

SUMMARY OF THE PAPER

II. A. BIBLICAL STUDY OF ROLE OF WOMEN IN ISRAEL (OT)

by

Leona Glidden Running

"The biblical witness is conditioned by and oriented to historical situations. Therefore biblical teaching cannot be abstracted from the historical context in which the books have been written." (Dr. Lukas Vischer.)

The members of the Godhead are presented "as beyond the sphere of sex, which is fundamental only to human kind." Both masculine and feminine qualities are anthropomorphically ascribed to God by Bible writers and to Himself by God in various communications to human beings.

The 182 laws of the Mesopotamian Code of Hammurabi, from the Old Babylonian Period, exhibit partiality as between men and women and between free men and slaves. These distinctions are paralleled in part, and countered in part, by the similar laws of the Pentateuch, which after all reflects its historical setting, since revelation does not annul human factors. The similar and sometimes differing provisions of the Covenant Code (Ex. 20:23 to 23:33), the Holiness Code (Lev. 17-26), and the Deuteronomic Code (Deut. 12-26) are sketched briefly to compare with the résumé of pertinent laws of the Hammurabi Code.

The Assyrian Laws, less well known because the evidence is more fragmentary, seem to have accorded women a less favorable status, even, than those of Babylonia. Prof. W. F. Albright's discussion of three Canaanite goddesses and their worship is cited for the contemporary evidence closest to Israel. The facts brought out may show why Hebrew and Israelite women were not allowed to function in the worship except as observing participants and singers--not as priests. (Several were, however, prophetesses, and Deborah, a married woman, was also a judge.)

The status of women in Greece was summarized. The ways of the bold,

publicly talkative, unveiled hetaerae prompted Paul's stern commands to the women in the church at Corinth, lest they be confused with these dissolute pagan women--and thus are still used to deprive women today, in a far different social and cultural situation, from equal opportunities to serve God and humanity.

The early status of women in Rome was even lower than that of Greek women, neither having any legal rights. In later Rome, however, women achieved a higher position allowing freedom and learning, providentially paving the way for women as well as men converts to Christianity to help spread the gospel.

The Old Testament is saturated with the idea of woman's inferiority, however, in usual agreement with the patriarchal and male-dominated societies of those centuries. The exceptions light up the darkness here and there and point the way to improvement in the status of women in later times.

SUMMARY OF THE PAPER

IV. D. SURVEY OF THE RELIGIOUS ISSUE (ROLE OF WOMEN) AS FACED
IN OTHER CHURCHES (PROTESTANT, ROMAN CATHOLIC, JEWISH GROUPS)

by

Leona Glidden Running

The 1971 report of the WCC Consultation in Geneva in 1970 states that "Now about 72 of the constituent churches of the WCC ordain women. . . . No church which has proceeded to the ordination of women has ever had cause to reconsider its decision. Rather the experience has been one of enrichment and greater adequacy in developing flexible forms of ministry. . . ." (Page 1.)

Drawing information mainly from the New York Times Index for 1972 and 1973, and the past five years' issues of Christianity Today, plus some other newspapers and several books, the current experiences of the main churches in the U.S. and Canada can be summarized as follows:

1. Baptists: Mrs. Marcus Rohlf, "a widowed social-action advocate from Seattle who has been ABC home-mission president for the past three years," was elected president of the American Baptist Convention in Minneapolis, May, 1971. This group has many ordained women today.

2. Christian Science Church: Founded by a woman, Mary Baker Eddy, it has always had more female than male practitioners of spiritual healing, and many female speakers.

3. Church of Christ, United: Rev. M. Beissert was ordained in New Jersey as a woman minister on October 1, 1972. Previously, on June 11, 1972, Rev. M. R. Eddy had been elected moderator of the New York Conference, the first woman to head a conference.

4. Church of the Brethren: This church has ordained women as ministers since 1860, though never enunciating a doctrine on the subject.

5. Congregationalists: These autonomous or "Free" churches have historically been served by women pastors as well as by men.

role of women is in home and family."

10. Presbyterians: Mrs. Lois H. Stair was named first woman moderator of the United Presbyterian Church in May 1971. In March 1972 J. A. Swope was the first woman, a senior theology student, to be elected class president at Princeton Theological Seminary. The United Presbyterian Church U.S.A. began ordaining women in 1956; before that they had only been allowed to be ruling elders. Several years later the Presbyterian Church U.S. (southern) also began ordaining women.

