

VIII
THE ROLES OF WOMEN
IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
SIGNIFICANCE OF ELLEN G. WHITE COUNSELS

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Preface

Although the Seventh-day Adventist Church draws its faith and doctrine from the Bible only (*sola scriptura*), it sees the work of Ellen G. White as a particular fulfillment of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the church and a special bestowal of the “spirit of prophecy” in the end of time.

The fact that a woman—Ellen G. White—was chosen by God (after two men had declined the commission) to be His special messenger to the remnant, makes her writings on the roles for women in the church especially pertinent. No other person had a greater impact upon the form and character of this church.

“In ancient times God spoke to men by the mouth of prophets and apostles. In these days He speaks to them by the *Testimonies* of His Spirit. There was never a time when God instructed His people more earnestly than He instructs them now concerning His will and the course that He would have them pursue.”¹

So this paper draws heavily upon Mrs. White’s writings as it attempts to portray God’s twentieth century counsel on the roles of women in this church. It will consider God’s call of women to positions of trust; it will canvass similarities and differences between the roles of men and women in the church; it will draw together counsel regarding specific callings for women; and finally it will attempt a summary and conclusions.

Positions of Trust

The God who inhabits eternity is looking for loving, self-sacrificing women who will give of their time, means, and selves to hasten the ushering in of His kingdom of glory. Such women will not be wasting precious time in useless, seemingly endless, discussion on woman’s elevated sphere and her rights.² Instead they will be investigating what is the true “right of every daughter of Eve to have.”³

“Women who might develop good intellects and have true moral worth are now mere slaves to fashion. They have not breadth of thought nor cultivated intellect. They can talk understandingly of the latest fashion, the styles of dress, this or that party or delightful ball. Such women are not prepared to intelligently take a prominent position in political matters. They are mere creatures of fashion and circumstance. Let this order of things be changed. Let woman realize the sacredness of her work and, in the strength and fear of God, take up her life mission.”⁴

¹4T 147.

²Cf. FE 75.

³FE 85.

⁴3T 565.

Truly, “when women are wanted with well-balanced minds, with not a cheap style of education, but with an education *fitting them for any position of trust*, they are not easily found.”⁵

The Lord has a work for the women of our church, but do they realize the high mission that is theirs by the grace of God? “Sisters, we may do a noble work for God if we will. Woman does not know her power.”⁶ By the light reflected from the Saviour’s countenance, self-sacrificing women may receive a power from Him “that exceeds that of men. They can do in families a work that men cannot do, a work that reaches the inner life. . . .”⁷ “When the believing women shall feel the burden of souls, and burden of sins not their own, they will be working as Christ worked. They will consider no sacrifice too great to make to win souls to Christ.”⁸

The qualifications of women such as the Lord would like to use in these last days are clearly delineated:

“All who work for God should have the Martha and the Mary attributes blended—a willingness to minister and a sincere love of the truth. Self and selfishness must be put out of sight. God calls for earnest women workers, workers who are prudent, warmhearted, tender, and true to principle. He calls for persevering women who will take their *minds* from self and their personal convenience, and *will center them on Christ*, speaking words of truth, praying with the persons to whom they can obtain access, laboring for the conversion of souls.

“Oh, what is our excuse, my sisters, that we do not devote all the time possible to searching the Scriptures, making the mind a storehouse of precious things, that we may present them to those who are not interested in the truth? Will our sisters arise to the emergency? Will they work for the Master?”⁹

With the vision of the gentle, loving Saviour ever before them—gained by that morning by morning thoughtful hour contemplating His life and then continuing to abide in Him—such women workers can be a mighty power for the upbuilding of Christ’s kingdom on earth.¹⁰

“Women of firm principle and decided character are needed, women who believe that we are indeed living in the last days, and that we have the last solemn message of warning to be given to the world. They should feel that they are engaged in an important work in spreading the rays of light which Heaven has shed upon them. When the love of God and His truth is an abiding principle, they will let nothing deter them from duty or discourage them in their work. They will fear God and will not be diverted from their labors in His cause by the temptation of lucrative situations and attractive Prospects. They will preserve their integrity at any cost to themselves.”¹¹

The Issue of Equality

When considering the matter of whether women should take more prominent leadership roles in the church, particularly along ministerial lines, the question arises as to whether men and women should attempt to fill identical roles in the church. Did Eve, in being deceived by the enemy, forfeit that right for herself as well as for all modern Eves?

⁵FE 118, emphasis supplied.

⁶4T 642.

⁷WM 145.

