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VIEWPOINT

The Role of Women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church

presented at the request of
The Biblical Research Committee
of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

February, 1972

Kit Watts

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PRECIS

In survey fashion, yet dogged by the realization that this study may be tabled unless it appears substantive and credible, I have tried to touch the pulse of Scripture, of Ellen White, and of a weltering social movement known as Women's Liberation. Thus, Parts I, II, and III in bulk, and recommendations as found in Part IV.

My study leads me to conclude that while uncertainties surround some passages of Scripture, the general thrust confirms the personhood of women before a just and compassionate God.

My comparatively brief excursion into Ellen White's far-ranging references to women and their role as people, as wives and mothers, and as workers in the church leads me to conclude that she uplifted women. Passages frequently referred to by Adventist ministers and used in a form of put-down apparently were not intended in that manner. Women of Mrs. White's time were just beginning to be considered candidates for education and careers. She encouraged this and witnessed to it in her own life--a dual career as wife-and-mother and church leader.

In the 1960's the Women's Liberation movement began to rise within the fray of the civil rights movement, black power and student power. Women became more vocal and the case-studies of several Seventh-day Adventist women asking questions and making suggestions are cited. This movement

among women essentially picks up where women suffragettes of Ellen White's time left off. Church and government have both been insensitive to prejudice and injustice to women as citizens and workers. This is certainly more serious in the church, an institution which by its very nature is usually found to be the fount-head of peace and good will, justice and right-doing.

Part IV, which includes 10 recommendations, I submit to the committee for consideration as a beginning in bringing about a climate for understanding and implementing the true role of women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

I am indebted to the Review and Herald Publishing Association, to my perceptive and gracious superior, Raymond F. Cottrell, for the time allowed away from my regular duties, and to my friends, Jane, Pat and Rosie for the encouragement needed to sustain me while compiling this paper.

-- Kit Watts
Assistant Book Editor
Review & Herald
September 26, 1971

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VIEWPOINT

'The Role of Women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church'

by Kit Watts

Introduction: A look-at-it-this-way

In spite of impressive illustrations of woman's abilities preserved and documented by the Bible, and a modern woman prophet and dozens of her statements lifting woman far above either household ornament or drudge, the role of woman in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is a meager one.

Some estimate she makes up at least 70 per cent of the church's membership. She dominates great parts of two favored limbs of church organization--school teaching and nursing. She makes much of the local church tick during Sabbath school, mission bands, MV, welfare services, campaigns and bake sales. The church's channels and structures would boggle hopelessly if she as typist, file clerk, and telephone operator were to stop working.

Yet if there be any power or policy-making, title or allowance, the church bestows it upon men. Women are sought for their money and temporary employment but seldom for their minds. Church leaders (male) appear to be helplessly smitten by God with the divine right to rule. And without gloom they plead their powerlessness to change what God Himself hath ordained. Women disagreeing with this view may be dismissed as unfeminine.

The role of women has generally been conceded to be man's prerogative to define. Couched in noble words, that role is housewife and mother. Other occupations--or interests--are deemed aberrations of God's creation.

Within the Seventh-day Adventist Church up to this time the nature of things has prevented any other alternative. The vitality of authority rests almost exclusively upon ministers. With the notable exception of the health professions, ministers as a class are most highly favored for leadership roles. A by-product of position is membership on controlling boards, committees, and commissions. For this reason, the male prerogative has not been subject to challenge.

Women are not on controlling boards, committees, or commissions. Women are not there because they are not leaders because they are not ministers because they are women. Herein lies the rub.

Until women are allowed to speak for themselves they will be held down. Were they American colonists protesting their lack of representation in British Parliament, or an enslaved race owned and ordered about at the whim of grim masters, women's cause would be trumpeted by churches fevered with righteous indignation. Declaration of Independence and Decalogue would be called in witness.

In short, if women were anything but women the justice of their cause would easily be seen by men.

But the privilege of self-determination for women is high-priced. For when women actively help define their own role in the church it will mean men are relinquishing a long-cherished part of their role. We admire the men who are doing this for they are real men, secure and just.

PART I: THE THRUST OF SCRIPTURE

Scripture is not murky. From its breadth and depth sound the clear ringing tones of the Creator's voice: "Let us make man in our image and likeness to rule the fish in the sea, the birds of the heaven, the cattle, all wild animals on earth, and all reptiles that crawl upon the earth." And the prophet says, "God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase, fill the earth and subdue it...'"¹

Adam and Eve's subsequent sin interrupted this plan for human life. Relationships between them and God and between each other changed. But the thrust of Scripture is not curses.

The prophets write of salvage and of restoration.

The creation story glows with the warmth of God's finger shaping clay and a rib into His own likeness. With the rush of His breath Adam and Eve took life.

Implicit in God's statement to them to subdue the earth and its creatures was His endowment of intelligence upon them--both. He blessed both man and woman upon their creation. He invited both to develop, charged both with wide-sweeping responsibility. And later, when He spoke of the forbidden tree, He fully informed both Adam and Eve of the tempting danger.²

¹ Genesis 1:26, 27. NEB

² Genesis 3:1-3.

Passing the buck and assigning blame for the Fall began on Eden's turf. (Theologians still talk about it.) But the Lord was not distracted by Eve's excuse that she was tricked by the serpent or by Adam's complaint that the "woman you gave me for a companion, she gave me fruit from the tree and I ate it."³

It was true that Eve had wandered out of ear-shot of Adam.⁴ It was also true that Adam did not go searching for her.⁵ It is true that Eve was deceived--by the father of lies. It was also true that Adam capitulated willfully to his wife's urging.⁶

The Lord penalized both man and woman.

The story puts the thrust of Scripture into a nutshell. Through the whole of God's revelation is His consistent pattern of endowing people with privileges and expecting returns from the inherent responsibilities.

Adam and Eve had the facts. They had the intelligence with which to judge those facts. When their decisions were made, they had to face the inevitable consequences resulting directly from their own choices.

This one story is enough to clarify God's position on personhood. But the record of God's dealing with persons over the whole period of biblical history reinforces the story of His first one.

God is nonpartisan. God saves or condemns people. Regardless of their sexual equipment, He bestows upon all people intelligence and talents and the responsibility to use and develop them. Women and men alike are free,

³ Genesis 3:11-13. NEB.

⁴ Patriarchs and Prophets, 54.

⁵ Ibid, 56.

⁶ Ibid, 57.

under God, to think, to choose, to act. Scripture scrupulously assures us that all people (women not excluded) are sinners and will be examined in judgment.⁷ In proportion to their talents and intelligence they will be held responsible for the use or lack of use of those talents.⁸ The God of Scripture is a God of justice.

While it may be elementary to be specific, we should note here the emphasis upon a terrible equality of souls. Eve was deceived. But she was punished, not dismissed as "a mere woman," emotional and cyclical and therefore unfit to reason out her temptation with competence. Women were not created inferior to men and God does not deal with them as inferiors in the midst of the most stringent of tests--loyalty to eternal verities.

The role of first priority is the role of personhood.

All other roles taken by God and the human race, by God and the progress of the church's mission, by God and the outcome of the controversy of evil against good, are subsidiary. These roles, including those of male and female, change radically as they are influenced by culture and times. May I hasten to add that the role of personhood is not immune to a setting of time, place and circumstance. But God's final judgment is upon a person, a soul--not a sex.

The role of woman or child, husband, citizen or slave in society is overruled always by the role of that person to God. A wife is due her individuality.⁹ Children are required to obey their parents--in the Lord.¹⁰ Citizens are admonished to "pay Caesar what is due to Caesar, and pay God

⁷ Romans 3:23; 1 Peter 4:17, 18.

⁸ Matthew 25:14-30.

⁹ Ephesians 5:22; Adventist Home, 103.

¹⁰ Ephesians 6:1, 2.

what is due to God."¹¹ A slave is to perform service not "to curry favour with men, but, as slaves of Christ, do wholeheartedly the will of God."¹² Sex, or any other position in life, is secondary to one's relation as a person to God.

However, the relationship of God-to-person will in turn affect the working out of relations between person and person.

Husbands and wives are to love each other as their own flesh.¹³ Children are to honor their parents.¹⁴ Masters are to remember that with their servants they serve a common master in heaven.¹⁵ An individual's response to his primary role in life--his relationship to God as a person--will affect the way he relates to the people around him.

But what is "love" or "honor" in one generation or culture may differ vastly from "love" and "honor" in another generation or culture. In view of this, what God accepts from one generation or culture He may not find adequate for another time or place.

Polygamy is regarded by the Christian world today as a gross evil. But the patriarchs practiced it regularly. Slavery was an accepted part of life during the whole of Biblical history from Moses to Paul. But with the passing of time and the maturity of insight, slavery is now believed

¹¹ Matthew 22:21, NEB.

¹² Ephesians 6:6, NEB.

¹³ Matthew 19:5, 6.

¹⁴ Ephesians 6:2; Exodus 20:12.

¹⁵ Ephesians 6:9.

to be wholly inconsistent with God's ideal for human freedom.¹⁶ Moses instructed an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Christ said to turn your other cheek.¹⁷

The Scripture itself shows roles being played out differently according to the maturity of conscience and revelation. Therefore it is possible to assume that God looks upon women as persons first, females second. We may further notice that woman was created equal with man in the beginning--in intelligence, ability and responsibility. She is a person, and according to the New Testament, is both a talent-bearer and a sinner. We have also seen that roles acceptable at one period of time are not necessarily the ideal for another generation to pursue. Further, the working out of person-to-person roles (husbands and wives, slaves and masters, for example) is not fixed.

The thrust of Scripture supports this flexibility.

To get at this we must ask why God made human beings in the first place. Otherwise we will not know for what reason He makes such ado about saving them. Saving them for what?

God is a creative being who reveled in His creativity--the joy of planning, making, and admiring. With the creation of human beings He added still another dimension. This creature could admire and share with Him, too. When Adam and Eve sinned, this communication and sharing was fumbled. Ever since, God's immediate purpose has been to make it possible for things to be as they once were. His message to the children of Adam and Eve has been that He will restore them.

¹⁶ See footnote 25 on page 13.

¹⁷ Matthew 5:38, 39. Exodus 21:24.

In handling this message God has proved Himself continually as Creator, Deviser, Initiator, Innovator. He attempted to make the message clear through a patriarchal system where Adam told the story to his sons and their sons, and in turn, each son to his. The system broke down as men did. The Innovator summoned Abraham from Ur, called him a nation and his descendants, the Chosen People. Through prophets He rallied and tested them. Later still, the Creator put Himself into human flesh and the Christian Church emerged among His followers. He touched disciples with the flames of Pentecost and bade them fan the fire through all ranks of Jews and Gentiles.

This recital of history is merely to illustrate that when methods of transmitting God's message have broken down, the message has not been abandoned. God has simply used new or other methods.

A message so important that it causes God to suffer personal injury as He did at Calvary must be important indeed. In this context, it is difficult to believe that in 1971 God is restricting its release by, say, limiting the ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to men. On the contrary, one might expect to find God begging any person who believes to pass the Good Word along. This is exactly the way it is.

Despite hampering social customs and cultural biases of ancient times, the Lord on several occasions thrust women into the limelight. Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Ruth, Rahab and Esther are not in the category of substitutes. They were decisive and authoritative in times that made men quake. Their genius and their devotion are not second-rate.

On the New Testament scene Christ touched women with a dignity and compassion seldom indulged upon the female. Mary was the first to know of the Messiah's coming. Elizabeth was the second.¹⁸ The Lord did not shunt

¹⁸ Luke 1.

