

ELLEN G. WHITE ESTATE

ELLEN G. WHITE'S
VIEW OF THE
ROLE OF WOMEN
IN THE SDA
CHURCH



ROGER W. COON

**Ellen G. White's View of
the Role of Women in
the SDA Church**

Ellen G. White

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About the Author

Ellen G. White (1827-1915) is considered the most widely translated American author, her works having been published in more than 160 languages. She wrote more than 100,000 pages on a wide variety of spiritual and practical topics. Guided by the Holy Spirit, she exalted Jesus and pointed to the Scriptures as the basis of one's faith.

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Roger W. Coon

Introduction

The primary focus of this presentation is the perception of EGW on the proper role of Christian women in the SDA Church. It will include the question of ordination of women to the gospel ministry as one of its categories for consideration; but that question is not the main thrust of this paper.

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Chapter I—The Religio-Cultural Climate within the Adventism of EGW’s Contemporaries

The last half of the 19th Century saw SDA’s publicly involved in lively discussions and debates on all sorts of “reform” questions. SDA’s as a group were seen by other Protestant Christians as “breaking new ground” theologically:

1. The observance of the seventh-day Sabbath instead of Sunday.
2. The feet-washing “ordinance” in celebration of the Lord’s Supper.
3. The advocacy of temperance enforced by civil/criminal statute.

This willingness to set aside the traditions of historical precedent in other areas seems to have “spilled over” into attitudes permitting (if not actually encouraging) women to preach from the pulpit. The SDA Church was co-founded by a woman who was very visible in the pulpit for 70 years. And there seems to have been a correspondingly broader acceptance of women in high leadership roles in general, and the gospel ministry in particular, during the last half of that century as compared with the last half of our own century, among SDA’s.

Adventism, in the 19th and 20th centuries, experienced a somewhat broader acceptance on the West Coast of the USA than in some other geographical areas of the continent. Sociologists of religion would find a correlation between the breaking of traditional “roots” and life-habits on the part of immigrants to California from the east/midwest, and their apparent readiness to adopt new forms of religious thought and expression. EGW spent much of her ministry in the western USA during the last half of the 19th century. Her example in leadership roles undoubtedly had a profound impact and

influence upon the public in general and her own denomination in particular.

Examples of the “open” attitude toward women occupying places in SDA Church leadership—at all levels—during the last half of the 19th Century:

1. Article (“Women as Preachers and Lecturers”) in [The Review and Herald, July 30, 1861](#), Editor James White front-paged the article as the lead story for this edition; associate editor Uriah Smith wrote an editorial introduction. [Appendix A]

[2] 2. The resolution on ordination of women, appropriately qualified, for the gospel ministry, at the 1881 General Conference Session:

Resolved, That females possessing the necessary qualification to fill that position, may, with perfect propriety, be set apart by ordination to the work of the Christian ministry.

This was discussed by J. O. Corliss, A. C. Bourdeau, E. R. Jones, D. H. Lamson, W. H. Littlejohn, A. S. Hutchins, D. M. Canright, and J. N. Loughborough, and referred to the General Conference Committee.—Source: [The Review and Herald, December 20, 1881](#) (Vol. 58, No. 25), p. 392. (For further discussion of this resolution, see under Sec. III, below. Cf. also Appendix B.)

3. Three of the first 11 Treasurers of the General Conference (between 1871 and 1883) were women. [Appendix C]

4. Women held conspicuously prominent positions in church leadership at the highest levels. Of the identified editors (or co-editors) of *The Youth's Instructor*, 11 of the 19 who served between 1852-99 were women (including two who also served as G.C. Treasurers: Adelia Patten-Van Horn, and Minerva Jane Loughborough-Chapman); and of the four editors who served 1899-1970, three were women.

James White, 1852-1853, 1855-1857; *Anna White*, 1854; G. W. Amadon, 1858-1864, 1867-1869; *Adelia P. Patten (later Van Horn)*, 1864-1867; G. H. Bell,

1869-1871; Jennie R. Trembley, 1871-1873; Jennie A. Merriam, 1873-1875; Mrs. Minerva J. Chapman, 1875-1879, 1884-1889; Mrs. Mary K. White and Miss V. A. Merriam, 1879-1880; V. A. Merriam, 1880-1881; Eva Bell (later Giles), 1882-1883; Editorial Committee of Eva Bell Giles, Adolph B. Oyen. Winnie E. Loughborough., 1883; Winnie E. Loughborough (later Kelsea), 1890-1891; "Editorial Contributors," M. B. Duffie, P. T. Magan. J. O. Corliss, Fannie Bolton, 1891; no editor listed Dec. 30, 1891-Aug. 30, 1894, however, in his last editorial (42:400. Dec. 20, 1894) N. W. Lawrence, calling himself "the present editor," mentions laying down the responsibilities he has carried "during the three years just passed": J. H. Durland and M. E. Kellogg, 1895-1896; J. H. Durland, 1897; W. H. McKee and J. C. Bartholf, 1897-1899; *Adelaid Bee Cooper (later Evans)*, 1899-1904; *Fannie M. Dickerson (later Chase)*, 1904-1922; *Lora E. Clement*, 1923-1952; Walter T. Crandall. 1952-1970. [Source: Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia 1976: pp. 1631, 1632]

L. Flora Plummer served as the ninth "secretary" [director] of the General Conference Sabbath School Department (1913-36) during the last three years of Ellen White's lifetime. She became an SDA in 1886. Shortly thereafter she joined the SS Department of the Iowa Conference. In 1900 she transferred to a similar post in the Minnesota Conference. In 1901 the SS Department was organized in the General Conference, and Mrs. Plummer was appointed the "organizing secretary," and continued in the leadership of that department, including heading it for 23 years before retirement in 1936. [3]

5. A total of 31 women were licensed by the SDA Church to preach from its pulpits during EGW's lifetime (see period 1878-1910 on the tabulation covering 1878-1975, Appendix D). [The] case of Lulu Wightman [is] particularly interesting: she and her husband were both ministers in the New York Conference. As she was the better preacher of the two (and doubtless also to capitalize on the curiosity value of a woman speaker to attract an audience into

their evangelistic tent), Elder Wightman shared the platform in his campaigns with his wife: he acted as master of ceremonies, made announcements, called for the offering, led hymns, etc., while his wife did the preaching. When the time came for the baptism of converts, he officiated at the rite. (Interview with Armina L. Glascock, age 93, St. Helena, CA, June 4, 1986, who as a young girl attended a Wightman campaign; also Bert Haloviak, "The Adventist Heritage Calls for Ordination of Women," *Spectrum* August, 1985, pp. 52-60, a condensation of his longer paper, "Route to the Ordination of Women in the S.D.A. Church: Two Parts," unpublished, March 18, 1985.)