⁸Ev 465-66.

⁹6T 8, emphasis supplied.

¹⁰Cf. DA 83; John 15.

¹¹WM 149.

In the Physical Realm

In the beginning, “Eve was not quite as tall as Adam. Her head reached a little above his shoulders. She, too, was noble, perfect in symmetry, and very beautiful.”¹² Eve was “to be loved and protected by him [Adam].”¹³

There are differences in the physical constitutions of men and women; hormones are a determining factor. Because of androgens produced in the male, he is the more aggressive of the sexes and has more of the leadership quality (generally evident throughout the animal kingdom). Most men do not have the quality of nurturance, which characteristic is especially woman’s and is supreme in fitting her motherhood. According to studies at the University of Wisconsin (Harlow), those females who haven’t been mothered properly are disasters at being mothers themselves, hence the need for true mothers in Israel.

Much of the physical weakness of women is due to fashion and a much-too-sedentary existence. This is not always the case; there are healthy and strong women in our day—comparatively, that is, after six thousand years of degeneracy and decay.

“Is it at all necessary that there should be so large a number of feeble, helpless women in our world? No; I answer, decidedly; no. The opinion prevails in this generation that women do not need active, vigorous muscles and strong, sturdy frames; but does not reason tell us differently? It is argued that by nature their muscles are softer and feebler, and their strength and power of endurance less. We admit that this is the case, but why? Because for many generations back false ideas, degenerating in their influence, have been brought in through their efforts to meet the standard of fashion. The great master-worker, Satan, has not been idle. He has brought in a varied of fashions, and has led men and women to encourage delicate idleness.”¹⁴

“There is danger that the women connected with the work will be required to labor too hard without proper periods of rest. Such severe taxation should not be brought upon the workers. Some will not injure themselves, but others, who are conscientious, will certainly overwork. Periods of rest are necessary for all, *especially women*.”¹⁵

With the above counsels in mind, here is very practical advice drawn from a different setting, but with applicable principles:

“Let no man consider it his place to judge of the amount of labor a woman should perform. A competent woman should be employed as matron, and if anyone does not perform her work faithfully, the matron should deal with the matter. Just wages should be paid, and every woman should be treated kindly and courteously, without reproach.”¹⁶

In Mental Ability

¹²SR 21.

¹³PP 46.

¹⁴E. G. White MS 138, 1898.

¹⁵Ev 494, emphasis supplied.

¹⁶CH 314.

Mental characteristics are much more difficult to measure than the physical. Unfortunately, feebleness of mind and body go hand in hand; “continued inactivity is one of the greatest causes of debility [weakness] of body and feebleness of mind.”¹⁷ But no one need remain in such a state.

“Our sisters have been too willing to excuse themselves from bearing responsibilities which require thought and close application of the mind; yet this is the very discipline they need to perfect Christian experience.

“. . . There are hundreds and thousands who can work it they are so disposed. Up to the present time they have done nothing but serve themselves. This class of do-nothings and know-nothings, as far as the work to be done in God’s cause is concerned, will never hear the well done from the lips of the Majesty of Heaven.”¹⁸

Differences That Must Be Preserved

In all the various roles in which men and women seem to have equality, the latter need to cling to womanly grace or modesty.¹⁹ Do we see this Christian grace among the majority of worldlings? Among the proponents of “women’s lib”? Does the status quo of women today really represent liberation? God’s messenger wrote:

“I was pointed back to God’s ancient people, and was led to compare their apparel with the mode of dress in these last days. What a difference! What a change! Then the women were not so bold as now. When they went in public, they covered their faces with a veil. In these last days, fashions are shameful and immodest. They are noticed in prophecy.”²⁰

Also there must be “a preservation of those barriers of reserve that should exist between men and women.”²¹ With the undercurrent of fashion and philosophy sweeping toward unisex, the following counsel is certainly pertinent and applicable.

“There is an increasing tendency to have women in their dress and appearance as near like the other sex as possible, and to fashion their dress very much like that of men, but God pronounces it abomination. . . .”²²

“It [such a style of dress] is not modest apparel, and is not at all fitting for modest, humble females who profess to be Christ’s followers. God’s prohibitions are lightly regarded by all who would advocate the doing away of the distinction of dress between males and females. . . .

“God designed there should be a plain distinction between male and female dress, and has considered the matter of sufficient importance to give explicit directions in regard to it; for the same dress worn by both sexes would cause confusion, and great increase of crime. St. Paul would utter a rebuke, were he alive, and should behold females professing godliness with this style of dress.”²³

Distinctive Duties and Mission of Women

¹⁷2T 524.