Mary of Bethany off to "woman's work" in the kitchen. Instead He gently rebuked Martha for her lack of understanding. Mary had chosen the better part, He said, when she chose to listen to His teachings instead of helping fix dinner.¹⁹

Christ's sermons were not confined to the synagogue nor to an all-male following. He often illustrated His points with stories in which women as well as men were main characters.²⁰

Such behavior strongly contradicts the norms of His era. To the shock of his contemporaries, Christ associated with women.²¹ Many rabbis avoided the sight of women, and men were instructed not to speak even to their wives in public.²² Christ touched women and allowed them to touch him.

Paul is less than enthusiastic about women in several of his discourses. For example, 1 Corinthians 7:

1-And now for the matters you wrote about.

2-It is a good thing for a man to have nothing to do with women; but because there is so much immorality, let each man have his own wife and each woman her own husband. 3-The husband must give the wife what is due to her, and the wife equally must give the husband his due.

6-7 All this I say by way of concession, not command. I should like you all to be as I am myself; but everyone has the gift God has granted him, one this gift and another that.

8-To the unmarried and to the widows I say this: it is a good thing if they stay as I am myself; but if they cannot control themselves they should marry.

9-Better be married than burn with vain desire.

¹⁹ Luke 10:41, 42.

²⁰ Among them, the parables of the lost coin, the leaven, the unjust judge.

²¹ John 4:27

²² "Engage not in too much conversation with women. They said this with regard to one's own wife, how much more [does the rule apply] with regard to another man's wife. Hence have the sages said: as long as a man engages in too much conversation with women, he causes evil to himself, [ToF] he goes idle from [the study of] the words of the Torah, so that his end will be that he will inherit Gehinnom." The Mishnah. Aboth 1.5, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 4.

26-It is my opinion, then, that in a time of stress like the present this is the best way for a man to live--it is best for a man to be as he is. 27-Are you bound in marriage? Do not seek dissolution. Has your marriage been dissolved? Do not seek a wife. 28-If, however, you do marry, there is nothing wrong in it; and if a virgin marries, she has done no wrong. But those who marry will have pain and grief in this bodily life, and my aim is to spare you.

32-I want you to be free from anxious care. The unmarried man cares for the Lord's business; his aim is to please the Lord. 33-But the married man cares for worldly things; his aim is to please his wife; 34-and he has a divided mind. The unmarried or celibate woman cares for the Lord's business; her aim is to be dedicated to him in body as in spirit; but the married woman cares for worldly things; her aim is to please her husband.

35-In saying this I have no wish to keep you on a tight rein. I am thinking simply of your own good, of what is seemly, and of your freedom to wait upon the Lord without distraction.

36-But if a man has a partner in celibacy and feels that he is not behaving properly towards her, if, that is, his instincts are too strong for him, and something must be done, he may do as he pleases; there is nothing wrong in it; let them marry. 37-But if a man is steadfast in his purpose, being under no compulsion, and has complete control of his own choice; and if he has decided in his own mind to preserve his partner in her virginity, he will do well. 38-Thus, he who marries his partner does well, and he who does not will do better. ²³

In this discourse Paul indicates his own marital status (without wife), is frank about his own opinions, and helps prepare us for the tone of other statements.

In 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 and 1 Timothy 2:8-15 are negative statements about a woman's participation in church. In both instances Paul supports his statements with the "order of creation" argument, and, in 1 Timothy, with assigned blame for the Fall most heavily laid upon Eve. Paul contends that because Adam was created first, woman was created for him. He also argues submission on the part of the woman because she was deceived, Adam

²³ Quoted from the New English Bible.

was not. In the New English Bible the two passages are:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:

3-But I wish you to understand that, while every man has Christ for his Head, woman's head is man, as Christ's Head is God. A man who keeps his head covered when he prays or prophesies brings shame on his head; a woman, on the contrary, brings shame on her head if she prays or prophesies bare-headed; it is as bad as if her head were shaved.

6-If a woman is not to wear a veil she might as well have her hair cut off; but if it is a disgrace for her to be cropped and shaved, then she should wear a veil. A man has no need to cover his head, because man is the image of God, and the mirror of his glory, whereas woman reflects the glory of man. 8-For man did not originally spring from woman, but woman was made out of man; 9-and man was not created for woman's sake, but woman for the sake of man; 10-and therefore it is woman's duty to have a sign of authority on her head, out of regard for the angels. 11-And yet, in Christ's fellowship woman is as essential to man as man to woman. If woman was made out of man, it is through woman that man now comes to be; and God is the source of all.

13-Judge for yourselves: is it fitting for a woman to pray to God bareheaded? Does not Nature herself teach you that while flowing locks disgrace a man, they are a woman's glory? For her locks were given for covering.

16-However, if you insist on arguing, let me tell you, there is no such custom among us, or in any of the congregations of God's people.

1 TIMOTHY 2:

8-It is my desire, therefore, that everywhere prayers be said by the men of the congregation, who shall lift up their hands with a pure intention, excluding angry or quarrelsome thoughts. 9-Women again must dress in becoming manner, modestly and soberly, not with elaborate hair-styles, not decked out with gold or pearls, or expensive clothes, 10-but with good deeds, as befits women who claim to be religious. A woman must be a learner, listening quietly and with due submission. I do not permit a woman to be a teacher, nor must woman domineer over man; she should be quiet. 13-14-For Adam was created first, and Eve afterwards; and it was not Adam who was deceived; it was the woman who, yielding to deception, fell into sin. Yet she will be saved through motherhood--if only women continue in faith, love, and holiness, with a sober mind.

Many commentators agree that Paul was writing within the framework of his time. The principle urged upon men and women both is that of propriety and reverence. Moses took off his shoes at the burning bush. This custom is not considered obligatory by Christian churches in the West any more than women (in most Protestant churches, especially) are expected to wear veils or long hair. There are other means of expressing propriety and reverence in our times and culture.

It should be noticed, in passing at least, that on the surface, portions of the two above passages are contradictory. In Timothy, Paul says women are to be quiet learners, not active participants. But in Corinthians he indicates that properly veiled women may pray and prophesy--very active and positive expressions of worship. In part, one may conclude that Paul wrote in response to specific needs and problems of the first century and that a general, for-all-time application of his words is dubious.

Still, the situation would be grim were it not for other glimpses of Paul and women. In spite of some obvious prejudices, Paul remains remarkably free in his ministry to women in the early church. He goes on record with high regard for their work and personal devotion. In Romans 16 he lists several women among men for their good works, and heads the list by naming the worthy Phoebe.

In the often-quoted Ephesians 5, Paul instructs wives to submit to their husbands--as to the Lord--for the man is head of the woman even as Christ is head of the church. This is not a blanket order for female subordination, as some would construe it. Did Christ, as head of the church, command it to love Him and dictate it into a groveling subservience? No. Touched by the example of a loving, giving, sacrificing Christ, it responds to His direction.

This text authorizes no despotic authority, no ego trips and no last words. The underlying principle, cited in Ephesians 5:21, is, "Be subject to one another in reverence to Christ." (Emphasis supplied.)

But it is to the Galatians that Paul bugles the words, "There is no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and freeman, male and female; for you are all one person in Christ Jesus."²⁴ Here Paul transcends polarization and prejudice of many types and rends the air with spiritual truth.²⁵

The thrust of Scriptures implies by example, theme, and statement that women are worthy of God's trust on an equal basis with men. This is not to say that men and women are the same. They are equal but different. I propose to argue, however, that these differences are less limiting than some suppose.

The Bible has relatively few direct statements instructing men and women of particular duties or roles that befall them because they are male or female, father or mother.

²⁴ Galatians 3:28

²⁵ "Here I must introduce the fact that the New Testament shows no urgency to emancipate women. In a not untypical sentence, Paul writes: 'I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent.' (1 Timothy 2:12, RSV.) By what logic, then, can one say, as I have done, that things should be different now?

"To get at the answer we must recall Paul's feelings on slavery. He sent Onesimus, Philemon's slave, back to his master--with words of advice, to be sure, for Philemon but without any indication of moral outrage over the idea of human enslavement.

"This brings me to what has been called a 'breakthrough' in Paul's letters. He writes in Galatians: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.' (Galatians 3:28). Historically, Christians who opposed slavery (among them Ellen White!) have depended heavily on what Paul says here--for in the rest of the New Testament there is silence about slavery, even an acceptance of it. Though proof-text-toting reactionaries sought to neutralize this verse by saying it applied only to man's relationship with God (and not to man's relationships with his fellows), it resolutely pommelled Christian conscience and the opponents of slavery finally prevailed.

The church, then, has used Galatians 3:28 as the basis for denuncia-

At creation God made Adam male and Eve female. He made them capable of together choosing to create new life within the context of mutual love and dependence. He urged them to "Be fruitful and increase, fill the earth and subdue it."²⁶

After they had eaten the forbidden fruit, God confronted Adam and Eve and announced the consequences. They must leave the garden. Their face-to-face communion with God was ended.²⁷ They would, surely, die.²⁸ And their lives would be marked by certain other hardships, too. The female would bear her young in pain. For the male's sake, the ground was cursed and would require hard labor to make it deliver a livelihood.²⁹

While these hardships, or curses, are specifically addressed to female and male, in practice they are not exclusive of each other. Further, the curses should not be construed as definitions of female and male roles.

In reality, certain roles result as (1) a natural working out of the limitations of the Genesis Three Curses and (2) the natural functions of the two sexes who in partnership bear and raise young.

Let us clearly distinguish between functions and limitations--and the possible results accruing from them: it is the difference between allowing creative adaptation or commanding a mindless obeying of rules.

tions of slavery, even though the rest of the New Testament seems to tolerate slavery. By the same logic, it may be used, I think, to endorse the equality of men and women, even though the rest of the New Testament seems to tolerate their inequality. On the question of women, as on the question of slavery, this text is a 'breakthrough,' a funnel of light shining down on the gray weather of first century culture." Chuck Scriven, "Christianity and Women's Lib," Insight, January 23, 1972. Also, see Krister Stendahl's book, The Bible and the Role of Women.

²⁶ Genesis 1:28, NEB.

²⁷ Patriarchs and Prophets, 61-62.

²⁸ Ibid, 59.

²⁹ Genesis 3:16-19.

Male and female are one flesh.³⁰ They are a team. Though their functions are unique in bringing about new life, the project is a joint one. In the context of a sin-blighted world, raising a family is especially a cooperative venture.

Since the female is equipped to carry the young before birth and to nurture it afterwards, and since this drastically changes the routine of her existence, the male life-style is altered, too. The male accomodates the child-bearing venture by also accepting added responsibility. And because extracting shelter and food from cursed ground is time-consuming, even as bearing and nurturing children is time-consuming, the female becomes quite dependent on her partner to sustain even her own life.

It is therefore possible to say that because the female bears children and has less time to work for a livelihood, she is put in a role of dependency upon the male. But it is not fair to equate this dependency with inferiority. It is also inaccurate (and, may I suggest, immoral) to hold that a woman cannot or should not be anything more, anything else or anything other than a bearer and nurturer of children. Such a view makes her a slave of anatomy--not a human being created, in the image of God, with infinite possibilities.³¹

Perhaps out of a need to show strength or superiority or perhaps only out of convenience have men tended to put women "in their place."

But a rigidity has sprung up within the roles of female and male, a rigidity which in our era is often impractical. Women and men--far removed from circumstances which once demanded extensive accomodations by male and female--are forced to act as though they aren't. Much of today's sex role-

³⁰ Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5, 6.