Chapter II—EGW Counsels Concerning the Work of Women in the Church

Typical of EGW's counsels, pointing out that women could do not only work often associated with men, but also a work men could not do, is this statement ([The Review and Herald, August 26, 1902](#), p. 7): [Cf. Appendix E]

The Lord has a work for women, as well as for 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 ([Welfare Ministry, 145](#))

EGW counsels concerning the role women may play in the life of their church, in the published writings, are found chiefly in two works: [4]

1. Evangelism Chapter 14, "The Bible Instructor," pp. 456-95.
2. Welfare Ministry Chapter 17, "Women Called to the Work," pp. 143-48; Chapter 18, "Qualifications of Women for Service," pp. 149-56; and Chapter 19, "The Influence of Christian Women," pp. 157-66.

A. General Counsels

1. There should be a larger number of women engaged in the work of ministry to suffering humanity than are in the field at present ([Welfare Ministry, 143](#)).

- a. We need women workers ([Evangelism, 491](#)), just as greatly as men ([Evangelism, 493](#))
- b. God has appointed some to the task of ministry ([Evangelism, 491](#)).
- c. The Lord will use them if they are willing ([Evangelism, 491](#)).
- d. They are to be encouraged actively to give themselves to this work ([Evangelism, 493](#)).

2. All have not the same work; but there are distinct and individual duties for each woman to perform.

- a. The faithful exercise of God-given talents will result in new, additional talents being bestowed.
- b. The Christian woman may continually increase her:
 - (1) power of influence
 - (2) sphere of usefulness.
- c. Her individuality may (and should) be distinctly preserved, and yet she still be part of the great whole in advancing the work of reform.
- d. The woman who wisely improves her time/faculties, and relies up on God for wisdom/strength may stand on an equality with her husband, without losing any of her womanly grace/modesty, as:
 - (1) adviser,
 - (2) counselor,
 - (3) companion, and
 - (4) co-worker.
- e. As she elevates her own character, she:
 - (1) ennobles the characters of her family members, and
 - (2) exerts a powerful (though unconscious) influence upon others around her ([Welfare Ministry, 159, 160](#)).

3. The dignity/importance of woman's mission for the Lord, and her distinctive duties, are of a more sacred character than the corresponding duties of men ([Testimonies for the Church 3:565](#) in [Welfare Ministry, 145](#)).

a. God will give women a power that exceeds that given men ([Evangelism, 464](#)).

b. She can reach a class not reached by male ministers ([Evangelism, 466](#)).

c. She can do in families a work that men cannot do in reaching the inner life, coming close to hearts than men cannot reach ([Evangelism, 464, 465](#)).

4. Concerning the employment of women in church work:

a. Those engaged in cooking/household work are as verily engaged in the service of God as are those engaged in Bible work.

(1) It is just as essential.

b. They are due:

(1) “A just wage.”

(2) “Words of appreciation, ... compassion, and sympathy.”

[5]

(a) Those in domestic duties have a greater need for these three elements than those engaged in Bible work; housework does not provide that which keeps the spirits “cheered, uplifted and comforted” as does its counterpart in “spiritual lines of work” ([Evangelism, 468](#)).

c. Women in gospel work should be paid from the tithe as men.

(1) And paid whether they ask for wages or not ([Evangelism, 492](#)).

d. Failure to pay women workers their “just due”:

(1) Is viewed by God as “making a difference.”

(a) If self-denial is required because of shortage of funds, it should fall equally upon male and female workers.

(2) Is “not sanctioned by God.”

(3) Is viewed by Him as:

(a) “Selfishly withholding ... their due.”

(b) “Injustice.”

(c) “Belittl [ing] woman’s work.”

(4) Discourages our sisters from qualifying themselves for work God has called them to perform ([Evangelism, 491-93](#)).

5. [In the context of the feminist movement of the 19th Century] Our sisters are not to seek to become:

a. Voters in elections.

b. Political office-holders ([Welfare Ministry, 165](#)).

B. Specific Counsels Concerning Appropriate Categories of Service:

1. At Home

a. Family duties/responsibilities:

(1) If married, aid husband in his work/interests.

(a) Encourage, make happy, be a blessing to him ([Welfare Ministry, 157-59](#)).

(2) If children present, child-training, character-development:

(a) A mother’s first duty ([Welfare Ministry, 158](#)).

(b) In no case neglect husband/children/home duties ([Welfare Ministry, 164](#)).

(3) Assist husband as adviser, counselor, companion, and co-worker ([Welfare Ministry, 160](#)).

b. Care of orphaned/homeless children:

(1) Help them unlearn many things; reform bad traits.

(2) Teach new concepts, self-control; dispel ignorance.

(3) Pity and love.

(4) Train for Christ ([Welfare Ministry, 226-28](#)).

c. Correspondence:

(1) Write to friends, acquaintances: learn their true feelings in spiritual matters; present truth in simplicity ([Welfare Ministry, 147, 148](#)).

(2) Teach the truth by epistolary correspondence ([Welfare Ministry, 165](#)).

d. Personal growth and self-improvement:

(1) Develop/cultivate personal powers for God to employ in soul-saving work ([Welfare Ministry, 145](#)).

(2) Become intelligent on how to work the most successfully/methodically in bringing souls to Christ ([Welfare Ministry, 165](#)).

2. At the Local-Church Level

a. Teach a children's Sabbath School class; pray with children ([Welfare Ministry, 165](#)).

b. Volunteer tasks:

(1) Serve as local church clerk; too much church work is neglected ([Welfare Ministry, 147](#)).

c. Organization of small personal-growth/study groups for:

(1) Devotional study of word, prayer, fellowship.

(2) Raise consciousness-level of women, to rise from their discouragement and feel they can do a work for the Lord ([Welfare Ministry, 144](#)).

[6]

3. Home-Visitation Work (“various lines of” [Welfare Ministry, 160](#))

a. Social fellowship (“quietly visit” [Evangelism, 463](#))

(1) Converse with families, mothers, children ([Welfare Ministry, 146, 165](#)).

(2) Demonstrate a genuine interest in people—including the children—let them see that you love them ([Evangelism, 460](#)).