¹⁸RH, Dec. 1 2, 1978.

¹⁹Cf. Ev. 467.

²⁰1T 188.

²¹CH 363.

²²1T 457.

²³2SM 477-78.

As far as church-related work is concerned, there are unique tasks for men and for women. The following quotation gives some examples:

“There are so many kinds of work too laborious for women, which our brethren are called to engage in, that many branches of missionary work are neglected. Many things connected with different churches are left undone that women, if properly instructed, could attend to. Our sisters might serve as church clerks, and the church business would not be so sadly neglected. There are many other offices connected with the cause of God which our sisters are better qualified to fill than our brethren, and in which they might do efficient service.”²⁴

In the work of carrying truth to families, “in many respects a woman can impart knowledge to her sisters that a man cannot.”²⁵

Without question, when available to her, it is in her own home that woman can find “the most sacred, elevated office that she can fill.”²⁶ Her distinctive duties there may be summed up thus:

“There is a work for women that is even more important and elevating than the duties of the king upon his throne. They may mold the minds of their children and shape their characters so that they may be useful in this world and that they may become sons and daughters of God. Their time should be considered too valuable to be passed in the ballroom or in needless labor. There is enough necessary and important labor in this world of need and suffering without wasting precious moments for ornamentation or display. Daughters of the heavenly King, members of the royal family, will feel a burden of responsibility to attain to a higher life, that they may be brought into close connection with heaven and work in unison with the Redeemer of the world. . . . They will be in sympathy with Christ, and in their sphere, as they have ability and opportunity, will work to save perishing souls as Christ worked in His exalted sphere for the benefit of man.”²⁷

So every mother has a responsibility to her children that is “paramount to everything else.”²⁸ Also, as has been made plain above, all women should feel they can do something in the work of bringing souls to Christ; domestic cares are not to be an excuse.²⁹ Especially if a woman’s mother role has diminished or has not been taken up, the following may be true:

“Woman, if she wisely improves her time and her faculties, relying upon God for wisdom and strength, may stand on an equality with her husband as adviser, counselor, companion, and co-worker, and yet lose none of her womanly grace or modesty.”³⁰

In areas where it is appropriate for the wife to assume a role similar to that of her husband, she should not contend for such, but rather she should aspire to qualify herself so that she can and will naturally fill that position whenever and wherever opportunity arises. “We have an earnest desire that woman shall *fill* the position which God *originally designed, as her husband’s equal*. . . . We may safely say that the dignity and importance of woman’s mission and distinctive duties are of a more sacred and holy character than the duties of man.”³¹

Wherein Lies Equality?

²⁴WM 147.

²⁵Ev 493.

²⁶MYP 326.

²⁷3T 483-84.

²⁸WM 158.

²⁹Cf. WM 165.

³⁰Ev 467.

³¹3T 565, emphasis supplied.

It should be noted in the following quotation that God's plan is for women to fill, and be satisfied in, a certain sphere. Also, in the beginning Eve was on an equality with Adam to do individual thinking and acting.

"A neglect on the part of woman to follow God's plan in her creation, an effort to reach for important positions which He has not qualified her to fill, leaves vacant the position that she could fill to acceptance. In getting out of her sphere, she loses true womanly dignity and nobility. When God created Eve, He designed that she should possess neither inferiority nor superiority to the man, but that *in all things she should be his equal*. The holy pair were to have no interest independent of each other; and yet each had an *individuality in thinking and acting*. But after Eve's sin, as she was first in the transgression, the Lord told her that Adam should rule over her. She was to be in subjection to her husband, and this was a part of the curse. . . ."³²

Since "the very essence of the gospel is restoration,"³³ the religion of Christ permeates the marriage relation and restores to it the original beauty, harmony, and love. A family needs a spiritual head, and in the Lord's plan it is the husband;³⁴ or, in his absence, the wife and mother.³⁵ However, both father and mother are to be responsible for maintaining religion in the home;³⁶ in fact, they are both referred to as "heads."³⁷

Ellen White exercised her womanly grace of modesty when it came to opportunities to speak at times that both she and her husband were available. When they both visited a church and she was asked to take the regular preaching hour, it was her custom to decline the invitation and let James preach in the morning service while she would speak at an afternoon or evening session.

This section closes with the same thought with which it was opened: Husband and wife stand as equal before God, because of the restoration made possible by the gospel, in their ability and right to think and to act as individuals.