³¹ This is not to say that motherhood or family responsibilities lack potential for creativity. This point will be amplified in Part II.

playing is empty.³² It might be considered interesting tradition and ceremony were not the implications still regarded so seriously as valid. In a real sense both men and women are prisoners of their sexes--not partners on a team. The tragedy is that the church perpetuates, yea, blesses these packaged sex-roles.

³² At one time in our culture the amount of a person's life-time spent in intensive parental responsibility could be as much as 20 or 30 years. When life-expectancy seldom exceed 40 or 50 years, parental responsibilities might easily occupy half or three-quarters of a person's total life-time. Under such circumstances, where a woman might be pregnant from half-a-dozen to a score of times and would simultaneously be caring for a stair-step family, and where a man would be forced to provide constantly increasing amounts of food, shelter, etc., it is easy to see how sex-roles came about, how there came to be a division of labor, 'man's work' and 'woman's work.'

In our society life-expectancy has now expanded and the average size of a family has shrunk. Women are free from a life-time of constant and intense child care. Technology has alleviated much of the physical stress of bread-winning jobs (farm work or work outside the home) as well as of house-keeping chores. Labor-saving devices, smaller families, ready-made clothes, etc., have also reduced the number of traditional duties and has sharply cut the time needed to perform those that remain.

Need we point out, in the context of "woman's work," the actual lack of it for many women. These include single women, the widowed, and those married women without children or whose children are grown. We may query the church if these women are to lack identity or favor because of this. Is it possible (in theory only, of course, for in reality many women do work to make ends meet or because they don't have that much to do at home) that the church would force women into idleness because they are not mothers or wives?

Need we also point out the changed character of traditional "men's work." In our society, more than at any other time, pay-jobs depend on brain, not brawn. (We would even here perpetuate a fallacy if we suggested that women have no brawn. Women's physical resilience and strength are scientifically documented. That most women are physically weak is a result of our culture's assigning them a role, "a place," in which it is considered unladylike to even keep physically fit, although this is beginning to change. Unfitness, of course, is directly contrary to health-reform teachings Ellen White delivered to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.) As for brain, even at this end of six thousand years science bears out that God, indeed, is no respecter of persons when it comes to issuing intelligence to the sexes. "No significant differences in intelligence have been found between men and women, and it is not even certain that qualitative differences, as shown by the somewhat higher scores of men in mechanical reasoning and of women in verbal ability, may not be considered as temporary cultural effects." Raymond B. Cattell, "Intelligence," Encyclopaedia Britannica, (1961), XII, p. 457-459.

Some of the results?

A man may feel threatened if a woman gets a job. (Did Adam feel threatened if Eve picked fruit or trained the vines?)

A woman is considered feminine only if she tends the house and minds the children. (Was Eve unfeminine, roaming about the garden and studying plant and animal life with Adam?)

Many men are unable to think of women as capable, or at least not equal in possibility, as men in intelligence, ambition or ability. Her dependence upon man he sees as weakness, not sharing. Therefore, in the position of a superior, he feels free to put her down, pay her less and, if she objects, to regard her as "out of place."

Certainly the Scripture celebrates parenthood³³ and plugs for good parents.³⁴ Whatever results in happier or more prosperous homes is blessed.³⁵ Parents are firmly reminded of their responsibilities and neglect of such is cursed.³⁶

But how the parental responsibilities of loving, sheltering, feeding or teaching the children are to be carried out is not specified in the Bible according to sex. There is no divine injunction. We simply know of various customs. There is little delineation of "woman's work" or "man's work" per se. And with but few exceptions, there is no pronouncement of status according to sex.³⁷

³³ God ordered replenishing of the earth, Genesis 1:28. "Sons are a gift from the Lord and children a reward from him. Like arrows in the hand of a fighting man are the sons of a man's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; such men shall not be put to shame when they confront their enemies in court." Psalm 127:3-5, NEB.

³⁴ "You fathers, again, must not goad your children to resentment, but give them the instruction, and the correction, which belong to a Christian upbringing. Ephesians 6:4, NEB.

³⁵ The most explicit statement to this effect is Solomon's poem about the capable wife in Proverbs 31:10-31. A careful reading shows the role she

played is hardly the fanciful ideal many clergymen of today would assign her. An education of no mean nature has afforded the woman of Solomon's era the ability to buy, sell, market, earn, to organize and execute business with financial wizardry. For this she is publically praised by her husband and sons, and even in the city gate all "her labours bring her honour." NEB.

Bible characters who are particularly noted as being good parents include Abraham, Mary the mother of Jesus, Elizabeth the mother of John, Jochebed the mother of Moses, Lois and Eunice the grandmother and mother of Timothy, and Hannah the mother of Samuel. Among those parents who failed to have happy, prosperous homes are Lot and Eli.

36 "These commandments which I give you this day are to be kept in your heart; you shall repeat them to your sons, and speak of them indoors and out of doors, when you lie down and when you rise." Deuteronomy 6:6, 7, NEB. Also, Deuteronomy 8:19, 20, and 11:18-21.

37 I regard it necessary for a team to have a captain. It is useful in a sinful world for the home to have a head. But the matter of automatic and/or unquestioned submission of the woman to the man in the marriage relationship--and certainly its spill-over into the workaday world of the 20th century--based on Genesis 3 or Patriarchs and Prophets 58, 59, is a case that is shaky at best, and probably worthy of further exploration and study.

Leviticus and Deuteronomy list several practices which give more status to the male than to the female. For example, Leviticus 27:1-8 deals with vows taken upon the valuation of living persons. A male between twenty and sixty years of age was valued at 50 shekels. A female of the same age is valued at only 30 shekels. I rely on scholars who tell me that the lot of a Jewish woman was much improved over the lot of most women living in those times.

Some of the Old Testament laws were put into fresh, vigorous terms by Christ. Deuteronomy 24:1-4 discusses divorce. A woman had no right to serve divorce notice. But the husband did and for such a reason only as "finding something shameful in her." Rabbis in Christ's time were known to release a man from his marriage for as little as a complaint about the wife's cooking.

However, Christ taught in the New Testament that divorce could only be granted on terms of infidelity (Matthew 5:31, 32, and 19:3-9), thus improving woman's lot.

I presume to say that this is as it should be. God's message to the world and the implications of its practice are those of recognition and restoration--of all people, women included--into the sacred dignity of His own image.

CONCLUSION TO PART 1:

In summary I conclude that the thrust of Scripture

(a) is one of personhood; of God-created intelligence and responsibility within both women and men,

(b) is one of God's justice and fair-play in requiring development of this intelligence and in placing trust for fulfilling this responsibility upon both women and men,

(c) is one which nobly illustrates God's own dealing with women and men in just such a manner,

(d) is one which authorizes and encourages sexual relations in marriage and makes steep demands of parents to love and nurture the children born of this union,

(e) is one which outlines no static or "right" male and female roles in marriage or society,

(f) is one which time and again shows God as creative and flexible; which shows His message to this world as Good News and hope--not despair; a message of deliverance from--not enslavement to--the Genesis Three Curses; a message of salvation and transformation and restoration of all people who believe.

If I have overdrawn the point of equality in status and responsibility of women with men and underplayed the points of dissimilarity and function as male and female, it has been for emphasis. For so long the differences have been the primary discussion that I have hoped only to even up the balance.

Because sexuality is one of many qualities God has bestowed upon humans, and it is not the chief or ruling one, I conclude that it is appropriate for this church to untangle sexual biases from a person's rights and responsibilities under God.

VIEWPOINT

"The Role of Women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church"

Introduction to Part II

When she wrote messages from the Lord in the late 19th-century, Ellen White lived embedded in her time, her own background as a pious Methodist, and the shattering drama of The Last Days--the pain and anguish of October 22, 1844, and the slow revival of hope among a remnant.

Some of her messages relate best to circumstances of her times. Yet others still challenge scientists and thinkers of the 1970's. Like Bible-time messages, Ellen White's writings are progressive. They are for us another aid to spiritual revelation and mature insight.

Ellen White wrote extensively of the sacredness and dignity of personhood--of the very singular responsibility of a person (woman or man) to her or his God, and resulting implications of how people should relate to each other, including how they should act as parents and in functioning female and male, mother and father roles.

This paper cannot presume to cover the writings of Mrs. White on this subject, even of her statements about women. But the sampling may reveal some basic and useful premises.

Above all, one question must be answered. This is how does Ellen White herself square up with what she wrote? Did she advocate one thing for women (including those in the Adventist Church) but herself abide by something else?

PART II: ELLEN WHITE--PARADOX?

Seventh-day Adventist men and women discuss the role of women by quoting Ellen White. Some take a position, apparently in harmony with these statements, that women should be content with a lot in life as mother and homemaker, and that those women seeking relief or change are out of place. In fact, they may count such women as defying nature and God's will.

For example:

We may safely say that the distinctive duties of woman are more sacred, more holy, than those of men. Let woman realize the sacredness of her work and in the strength and fear of God take up her life mission.³⁸

The mother's work is given her of God, to bring up her children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.³⁹

The mother who cheerfully takes up the duties lying directly in her path will feel that life is to her precious, because God has given her a work to perform.⁴⁰

The humble round of duties which women have come to regard as a wearisome task should be looked upon as a grand and noble work.⁴¹

There are some who think that unless they are directly connected with active religious work, they are not doing the will of God; but this is a mistake. Everyone has a work to do for the Master; it is a wonderful work to make home pleasant and all that it ought to be.⁴²

These women who are doing with ready willingness what their hands find to do, with cheerfulness of spirit aiding their husbands to bear their burdens and training their children for God, are missionaries in the highest sense.⁴³

³⁸ Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene, 77. (Adventist Home, 231).

³⁹ Good Health, Jan., 1880. (Adventist Home, 233).

⁴⁰ Pacific Health Journal, June, 1890. (Adventist Home, 233).

⁴¹ Patriarchs and Prophets, 572.

⁴² Manuscript 32, 1899. (Adventist Home, 245).

⁴³ 2T, 466.

The Lord has not called you to neglect your home and your husband and children. He never works in this way; and He never will.... Never for a moment suppose that God has given you a work that will necessitate a separation from your precious little flock.⁴⁴

Eve had been perfectly happy by her husband's side in her Eden home; but, like restless modern Eves, she was flattered with the hope of entering a higher sphere than that which God had assigned her. In attempting to rise above her original position, she fell far below it. A similar result will be reached by all who are unwilling to take up cheerfully their life duties in accordance with God's plan. In their efforts to reach positions for which He has not fitted them, many are leaving vacant the place where they might be a blessing. In their desire for a higher sphere, many have sacrificed true womanly dignity and nobility of character,⁴⁵ and have left undone the very work that Heaven appointed them.

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 become sons and daughters of God.⁴⁶

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.⁴⁷

This confrontation suggests we must dig deeply to understand. Balanced one against another, what do these statements by Ellen White mean and what do they not mean? There are several assumptions usually drawn from such statements. Let us examine them carefully.

⁴⁴ Letter 28, 1890. (Adventist Home, 246.)

⁴⁵ Patriarchs and Prophets, 59.

⁴⁶ 3T, 483.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 484.

ASSUMPTION 1: Woman's mission in life is to bear and raise children.

False. This would mean that women with children have a life mission but those without do not.

This assumption, by implication, makes unmarried and childless women either sinful or idle. It, in fact, makes woman's identity dependent upon other people. Unless a woman has children and/or a husband, she is a zero.

Ellen White supports the dignity of human life, female or male.