(3) Speak cheering, encouraging words, especially to the poor ([Welfare Ministry, 147, 148](#)).

b. Practical in-home assistance with household tasks/needs:

(1) Practical, personal labor in doing chores ([Welfare Ministry, 146](#)).

(2) Give money to relieve temporal necessities, especially in cases of widows/orphans in affliction ([Welfare Ministry, 148](#)).

(3) Seek to make occupants more comfortable ([Welfare Ministry, 166](#)).

(a) “Real charity helps men to help themselves. True beneficence means more than mere gifts. It means a genuine interest in the welfare of others. We should seek to understand the needs of the poor and distressed, and to give them the help that will benefit them most. To give thought and time and personal effort costs far more than merely to give money. But it is the truest charity ([The Ministry of Healing, 194, 195](#)).”

c. Training occupants in practical duties (instructing ignorant, [Evangelism, 459](#)):

(1) In cooking.

(2) In mending clothing.

(3) In nursing, treating sick; relieving suffering.

(4) In proper care of the home.

(5) In teaching children to do errands of love for those less fortunate ([Welfare Ministry, 75](#)).

d. Counseling the inexperienced ([Evangelism, 459](#)):

(1) Reach hearts, make them tender ([Welfare Ministry, 162](#)).

(2) Especially helping other women in problems; acting as an intermediary between them and male ministers ([Evangelism, 460, 461](#)).

e. Spiritual instruction:

(1) Talk words of Christ to perishing souls ([Welfare Ministry, 143](#)).

(2) Pray with people ([Welfare Ministry, 165](#)).

(3) Study Bible with people:

(a) Read it.

(b) Explain it ([Welfare Ministry, 146, 148, 160, 161; Evangelism, 456, 457](#)).

(4) Sing with, and for, others ([Evangelism, 463](#)).

- (a) Work of “sunshine bands” (Wm 75).
- (5) Distribute SDA literature ([Welfare Ministry, 162, 165](#)).
- (6) Comfort the sorrowing, bereaved ([Evangelism, 459](#)).

4. Public ministry:

[7]

- a. Training other women (including blacks) in:
 - (1) Nursing.
 - (2) Cooking.
 - (3) Colporteur work.
 - (4) Bible instructor’s work ([Evangelism, 469](#)).
- b. Assist minister-husband in his field work ([Evangelism, 472](#)).
- c. Conduct camp-meeting Bible classes ([Evangelism, 473, 474](#)).
- d. Co-operate with Women’s Christian Temperance Union workers in laboring for temperance reform on behalf of total abstinence—harmonize with them as far as possible ([Welfare Ministry, 162-64](#)).
- e. “Gospel ministry” from pulpit of church:
 - (1) There are women who should be chosen who can present truths of word “in a clear, intelligent, and straight forward manner” ([Evangelism, 472](#)).
 - (2) A Bible instructor in Australia who was just as efficient as the male minister; in his absence she addressed the congregation ([Evangelism, 473](#)).
 - (3) To Mrs. S.M.I. Henry, an especially able platform speaker, Mrs. White opened her heart:

“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 torch light procession got up for a parade and

show. Oh, what a work may be done if we will not stretch ourselves beyond our measure!

“Teach this, my sister. You have many ways opened before you. Address the crowd whenever you can; hold every jot of influence you can by any association that can be made the means of introducing the leaven to the meal. Every man and every woman has a work to do for the Master...” ([Evangelism, 473](#)).

Chapter III—EGW and the Question of Ordination of Women ¹

EGW was herself never ordained to the gospel ministry by human hands. She held the credentials of an ordained minister, first from the Michigan Conference and later from the General Conference (on one of the certificates, the word “ordained” is crossed out by the stroke of a pen; on some it is not—they were issued every year). Following the death of her husband, James White, in 1881, she was paid the salary of an ordained minister. She never performed tasks usually associated with a minister: (1) Weddings, (2) Baptisms, (3) Organization of churches.

EGW did not attend the 1881 GC Session at Battle Creek at which the resolution to ordain women was discussed (cf. p. 2). Her husband died Aug. 6 that year; she left for California two weeks later, and did not return to Michigan until Aug., 1883. The resolution was referred to the General Conference Committee where it apparently died. There is no evidence it was subsequently discussed, much less adopted, at that level. [8]

In the [The Review and Herald, July 9, 1895](#), EGW made a reference to ordination of women in an article on “The Duty of the Minister and the People” (p. 434) [Appendix F]:

Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands. In some cases they will need to counsel with the church officers or the minister; but if they are devoted women, maintaining a

¹Materials for Section II of this outline were drawn largely from a document “Exhibits relating to the Ordination of Women From the Lifetime and Experience of Ellen G. White” by Robert W. Olson, Ellen G. White Estate, Washington, D. C., February 13, 1986, nine pages.

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.

A number of women were ordained to the office of deaconess during EGW's Australian ministry [1891-1900]:

1. August 10, 1895, Ashfield Church, Sydney.
2. January 7, 1900, Ashfield Church, ceremony performed by W. C. White. (Cf. Arthur N. Patrick, "The Ordination of Deaconesses," *Adventist Review* Jan. 16, 1986, pp. 18, 19 [Appendix G].)

There is no documentary evidence that EGW was calling for the ordination of women to gospel ministry in this RH article. The article seems to deal primarily with the question of the church utilizing its resources (including women) to the ultimate. The immediate internal context ("visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor") may suggest she had in mind the work of a deaconess. The opinion of EGW's personal secretary, Clarence C. Crisler, writing within one year of Mrs. White's death, was to the effect that EGW was referring to ordination of deaconesses rather than gospel ministers [Appendix H].

There are three EGW statements that are sometimes construed as evidence that she supported the concept of women as ordained gospel ministers. In 1898 she declared that "there are women who should labor in the gospel ministry" ([Evangelism](#), 472). The context of this statement would seem to indicate that she here was speaking of the wives of ministers rather than single women:

[9] "Letters have come to me from several, asking my advice upon the question, Should ministers' wives adopt infant children? Would I advise them to do this kind of

work. To some who were regarding this matter favorably, I answered, No; God would have you help your husband in his work. The Lord has not given you children of your own; His wisdom is not to be questioned. He knows what is best. Consecrate your powers to God as a Christian worker. You can help your husband in many ways. You can support him in his work by working for him, by keeping your intellect improved. By using the ability God has given you, you can be a home-keeper. And more than this, you can help to give the message.

