, share God's presence and extend his good rule to other nations.

Within the theme of Israel Exodus 19:1–6 becomes theologically significant. There the Israelites are addressed with the same title as Adam and Eve: 'kingdom of priests.' They are to be a royal priesthood, functioning as 'priests' and 'royals,' just as Adam and Eve were commissioned.

Therefore, reading from Genesis 1 to the end of Exodus, there is no surprise that the theme ends with instructions for building a tabernacle (sanctuary) where God could dwell and Israel could meet him. Thus Exodus 25:8 forms the climax of this thematic context: 'And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.'<sup>7</sup> Israel's presence and mission are now the blueprint of the Garden of Eden, and Israel is now the centre from where it will spread to the whole world. Theologically this context frames all that Israel will do, including the specific cultic commission of the Levites and the Aaronic descendants (Ex 28:1–29:46; Num 8:5–26, 27:12–23 and Deut 34:9),<sup>8</sup> who will operate within this thematic and theological context of all Israel being called to be 'priests' and 'royals.'

It is in this thematic context also that all God's provisions for Israel (and not just the cultic one through the Levitical priesthood) need to be understood. Thus the laws—moral, social and health, the formal organisation, the leadership structure, the sacrificial system, the priestly order and its functions, the religious festivals and the tabernacle functions—are all meant to keep and teach Israel to be 'priests' and 'royals' in God's mission. They are meant to form them and equip them for their specific task of sharing God's presence and his good rule with the whole earth. None of these institutions, including the Levitical priesthood, have any purpose in themselves, for they must all be seen in the light of their larger purpose, as defined by Exodus 19.

In discussions the Levitical and Aaronic priesthood is often singled out as the 'priestly' context. In the context of the larger theme of God's mission it becomes

<sup>7</sup> See also Exodus 29:45–46: 'And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the Lord their God.'

<sup>8</sup> The duties of the Levitical priesthood included: the teaching of the Law (Lev 10:11); offering sacrifices (Lev 9); maintaining the Tabernacle and the Temple (Num 18:3); officiating in the Holy Place (Ex 30:7–10); inspecting ceremonially unclean persons (Lev 13 and 14); arbitration of disputes (Deut 17:8–13); collecting tithes (Num 18:21, 26, Heb 7:5).

clear, however, that the mission of spreading God's presence and his good rule was not just dependent on them, but the whole Israel was involved in that task. The larger thematic context here helps to clarify both Israel's and the Aaronic priesthood's meaning and function.

*The third narrowing of the mission of God theme: kingdom (2 Sam 7)*

Within Israel, there is yet one tribe and one family that God will specifically use, and it is not the Levites or the family of Aaron. From 1 Samuel, the story of this dynasty becomes the central focus of God's mission theme for the rest of the Old Testament.

The tribe of Judah has prophetically been singled out as early as Genesis 49:9–10 as fulfilling a specific function. It is, however, much later that its function becomes activated. From the time of Samuel the concepts of 'kingdom,' 'king,' 'servant,' 'son-father' are introduced to specify the theme of God's mission (2 Sam 7:12–14).

David and his descendants will now spearhead the mission of God. The massive promise he received in 2 Samuel 7 alters the direction and language of God's mission theme and we need to listen carefully to catch the drift in the canon of Scripture.

The theological perspective of the biblical writers from the first book of Samuel—without exception—is on the royal commissioning of David. Out of his descendants will come the decisive divine-human answer to the particular (Gen 3) and general (Gen 1) tasks of the mission of God. He will be a king, like David. He must consequently bring a kingdom similar in nature to David's. He will address God as his father and God will call him his son, just as David was a son to God and God was his father—indicating a close unity between the king and God. The logic of the biblical story about who David is as king and how he rules his kingdom becomes the sign by which Israel will recognise the promised king, the Messiah.

Strikingly, the king is not a power figure, his kingdom champions social justice and knowledge of the Lord—but not power. The poor, the needy and the oppressed are not forgotten in his kingdom.<sup>9</sup> Whoever will be the ultimate Davidic king must present these kingdom signs, otherwise he would not be a legitimate king.