1868: Women professing godliness generally fail to train the mind. They leave it uncontrolled, to go where it will. This is a great mistake. Many seem to have no mental power. They have not educated the mind to think; and because they have not done this, they suppose they cannot. Meditation and prayer are necessary to a growth in grace. Why there is no more stability among women is because of so little mental culture, so little reflection. Leaving the mind in a state of inaction, they lean upon others to do the brainwork, to plan, and think, and remember for them, and thus grow more and more inefficient. Some need to discipline the mind by exercise. They should force it to think. While they depend on someone to think for them, to solve their difficulties, and they refuse to tax the mind with thought, the inability to remember, to look ahead and discriminate, will continue.⁴⁸

1877: Girls should be taught that the true charm of womanliness is not alone in beauty or form or feature, nor in the possession of accomplishments; but in a meek and quiet spirit, in patience, generosity, kindness, and a willingness to do and suffer for others. They should be taught to work, to study to some purpose, to live for some object, to trust in God and fear Him, and to respect their parents...⁴⁹

1878: Hundreds of our sisters might be at work today if they would. They should dress themselves and their children with simplicity, in neat and durable garments, free from adornment, and devote the time they have spent in needless display to missionary work. Letters may be written to friends at a distance. Our sisters may meet together to consult as to the best manner of labor. Money can be saved to present as an offering to God, to be invested in papers and tracts to send to their friends. Those who are now doing nothing should go to work. Let each sister who claims to be a child of God feel indeed a responsibility to help all within her reach.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ 2T 187, 188. Emphasis supplied.

⁴⁹ Health Reformer, December, 1877. (Child Guidance, 140). Emphasis supplied.

⁵⁰ R&H, December 12, 1878. (Christian Service, 28, 29). Emphasis supplied.

1880: Why should not women cultivate the intellect? Why should they not answer the purpose of God in their existence. Why may they not understand their own powers, and realizing that these powers are given of God, strive to make use of them to the fullest extent in doing good to others, in advancing the work of reform, of truth and real goodness in the world. Satan knows that women have a power of influence for good or for evil; therefore he seeks to enlist them in his cause. ⁵¹

1881: Sisters, we may do a noble work for God if we will. Woman does not know her power. God did not intend that her capabilities should be all absorbed in questioning: What shall I eat? what shall I drink? and wherewithal shall I be clothed? There is a higher purpose for woman, a grander destiny. She should develop and cultivate her powers, for God can employ them in the great work of saving souls from eternal ruin. ⁵²

True. Women who have children have a great mission in life, one that many in Ellen White's time completely overlooked, and one which mothers today constantly need to keep before them.

1868: Oh, what wretchedness exists in families that might be happy! These women are a curse to themselves and a curse to their husbands. In supposing themselves to be angels, they make themselves fools, and are nothing but heavy burdens...

Great is the work and mission of women, especially those who are wives and mothers. They can be a blessing to all around them. They can have a powerful influence for good if they will let their light so shine that others may be led to glorify our heavenly Father. Women may have a transforming influence if they will only consent to yield their way and their will to God, and let Him control their mind, affections, and being.... God has assigned woman her mission; and if she, in her humble way, yet to the best of her ability, makes a heaven of her home, faithfully and lovingly performing her duties to her husband and children, continually seeking to let a holy light shine from her useful, pure, and virtuous life to brighten all around her, she is doing the work left her of the Master, and will hear from His divine lips the words: 'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' These women who are doing with ready willingness what their hands find to do, with cheerfulness of spirit aiding their husbands to bear their burdens, and training their children for God, are missionaries in the highest sense. ⁵³

⁵¹ Good Health, June, 1880. (Evangelism, 467). Emphasis supplied.

⁵² 4T 642. Emphasis supplied.

⁵³ 2T, 464, 465, 466. Emphasis supplied.

The above statements by Ellen White obviously uplift women rather than put them down. From a being who felt she had no purpose, or only a decorative or drudgery-filled one, woman is promoted and recognized as an intelligent, responsible person. She is charged with fulfilling a far-reaching mission within her own home. Ellen White makes no bones about the fact that a family with children should have top-priority planning by both parents, including mother. Women should be "fitted" for this work, she says.⁵⁴

Woman should fill the position which God originally designed for her, as her husband's equal. The world needs mothers who are mothers not merely in name but in every sense of the word. We may safely say that the distinctive duties of woman are more sacred, more holy, than those of man. Let woman realize the sacredness of her work and in the strength of God take up her life mission. Let her educate her children for usefulness in this world and for a home in the better world.⁵⁵

1880: These children are to be educated and trained to become disciples of Christ, "that our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace." The character of the child is to be developed. The mother must engrave upon the tablet of the heart lessons as enduring as eternity; and she will surely meet the displeasure of the Lord if she neglects this sacred work or allows anything to interfere with it.... The Christian mother has her God-appointed work, which she will not neglect if she is closely connected with God and unbued with His Spirit.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Manuscript 43, 1900: "Women have need of great patience before they are qualified to become mothers. God has ordained that they shall be fitted for this work." Women are not commanded to become mothers, but mothers are charged to take their position seriously. (Adventist Home, 255).

⁵⁵ Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene, 77. (Adventist Home, 231). Emphasis supplied.

⁵⁶ Good Health, January, 1880. (Adventist Home, 234). Emphasis supplied. Mrs. White cannot mean that a mother's "neglect" would include child care and training by someone other than the mother. The mother's responsibility must be discharged responsibly. But being near the children at all times does not guarantee that "neglect" has not taken place. During her own ministry to the church Mrs. White left her children with trusted friends when she traveled. She notes on January 21, 1859, in her diary, this fact and its accompanying loneliness: "I have felt so homesick on the journey. Fear that I have not been willing to sacrifice the company of my husband and children to do others good. I desire a willingness to make a whole sacrifice and crucify every selfish feeling."

1882: That was a wise father, who, when asked what he intended to do with his daughters, replied, "I intend to apprentice them to their excellent mother, that they may learn the art of improving time, and be fitted to become wives and mothers, heads of families, and useful members of society." 57

✓1886: Intelligent Christian women may use their talents to the very highest account. They can show by their life of self-denial and by their willingness to work to the best of their ability that they believe the truth and are being sanctified through it. Many need a work of this kind to develop the powers they possess. Wives and mothers should in no case neglect their husband and their children, but they can do much without neglecting home duties, and all have not these responsibilities. 58

1875: There are speculations as to woman's rights and duties in regard to voting. Many are in no way disciplined to understand the bearing of important questions. They have lived lives of present gratification because it was the fashion. 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. Let her educate her children for usefulness in this world and for a fitness for the better world.

We address Christian mothers. We entreat that you feel your responsibility as mothers and that you live not to please yourselves but to glorify God. 59

ASSUMPTION 2: A woman's role is that of helper to her husband, a teacher and trainer of their children.

COROLLARY: Woman was made for man.

False. Women without husbands or children are not without a purpose in creation. Those with husbands and children are not, as some occasionally imply, slaves to them.

57 Signs of the Times, June 29, 1882. (Fundamentals of Christian Education, 74). Emphasis supplied.

58 Signs of the Times, September 16, 1886. (Welfare Ministry, 164, 165). Emphasis supplied.

59 3T 565, 566. Emphasis supplied.

✓ 1873: It is a woman's right to look after the interest of her husband, to have a care for his wardrobe, and to seek to make him happy. It is her right to improve her mind and manners, to be social, cheerful, and happy, shedding sunshine in her family and making it a little heaven. And she may have an interest for more than "me and mine." She should consider that society has claims upon her. ⁶⁰

1890: The wife and mother should not sacrifice her strength and allow her powers to lie dormant, leaning wholly upon her husband. Her individuality cannot be merged in his. She should feel that she is her husband's equal--to stand by his side, she faithful at her post of duty and he at his. Her work in the education of her children is in every respect as elevating and ennobling as any post of duty he may be called to fill, even if it is to be the chief magistrate of the nation. ⁶¹

✓ 1891: 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. ⁶²

✓ Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him. A part of man, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, she was his second self; showing the close union and the affectionate attachment that should exist in this relation. ⁶³

True. By choosing marriage, the woman chooses to join a team. Husband, children and she herself need care and sustenance, and she shares the responsibility of seeing these things are assured. The husband and children, however, must not overlook Ellen White's comments on their share in this role.

⁶⁰ Health Reformer, June, 1873. (Welfare Ministry, 159). Emphasis supplied.

⁶¹ Pacific Health Journal, June, 1890. (Adventist Home, 231). Emphasis supplied.

⁶² Manuscript 17, 1891. (Evangelism, 494). Emphasis supplied.

⁶³ Patriarchs and Prophets, 46. NOTE: Some have suggested this statement is invalidated by PP 58--a discussion of Eve's sin and the curse laid upon her. Manuscript 16, 1899 balances this by saying, "Christ came not to destroy this institution /marriage/, but to restore it to its original sanctity and elevation. He came to restore the moral image of God in man and He began by sanctioning the marriage relation." (Adventist Home, 99.) Emphasis supplied.

The mother is queen of the home, and the children are her subjects. She is to rule her household wisely, in the dignity of her motherhood. Her influence in the home is to be paramount; her word, law. If she is a Christian, under God's control, she will command the respect of her children. ⁶⁴

1865: If the father would become acquainted with physical law, he might better understand his obligations, and his responsibilities. He would see that he had been guilty of almost murdering his children, by suffering so many burdens to come upon the mother, compelling her to labor beyond her strength before their birth, in order to obtain means to leave for them.... It seems perfectly natural for some men to be morose, selfish, exacting, and overbearing. They have never learned the lesson of self-control, and will not restrain their unreasonable feelings, let the consequences be what they may. Such men will be repaid, by seeing their companions sickly, and dispirited, and their children bearing the peculiarities of their own disagreeable traits of character. ⁶⁵

1865: It has been one of the greatest causes of degeneracy in generations back, up to the present time, that wives and mothers who otherwise would have had a beneficial influence upon society, through multiplicity of home cares, because of the fashionable, health-destroying manner of cooking, and also in consequence of too frequent child-bearing. She has been compelled to needless suffering, her constitution has failed, and her intellect has become weakened, by so great a draught upon her vital resources. Her offspring suffer her debility, and society has thrown upon them a class poorly fitted, through her inability to educate them, to be of the least benefit. ⁶⁶

58 1891: Amid all the activities of life the mother's most sacred duty is to her children. But how often is this duty put aside that some selfish gratification may be allowed! Parents are entrusted with the present and eternal interests of their children. They are to hold the reins of government and guide their households to the honor of God. ⁶⁷

20 1903: The children are to be taught to regard their mother not as a slave whose work it is to wait on them, but as a queen who is to guide and direct them, teaching them line upon line, precept upon precept. ⁶⁸

64 Counsels to Teachers, Parents, and Students, iii. Emphasis supplied.

65 "How to Live," No. 2, pp 25-48. (2 SM, 429, 430.) Emphasis supplied.