“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. Husband and wife may unite in this work, and when it is possible, they should. The way is open for consecrated men. But the enemy would be pleased to have the men whom God could use to help hundreds, binding up their time and strength on one helpless little mortal that requires constant care and attention.”—MS 43a, 1898; Ms. Re. #330.

In 1900 [she] wrote concerning “The Canvasser [Colporteur] a Gospel Worker” ([Testimonies for the Church 6:322](#)). The immediate context is not gospel ministry, but the implication is that colporteur work is a good preparation for gospel ministry. Even so, there is no reference to ordination, per se:

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

Lastly, in September, 1903, EGW wrote in [Testimonies for the Church 8:229, 230](#) about young women in the ministry; but again not even a hint concerning whether or not ordination was an issue:

The Lord calls upon those connected with our sanitariums, publishing houses, and schools to teach the youth to do evangelistic work. Our time and energy must not be so largely employed in establishing sanitariums, food stores, and restaurants that other lines of work will be neglected. Young men and young women who should be engaged in the ministry, in Bible work, and in the canvassing work should not be bound down to mechanical employment.

The youth should be encouraged to attend our training schools for Christian workers, which should become more and more like the schools of the prophets. These institutions have been established by the Lord, and if they are conducted in harmony with His purpose, the youth sent to them will quickly be prepared to engage in various lines of missionary work. Some will be trained to enter the field as missionary nurses, some as canvassers, and some as gospel ministers.

[10] There is no question but that EGW called for women as well as men to enter gospel ministry. But there is no documentary evidence I have seen yet to indicate a linkage between women as gospel ministers and their ordination. On the contrary, in [Manuscript 43a, 1898](#), the first five pages deal with the question of proper payment for the professional services of women ministers. The article is entitled “The Laborer is Worthy of His Hire.” And in the very first paragraph Mrs. White points out that “although the hands of ordination have not been laid upon her, she is accomplishing a work that is in the line of ministry,” and she should be paid wages accordingly. There is not the slightest hint here—or anywhere else in Mrs. White’s writings—that she favored (or disfavored) ordination for women. She is totally silent on the question; and proponents or opponents can only “argue from silence.”

EGW made two statements about her own call to service as the Lord's "special messenger". She declared:

"At the age of 78 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."—[The Review and Herald, July 26, 1906](#), p. 9.

"In the city of Portland the Lord ordained me as His messenger, and here my first labors were given to the cause of present truth."—[The Review and Herald, May 18, 1911](#), p. 1.

As a girl just barely 17 years of age, Ellen Harmon received her first vision on an unknown day in December, 1844, in Portland, Maine. Very shortly thereafter she was instructed of the Lord to relate to others the things He had shown her by special revelation.

EGW distanced herself from a contemporary women's rights movement in her own day. When urged to join others in this crusade for women's suffrage, she declined the invitation. She expressed her own views in a letter to her husband, James White:

"I called upon Mrs. Graves. She had a burden upon her mind and ever since she knew I was at home she desired to see me. She said she felt that she must talk out her feelings to me. She is desirous that women's suffrage should be looked into by me. She says women ought to vote, and she related many things of a startling character which were legalized in France and St. Louis, and an effort was made to carry them out in Chicago this year, but [the effort] failed. Houses of ill fame are legalized. Women who travel alone through those cities, if they are the least suspicious of them, are taken up by the authorities and their cases are investigated. If they are diseased they are placed in the care of the

doctors and cured. Then they are fit for the visits of men and are placed in the legalized home for men to satisfy their lusts upon. No examination is made of the men, and where this law is carried into effect the crime and immorality resemble the condition of the world which existed previous to the Flood.

“Mrs. Graves viewed the matter as I do in regard to the increase of crime and demoralization of society. She says women must vote if this law is [to be] withstood. We had a long talk in regard to temperance. I told her that my mind was unprepared for any such matter as women voting. She had been thinking and dwelling upon these things and her mind was ripe upon them, while my work was of another character. We were doing upon the point of temperance what no other class of people in the world were. We were as much in favor of a pledge against tobacco as liquor.”—[Letter 40a, 1874](#); Ms. Re #794.

[11] As already noted, EGW urged her fellow sisters in the church not to participate in the 19th Century feminist movement by seeking to become:

1. Voters in elections in which women were then ineligible to exercise their franchise.
2. Political office holders ([Welfare Ministry, 165](#)).

Summary and Conclusions

Ellen G. White [1827-1915] lived and worked during a period of great social ferment and transition. In her day the “proper place” of women was quite generally decreed by a male-dominated society to be “in the home.” Women of that time, generally, did not distinguish themselves in positions of conspicuous public exposure. The chauvinistic spirit of the age is aptly epitomized by the cynical remark attributed to Gilbert K. Chesterton:

“A woman speaking in public is like a dog standing on its hind legs. One is not surprised that it is done well; one is surprised that it is done at all.”

Ellen White demonstrated what a woman of intelligence, wit, courage, discretion, and determination can accomplish in lifting the burdens and improving conditions in society, the church, and the home. She was more concerned with doing right than in being popular. She stood in the forefront of reform in unpopular causes such as the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, the feet-washing “ordinance” in celebration of the Lord’s Supper, [and] the advocacy of temperance enforced by civil/criminal statute. She did not become involved in promoting certain “secular” reforms, such as suffrage, women’s rights, etc.; and she warned the church of her day against such involvement, perhaps because, in part:

1. She did not want to divert attention from the main work of the church, as she viewed it: the giving of the gospel to the world.

2. The unity of the church—a very high priority with her—might be compromised (if not sundered) by unnecessary involvement in controversial issues.

3. Recognition that all reforms come slowly in conservative institutions, including her church, and that an attempt to accomplish too much, too quickly, might create a backlash that could effectively thwart accomplishment on any front.

4. The spirit of some feminist reformers was alien to the spirit of Christ, and this [was] inimical to fostering and developing spirituality within the church of God.

[12] Ellen White called for the total utilization of the full resources of her church, including the talents and abilities of its women, for the promotion of the kingdom of God on earth and the hastening of Christ's second coming. She advocated placing women in all positions for which they might be qualified, and to which they might be called by the Lord, including pulpit ministry. Not once, however, in any of her recorded utterances did she call for ordination of women to the gospel ministry. There is no evidence that she regarded this "lack" either as a substantial deficiency or a belittling disservice to her in her work, or to other women in gospel ministry (as she did the failure of conferences to compensate with wages the women who did such work). Her silence—for she spoke neither in favor of ordination nor against—"proves" nothing conclusively beyond the fact that this subject was not one of her high-priority burdens during her ministry (which ended in 1915).