While the story of the Davidic descendants will become distorted and the major Old Testament prophets will often cry their condemnations because the

<sup>9</sup> For example, Ps 72:1–4, 12–14; 2:7–8, 12 and Ps 89:36–7.

key signs of justice and righteousness were not present in Israel and Judah (Zech 7:9-10), nevertheless the specific Davidic commission will not be forgotten and the Old Testament prophets will also cast a vision of a time when what was promised to David will indeed be fulfilled and God will have fulfilled the specific function with David, Israel and also with Adam and Eve (Zech 6:12-13 and Jer 23:5-6).

How does the theme of the mission of God evolve when we come to the New Testament? What perspective can we gather from the New Testament biblical-thematic framework for the specific 'ordination' topic?

### The mission of Christ thematic context

By the time we come to the New Testament we can see that the umbrella under which the mission of God operated was the theme of the kingdom and king. We can demonstrate this by a few brief examples: Jesus at his birth is described by the magi as 'the king of the Jews' (Mat 2:2); Nathaniel confesses him as 'king of Israel' (John 1:49); after the multiplication miracle the crowd wanted 'to take him and make him king' (John 6:15); on his entry to Jerusalem he was called 'your king [who] comes to you' (Mat 21:5, Lk 19:38, John 12:32, cf. Zech 9:9); before Pilate when he was accused of being a king of the Jews, Jesus admits 'I am a king' (John 18:37); to his disciples he said that he will appear as a glorious king at his *parousia* (Mat 25:34); when they crucified him they wrote above his head: 'King of the Jews'.<sup>10</sup>

Statistically speaking, the expression 'kingdom of God' and its parallels appear almost 160 times in the New Testament; out of these, more than 120 occur in the gospels. This is especially the case in Matthew where it appears 50 times. The kingdom begins to be announced by Jesus: 'The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has drawn near; repent and believe the gospel' (Mk 1:15). The gospel is then the good news about the arrival of the kingdom.

Scholars observe that the expression 'has drawn near' in the perfect indicative means 'an extreme closeness, 'imminence', even 'presence'; Luke 11:20 and Matthew 12:28 confirm such an understanding: 'If I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come.' Here the expression 'has come' is in aorist perfect and it points to a (continued) presence of the kingdom

<sup>10</sup> O.P. Cestias Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament: Volume 1*, translated and edited by James D. Ernest (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 265-266. Later, the early church was accused by the Jews of contravening 'Caesar's edict by saying [preaching] that there is another king Jesus' (Acts 17:7).

of God. This interesting link between ‘coming’ and ‘being close’ and actually ‘being present’ is confirmed again by Jesus in John 4:23 and 5:25: ‘the hour is coming and is now.’<sup>11</sup>

What does this all mean? What it means is that in the gospels Jesus is acting as a king who is bringing the promised kingdom to Israel. What this means is that there is a specific kingdom christology in the gospels, which will form the basis for the New Testament theology of the church, the ministry and its ecclesiastical functions.