66 Ibid, 431.

67 Signs of the Times, March 16, 1891. (Adventist Home, 235.) Emphasis supplied.

68 Letter 272, 1903. (Adventist Home, 232). Emphasis supplied.

1870: Only let a woman realize that she is appreciated by her husband and is precious to him, not merely because she is useful and convenient in his house, but because she is part of himself, and she will respond to his affection and reflect the love bestowed upon her. ⁶⁹

Those who increase their number of children, when if they consulted reason, they must know that physical and mental weakness must be their inheritance, are transgressors of the last six precepts of God's law, which specify the duty of man to his fellow man.... In addition to the suffering they entail upon their children, they have no portion but poverty to leave their pitiful flock. They cannot educate them, and many do not see the necessity, neither could they if they did, find time to train them, and instruct them, and lessen, as much as possible, the wretched inheritance transmitted to them. Parents should not increase their families any faster than they know that their children can be well cared for, and educated. A child in the mother's arms from year to year is great injustice to her. It lessens, and often destroys, social enjoyment, and increases domestic wretchedness. It robs their children of that care, education, and happiness, which parents should feel it their duty to bestow upon them. ⁷⁰

We may conclude that Ellen White does emphasize a role for woman as companion and helper to husband and children, but in the context of reciprocal roles by husband and children. She was made for man. But he was made for her, and children also fit into the total scheme of things.

ASSUMPTION 3: Home (household) duties are the primary work for women to perform.

COROLLARY 1: Women shall be regarded as temporary help when they are employed outside the home.

COROLLARY 2: Women hit the peak of their performance in household duties. Household duties are menial work. Therefore, women can be easily replaced. Women are capable of less and worth less pay than men, skilled in using brains.

⁶⁹ 2T 416, 417. Emphasis supplied.

⁷⁰ "How to Live," No. 2, pp 25-48, 1865. (2SM, 424, 425). Emphasis supplied.

False. Women are capable of work other than household care and can be competent . The Lord expects capable women to exercise their talents.

⁶⁵ 1902: If a woman is appointed by the Lord to do a certain work, her work should be estimated according to its value. Some may think it a good policy to allow persons to devote their time and labor to the work without compensation. But God does not sanction such arrangements. When self-denial is required because of a dearth of means, the burden is not to rest wholly upon a few persons. Let all unite in the sacrifice. ⁷¹

1896: 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. ⁷²

⁶⁶ 1903: If women do the work that is not the most agreeable to many of those who labor in word and doctrine, and if their works testify that they are accomplishing a work that has been manifestly neglected, should not such labor be looked upon as rich in results as the work of the ordained ministers? Should it not command the hire of the laborer?... This question is not for men to settle. The Lord has settled it. You are to do your duty to the women who labor in the gospel, 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 ⁶² has shown me that women teachers are just as greatly needed to do the work to which He has appointed them as are men. ⁷³

⁶¹ 1907: Women should be educated and trained to act skillfully as midwives and physicans to their sex. It is just as important that a line of study be given to educate women to deal with women's diseases, as it is that there should be gentlemen thoroughly trained to act as physicans and surgeons. And the wages of the woman should be proportionate to her services. She should be as much appreciated in her work as the gentleman physican is appreciated in his work. ⁷⁴

⁷¹ 7T 206-209. Emphasis supplied.

⁷² Letter 61, 1896. (Evangelism, 493).

⁷³ Manuscript 142, 1903. (Evangelism, 493). Emphasis supplied.

⁷⁴ Special Testimonies, 1907. (Counsels on Health, 365). Emphasis supplied.

1909: When it is possible, let the minister and his wife go forth together. The wife can often labor by the side of her husband, accomplishing a noble work. She can visit the homes of the people and help the women in these families in a way that her husband cannot.... Select women who will act an earnest part. The Lord will use intelligent women in the work of teaching. And let none feel that these women, who understand the Word, and who have the ability to teach, should not receive remuneration for their labors. They should be paid as verily as are their husbands. 75

1915: 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. 68

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. 76

True. Ellen White emphasizes the far-reaching results of mothers and fathers who do or do not take time to take care of the house. This responsibility for household duties properly falls upon women, but men are not excluded. The joys and creativity possible in housekeeping (as well as words of encouragement and suggestions for improvement for the more dreary chores) are underscored in some of these quotations:

69 How many parents are lamenting the fact that they cannot keep their children at home, that they have no love for home! At an early age they have a desire for the company of strangers; and as soon as they are old enough, they break away from that which appears to them to be bondage and unreasonable restraint and will neither heed a mother's prayers nor a father's counsels. Investigation would generally reveal that the sin lay at the door of the parents. They have not made home what it ought to be--attractive, pleasant, radiant with sunshine of kind words, pleasant looks, and true love.

The secret of saving your children lies in making your home lovely and attractive. 77

75 Letter 142, 1909. (Evangelism, 491). Emphasis supplied.

76 Evangelism, 493. Emphasis supplied.

77 R&H, December 9, 1884. (Adventist Home, 529, 530). Emphasis supplied.

In many a home the wife and mother has no time to read, to keep herself well informed, no time to be a companion to her husband, no time to keep in touch with the developing minds of her children. There is no time or place for the precious Saviour to be a close, dear companion. Little by little she sinks into a mere household drudge, her strength and time and interest absorbed in the things that perish with the using. Too late she awakes to find herself almost a stranger in her own home. The precious opportunities once hers to influence her dear ones for the higher life, unimproved, have passed away forever.

Let the homemakers resolve to live on a wiser plan. Let it be your first aim to make a pleasant home. Be sure to provide the facilities that will lighten labor and promote health.⁷⁸

1882: Many ladies, accounted well-educated, having graduated with honors at some institution of learning, are shamefully ignorant of the practical duties of life. They are destitute of the qualifications necessary for the proper regulation of the family, and hence essential to its happiness. They may talk of woman's elevated sphere, and of her rights, yet they themselves fall far below the true sphere of woman. It is the right of every daughter of Eve to have a thorough knowledge of household duties, to receive training in every department of domestic labor. Every young lady should be so educated that if called to fill the position of wife and mother, she may preside as a queen in her own domain. She should be fully competent to guide and instruct her children and to direct her servants, or, if need be, to minister with her own hands to the wants of her household. It is her right to understand the mechanism of the human body and the principles of hygiene, the matters of diet and dress, labor and recreation, and countless other that intimately concern the well-being of her household. It is her right to obtain such knowledge of the best methods of treating disease that she can care for her children in sickness, instead of leaving her precious treasures in the hands of stranger nurses and physicians.

The idea that ignorance of useful employment is an essential characteristic of the true gentlemen or lady, is contrary to the design of God in the creation of man.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Ministry of Healing, 368, 369. Emphasis supplied.

⁷⁹ Fundamentals of Christian Education, 75. Emphasis supplied.

NOTE: If men today are to regard women as inadequate without a full complement of education in the home arts, they must consider such counsel as this: "By the Israelites, industrial training was regarded as a duty. Every father was required to see that his sons learned some useful trade. The greatest men of Israel were trained to industrial pursuits. A knowledge of the duties pertaining to housewifery was considered essential for every woman; and skill in these duties was regarded as an honor to women of the highest station." Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students, 276. I would here urge two concepts: (1) Men should yoke no ancient traditions

10 Since both men and women have a part in homemaking, boys as well as girls should gain a knowledge of household duties. To make a bed and put a room in order, to wash dishes, to prepare a meal, to wash and repair his own clothing, is a training that need not make any boy less manly; it will make him happier and more useful.⁸⁰

ASSUMPTION 4: Women are subject to men.

COROLLARY 1: Man is a higher being than woman and his sphere is more exalted.

COROLLARY 2: Anything a woman can do, a man can do better.

COROLLARY 3: No man will work for a woman, nor should he have to.

COROLLARY 4: Women cause men a lot of trouble morally. Men have a responsibility to control them.

False. Women and men are creatures of God and subject first and foremost to Him. This relation preempts other relationships.

1398: 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.⁸¹

1898: A great work is to be done in our world, and every talent is to be used in accordance with righteous principles. If a woman is appointed by the Lord to do a certain work, her work is to be estimated according to its value. Every laborer is to receive his or her just due.

It may be thought to be a good plan to allow persons to give talent and earnest labor to the work of God, while they draw nothing from the treasury. But this is making a difference, and selfishly withholding from such workers their due. God will not put His sanction on any such plan. Those who invented this method may have thought that they were doing God service by not

upon women, the counterparts of which they refuse to bear, e.g., in their case training in farming, carpentry, mechanics, etc. (2) Women need less time and training to maintain a clean house, good clothes and good diet in the 20th century. But it will always be useful to possess the skills, though not as vital as in former times. Also, it should be further noted that modern people seldom regard "stranger nurses and physicians" inadequate for the care of their children.

80

Education, 216, 217. Emphasis supplied.

81

Letter 77, 1898. (Evangelism, 469.)

71 drawing from the treasury to pay these God-fearing, soul-loving laborers. But there will be an account to settle by and by, and then those who now think this exaction, this partiality in dealing, a wise scheme, will be ashamed of their selfishness. God sees these things in a light altogether different from the light in which finite men view them.

Those who work earnestly and unselfishly, be they men or women, bring sheaves to the Master; and the souls converted by their laobr will bring their tithes to the treasury. When self-denial is required because of a dearth of means, do not let a few hard-working women do all the sacrificing. Let all share in making the sacrifice. God declares, I hate robbery for burnt offering. 82

1899: We believe fully in church organization, but in nothing that is to prescribe the precise way in which we must work; for all minds are not reached by the same methods. . .

Each person has his own lamp to keep burning... Very much more light shines from one such lamp onto the path of the wanderer, than would be given by a whole torchlight procession got up for parade and show. Oh, what a work may be done if we will not stretch ourselves beyond our measure!

72 Teach this, my sister. You have many ways opened before you. Address the crowd whenever you can; hold every jot of influence you can be any association that can be made the means of introducing the leaven to the meal. Every man and woman has a work to do for the Master. 83

1899: Women, as well as men, are needed in the work that must be done. Those women who give themselves to the service of the Lord, who labor for the salvation of others by doing house-to-house work, which is as taxing as, and more taxing than, standing before a congregation, should receive payment for their labor. 84

1902: The Lord has a work for women as well as men. They may take their places in His work at this crisis, and He will work through them. If they are imbued with a sense of their duty, and labor under the influence of the Holy Spirit, they will have just the self-possession required for this time. The Saviour will reflect upon these self-sacrificing women the light of His countenance, and will give them a power that exceeds that of men. They can do in families a work that men cannot do, a work that reaches the inner life. They can come close to the hearts of those whom men cannot reach. Their labor is needed. 85

82 Evangelism, 492. Emphasis supplied.

83 Ibid, 473. Emphasis supplied. NOTE: Presumably this woman taught and influenced men as well as women. Ellen White plainly states that men and women both have an obligation to the Lord to do this and should not be held back by a restrictive church government.

84 Ibid, 493, 494. Emphasis supplied.

85 Ibid, 464, 465. Emphasis supplied.

1909: Women as well as men can engage in the work of hiding truth where it can work out and be made manifest. ⁸⁶

1914: In the various branches of the work of God's cause, there is a wide field in which our sisters may do good service for the Master. Many lines of missionary work are neglected. In the different churches, much work which is often left undone or done imperfectly, could be well accomplished by the help of our sisters, if properly instructed, can give.

Through various lines of home missionary effort they can reach a class that is not reached by our ministers. Among the noble women who have had the moral courage to decide in favor of the truth for this time are many who have tact, perception, and good ability, and who may make successful workers. The labors of such Christian women are needed. ⁸⁷

True. Because sin destroyed the possibility of full harmony between any two individuals, God indicated that a compromise measure would be necessary in human life. In the marriage relationship, the Lord indicated that Even would be subject to Adam. The male dominance over the female is a custom practiced in many cultures, though not all. The meaning of this subjection and the limits of its usefulness merit careful study:

1875: 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. In many cases the curse has made the lot of woman very grievous and her life a burden. The superiority which God has given man he has abused in many respects by exercising arbitrary power. Infinite wisdom devised the plan of redemption, which places the race on a second probation by giving them another trial. ⁸⁸

⁸⁶ 9T, 128.