"There are circumstances under which it is proper for a woman to *act* promptly and independently, moving with *decision* in the way she knows to be the way of the Lord. *The wife is to stand by the side of the husband as his equal*, sharing all the responsibilities of life, rendering due respect to him who has selected her for his life-long companion."³⁸

The church is composed of individuals and families, each family being a miniature church. In the larger church, as in the smaller, do we not have basically the same relationship of men to women and vice versa? Should we not expect that the gospel would restore to women in the church the ability and right to act in leadership roles, as "spiritual heads" in Israel? However, the picture would be truly beautiful only if women would preserve their Christian grace of modesty by not seeking for themselves high places or honor and by giving due respect and preference to men who are spiritual leaders of the church. This brings us to the next sub-title.

The Golden Rule on Rights

Heaven's beautiful harmony was marred by self-seeking. It is altogether possible for the same thing to happen in the church.

³²3T 484, emphasis supplied.

³³DA 824.

³⁴AA 215.

³⁵CG 519.

³⁶Cf. AH 321.

³⁷CG 521.

³⁸Ev 494, emphasis supplied.

“He [Lucifer] sought for himself the highest place, and every being who is actuated by his spirit will do the same. Thus alienation, discord, and strife will be inevitable.”³⁹

“It is Satan’s object to keep Christians occupied in controversies among themselves. . . . We have no time now to give place to the spirit of the enemy and to cherish prejudices that confuse the judgment and lead us away from Christ.”⁴⁰

Instead of seeking the highest place, what would love do? “Love not only bears with others’ faults, but cheerfully submits to whatever suffering or inconvenience such forbearance makes necessary.”⁴¹ Our great Exemplar, Jesus, “did not contend for His rights.”⁴² On the other hand, those who have the true spirit of their Master “will treat their fellow men as they would treat Christ. *No one will ignore the rights of another.*”⁴³ In other words, we should seek to promote the rights of others—not our own.

The practice of the golden rule will reach its height under the latter rain or refreshing from the presence of the Holy Spirit. “When the Holy Spirit is poured out, there will be a triumph of humanity over prejudice in seeking the salvation of the souls of human beings. God will control minds. Human hearts will love as Christ loved.”⁴⁴ The more God’s servants seek to abide in Jesus as He did in His Father—communicating through prayer and study of the Word—the more will the above demonstration of out flowing love be seen in the church. “Restless modern Eves” might ponder the following:

“But in attempting to climb higher than her original position, she [Eve] fell far below it. This will most assuredly be the result with the Eves of the present generation if they neglect to cheerfully take up their daily life duties in accordance with God’s plan.”⁴⁵

Would it not be the better part of valor for women to let the Lord fight their battles for them?

“If any are qualified for a higher position, the Lord will lay the burden, not alone on them, but on those who have tested them, who know their worth, and who can understandingly urge them forward. It is those who perform faithfully their appointed work day by day, *who in God’s own time will hear His call, ‘Come up higher.’*”⁴⁶

Leadership Roles in the Church

Counseling

A real need exists for women who, with proper education, could help bear the burden that many ministers are now staggering under—to advise, counsel, and sympathize with those who have questions, problems, and trials. In particular, consecrated women, as messengers of mercy, could help their sisters in the faith, in the light of this admonition from the Lord:

“If any woman, no matter who, casts herself upon your sympathy, are you to take her up and encourage her and receive letters from her and feel a special responsibility to help her? My brother, you should change your course with regard to such matters, and set a right example

³⁹DA 435-36.

⁴⁰9T 216.

⁴¹5T 169.

⁴²DA 89; cf. COL 171.

⁴³7T 209, emphasis supplied.

⁴⁴9T 209.

⁴⁵3T 483.

⁴⁶MH 477.

before your brother ministers. Keep your sympathy for the members of your own family, who need all that you can give them.

“When a woman is in trouble, let her take her trouble to women.”⁴⁷

“Our sisters generally have a hard time with their increasing families and their unappreciated trials. I have so longed for women who could be educated to help our sisters rise from their discouragement and feel that they could do a work for the Lord. This will bring rays of sunshine into their own lives, which will be reflected into the lives of others. God will bless all who unite in this grand work.”⁴⁸

Health Evangelism

Medical missionary work is to be the entering wedge for the entrance of the gospel, the preparatory work that helps to produce sound minds in sound bodies so that the gospel in its fullness can be appreciated; but for real effectiveness Jesus Christ must be lifted up (John 12:32). It is also true that some persons must first see Christ in His purity and beauty of character and have the assurance of sins forgiven before their health begins to spring forth speedily (Isa 58:8).