In Adventism, however, the idea of the kingdom of God as the central context to Jesus has been pushed to the eschatological corner. This is problematic, because it overlooks the central thematic theological context within which the mission of Jesus is unfolding and which has consequences for what is the theological ‘room’ of the New Testament ministry and mission, including its specific functions such as commissioning or ‘ordination’. Jesus brought the theme of God’s mission to its climax. Those who hear his story in the gospels—within its antecedent Old Testament theme—should hear a radical call to become part of Jesus’ kingdom mission. What Jesus was to Israel, the church—the new community—is now to be to the world.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> There has been a long discussion concerning whether the kingdom is present already in the ministry of Jesus or became a reality only as a result of his death on the cross. This debate has significant theological consequences and it centres on the interpretation of Matthew 12:28 and Luke 17:21. The realized eschatology school of C.H. Dodd interprets these as saying that the kingdom is already present in the ministry of Jesus while the A. Harnack non-eschatological school tends to see these as indicating close future or immanence in the case of Matthew 12:28 and spiritual presence in the case of Luke 17:21. Still others, most prominently Chrys Caragounis, suggest that Matthew 12:28 uses an idiom that means that the kingdom is imminent, not present yet, but will come soon (at the death of Christ). See C.C. Caragounis, ‘Kingdom of God/Heaven,’ *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. J.B. Green and S. McKnight (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 417–430. Also C.H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London, UK: Nisbet, 1935), the book has been republished several times; *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Development* (London, UK: Hodder & Stoughton, 1936); Adolf von Harnack, *What is Christianity? Sixteen Lectures Delivered at the University of Berlin During the Winter Term 1899–1900*, trans. Thomas Bailey Saunders (New York, NY: Putnam, 1908); and for an overview of the debate see for example Caragounis’ article (ibid.) and Larry R. Helyer, *The Witness of Jesus, Paul and John: An Exploration in Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 130–144. In Luke 17:20–21 the kingdom is ‘among you’ already could mean (1) ‘in your midst’—i.e. in Israel, or (2) ‘in you,’ meaning: in each person who acts spiritually. See O.P. Ceslas Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament: Volume I*, translated and edited by James D. Ernest (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 266–267.

<sup>12</sup> Howard Marshall in his magnum opus on New Testament theology argues that all New Testament documents hang together around the recognition of Jesus as Lord or King. He suggests that the New Testament material is thus a commentary on Jesus’ inauguration of the kingdom of God. See Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 34–35.

## The mission of the church thematic context

Seeing Jesus as king or Messiah offers the church a *mission-generating hermeneutics* of the New Testament. The early church understood that Jesus became Christ with the result that the kingdom of God began to take hold in this world. The mission of God now included the mission of the church.

Christopher Wright expresses it this way: 'It is not so much the case that God has a mission for his church in the world but that God has a church for his mission in the world. Mission was not made for the church, the church was made for mission—the mission of God.' The mission of God was already in operation. The church with its functions, ministries and gifts are the means of advancing it. 'Mission, then, in biblical terms, while it inescapably involves us in planning and action, is not *primarily* a matter of our activity or our initiative'.<sup>13</sup>

## The link between the mission of the church and Christ's kingship

There is an explicit biblical-theological link between the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, by which act the mission of the church began, and the inauguration of Jesus as king in Revelation 5. The text of Revelation 5, which speaks about Jesus' inauguration as the king with all power, is also interestingly the text which mentions the sending out of the Holy Spirit (Rev 5:6). The visible reality of Jesus' inauguration and the sending of the Spirit was the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost and the beginning of the Christian mission. The text in Acts 2, which describes the church's experience, also explicitly mentions the inauguration of Jesus as the vindication for what is going on: '... therefore being exalted to the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he poured out this which you now see' (Acts 2:33). This crucial link is confirmed several times in the speeches that follow—by Peter (Acts 5:31–2) and Stephen (Acts 7:55–6).

In theological terms these links strongly suggest that the theology of mission and ministry of the church (ecclesiology) is rooted in christology. Jesus as king, as Peter says, is the cornerstone that makes the church into what it is. Ecclesiology is not related so much to the doctrine of the Trinity as many modern theologians

<sup>13</sup> Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 62 and 67.

propose, including Barth and Hartenstein (the father of the 'mission of God' concept),<sup>14</sup> but rather to the doctrine of Christ.

In the biblical-theological context of Acts 2 and Revelation 5, even pneumatology is a subcategory of christology. The Spirit does not operate on his own will or authority. He is not instituting the mission of the church. The Spirit is in the service of the new king. He mediates the presence and the power of Christ to the church and its mission. Therefore charismatic theology with the emphasis on the doctrine of Spirit as foundation for the church's ministry and mission is a misleading construct. It simply overlooks the larger Old Testament theme of God's mission and the specific theme of Jesus' mission as foundational for anything that relates to the church's mission and ministry. Pentecost is not a new foundation, it is only the opening of a new stage in the theme of God's mission.