11. Roman Catholics: The Church is almost as rigidly set as the Missouri Synod Lutherans, but winds of change are blowing through it since Vatican II, and there are conventions held and books written favoring admission of women to the priesthood. Pope Paul seems to alternate in favorable and dogmatically negative statements on the subject. The world Synod of Bishops in October, 1971, went on record in favor of it, however, and the Pope is convening their fourth Synod in October 1974 with a theme ("evangelization of contemporary world") that may permit debate on the subject of women's role as well as of married priesthood of men.

12. SalvationArmy: The Army has always had women ministers--in fact, more of them than of men, by a ratio of about 5 to 3. However, they^{both}/are not ordained but "commissioned," and they have not received equal pay. There has been a recent court suit (by Mrs. Billie McClure in 1972) on that point, which the Appeals Court rejected on a questionable interpretation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which could be interpreted to ban religious discrimination rather than sex discrimination. (So that, e.g., Catholics could not be compelled to hire Buddhist priests.) (July-August 1972 Liberty is on the side of Mrs. McClure; one wonders whether it is also on the side of Merikay, when the question comes closer home!)

13. Universalist Churches: Unitarian, Universalist and Quaker Churches

had more women preachers in the nineteenth century than the other denominations. They still have many today.

14. Jews: Orthodox Jews are still firmly and dogmatically opposed, like the Missouri-Synod Lutherans and the Eastern Orthodox Churches. The Conservatives have not moved much in their position either, but the Reform Jews have ordained their first woman rabbi, Sally Priesand, in 1972. Dr. Nelson Glueck, president of Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, where she studied, hoped to ordain her, but died a year earlier. There is another woman Rabbinical student in preparation in Philadelphia, Mrs. S. E. Sasso, who expects to be ordained in 1974. The Rabbinical Assembly president elected in March, 1972, Rabbi J. Nadich, advocates meeting the issue of Jewish women's role in religious life "head on," saying it is "high time" to give them their rightful equality in every way.

In the WCC Consultation in 1970 Ian M. Fraser stated: "We can produce no positive theological case for ordaining Scotsmen--by a clear oversight on the part of God, they were not represented among the apostolic band: but the extension of the Church to the Gentiles cleared the way for the ordaining of people of all nations. The same extension of the Church to total humanity is, surely, the basis for opening the possibility of ordination to total humanity."

(P. 20.)

SUMMARY OF THE PAPER

V. A. TYPES OF ROLE AVAILABLE TO WOMEN IN THE SDA CHURCH

by

Leona Glidden Running

Introductory remarks included quotations from Dorothy L. Sayers about the fact that it is "repugnant to every human being to be reckoned always as a member of a class and not as an individual person" and that "the only decent reason for tackling a job is that it is your job, and you want to do it."

The subconscious influence of our male-dominated English language on both men and women is pervasive and crippling. A sympathetic letter from an Episcopal bishop to a seminary-trained woman wishing ordination is quoted, also information from Vance Packard's Sexual Wilderness about women in professions, including the ministry, and the proper kind of education needed to produce a more liberated and human society. "There is also the need to be more fully aware of, and to recognize, the skills, traits, and potentialities that are possessed equally by fortunate human beings of both sexes," he states (p. 358).

Data are presented from Mrs. Elsie Gibson's survey by questionnaire and interviews as contained in her 1970 book When the Minister Is a Woman. Roles of many kinds for ordained women are cited from this as well as Georgia Harkness's 1972 book Women in Church and Society. Single women ministers, married women ministers, and women who have gone into the ministry after being widowed, are cited with some of their personal experiences and evaluations of different roles. Mention is made of the centuries of service by ordained women as deaconesses and abbesses with public preaching and heavy administrative responsibilities in the Catholic Church, which that Church is now covering up and ignoring as it refuses to admit women now to similar work and to the priesthood. The Reformation did not provide a similar outlet for women's abilities in Protestantism, nor has our church yet done so, though progress

is being made in that it has become aware and is studying the question.

Suggestions of roles include those listed in V.C., plus that of women physicians (many male physicians are ordained); other suggestions come through citation of experiences of ordained women in other churches, such as hospital and prison chaplains and those in social work as counselors in halfway houses, etc. Pastorship should not be opened to women in a restrictive way, as such a set-up would tend to "jell" and be continued indefinitely, continuing to bar qualified women from places where they could well serve.

We concur with Georgia Harkness: "I am not saying that every woman should be ordained, any more than that every man should be. I contend simply that sex alone should not be a barrier."

1. Some other way for leadership
Roles

2. Ellen white says "Counsel from
The Lord"