Today the SDA Church, of which she was a co-founder, has been slow to proceed with approval of ordination of women to the gospel ministry for perhaps three reasons:

a. *Theological*: Until now the church has based all precepts and practices on a clearly explicated "Thus-saith-the-Lord." The absence in Scripture of any precedent commanding (or even permitting) ordination of women ministers gives some pause. And a decision to go ahead would signal a significant departure from previous policy based on "the-Bible-and-the-Bible-only."

b. *Historical*: The lack of any Spirit of prophecy counsels authorizing ordination of women to the ministry—particularly in the absence of Scriptural warrant—doubtless has caused some hesitation.

c. *Ecclesiastical*: The SDA Church is a world church, and when the General Conference speaks, it speaks to the entire body of believers. In certain parts of the Third World today contemporary cultural considerations would totally preclude the wisdom of ordaining

women to *anything*, and a decision favoring ordination of women is clearly contraindicated there. Yet, under our present polity, ordination is to a world church, not a regional body.

The Ellen G. White Estate has endeavored to follow the practice of its founder:

- a. The advocacy of placing women in all positions for which they may be qualified and to which they may be called by God, including the gospel ministry.
- b. Silent neutrality regarding either advocacy or opposition to the ordination of women to gospel ministry.

Roger W. Coon
Ellen G. White Estate
General Conference of SDA
Washington, DC
June 6, 1986

Appendix A

Article published in [The Review and Herald, July 30, 1861](#) by the editor, James White, with an editorial introduction by Uriah Smith. (It appeared on page one as the lead article, continuing to page two; but with sequential numbering of the annual edition the “official” page numbers are 65 and 66.) [XVIII, No. 9]

Women as Preachers and Lecturers

[Extracted from the “Portadown News,” Ireland, of March 2, 1861.]

[We consider the following a triumphant vindication of the right of the sister to take part in the public Worship of God. The writer applies the prophecy of Joel—“Your daughters shall prophesy,” &c., to female preaching; but while it must embrace public speaking of some kind, this we think is but half of its meaning. We have nothing to say upon what the writer claims to have been done by certain females. That to which the attention of the reader is especially called is the argument by which he shows that they have a *right* to do this, or any amount besides in the same direction—u. s.]

To the Editor of the “Portadown News:”—Dear Sir, A correspondent in your paper takes up the question of women occupying positions as public speakers, and by every means in his power endeavors to show that women ought not to do so; still, as he is “open to conviction,” and as he wishes for “an explanation” of the texts which he quoted, I shall endeavor to gratify him therein.

I will say here that if a woman can effect good in a world like ours, where so much is yet to be done for its reformation, I would think twice before I would discourage her or throw any obstacle in her way. Perhaps no man living has effected half as much for a revival of religion as Mrs. Phoebe Palmer; but “An Admirer of Woman in her proper place,” would not suffer a woman to teach. I would like to know if ever he saw a female engaged in a school to teach. Could such a man not see that the teaching of which Paul

writes is not such as that given in our Sunday Schools, and from our pulpits or platforms? I hold that each individual in this world is morally bound to do as much good to others as he or she can; and he or she is bound to leave the world better than he or she found it—if they possibly can. And is Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe and other ladies to teach me through my eyes, and are they prohibited from teaching me through my ears? Certainly not. Has Miss Buck, of England, powers in the pulpit equal to the greatest pulpit orator of the day, and is she not to use such powers? Are Spurgeon and such men to be lauded to the skies while sowing the heresy of Calvinism, mixed up with scraps of street songs and old wives' fables, and is Miss Buck to be condemned while she preaches, with much superior eloquence and dignity, the glorious gospel of the grace of God to sinful, fallen mankind—none excepted? Let us hear no more of this condemnation of woman going about doing good. I suppose, indeed I might venture to assert, that Mrs. Palmer, Miss Buck, and women like them, have each done more to lead sinners to a Saviour than any man of the same period; and will not the souls thus saved be to these women “a crown of rejoicing?” To be sure they will.

Who would object to a woman rescuing his friend from temporal death? No man. Then why object to a woman rescuing men from eternal death? Who would dare say that Grace Darling did wrong to go out in the life-boat and rescue the crew of a sinking vessel? No man. Why then object to a woman pushing out the gospel life-boat to rescue men sinking into perdition? Who would dare say Mrs. Fry did wrong in seeking to rescue men from dismal dungeons? No man. Then why object to woman going to seek and to save those that are pining in the dungeons of sin and iniquity?

Is not Mrs. Theobald one of the ablest advocates of the Total Abstinence cause? Is she surpassed by any as a speaker on that question? I venture to affirm she is not. Then why silence such an advocate?

Neither Paul nor any other apostle forbade women preaching, or lecturing. I affirm such a command is nowhere in the Bible, and I shall proceed to prove it; and, besides, I will prove that Paul taught the very opposite.

“An Admirer of Woman in her proper place” has quoted [1 Corinthians 14:34, 35](#). Now, surely the fourteenth chapter does

not contradict the eleventh, which was necessarily written before it. In [1 Corinthians 11:4, 5](#), St. Paul says, “Every man praying or prophesying having his head covered dishonoreth his head; but every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoreth her head.” Why did not “An Admirer” read this chapter before he read the other?

Instead of St. Paul’s forbidding woman to conduct public worship—for that is what praying and prophesying mean—he actually condescends, as “An Admirer” would perhaps think, to settle and arrange how a woman is to dress when she prophesieth or preacheth. It will be seen from the verses I have quoted above, that whatever every man was to do in the church in praying and prophesying, woman was to do the same; and, instead of Paul forbidding the woman, he merely tells herself and the man how they are to dress—one with the head uncovered, the other with it covered. “An Admirer” has made some reference to Eve, but he is evidently totally ignorant of the nature of the temptation to which Eve was exposed, of the manner in which it was put, and of the share which Adam had in the matter.

[14] Dr. Adam Clarke says the prediction of [Joel 2:28](#) would not be fulfilled unless women prophesied, preached or taught; and he says Peter understood it thus when, in [Acts 2:17](#), he quotes it, saying “Your daughters shall prophesy.” Dr. Adam Clarke, in a word, is entirely in favor of female preaching, and contends that the verses quoted by “An Admirer” bear no such meaning as that attached to them by those who oppose female preaching.