Ecclesiology must therefore always be christologically oriented. Such ecclesiology, including the theology of ministry, will have at its heart the picture of Jesus as king and this vision of Christ would mold the church into a community of kingdom-bringers. Because if Jesus is king of the kingdom based on justice, true love, acceptance, forgiveness and healing, both spiritual and physical, and all this springs from the true knowledge of God, then the church founded on such christology will be promoting the same foundational kingdom values and message—and in this way it will be extending God's good rule and his presence in the world that is founded on power, injustice and a false knowledge of God.

The kingdom-oriented church ministry will model a different way of being a community and indeed humanity (Eph 2:15). It will actively advocate justice and equality—socially, economically, racially, and with regard to gender. It will challenge politicians and other power players by pointing out that the current leaders, prime ministers, presidents or monarchs are not in charge of the affairs of the world but that Jesus is the ultimate 'president' or 'prime minister.'

It will be a community with a mission of true forgiveness, helping and serving love, championing the case of the marginalized, which Jesus exemplified. It will bring healing and care to people, just as David did in his kingdom. Such a New Testament community will clearly announce the truth about God and his mission in the word. 'Your kingdom come; your will be done on earth as it is in heaven'—the prayer of Jesus then becomes a mission prayer for the kingdom of God to be revealed through the church here on earth.

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<sup>14</sup> See footnote 5 above.

I have a hunch here that the Adventist conception of christology, which is locked into the perfectionist-soteriological corner (meaning that christology is discussed as a matter of what human nature Jesus had), and the concept of kingdom which is locked into the eschatological corner, may have a weakening effect on the Adventist understanding of mission and ministry. The multi-dimensional implications of the gospels' kingdom-christology are suppressed to the individual level—with an emphasis on confession, spirituality and ethical dimensions. But the larger socio-economic and political environment as well as the dimensions related to gender and the formation of a new community need to be part of the church's ministry and mission theology.

In the context of the New Testament theme of the mission of the church, Ephesians 2 actually becomes a key passage. 'Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens [language of kingdom] with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ [read: king] Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone [here we have the specific king/kingdom christology being the foundation for the church]. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord [a sanctuary]. And in him you [plural] too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit [echoes of Ex 25:8].'

In this brilliant piece of theological and biblical synthesis Paul presents the church as the new humanity. Being built on Christ's mission and now having Christ's glory among them, they are metaphorically speaking God's sanctuary. And as the church is growing, so is God's presence among the people. In this way the church is at the centre of God's original mission for the world—exactly what God wanted from the beginning for Adam and Eve to be and to do.

We can see how the specific theme of the church's mission operates under the larger umbrella of God's mission theme of Genesis 1 and 2 and that the key that made this possible is Jesus as the king.

The church now spreads not just the *truth* about the kingdom, but the actual *presence* of the kingdom. The church is a different humanity, where gentiles and Jews are together, where slaves and masters are equal and where there is essential unity, not just doctrinal or policy unity. The citizenship is multi-dimensional, and importantly, it begins now, not in the future. Thus the mission, and the ministry the church is being called to be part of, must reflect this new reality.

## Towards a systematic theology of ordination: a suggestion

What does this then mean for the task of formulating a systematic theology of 'ordination'? What this means is that the thematic-biblical motifs of God's mission, Christ's mission and the church's mission with their nuances and emphases must be heeded when entering into the specific textual and exegetical investigation. Texts are not thematically neutral or isolated islands. Texts have their thematic homes or theological rooms.

Very often the specific theme of *laying on of hands* is identified as the most relevant and, theologically, the immediate framework for the ordination topic.<sup>15</sup> Equally the discussion is drawing quickly on the framework of the *priesthood of all believers* and its related texts as a key context for the discussion. While both these contexts and their related texts may be appropriate and necessary to consider at some stage, what this essay tries to demonstrate is that the constructive task needs to start at an even more fundamental level.

If this happens, then, for example, the *priesthood of all believers* theme in the New Testament and its key text in 1 Peter 2:4–10 would right away be recognized as being profoundly influenced by the canonical theme of God's mission.