⁸⁷ Review & Herald, December 10, 1914. (Evangelism, 466.) Emphasis supplied.

⁸⁸ 3T, 484. Emphasis supplied. (See NOTES on next page.)

In the creation, God had made her the equal of Adam. Had they remained obedient to God--in harmony with His great law of love--they would ever have been in harmony with each other; but sin had brought discord, and now their union could be maintained and harmony preserved only by submission on the part of one or the other. Eve had been the first in transgression; and she had fallen into temptation by separating from her companion, contrary to the divine direction. It was by her solicitation that Adam sinned, and she was now placed in subjection to her husband. Had the principles enjoined in the law of God been cherished by the fallen race, this sentence, though growing out of the results of sin, would have proved a blessing to them; but man's abuse of the supremacy thus given him has too often rendered the lot of woman very bitter, and made her life a burden. ⁸⁹

NOTE: "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." What is meant?

Other statements at least clarify this to the point that it does not mean she should refrain from teaching, preaching, developing and using her talents: unless she is not providing good care for her family if she has one.

NOTE: "She was to be in subjection to her husband, and this was a part of the curse."

This part of the curse is frequently dwelt upon. At one time men questioned the use of anesthetics for women in labor and child-birth pain--because, they argued, pain was "part of the curse."

They have not been known to throw over tractors or threshing machines which remove some of the pain of their curse to till the soil by the sweat of their brow. Nor have they found it theologically disturbing that some men never get near the soil at all to earn a living.

Especially in the light of Ellen White's concluding sentences in this and the subsequently quoted passage, I argue that the curse was less a form of punishment than a tool for salvation. Men were to learn from this particular curse (as were women) of responsibility--not cruelty and arbitrariness. Further the human race is on probation. As men and women become more Christlike, they are more nearly to approach a life-style like the Eden relationship--one of equality, harmony, and understanding.

⁸⁹ Patriarchs and Prophets, 58, ~~59~~. Emphasis supplied.

1889: Women are too often tempters. On one pretense or another they engage the attention of men, married or unmarried, and lead them on till they transgress the law of God, till their usefulness is ruined, and their souls are in jeopardy. The history of Joseph is left on record for the benefit of all who, like him, are tempted. In principle he was firm as a rock, and he answered the tempter: "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Moral power like his is what is needed now. If women would only elevate their lives and become workers with Christ, there would be less danger through their influence; but with their present feelings of unconcern in regard to home responsibilities, and in regard to the claims that God has upon them, their powers are dwarfed, and their work does not bear the divine impress. They are not home missionaries neither are they missionaries away from home; and frequently home, precious home, is left to desolation.⁹⁰

"Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Matthew 5:28.

When the thought of evil is loved and cherished, however secretly, said Jesus, it shows that sin still reigns in the heart. The soul is still in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. He who finds pleasure in dwelling upon scenes of impurity who indulges the evil thought, or the lustful look, may behold in the open sin, with its burden of shame and heartbreaking grief, the true nature of the evil which he has hidden in the chambers of the soul. The season of temptation, under which, it may be, one falls into grievous sin, does not create the evil that is revealed, but only develops or makes manifest that which was hidden and latent in the heart.⁹¹

ASSUMPTION 5: Women should not be public figures.

COROLLARY 1: Women are incapable of sustained drive.

COROLLARY 2: The will of God for women excludes major participation in public work.

COROLLARY 3: Women ought not to be ordained.

COROLLARY 4: Bible women and Ellen White are exceptions, not illustrations.

⁹⁰ 5T, 596, 597. Emphasis supplied.

⁹¹ Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, 60. Emphasis supplied.

NOTE: Ellen White lays the blame for sexual sins squarely upon all involved offenders. While pointing out some women's waywardness she simultaneously points out their responsibility to change, to recognize the claims of God upon them. Wayward men she encourages to overcome temptation with strong moral power. Those who urge the most stringent control of women may be indicating this is necessary because they are too weak to control themselves, not that they are superior beings.

False. Women who have been public figures in the Bible and in Ellen White's time have not been censored because they were public figures. However, if they failed to take their responsibilities seriously, they were held guilty. In Biblical history God commended women who were public figures in spite of a prevailing posture of social customs which ignored women.

The amazing thing is not that so few women were used by God, but that so many were preserved in records kept by men in a time when a man's world specifically regarded women as chattels.

Ellen White calls women out of their customary slot at the edges of the action and outlines for them God's charge to develop and witness along with men.

1873: We have no right, my Christian sisters, to waste our time, and give example to others who are less able than we to waste their time and energies upon needless ornaments, upon dress or furniture, or to indulge in superfluities in food. We have religious duties to perform, and if we neglect these duties, and give our time to needless things, we will dwarf the intellect and separate the affections from God. The Author of our existence has claims upon our time and our money.⁹²

1878: Sisters, God calls you to work in the harvest field and help gather in the sheaves.⁹³

1880: All have not the same work. There are distinct and individual duties for each to perform; yet with these varied duties there may be a beautiful harmony, binding the work of all together in perfect fitness. Our heaven Father requires of none to whom He has given but one talent, the improvement of five. But if the one be wisely used, the possessor will soon have gained more, and may continually increase her power to influence and sphere of usefulness by making the best use of the talents which God has given her. Her individuality may be distinctly preserved, and yet she be part of the great whole in advancing the work of reform so greatly needed.⁹⁴

1886: The Lord of the vineyard is saying to many women who are now doing nothing, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" They may be instruments of righteousness, rendering holy service. It was Mary who first preached a risen Jesus; and the refining, softening influence of Christian women is needed in the great work of preaching the truth now. If there were twenty women where now there

⁹² The Health Reformer, June, 1873. (Welfare Ministry, 148.) Emphasis supplied.

⁹³ Review & Herald, December 19, 1878. (Evangelism, 477, 478.)

⁹⁴ Good Health, June, 1880. (Welfare Ministry, 159, 160.) Emphasis supplied.

91 is one who would make the saving of souls their cherished work, we should see many more converted to the truth. Zealous and continued diligence in the cause of God would be wholly successful, and would astonish them with its results. 95

1887: Ellen White discusses the problem of a lack of dedication or seriousness by teachers and parents as it relates to training students and asks that this responsibility be kept in mind:

Many have felt, "Well, it doesn't matter if we are not so particular to become thoroughly educated," and a lower standard of knowledge has been accepted. And now when suitable men are wanted to fill various positions of trust, they are rare; 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. What is worth doing at all is worth doing well. While religion should be the pervading element in every school, it will not lead to a cheapening of the literary attainments. 96

1894: Women who have the cause of God at heart can do a good work in the districts in which they reside. 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. But how very limited is the work done by those who could do a large work if they would. 97

1895: All through our ranks, individual talent has been sadly neglected. A few persons have been selected as spiritual burden-bearers, and the talent of other members has remained undeveloped. Many have grown weaker since their union with the church, because they have been practically prohibited from exercising their talents. The burden of church work should be distributed among its individual members, so that each one may become an intelligent laborer for God. (There is altogether too much unused force in our churches.)

Many of those who stand in places of trust, cherish a spirit of caution, a fear that some move may be made which is not in perfect harmony with their own methods of labor. They require that every plan should reflect their own personality. They fear to trust another's methods. And why are they not to be trusted? Because they have not been educated; because their leaders have not drilled them as soldiers should be drilled....

Neither Conference officer nor minister has a call from God to indulge distrust of God's power to use every individual who is considered a worthy member of the church. This cautionness, so-

95 Signs of the Times, September 16, 1886. (Welfare Ministry, 146). Emphasis supplied.

96 Review & Herald, June 21, 1887. (Fundamentals of Christian Education, 117, 118.) Emphasis supplied.

97 Letter 31, 1894. (Evangelism, 465.)

called, is retarding almost every line of the Lord's work. God can and will use those who have not had a thorough education in the schools of men. A doubt of his power to do this is manifest unbelief; it is limiting the Omnipotent power of the One with whom nothing is impossible. O for less of this unsanctified, distrustful caution. It leaves so many forces of the church unused; it closes up the way so that the Holy Spirit cannot use men; it keeps in idleness those who are willing and anxious to labor in Christ's lines; it discourages many from entering the work who would become efficient laborers together with God if they were given a fair chance.

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. Let men have freedom to carry out that which the Holy Spirit indicates. Do not put the shackles upon humble men whom God would use. If those who now occupy positions of responsibility had been kept at one class of work year after year, their talents would not have developed, and they would not have been qualified for the positions they hold; and yet they make no special effort to test and develop the talents of those newly come into the faith.

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 for 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. ⁹⁸

1898: The Lord designs that the school should also be a place where a training may be gained in women's work--cooking, housework, dressmaking, bookkeeping, correct reading, and pronunciation. They are to be qualified to take any post that may be offered--superintendents, Sabbath School teachers, Bible workers. They must be prepared to teach day schools for children. ⁹⁹

~~1898:~~ 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. ¹⁰⁰

98

Review & Herald, July 9, 1895. Emphasis supplied.

99

Letter 3, 1898. (Evangelism, 475.) Emphasis supplied.

100 Manuscript 43a, 1898. (Evangelism, 472.) Emphasis supplied.

1891-1900: We fully believe in church organization; but this is not to prescribe the exact way in which we should work, for not all minds are to be reached by the same methods. Nothing is to be allowed to keep the servant of God from his fellow men. 101

1900: Sister R and Sister W are doing just as efficient work as the ministers; and some meetings when the ministers are called away, Sister W takes the Bible and addresses the congregation. 102

1902: When a woman is in trouble, let her take her trouble to women. If this woman who has come to you has cause of complaint against her husband, she should take her trouble to some other woman who can, if necessary, talk with you in regard to it, without any appearance of evil. 103

1911: I have words of instruction for you and your coworkers who are ministers and physicians and counselors at Loma Linda....

In a remarkable way God has brought into our possession some of the institutions through whose agency we are to accomplish the work of reformation to which as a people we are called. At this time every talent of every worker should be regarded as a sacred trust to be used in extending the work of reform. The Lord instructed me that our sisters who have received a training that has fitted them for positions of responsibility, are to serve with faithfulness and discernment in their calling, using their influence wisely, and, with their brethren in the faith, obtaining an experience that will fit them for still greater usefulness....

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. 104

To this date my research has not uncovered evidence that Ellen White was ever officially offered ordination or that she refused to accept it. After the death of James White in August, 1881, she was paid a salary equivalent to that paid an officer of the General Conference. Her name appeared

101 6T, 115, 116. Emphasis supplied.

102 Letter 169, 1900. (Evangelism, 472, 473.) Emphasis supplied. NOTE: No censure for this action is implied.

103 Letter 164, 1902. (Evangelism, 460, 461.) NOTE: This situation would be improved if there were women ministers. In effect, a great ministry is probably now neglected.

104 B-22-1911. (Medical Ministry, 60, 61.) Emphasis supplied.

in lists of ministers in official publications such as the Yearbook.¹⁰⁵

Credentials of an ordained minister were granted her by the Michigan Conference first in 1871 as indicated in the Review and Herald, February 14, 1871.

Of her own work in the church Ellen White said:

I have had no claims to make, only that I am instructed that I am the Lord's messenger; that he called me in my youth to be his messenger, to receive his word, and to give a clear and decided message in the name of the Lord Jesus....

Why have I not claimed to be a prophet? Because in these days many who boldly claim that they are prophets are a reproach to the cause of Christ; and because my work includes much more than the word "prophet" signifies....