Perhaps some may ask, “What is prophesying?” In [1 Corinthians 14:3](#), St. Paul says it is to speak “unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort,” and women were to do it. And, according to the word of the Lord by the prophet Joel, “Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy;” and, according to Peter, this prediction was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost; and according to Paul, women were to pray and prophesy as much as men, only to keep their heads covered. And why even this rule about the covered head? Simply because in the East then, and at present, an uncovered female was, and is, looked upon “all one as if she were shaven”—the latter being the mark of prostitution. The reader will now see why St. Paul ordered the covered heads—that is, covered with a veil in the

East—and this portion of his directions does not apply at all to our fashions.

Will the reader be kind enough to turn now to [1 Corinthians 14:1](#), from which “An Admirer” quotes, and read the entire chapter over. You will see that St. Paul is writing on a different topic from that on which he wrote in chap. xi; and every fair interpreter of the Scripture will admit that, if in chap. xi Paul authorizes female preaching, then he cannot in chap. xiv, forbid it. Let us now see what chap. xiv, refers to. There seems to have been some confusion in the church at Corinth, in their meetings of church courts; for it could not be in the ordinary or regular public service. The men speaking [[verse 27](#)] were to speak “by two, or at most by three, and that by course,” or in other words, in their turn—after one another. This was to prevent two, or three, or half a dozen men speaking at once—or even a dozen, as I have often seen in public meetings. This was a meeting for discussion and debate on church matters, such as that recorded in Acts xv, where there was much disputing. It was not a regular religious service, and could not be such. At [verse 29](#) it is said, “Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the others judge.” Here, again, it was not an ordinary regular service; it was a meeting for discussion, and for the election of church officers; and the candidates for positions in the church were to be heard, and all the other members were to judge of the qualifications of each, and to make their selections accordingly. At [verse 33](#), this view is sustained still further by the words, “For God is not the author of confusion.” In order to prevent much discussion in these church courts, he forbids the women to speak in them—they are to ask their husbands at home; therefore Miss M’Kinney cannot be included.

Having thus clearly established that the place in which a woman was to keep silence was in a court of the church, not in an ordinary regular meeting, I shall pass on to notice the passage from Timothy.

In [1 Timothy 2:12, 14](#), St. Paul is forbidding the woman to usurp authority; and if any reader will but read this chapter, of fifteen verses, through, he or she will see at a glance that he has nothing whatever to say to public speaking. If “An Admirer” had quoted [1 Timothy 2:9](#), it might have been more needed in the present day. Our Methodist ladies seem to have forgotten that such a passage is in the Bible, “That women adorn themselves in modest apparel

(could Paul have had hoops on a windy day in his prophetic vision?), with shamefacedness and sobriety: not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.” There is not a word in the entire chapter against woman speaking and doing good—adorning herself with good works—in the cause of God and of fallen and debased humanity. If “An Admirer” will have a literal rendering of [verse 12](#), then out with all our thousands of female Sunday-school and day-school teachers, for if a woman is not to teach, in the literal sense, then all our female teachers, religious and secular, in Sunday-schools, national schools, Church Education Society schools, &c., are all rushing on in direct opposition to Paul when he says, “I suffer not a woman to teach.” The woman is to learn in silence with all subjection. Subjection to whom? Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. [Colossians 3:18](#). This is the subjection spoken of in Timothy, as is clearly shown by Adam and Eve—husband and wife—representatives of all our race of husbands and wives—being brought in by way of illustrating his subject, and the object which he had in view. A woman is not to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, that is, a wife is not to act so toward her husband. The passage has nothing whatever to do with regard to Total Abstinence lecturers, or gospel preachers. On the contrary, a woman is to pray and prophesy [[1 Corinthians 11:5](#)] just as the man, and with equal power and authority; and this is according to the prediction of the Holy Ghost. [Joel 2:28](#); [Acts 2:17](#).

“An Admirer” could not have quoted a case which tells more against himself than that of Phoebe mentioned in [Romans 15:1](#). She was a deaconess. Does not “An Admirer” know that the Church of England and other churches hold that a deacon was a certain rank in the ministry? and if so, then so was a deaconess. Dr. Adam Clarke says, too, that the deaconesses “were ordained to their office by the imposition of the hands of the bishop.” In the second verse of this chapter, Paul actually directs the Christians at Rome—the men, too—I wish “An Admirer” had been among them, how it would have lowered his dignity—to assist sister Phoebe “in whatever business she hath need of you.” Does this not look very like an appointment of Phoebe as the first pope of Rome, if she was to have absolute authority over all the church there?

I will conclude by glancing at female characters in scripture who occupied a position as teachers and leaders of the people equal to men. Deborah, the wife of Lapidoth—mark, she was married, too—was a prophetess, and judged Israel. [Judges 4:4, 10](#). Huldah, the prophetess, the wife of Shallum—a married woman also—dwelt at Jerusalem, in the College; and her dignified message to the king, who came to inquire at her mouth the will of God, does not betray any trembling diffidence or abject servility, although “An Admirer” would have woman so much inferior to man. It would be, perhaps, useless to remind him that in Christianity there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. [Galatians 3:28](#). It is said [[Micah 6:4](#)], “For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron and Miriam.” God here classes Miriam with Moses and Aaron, and declares that he sent her before his people. I presume had “An Admirer” been there he would have refused to go up through the wilderness under such a female leader. Need I refer to Anna, the prophetess [[Luke 2:37, 38](#)], and to the women which labored with Paul in the gospel as his fellow-laborers—therefore, preaching as he did? Timothy, in 1 Thess. iii, 2, is styled a minister of God, and our fellow-laborer in the gospel of Christ. Then these were the same as Timothy, who was a bishop in the church. In [Romans 16:12](#), three women are named as having labored much in the Lord; and Dr. Adam Clarke contends that they preached, for he says they prophesied, and that if a woman thus prophesied, then women preached. This is Dr. Clarke’s view, and I value it as highly as John Wesley’s.

“An Admirer” seems to think that woman is much inferior to man, and throws out taunts about mother Eve, to which taunts I have already alluded. If, through Eve, sin first entered into this world—and that too, with the hearty concurrence of Adam—then let it not be forgotten that by woman, without the concurrence of man, a Saviour came to bring deliverance. If woman be taunted about Eve, she can turn and point to Mary, and all the women who ministered to Christ daily up to his burial, and at his resurrection. Dr. Doddridge exhorts man to rejoice that, as by woman came transgression, so by her came redemption to; and I may add—why should not women preach that redemption also?