Like Ephesians 2, the passage in 1 Peter 2:4–10 is a brilliant piece of theological synthesis following up on the very specific *mission theme* that we have explored above. Of course, one might not recognise just how superbly the text sits within the larger context without first knowing something about the larger canonical themes.

Peter's synthesis mentions that they (the gentiles) are also now living stones (just like the Jews), being part of God's sanctuary. Hence they are a *holy priesthood* offering spiritual sacrifices (v. 5). All this is possible because of Jesus Christ who became the cornerstone of God's sanctuary, of which they are now part (vv. 6–8). Right after this comes the endorsement of their *new status* and *mission* in the form of a direct quote of Exodus 19:6—the very text on which the status and mission of Israel hangs. Now the same status of being God's people and having the same mission as Israel—*being priests and royals*, spreading God's presence and advancing God's good rule in the world—applies to Gentiles

<sup>15</sup> For example the latest book on the theology of the church, which contains a whole chapter on ordination (chapter 8), starts the biblical investigation with the laying on of hands context and later adds to it the priesthood of all believers context. See Reinder Bruinsma, *The Body of Christ: A Biblical Understanding of the Church* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2009), 109 and 113 (109–122).

(vv. 9 and 10). General *priesthood of all believers* is something all members of the body of Christ therefore receive. When it comes to *laying on of hands* as the immediate theological context for ordination, it has been pointed out that only about four New Testament texts out of 25, where the phrase appears, technically refer to 'ordination' in the sense of initiation to a task or office (Acts 6:6, 13:3, 1 Tim 4:14, and 2 Tim 1:6).<sup>16</sup> In most of these the context of 'ordination' is 'fullness of the spirit'. The New Testament thus appears to contain a formal recognition of individuals who were seen by the community as 'full of the spirit' and they were recognized as such.

Such recognition when we take the Old Testament background into consideration was not unique, as laying on of hands was widely practiced in different contexts and with different significance. But applying the biblical thematic context of God's mission to the specific New Testament passages on laying on of hands would prevent us from exclusively limiting the commission or recognition to a few uniquely gifted individuals.

While in the Old Testament Joshua (Num 27:12-23) and the Levites (Num 8: 5-26) are mentioned as receiving the 'ordination' ceremony, including laying on of hands, it was not just they who received the mission of God. Similarly we must see the specific New Testament commissioning ceremonies in the light of the larger theme of the mission of the church. The New Testament mission is given to all who form the church, all are given the 'royal priesthood' title and the resulting mission.

The last thematic context that could illustrate the proposition of this essay is the theme of *spiritual gifts*. Surprisingly, however, this theme is often overlooked in the discussions about 'ordination' theology. The exegetical investigation could once again significantly benefit from awareness of the larger thematic context. The spiritual *gifts, ministries and operations* (1 Cor 12:4-6), while being directly relevant for the subject of commissioning or 'ordination', receive their theological significance from the broader canonical perspective and not just from the local exegetical or New Testament context.

It is within the broader context of the Old Testament that these gifts, ministries and operations appear to fulfil the same significance or function as the various institutions which God had put in place in the Old Testament to build up and edify Israel for its mission. Equally in the New Testament, while there

<sup>16</sup> For example Reinder Bruinsma, *The Body of Christ: A Biblical Understanding of the Church*, 111-112.

is no formal Old Testament organisation, no leadership structure, no sacrificial system, no priestly order with its functions, no religious festivals and tabernacle functions which provided the edification of Israel, there is now the provision of *gifts, ministries and operations* to provide edification of God's new Israel. The 'gifts' become *the means* that support the mission and the ministry of the church. Traditionally these have been isolated as the ones deserving ordination and the rest of the body of Christ was left unrecognized.

However just as in the Old Testament the Aaronic priesthood had not replaced Israel's 'royal priesthood' mission, so in the New Testament the spiritual *gifts, ministries and operations* do not replace the 'priesthood of all believers' mission.

What is this then saying to the church? The discussion suggests not only that specific ministries and gifts may need official recognition, but the church should also find a way of recognizing each member's 'royal priesthood' title and function through some formal practice of 'ordination.'