Many statements make it evident that both men and women are to be engaged in the specialized work of medical evangelism. Two follow immediately: “In almost every church there are young men and women who might receive education either as nurses or physicians.”⁴⁹ To the young men and young women who are being educated as nurses and physicians I will say, Keep close to Jesus.”⁵⁰

The vital importance of combining the work of the ministry and of medical evangelism is evidenced in the following sample quotations, because healing for both soul and body is to come through the church. The healing art was never to become so highly commercialized—thus exalting the human above the divine and effectually leaving God, the only source of true healing, out of the picture—as it has become throughout the world.

“Ministers and physicians are to work harmoniously with earnestness to save souls that are becoming entangled in Satan’s snares. . . . This work belongs just as surely to the doctor as to the minister. By public and private effort the physician should seek to win souls to Christ.”⁵¹

“The faithful physician and the minister are engaged in the same work. They should work in complete harmony. They are to counsel together.”⁵²

“No influence should be exerted to turn young men aside from qualifying themselves for ministerial missionary work. To this we may attach the word ‘medical’; for it is essential that the gospel minister shall have a knowledge of disease and its causes. . . . This is a part of the gospel.”⁵³

“Medical missionary work is in no case to be divorced from the gospel ministry. . . . Without this union neither part of the work is complete.”⁵⁴

⁴⁷Ev 460.

⁴⁸6T 114.

⁴⁹CH 506.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 590.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 336.

⁵²Ev 546.

⁵³Ev 547.

⁵⁴CH 524.

In this context there are certain safeguards that the Lord wants us to observe in this important work. It seems that in very personal situations, in counseling (as seen above) or in medicine, women are to help their own sex, and men likewise.

“Women should be educated in medical missionary lines, that as they go forth to heathen countries, they may help those of their sisters who need help.”⁵⁵

“It is better that our physicians be married men, whose wives can unite with them in the work. Both the doctor and his wife should have a living experience in the things of God.”⁵⁶

“There should be a much larger number of lady physicians, educated not only to act as trained nurses, but also as physicians. It is a most horrible practice, this revealing the secret parts of women to men, or men being treated by women [for the same reason].

“. . . And the wages of the woman should be proportionate to her services. She should be as much appreciated in her work as the gentleman physician is appreciated in his work.

“Let us educate ladies to become intelligent in the work of treating the diseases of their sex. They will sometimes need the counsel and assistance of experienced gentlemen physicians. When brought into trying places let all be led by supreme wisdom. . . .

“We ought to have a school where women can be educated by women physicians, to do the best possible work in treating the diseases of women.”⁵⁷

This last statement, penned in 1907, along with other similar counsels, reveal that women qualified as physicians, in our sanitariums and hospitals or in a specialized school to train women physicians, are indeed in positions of responsibility and leadership. Now ponder the following elevated concept regarding the true medical missionary:

“If you are a Christian and a competent physician, you are qualified to do tenfold more good as a missionary for God than if you were to go forth merely as a preacher of the word. I would advise young men and women to give heed to this matter.”⁵⁸

Unite the preceding thought with the next one, while noting that many physicians would no longer meet one of the conditions—that of being a salaried worker in one of our institutions:

“The work of the true medical missionary is largely a spiritual work. It includes prayer and the laying on of hands; he therefore should be as sacredly set apart for his work as is the minister of the gospel. Those who are selected to act the part of missionary physicians, are to be set apart as such. This will strengthen them against the temptation to withdraw from the sanitarium work to engage in private practice. No selfish motive should be allowed to draw the worker from his post of duty. We are living in a time of solemn responsibilities; a time when consecrated work is to be done. Let us seek the Lord diligently and understandingly.”⁵⁹

The question then arises, Why, if men missionary physicians are ordained, women medical evangelists should not be?

Literature Evangelism

Closely tied in with the work of the gospel minister and the medical evangelist is that of the literature evangelist. In fact, the three lines of missionary endeavor are to be inseparably bound

⁵⁵MM 246.

⁵⁶CH 585.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 364-66.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 504.