At the age of seventy-eight I am still toiling. We are all in the hands of the Lord. I trust in him; for I know that he will never leave nor forsake those who put their trust in him. I have committed myself to his keeping.

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.¹⁰⁶ (Good)

(True. Not all, and possibly not many women should be public figures or ordained ministers because they lack the interest or the time. Whenever outside responsibilities interfere with the proper functioning of the home, Ellen White speaks of the home as taking priority.

However, this applies also to men.

Addressed to a woman of broad public experience:

1899: The work you are doing to help our sisters feel their individual accountability to God is a good and necessary work. Long has it been neglected. But when this work is laid out in clear, simple, definite lines, we may expect that home duties, instead of being neglected, will be done much more intelligently. The Lord would have us ever to urge the worth of the human soul upon those who do not understand its value.

If we can arrange to have regular, organized companies instructed intelligently in regard to the part they should act as servants of the Master, our churches will have a life and vitality that they have long needed... Our sisters generally have a hard time with their increasing families and their unappreciated trials. I have so longed for women who could be

¹⁰⁵ SDA Bible Commentary, 1413.

¹⁰⁶ Review & Herald, July 26, 1906. Written in Sanitarium, California, on June 29, 1906. Emphasis her own in first quoted paragraph.

educated to help our sisters rise from their discouragement and feel they could do a work for the Lord. This is bringing rays of sunshine into their own lives which are reflected into the hearts of others. God will bless you and all who unite with you in this grand work. 107

The father's duty to his children cannot be transferred to the mother. If she performs her own duty, she has burden enough to bear. Only by working in unison can the father and mother accomplish the work which God has committed to their hands. 108

1898: There is a tendency for the husband to feel free to go out and come into his home more as a boarder than a husband of the family circle. 109

1877: In most families there are children of various ages, some of whom need not only the attention and wise discipline of the mother but also the sterner, yet affectionate, influence of the father. Few fathers consider this matter in its due importance. They fall into neglect of their own duty and thus heap grievous burdens upon the mother, at the same time feeling at liberty to criticize and condemn her actions according to their judgment. 110

The father should not be so absorbed in business life or in the study of books that he cannot take time to study the natures and necessities of his children. He should help in devising ways by which they may be kept busy in useful labor agreeable to their varying dispositions. 111

The minister's duties lie around him, nigh and afar off; but his first duty is to his children. He should not become so engrossed with his outside duties as to neglect the instruction which his children need. He may look upon his home duties as of lesser importance, but in reality they lie at the very foundation of the well-being of individuals and society...

Nothing can excuse the minister for neglecting the inner circle for the larger circle outside. The spiritual welfare of his family comes first. 112

107

Letter 54; 1899. (Welfare Ministry, 144.) Emphasis supplied.

NOTE: Ellen White indicates that women who engage in religious work (or, presumably, other useful careers) may hire men or women to assist "in the work of the home" and "should give them a just wage. And they should give them also a just appreciation. Their work is just as essential as is the work of those who give Bible readings, and they should receive words of appreciation." Evangelism, 468.

108

Fundamentals of Christian Education, 69. Emphasis supplied.

109

Adventist Home, 217. Emphasis supplied.

110

Signs of the Times, December 6, 1877. (Adventist Home, 224.) Emphasis supplied.

111

Counsels to Teachers, Parents, and Students, 128. Emphasis supplied.

112

Gospel Workers, 204. Emphasis supplied.

106 (Ministers' children are in some cases the most neglected children in the world, for the reason that the father is with them but little, and they are left to choose their own employment and amusement. 113)

Conclusion to Part II

Ellen White--paradox? From my research in her writings I would conclude:

(a) Ellen White, in her commentary on creation and in subsequent remarks about the judgment of man in the last days, supports the idea that each person, (female, male) is created in the image of God. The female and the male are attributed by Mrs. White the power of choice, the gift of intelligence, and the ultimate requirement that they each are answerable to their Creator for the use of these powers.

(b) Adventist men make many assumptions about women. Because men are leaders of the church, they are in a position to widely broadcast their views which are frequently accepted by under-leaders, other men. Most of these assumptions are at least partially false as evidenced by the extensive quotations from Ellen White in Part II.

(c) Ellen White's own life in a dual career as mother, and messenger of God is not at variance with her instruction to the church about other women. She not only allows women a dual role, but urges it.

(d) Ellen White does not support men, including Adventist ministers, who serve notice that women are lesser beings, that women are intended to be only mothers and homemakers and have no rightful place or status outside the home, and who treat the working woman as less deserving of pay and rank, and as unfortunate but temporary intruders into man's rightful sphere. Such men usurp from God the right to bestow or revoke humanness upon women. The fact

is that now not even God Himself can take humanness away from women and still remain the God who died for them.

More specifically:

(e) The thrust of Ellen White's writings, like that of Scripture, promotes personhood, a team situation in the marriage relation and a constant progression toward the restoration of that relation to its original Edenic state. Also, Mrs. White calls for definite and responsible positions within the church for women--on an equal basis with men, including rank and pay.

(f) While Ellen White was never ordained as a gospel minister she does not seem to indicate that other women should not be. Her own calling of God she described as much broader than minister, or, even prophet.

That she carried credentials and received the pay of an ordained minister without protest seems significant.

In 1895 she suggested that women should then be set apart by a laying-on of hands for a work of visiting the sick, the young, and the poor--a plan which even yet the church has not implemented. DEACONNESS

(g) I conclude that the careful restudy of Ellen White's writings by both the women and men of the Seventh-day Adventist Church would conclusively show her strong for balance, unity, and a common responsibility for a common cause. This would allow each person to develop and use her or his talents and could result in an unprecedented witness to the world.

If I have burdened the reader with this extended section of quotes, many of them repetitious, it is for two reasons:

(1) Leaders in a position to authorize changes in the role of women in the church are sometimes known to misquote or partially quote Ellen White's writings--perhaps for lack of viewpoint. There are troublesome passages. Perhaps many need much more study than I could give them. But this paper attempts at least to put them in full view for scrutiny. Perhaps their

context and their very mass helps shed light on the total meaning.

(2) While I admit my bias as a woman, I have tried to look at the role of women in the context of the role of men, the role of parents and family life, and the role of people.

It is too much to encompass. Yet without this frame of reference, and even a sketchy portrayal of these other roles, that of woman cannot be seen in perspective.

VIEWPOINT

"The Role of Women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church"

Introduction to Part III

Even the world where Seventh-day Adventist women live is largely dominated and interpreted by men. Among those unaware of current and past grievances are some church leaders. Part III is an attempt to briefly outline the inequities which many women see existing in their wages, rank and benefits as compared to their male counterparts, and also, and perhaps most significantly, the inequities existing in the very definition of women as persons compared with men as persons.

History witnesses that the world in general has held down women. In the United States, the government is the vehicle which in many cases seems to be at the forefront of reform, rather than churches.

However, into this somewhat cheerless situation has shown a bright ray of hope: a request by the General Conference officers that the Biblical Research Committee get a first-hand report from women, initiate needed studies, and submit recommendations for improvement.

PART III: THE WORLD WHERE WOMEN LIVE

By far the most popular Christian point of view about the role of women is that she should be man's companion, the mother and keeper of his children. (Relatively few churches have gone against the grain--and those that have are nearly forgotten: Shakers and Quakers to name two.)

A well-known Adventist preacher states it this way:

What is the role of the woman? The Biblical account of the creation of womankind gives the basic answer: "For Adam there was not found a help meet for him. And the Lord God . . . made . . . a woman, and brought her unto the man."

Here the primary role assigned to the woman is spelled out. She is to be a help suitable for man, a sustainer, an encourager, a preserver of moral values, a help suitable for the world's citizenry. Her helping role could function simultaneously with her role as companion to man, but not necessarily always. In the New Testament there is recognition of the honourable and helping position of woman not involved with a man in terms of marriage.

To assume a helping role does not imply a down-graded position...¹¹⁴

The last statement, supplemented by a quotation from Jesus who said that "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant," would seem to vindicate the writer were it not for the concluding summary in his article. He adds:

When is a woman a woman? When she is a faithful friend and/or loving submissive wife and mother. Other roles may be added to enhance her, but this basic role raises her in the sight of her friends, in the sight of her family, and in the sight of God.¹¹⁵

What is it about such statements that causes many women to become angry? How do they interpret the world in which they live?

Some case-studies

A. Upon her graduation from a denominational college one young woman was offered a position in editorial work with a minor church publication. She chose not to accept the position because of plans for further education. However, she supplied the church leaders involved with a list of people

¹⁰⁵ 114 William A. Loveless, "When Is A Woman A Woman?", Good Health, Vol. 69, No. 5, p. 13.

¹⁰⁷ 115 Ibid, p. 15.

she knew to be qualified for editorial work, all of them men. The institution involved indicated their dismay. They needed to hire a young woman because she was cheaper.

In an interview later the young woman stated, "While a girl has an edge on the fellow in getting a denominational job in editing, it comes at the expense of her self-image. She realizes that she has the job not so much because she is good at it, but because she doesn't cost much. This is terribly depressing. You feel less like a person and more like a commodity."

B. A Seventh-day Adventist woman author states, "What bugs me about the difference in treatment between men and women employees is this. I'm a better teacher than my husband, and he is a better housekeeper than I am. But if I taught the school and he stayed home, we wouldn't get the housing allowance, the medical benefits, the educational benefits, or the year-around employment. Just because I am a married woman! Not that I want to teach full time. But I remember working on school budget in Baltimore and seeing how much could be saved by hiring married women as teachers!"

C. A woman with a Ph.D. in her field and well respected in denominational educational circles wrote in December, 1970, in regard to preparing a paper on women for her union officers at their request:

This whole area is very difficult to work with. Statistics are simply nonexistent. For example, I tried to find out from the local office even such simple things as, "Are there more women than men holding church membership today?" Everybody seems to think so, but nobody knows for sure. Also there seems to be no information relative to how many single women workers there are compared to single men. As you know and as Roland Hegstad carefully quoted recently for the Review, the wage distinction is made not between the sexes but between head of household and nonhead of household. However, if the ratio is a thousand single women employees

to one single male employee, it's not really difficult to figure out the basis of distinction. Also, one thing that's really griping some of us here is that the head of household who is a husband gets 100% living allowance. His wife gets 70% of the package for living allowance. This means that a man and wife employed by the denomination walk home with 170% living allowance while the single woman has 70%. When we ask our administrators why this is, they simply reply that the married women don't like to get less than the single women. I am very sympathetic to this, but the same logic does not seem to apply to the single woman getting less than the married man as far as living expenses are involved.

D. Two young people were put into positions of identical responsibility and title. Both had the same number of years experience in denominational employment. Both were single. Yet their paychecks had a \$45 a month discrepancy. One was male and had studied theology. (The male did have slightly more education than the female. But as Ph.D's on college campuses know, this scarcely affects earnings by more than even two or three dollars a week on their level.)

Because the situation was novel, the girl was kept on a secretarial wage for the first two and a half months--lower pay than she had been receiving before taking on the heavier responsibilities of her new job. When the salary at last "could be determined," as administrators explained it, hers was made retroactive only to the beginning of the year--approximately three weeks.

Both the man and woman were discouraged by their immediate superiors from making any inquiry into the situation. It was some time before they did so anyway. Administrators then deemed the past pay discrepancy as a "mistake." No money was then taken away from the man nor given to the woman in compensation.

E. A woman employed by a reputable Seventh-day Adventist institution for more than 25 consecutive years and acclaimed by those who have worked with her as a superior workman, well educated, and in fact invaluable to

major ventures of the institution, only in 1971 was promoted to the rank which her fellow workers, men, received within at the most, five years' apprenticeship.