[15]

Judging by the results which have followed the labors of such women as Mrs. Rogers, Mrs. Fletcher, Miss Tooth, Miss Culter, Miss Buck, Miss Marsh, Mrs. Theobald, Mrs. Stowe, Mrs. Palmer, Mrs. Booth. and a host of others, I rather think the Lord of the vineyard will require some more satisfactory excuse for even female timidity and backwardness in his service than the one given by "An Admirer," before they will be justified in ceasing to labor in his cause. I may say that I think Miss M'Kinney chose an admirable hymn.

I am yours, &c.

J. A. Mowatt

Appendix B

[16]

The Review and Herald

Sanctify them through Thy Truth, Thy Word Is Truth

Battle Creek, Mich, December 20, 1881

U. Smith, *Resident Editor*

J. N. Andrews, *Associate Editor*

The Conference

We had hoped to present complete in this number all the proceedings of the Conference, with the doings of the other associations which have held their annual sessions in connection therewith. But the occasion has been so prolific of proceedings, resolutions, plans, committee work, and suggestions, swelling the reports to such voluminous dimensions, that the secretaries have found it impossible to prepare their records in season for this number, and they are thus necessarily deferred to our next issue, which will be mailed Jan. 2, 1882.

We give this week another chapter of General Conference proceedings, with the doings of the Publishing Association and the Educational Society. The proceedings of the Health Institute, the General T. and M. Society, the General S. S. Association, and the American Health and Temperance Association, with the remainder of the General Conference proceedings, are deferred. A committee has been appointed to prepare all the proceedings of all the societies for publication in pamphlet form, for convenient reference and general circulation.

The character of the meetings has been the same as heretofore reported. There is a more general feeling of satisfaction expressed in regard to the occasion in this respect than ever before. There has been a disposition to examine every proposition thoroughly and go to the bottom of every subject; and while opinions have been expressed with the largest freedom pro and con, the conclusions arrived at

have been substantially unanimous. The prospect is encouraging, so much so as to have called forth the remark from various brethren that it looks as though we might be near the time when this work will go with greatly accelerated power.

General Conference

Business Proceedings (continued)

Fifth Meeting, Dec. 5, 10 a.m.—Prayer by Eld. Loughborough. Minutes of last meeting read and approved.

Bro. J. N. Loughborough was cordially welcomed as a delegate from England.

The resolution touching the separation of the primary department from the College proper, which had been postponed till after the meeting of the Educational Society, was now called up, and adopted.

The question in reference to ministers' moving to Battle Creek was taken from the table, and after being discussed by A. O. Burrill, W. H. Littlejohn, and J. O. Corliss, was referred back to the Committee on Resolutions.

Resolved, That the Chair be requested to appoint a committee of five brethren, whose duty it shall be to arrange a systematic course of reading for the ministers of our denomination.—Adopted.

The following named brethren were thereupon appointed as said committee: J. N. Loughborough, W. H. Littlejohn, D. M. Canright, S. H. Lane, and E. R. Jones.

Resolved, That all candidates for license and ordination should be examined with reference to their intellectual and spiritual fitness for the successful discharge of the duties which will devolve upon them as licensed and ordained ministers.

This was spoken to by D. M. Canright, D. H. Lamson, W. H. Littlejohn, S. H. Lane, G. C. Tenney, E. R. Jones, W. C. White, A. S. Hutchins, and R. M. Kilgore, and adopted.

Resolved, That females possessing the necessary qualifications to fill that position, may, with perfect propriety, be set apart by ordination to the work of the Christian ministry.

This was discussed by J. O. Corliss, A. C. Bourdeau, E. R. Jones, D. H. Lamson, W. H. Littlejohn, A. S. Hutchins, D. M. Canright, and J. N. Loughborough, and referred to the General Conference Committee.

Resolved, That we deeply sympathize with our beloved brother, Eld. J. N. Andrews, in his present condition of physical prostration, and that we will continue to pray most earnestly that the God of all grace may restore him to perfect health.

This resolution received the hearty endorsement of those present, as expressed by a unanimous vote.

Whereas, We recognize the manifestation of spiritual gifts, especially the spirit of prophecy, as one of the distinguishing features of the work of the third angels message, and—

Whereas, We fully believe that the neglect of these gifts and of the special instruction given us through them, will surely result in a decline of spirituality and true godliness among us as a people; therefore—

Resolved, That we urgently recommend to all our ministers that they frequently present before our brethren, in our older churches as well as among those more recently brought to the faith, the plain teaching of the Scriptures concerning the perpetuity of these gifts, and the great importance of carefully heeding the precious instruction given us through this agency.—Adopted.

Adjourned to call of Chair.

Sixth Meeting, Dec. 7, 10 a.m.—Prayer by Eld. A. S. Hutchins. Minutes of last meeting read and approved.

The Committee on a Course of Reading for Ministers presented a report, recommending a course to extend over a period of six years. [This report, on account of its length, is not inserted in this record of proceedings, but is given by itself in another column—Sec.]

Moved, That we adopt the report, by considering the course prescribed for each year separately. The question now being on the adoption of the recommendation for the first year's course of reading, after some discussion, an amendment was offered that Geike's *Life of Christ* be placed in the first year's course. This was spoken to by a number of brethren, and adopted. The motion, as amended, was then adopted.

The question now recurring on the adoption of the second year's course, an amendment was offered that the volume of Gibbon to be used should be the student's edition; this amendment was lost. The motion was then adopted.

The courses of the remaining years were voted on favorably, when the preamble and report as a whole were adopted.

Moved, that the Chair appoint a committee of three to still have this matter under advisement with a view to suggesting revisions of the various courses, if in their judgment any should be made.—
Carried.

The resolution referred back to the committee relative to the ministers' moving to Battle Creek was presented in the following modified form:—

Whereas, It is the highest degree important that our churches should enjoy the labor and watchcare of our ministers, and

Whereas, The wants of the church in Battle Creek in that direction can be provided for by those ministers who are connected to the institutions which have been planted in that place; therefore—

Resolved, That we recommend those of our brethren who are actively engaged in the work of the ministry to find homes in the vicinity of churches which have need of their labor and oversight, unless their connection with the cause shall, in the judgment of the General Conference Committee, render it desirable that they should reside in Battle Creek.—Adopted.

Whereas, The labors and responsibilities of the President of the General Conference are, from the necessity of the case, very great, and wearing in their character; therefore—

Resolved, That we express it as the sense of this body that the person occupying that position should not be encumbered by his brethren with the additional cares and duties which attend the presidency of State Conferences, or other offices which are merely local in their character.—Adopted.