⁵⁹Ev 546.

together, through Jesus, the greatest Medical Missionary. All are to be uplifting Christ who, “hanging upon the cross . . . was the gospel.”⁶⁰

“God works by means of instruments, or second causes. He uses the gospel ministry, medical missionary work, and the publications containing present truth to impress hearts. . . . The gospel ministry, medical missionary work, and our publications are God’s agencies. One is not to supersede the other.”⁶¹

“Genuine medical missionary work is bound up with the ministry, and *the canvassing work is to be a part both of the medical missionary work and of the ministry*. To those who are engaged in this work, I would say: As you visit the people, tell them you are a gospel evangelist, and that you love the Lord. . . .”⁶²

Women should join the ranks or literature evangelists. This is stated in several instances, but let this brief statement suffice: “Not only men, but women, can enter the canvassing field. And canvassers are to go out two by two. This is the Lord’s plan.”⁶³

Ministerial Lines

Should women work more prominently in the forefront of the ranks of the church of God, perhaps in heralding the gospel message? They have in the past.

“In ancient times the Lord worked in a wonderful way through consecrated women who united in His work with men whom He had chosen to stand as His representatives. He used women to gain great and decisive victories. More than once in times of emergency He brought them to the front and worked through them for the salvation of many lives.”⁶⁴

“Christ speaks of women who helped Him in presenting the truth before others, and Paul also speaks of women who labored with him in the gospel.”⁶⁵ In Gal 3:28 Paul clearly enunciated the equality principle that will operate as the result of the restorative power of the gospel: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man; there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (NASB). What about our day? If the well-balanced, well-educated women were available to fill the many existing needy situations, the cause of God would richly prosper. The Lord has spoken plainly in this matter:

“You are to do your duty to the women who labor in the gospel, *whose work testifies that they are essential to carrying the truth into families*. Their work is just the work that must be done, and *should be encouraged*. 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 by women. 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*.”⁶⁶

The minister and his wife who are truly converted are to unite their efforts in opening the Scriptures to souls in darkness.⁶⁷

“The minister is paid for his work, and this is well. And if the Lord gives the wife as well as the husband the burden of labor, and she devotes her time and strength to visiting from family to

⁶⁰6BC 1113.

⁶¹Ev 547.

⁶²RH, Jan. 15, 1901.

⁶³Ibid., Oct. 7, 1902.

⁶⁴WM 158.

⁶⁵Ev 465.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 493, emphasis supplied.

⁶⁷Cf. MM 140.

family and *opening the Scriptures* to them, *although the hands of ordination have not been laid upon her*, she is accomplishing a work that is *in the line of ministry*. Then should her labors be counted as naught?

“Injustice has sometimes been done to women who labor just as devotedly as their husbands, and who are recognized by God as being necessary to the work of the ministry. The method of paying men-laborers, and not paying their wives who share their labors with them, is a plan not according to the Lord’s order, and if carried out in our conferences, is liable to discourage our sisters from qualifying themselves for the work they should engage in. God is a God of justice, and if the ministers receive a salary for their work, their wives, who devote themselves just as disinterestedly to the work, should be paid in addition to the wages their husbands receive, *even though they may not ask for this*.

“Seventh-day Adventists are not in any way to belittle woman’s work. If a woman puts her housework in the hands of a faithful, prudent helper, and leaves her children in good care, while she engages in the work, the conference should have wisdom to understand the justice of her receiving wages.”⁶⁸

“The tithe should go to those who labor in word and doctrine, be they *men or women*.”⁶⁹

Departmental Work

Notice the broad vision of God’s messenger as the Spirit inspired her to write in 1913:

“As a people who claim to have advanced light, we are to devise ways and means by which to bring forth a corps of educated workmen for the various departments of the work of God. We need a well-disciplined, cultivated class of young men and women in our sanitariums, in the medical missionary work, in the offices of publication, in the conferences of different States, and in the field at large. We need young men and women who have high intellectual culture, in order that they may do the best work for the Lord. We have done something toward reaching this standard, but still we are far behind where we should be.

“As a church, as individuals, if we would stand clear in the judgment, we must make more liberal efforts for the training of our young people, that they may be better fitted for the various branches of the great work committed to our hands. . . .”⁷⁰

“When a great and decisive work is to be done, God chooses men and women to do this work, and it will feel the loss if the talents of both are not combined.”⁷¹ The great task of helping in God’s closing work on earth is before us; the evidence seems quite convincing that women should be just as involved in all lines of this work as are men laborers. In all departments, are not the talents of both needed in the decision-making or leadership roles as well as in the lowlier ones?

Bible Work

We should be people of the Word, mighty in the Scriptures; and our women should be as earnest in this matter as are consecrated men working along such lines: “The plan of holding Bible-readings was a heaven-born idea. There are many, *both men and women*, who can engage

⁶⁸GW 452.

⁶⁹Ev 492.

⁷⁰RH, Feb. 13, 1913.