F. A wife of a life-long denominational employee will receive little if any sustentation under current policies and applications thereof because her service is not considered to have been "continuous." She has taught elementary school under the most grueling circumstances which the church permits. At other times she has done hour-time work doing secretarial work for the mission. Yet the church "owes her nothing" at age 65. She, in turn, has literally given her life to husband, children, and church in a heartily nonprotested role for women.

It may be noted in passing that her husband, should he defect from church membership to become a Catholic, an atheist or perhaps a Brinsmead, would also be denied sustentation--regardless of his continuous service to the church for 25 years.

Inasmuch as the husband and wife have three single daughters, should it fall to their lot to support their parents the responsibility would be hard for them to fulfill: the daughters are neither heads of households nor ordained ministers.

G. Denominational editors, responding to questionnaires, have indicated that the qualification held most dear when looking for a good future editor is his having been a good minister, and if possible, a good overseas missionary. By comparison, his training in journalism ranks considerably lower on the scale. Editors indicate that a woman realistically may not expect to become editor of any major denominational paper, and probably not an associate on the general church paper. In counseling some young college women interested in journalism, a General Conference vice-president advised them to go into educational work where treatment of women is generally more equitable.

H. A working mother, responding to various injunctions to women published in denominational papers, states:

I don't know a single mother who works out to buy \$40,000 houses, new cars, or expensive furniture. But I surely have a large acquaintance with women who (like myself) work out to pay the doctor bills and buy medicine for a handicapped child. Also, ones who are sending their children through grade school, academy, and college, paying orthodontic bills, fees for music lessons, and just plain helping to keep the wolf from the door, especially when their husbands are either ill or having job difficulties because of the Sabbath problem.

Criticism is leveled because we supposedly allow our children to run the streets. We are told that our children are uncared for, unkept, and not properly fed.

Personally, I live in a neighborhood where five families have children. Two mothers work and three don't. Yet it is the children of the nonworking mothers who start fires in the back field, are discourteous to their elders, bully smaller children, and cause 90 per cent of the destruction and trouble in the area. None of the nonworking mothers go to the trouble of seeing that their children take music lessons. They say it's too much trouble to go to lessons each week and to make sure that their children practice even half an hour a day.

Working mothers know their limitations. We know that since we cannot always be available, we must prepare our days and our children for the possibilities that can occur. When Mama is always there, the child does not develop the ability to know what to do in case of an emergency. My ten-year-old boy can scramble eggs. He knows how to work the controls on the oven, can cook soup, mix juice, and use a can opener. He has been able to do these things since he was seven. He knows how and who to telephone in case of fires, accidents or other emergencies.

It is interesting that it is my house where the neighborhood eight-to-ten-year olds gather in the evening to get a bowl of popcorn. The other mothers don't have time.

I made a ruling at the beginning of the summer that no neighbor child could come to our yard to play until afternoon because my boys had chores and yard work to do. I had little boys on my porch begging to be allowed to help. They never got to do interesting things like pulling weeds in flower beds and gardens, cutting grass or planting corn at home. Their mamas don't plant gardens; it's too much trouble.

Children must be organized and kept busy, but do most mothers bother? Of course not. They are always home. Working mothers must, though.

Another point frequently attacked is the play school. Perhaps I have been exceptionally fortunate, but I have yet to see or know any place that ties children to chairs or chains them to beds. My two children were taken care of in a small school of ten children and run by a wonderful Christian grandmotherly lady (not SDA) who taught them good morals, manners and reading before they entered first grade. I don't know a single working mother who doesn't make it her first concern to know how her child's day was spent, who doesn't make sure that her child's home work is done and his music lesson practiced. It is impossible for me to believe that I live in a particularly sheltered area. I know there will always be some mothers who don't care, but those women wouldn't care a bit more at home than at work.

I would challenge our ministers and church members. Several churches are operating day care centers so that children of working mothers can have good care and Christian guidance. Why has the SDA church so steadily shirked its responsibility--and opportunity--in this area?

There are many older women who no longer have small children at home, who have never trained for a special vocation, but who are wonderful Christian grandmas and aunties. They are good cooks, housekeepers, etc, who could earn substantial weekly incomes by giving competent, loving care to these children. The children would certainly benefit; so would the community. The missionary opportunities would be boundless! Look what the Vacation Bible Schools can and do accomplish. How much more would a year-round Christian nursery school or day care center do?

I challenge the church to cease its criticism and stretch out a helping hand.

1. A single woman employed by the church asks about church policy in the areas of salary and benefits:

The church has traditionally adopted a policy of paying its workers on the basis of their needs. I don't quarrel with that. As I see it, the problem comes where the ideal breaks down into everyday practice. To my knowledge there is no representation of single women on the wage and salary committees of the church or even any effort to explore what a single woman's needs are.

For some reason it is assumed that women need only a private room. It is assumed that a woman who wishes not to have a roommate or to own her own home is asking for a luxury. However, it is assumed that a man and his family need space, and often, a home. Provision is made.

Of course, a family takes up more space than one person. But the reasoning is faulty from the beginning. A man--by choice--has a family. He doesn't need a wife, really. Paul heartily endorses celibacy. Christ was a successful celibate. Yet, a

family is a nice thing to have. So a man is provided facilities and benefits to support something which he does not absolutely have to have but which may turn out to be a real asset to his personality and total contribution to God's cause. A parallel simply does not exist for the woman (or man) who remains single. Yet if the single person could afford a pleasant place to live might this not contribute to her (or his) overall happiness and efficiency in God's work?

It is also assumed that a single person, because she (or he) does not have a family, does not have the expenses of heads of households. This is deceptive. There are certain fixed costs. Garbage collection costs the same. It costs as much to keep a refrigerator cold for one person as it does for a whole family. It also costs as much for a single person to buy, maintain, and insure a car.

The ideal of paying a worker what he needs breaks down still further when the large percentage of denominational workers who simply cannot get along without a wife's income is taken into consideration. A man is compensated for marriage by increased benefits. If his wife is a professional, for example, her work may bring home a check as large or larger than his. Does he really need those increased benefits?

J. A woman, now retired, recalls the experiences she faced during her denominational employment:

The idea is abroad that little feeling of inequity existed among women until quite recently. That it was possibly sparked by Women's Lib. If that is correct, our leaders are misinformed. My experience is probably typical.

I entered denominational employ in 1922. While briefing me on my duties, my predecessor (who was retiring) warned me that I must "not mind too much" the discrimination I would meet. She had put in about 25 years of service, so it would appear the feeling of being discriminated against dates back some 75 years at least.

In 1922 discrimination was most conspicuous in salaries. Conference committees sometimes admitted they hired women because they "came cheaper." I questioned the wage policy. The arguments for them went something like this: A young man, single, must be paid more than a woman in the same category because it cost him more to live. First, he must eat out. A woman could cook her meals. Second, he must pay to have his laundry and dry cleaning done. A woman could do her own. Third, he must have a car. A woman could do without. In addition, he must save for a possible future marriage. I was not willing to grant the first three. Admittedly, it made no increase in my salary to assert my objection to the policy. But it made me feel better to have protested. The other women in the office were in agreement, but too timid to make the first complaint.

Through the years I have heard men admit the inequities should be abolished; but they usually added that they must wait for the cue from the General Conference. It seems too bad it takes a warning of possible government regulation to even things up a bit.

So far as I am aware, few of our church women are anti-male; we are just pro-equality. Most of us feel that any Seventh-day Adventist woman should be allowed to fill any post for which she is equally qualified, if she believes God has called her to that post. Female students should not be told: "No, a major in Bible is not wise for a woman." Nor should they be shunted away from majors in history, math, or the sciences. All other things being equal, men should not always be the choice to head departments in academies and colleges--women should be considered.

Must men edit all the denominational magazines? With the exception of some union publications, of course. Qualified women could surely be found for some of them. At least a woman could do little worse than has been done on some of them, and might do somewhat better.

So far as women in the ministry: The laity would have to accept the idea before women could succeed. But I think they could be educated. In earlier years, women held departmental secretary positions in local conferences. They spoke at the worship hour week after week as they visited churches. True, their reception varied. In four years as a local conference secretary I learned to expect anything, but for the most part I was accepted. I recall one church elder who declined to sit on the same platform with me. But at the close of the service somewhat gruffly he said, "Too bad you aren't a man, but come again anyway."

The sad part of the inequities is that many well qualified women have left denominational employ because of it. And some of them have kept on going all the way out of the church. Their loss? Yes, but a loss to the church, too.

God used a woman to guide this denomination. Yet women have had a hard time in the church. It seems peculiar.

I've been retired for some years. I have no bitterness; I was as fairly treated as the rest of the women. But I would like to see the present generation of women workers have a better chance. Don't believe that women were asleep all the past years and have suddenly awakened.

Conclusion to Part III

The world where women live is

(a) frustrated by those who at times wish to isolate women from the call of the Holy Spirit and instead put them into "places."

(b) one where women are paid or not paid, advanced or not advanced according to policies which women currently have little power to shape or influence.

(c) sometimes better administered by the government than by the church.

(d) vastly improved both in society and the Seventh-day Adventist Church within recent years, but still is tagged with much injustice and stands in need of open investigation.

(e) not a world that Lord has set His stamp of approval upon, but one to which He calls conscience to improve if His blessing is to fully rest upon the church.

PART IV: RECOMMENDATIONS

1 That the Seventh-day Adventist church recognize women's eligibility on an equal basis with men for participation in leadership and administration on every level, and that women be appointed full voting members of the church's commissions, boards, agencies and committees ~~in a manner reflective of the general church ratio of women to men.~~

2 That women of experience in educational, secretarial, medical and administrative positions--but especially from areas where women form a major base of the church's working force--be properly represented on the wage and salary committee, and that their needs be given proper consideration.

3 That capable women be sought ^{out} and advanced to more responsible positions, and that women already shouldering heavy responsibilities be recognized by proper titles, benefits, privileges and amenities ~~now granted their male counterparts.~~

4 That each union set up a committee of men and women representative of various occupations and levels of church administration who will provide women employees with information regarding their rights as employees and who will hear cases of women who believe they have been unjustly dealt with by their employing organizations in the church.

5 That the General Conference lead the church by setting up a Task Force on women. That this Task Force investigate problems as they may arise anywhere in North America with respect to fairness to women employees, that they may be a kind of superior court of appeal for women who have discussed their cases at the union level and wish to appeal their cause. That the

Task Force actively encourage institutions and other church organizations to use women to the fullest potential of their talents.

6 That the church revise the language of its constitution and policies and related documents to show that such offices are open to women.

7 That the church recognize in its official communications that women, under call or appointment, with or without a husband, are individuals, separate and distinct.

8 That the Biblical Research Committee be empowered to commission further studies on the role of women in the church including:

(a) inquiry, intensive if possible, into Ellen White's writings about the position of women in relation to the church,

(b) study of Scriptural passages indicating a role for women in the church and society,

(c) scientifically conducted surveys to gather statistics and facts to replace current guesses about woman's status on denominational participation in leadership, wages, benefits, and history of working life.

9 That the church visually communicate its interest in women through articles in church papers revealing the status of these studies and inviting from both women and men observations, questions and suggestions.

10 That those involved in the preliminary study requested by the General Conference officers and referred to the Biblical Research Committee be brought together to present their papers and study recommendations as is customary for like studies under the sponsorship of these groups.

Kit Watts
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Review & Herald
September 26, 1971