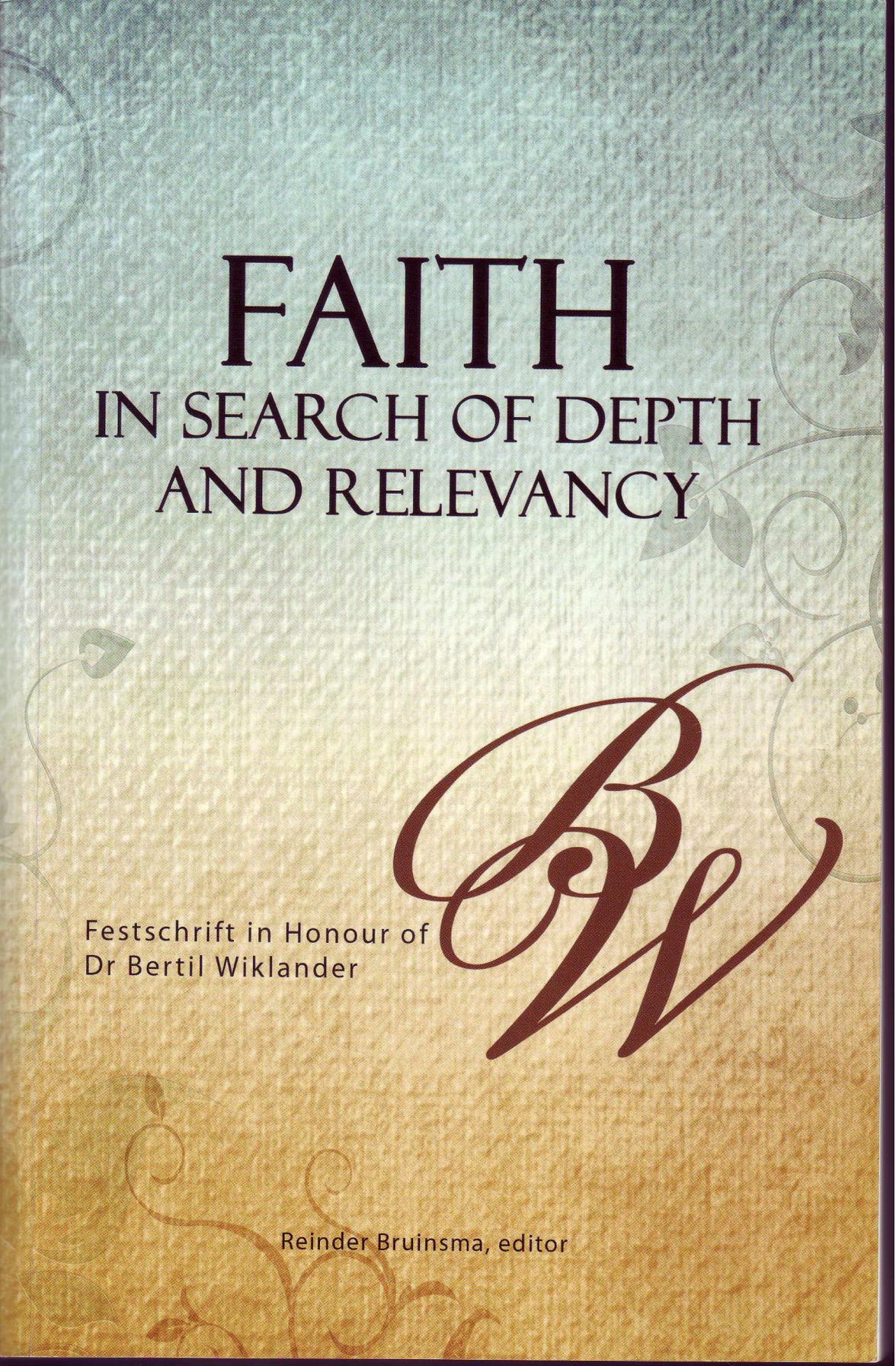
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