⁷¹Ev 469.

in this branch of missionary labor. Workers may thus be developed who will become mighty men of God.⁷²

How will God's servants become involved in the "great reformatory movement" in connection with giving the last warning message to the world unless Christ's warm, compassionate, and zealous love in the heart and life moves them to action now?

"In visions of the night, representations passed before me of a great reformatory movement among God's people. Many were praising God. The sick were healed, and other miracles were wrought. A spirit of intercession was seen, even as was manifested before the great Day of Pentecost. *Hundreds and thousands* were seen visiting families and *opening before them the word of God*. Hearts were convicted by the power of the Holy Spirit, and a spirit of genuine conversion was manifest. On every side doors were thrown open to the proclamation of the truth. The world seemed to be lightened with the heavenly influence. Great blessings were received by the true and humble people of God. I heard voices of thanksgiving and praise, and there seemed to be a reformation such as we witnessed in 1844."⁷³

Preaching the Word

Many women might be surprised to learn that the testimonies of God's Spirit recommend that some of our sisters *preach* the truth. Carefully weigh these statements from the book *Evangelism*, pp. 471-72, and note the emphasis on the need for a twenty-fold increase in this work of women.

"Women can be the instruments of righteousness, rendering holy service. It was Mary that first *preached* a risen Jesus. . . . If there were twenty women where now there is one, who would make this holy mission their cherished work, we should see many more converted to the truth. The refining, softening influence of Christian women is needed in the great work of *preaching* the truth. . . . Zealous and continued diligence in our sisters tolling for the spread of the truth would be wholly successful, and would astonish us with its results."⁷⁴

"There are women who should labor in the *gospel ministry*. In many respects they would do more good than the ministers who neglect to visit the flock of God."⁷⁵

"There should be selected for the work wise, consecrated men who can do a good work in reaching souls. *Women also* should be chosen who can *present the truth* in a clear, intelligent, straightforward manner."⁷⁶

Right at the beginning of this twentieth century there were Bible instructors who were active in laboring in the public ministry. "Sister R and Sister W are doing just as efficient work as the ministers; and some meetings when the ministers are all called away, Sister W takes the Bible and addresses the congregation."⁷⁷

God's messenger gave the following counsel to another woman:

"Teach this, my sister. You have many ways opened before you. Address the crowd whenever you can; hold every jot of influence you can by any association that can be made the means of introducing the leaven to the meal. Every man and every women has a work to do for

⁷²GW 192.

⁷³9T 126, emphasis supplied; cf. GC 612; RH, July 23, 1895.

⁷⁴RH, Jan. 2, 1879, emphasis supplied.

⁷⁵MS 43a, 1898, emphasis supplied.

⁷⁶Ev 472, emphasis supplied.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 473.

the Master. Personal consecration and sanctification to God will accomplish, through the most simple methods, more than the most imposing display.”⁷⁸

In this context of ministering and preaching, it is significant to note the value of literature evangelism as a preparation:

“All who wish an opportunity for true ministry, and who will give themselves unreservedly to God, will find in the canvassing work opportunities to speak upon many things pertaining to the future immortal life. The experience thus gained will be of the greatest value to those *who are fitting themselves for the work of the ministry*. It is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, *both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God*.”⁷⁹

The above statement may be one of the most significant from the Spirit of Prophecy writings in favor of ordaining women to the gospel ministry, and the following is comparable:

“Young men and young women who should be engaged *in the ministry*, in Bible work, and in the canvassing work should not be bound down to mechanical employment.”⁸⁰

Laying On of Bands

Not much is said in the Spirit-inspired counsels regarding the ordination of women other than a significant passage in the *Review* in 1895:

“Let church-members awake. Let them take hold and help to stay up the hands of the ministers and the workers, pushing forward the interests of the cause. . . . If ministers and men in positions of authority will get out of the way, and let the Holy Spirit move upon the minds of the lay brethren, God will direct them what to do for the honor of his name. . . .

“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. Place the burdens upon men and women of the church, that they may grow by reason of the exercise, and thus become effective agents in the hand of the Lord for the enlightenment of those who sit in darkness.”⁸¹

If it were important for women engaged in welfare ministry—or possibly a pastoral type of ministry with emphasis on reaching the “heart” of the family—to “be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands,” then surely it would be much more needful and significant to have them ordained to the work of being Bible instructors or preachers of the Word as gospel ministers. Would not this attach a solemnity, dignity, urgency, and vitality by God’s Spirit to the high office which they might fill?—remembering that God wants women of the church to have an “education fitting them for any position of trust.”⁸² The assurance is that the church will be strengthened and built up as a result.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 473.

⁷⁹RH, Jan. 15, 1901, emphasis supplied.

⁸⁰8T 229-30, emphasis supplied.

⁸¹RH, July 9, 1895, emphasis supplied.

⁸²FE 118.

Elevated Standards

The high standards applicable to ordaining men for the ministry should necessarily be observed in the same service for women should the church be led to this practice:

“There should be a close investigation of their experience. Do they know the truth, and practice its teachings? Have they a character of good repute? Do they indulge in lightness and trifling, jesting and joking? In prayer do they reveal the Spirit of God? Is their conversation holy, their conduct blameless? All these questions need to be answered before hands are laid upon any [woman to dedicate her to the work of ministering in Word or doctrine]. . . .”⁸³

Paramount to every other qualification is that such women be devoted to Jesus Christ and His service, “maintaining a vital connection with God.”⁸⁴ Then it will be a natural outflow for them to be modest and godly, surrounded by a “sacred circle of purity.”

“Our sisters should encourage true meekness; they should not be forward, talkative, and bold, but modest and unassuming, slow to speak. They may cherish courteousness. To be kind, tender, pitiful, forgiving, and humble would be becoming and well pleasing to God. If they occupy this position, they will not be burdened with undue attention from gentlemen in the church or out. All will feel that there is a sacred circle of purity around these God-fearing women which shields them from any unwarrantable liberties.”⁸⁵

Speaking of modesty of appearance, the dress question is more crucial with respect to women than to men. Since women have a power that exceeds that of men to influence and mold the inner lives of families, it stands to reason that the dress of women ministers would have much to do with the atmosphere that surrounds them and works either as a savor of life unto life or of death unto death. The counsels in regard to the dress of ministers should be explicitly followed in its adaptation to women. Ministerial dress, particularly in the pulpit, should point to Christ. This could be accomplished by keeping in mind and following the same principle that characterized the life of Jesus in this respect: “Only the beauty of heavenly truth must draw” one’s congregation or audience, however small; the living Word of God is to outshine everything else.⁸⁶

Summary and Conclusions

1. So many of our church women seem unaware of their high, holy calling and privileges in Christ Jesus, particularly with reference to missionary labors along various lay activity and ministerial lines.

2. They need more encouragement to step out in this work—after proper preparations and inspiration from daily taking time to behold the life and example of Christ—perhaps from their pastors or other leaders in the church. Remuneration might be the means of encouraging ministers’ wives to work as Bible instructors. More funds should be available to employ Bible workers in the conferences, *even if this means taking on fewer male workers*.

3. The ministry of conducting Bible studies in the home or larger meeting place is much needed and should be made to attract a class of women who want to be deep students of the Word, who have an earnest love for souls, who have other necessary qualifications. This need

⁸³RH, Oct. 21, 1890.

⁸⁴Ibid., Dec. 18, 1888.

⁸⁵AH 334; cf. 5T 602; 4T 643; AH 330ff.

⁸⁶DA 43.

not be “formal” Bible studies such as are customary, but a prayer and Bible study fellowship with our non-Adventist friends.

4. Some women of our church are called to be counselors or advisers, especially to their sisters in the faith. This would bring relief to many church pastors. Others should devote their time and efforts to welfare ministry such as consecrated deaconess or “Dorcas” workers might perform.

God calls some to be preachers of the Word, pastors to the “flock of God” as full gospel ministers. There is great need for women medical (health) evangelists and literature evangelists. And there should be a union of these two lines of endeavor with that of the gospel ministry. Some women in the categories just named should be in leadership roles so as to teach and/or train other women for the same kinds of work.

5. Certain consecrated and qualified women who work along the various lines of ministry such as mentioned under 3 and 4, should be set apart to their high and holy mission by prayer and the laying on of hands—especially medical evangelists who are hired by a medical institution or a mission board, associate pastors of the larger churches, or possibly fullfledged pastors of smaller churches, associate chaplains, associate (or assistant) publishing directors (secretaries).

8. In time, then, would not some of these women workers be thus fitted for higher positions of trust and leadership in God’s organized church? We do not propose that a woman be the General Conference president or even a union conference president, but there are certain leadership roles in the Sabbath School and education departments in local or union conferences that properly qualified women could fill.

7. The standards for the ordination of women workers and of relations between men and women workers must ever be kept high, that the truth as it is in Jesus might be preserved—pure and sacred.