Adjourned to 3 p.m.

Seventh Meeting.—Met as per adjournment. Prayer by D. M. Canright. Minutes read and approved.

The report of the Committee on Destitute Fields being called for, they presented a partial report, recommending that Eld. C. L. Boyd of Nebraska labor in Oregon, and that Eld. Samuel Fulton of Minnesota labor in Tennessee.

This report was adopted.

Moved, that the 1000 copies of the *Signs* now sent to England be continued.

After some discussion, and a request from Bro. Loughborough that action be deferred till he had opportunity to lay the situation more fully before the Conference, the motion was laid on the table.

Moved, That the question of renewing the credentials of laborers in the South, and granting licenses to new applicants, be referred to the General Conference Committee, with instructions to confer with those who are acquainted with that field.—Carried.

Bro. Loughborough was requested by vote to make a full statement of the condition and prospects of the English mission, Sabbath, Dec. 10, at 10:20 a.m. [With this request he complied, as noticed in general remarks on The Conference in last weeks *Review*.—Sec.]

The Committee on Nominations reported as follows:—

For President, Geo. I. Butler; Secretary, A. R. Oyen; Treasurer, M. J. Chapman; Executive Committee, Geo. I. Butler, S. N. Haskell, U. Smith. These persons were thereupon elected to the offices named.

The Committee on Census Blanks reported that they had prepared blanks, and that they were ready for use.

Adjourned to call of Chair.

Eighth Meeting, Dec. 9, 2 p.m.—Prayer by Eld. A. Stone.

The following preamble and resolution were introduced, discussed, and adopted:—

Whereas, Many calls for ministerial labor among our churches come in from every part of the field; and—

Whereas, In part our method of labor has failed to meet the wants of many churches, on account of the unsystematic bestowal of mid labor; therefore—

Resolved, That we recommend that all our Conferences so distribute the labor in their respective States as to give each ordained minister, at least, a certain portion of territory to which his labors may be confined for a stated period, with instructions to labor for the spiritual advancement of each church and company in his respective territory, and thus hold together and build up the work already started with so much expense and labor, before entering new fields.

Moved, That it be considered the rule that State Conferences pay their tithe to the General Conference quarterly.—Carried.

Moved, That the constitution of the General Conference, as revised by the committee appointed in 1875, be printed.—Carried.

Moved, That the Chair appoint a committee of three to examine the form of constitution for State Conferences, with a view to suggesting such revision as may be necessary to adapt it to present wants, and to report at this session if possible.—Carried.

Brn. W. H. Littlejohn, J. N. Loughborough, and U. Smith were appointed as said committee.

The Conference then listened to an interesting report from Bro. Loughborough concerning his visit

Appendix C

[17]

Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook, 1986 (p. 573)

Presidents of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Name	Term of Service
1. John Byington	May 20, 1863 to May 17, 1865
2. James White	May 17, 1865 to May 14, 1867
3. J. N. Andrews	May 14, 1867 to May 18, 1869
4. James White	May 18, 1869 to December 29, 1871
5. George I Butler	December 29, 1871 to August 10, 1874
6. James While	August 10, 1874 to October 6, 1880
7. George I Butler	October 6, 1880 to October 17, 1888
8. O. A. Olsen	October 17, 1888 to February 19, 1897
9. C. A Irwin	February 19, 1897 to April 2, 1901
10. A. C. Daniells	April 2, 1901 to May 11, 1922
11. W. A. Spicer	May 11, 1922 to May 28, 1930
12. C. H. Watson	May 28, 1930 to May 26, 1936
13. J. L. McElhany	May 26, 1936 to July 10, 1950
14. W. H. Branson	July 10, 1950 to May 24, 1954
15. R. R. Figuhr	May 24, 1954 to June 16, 1966
16. Robert H. Pierson	June 16, 1966 to January 3, 1979
17. Neal C. Wilson	January 3, 1979 to----

Secretaries of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Name	Term of Service
1. Uriah Smith	May 20, 1863 to November 14, 1873
2. S. Brownsberger	November 14, 1873 to August 10, 1874
3. Uriah Smith	August 10, 1874 to September 19, 1876
4. C. W. Stone	September 19, 1876 to September 20, 1877
5. Uriah Smith	September 20, 1877 to December 1, 1881
6. A. B. Oyen	December 1, 1881 to November 8, 1883
7. Uriah Smith	November 8, 1883 to October 17, 1888
8. Dan T. Jones	October 17, 1888 to March 5, 1891
9. W. A. Colcord	March 5, 1891 to March 6, 1893
10. L. T. Nicola	March 7, 1893 to February 19, 1897
11. L. A. Hoopes	February 19, 1897 to April 2, 1901
12. H. E. Osborne	April 2, 1901 to April 11, 1903
13. W. A. Spicer	April 11, 1903 to May 11, 1922
14. A. G. Daniells	May 11, 1922 to May 27, 1926
15. C. K. Meyers	May 27, 1926 to October 17, 1933
16. M. E. Kern	October 22, 1933 to May 26, 1936
17. E. D. Dick	May 26, 1936 to September 19, 1952
18. D. F. Rebok	September 19, 1952 to May 24, 1954
19. W. R. Beach	May 24, 1954 to June 12, 1970
20. Clyde O. Franz	June 12, 1970 to June 30, 1980

21. C. Ralph Thompson	June 30, 1980 to----
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**Treasurers of the General Conference of Seventh-day
Adventists Name Term of Service**

1. F. S. Walker	May 20, 1863 to May 17, 1865
2. I. D. Van Horn	May 17, 1865 to May 12, 1868
3. J. N. Loughborough	May 12, 1868 to May 18, 1869
4. E. S. Walker	May 18, 1869 to March 15, 1870
5. G. H. Bell	May 15, 1870 to February 7, 1871
6. Mrs. A. P. Van Horn	February 7, 1871 to March 11, 1873
7. F. B. Gaskill	March 11, 1873 to August 10, 1874
8. Harmon Lindsay	August 10, 1874 to August 15, 1875
9. Fredericka House	August 15, 1875 to September 19, 1876
10. Uriah Smith	September 19, 1876 to September 20, 1877
11. Mrs. M. I. Chapman	September 20, 1877 to November 8, 1883
12. A. R. Henry	November 8, 1883 to October 17, 1888
13. Harmon Lindsay	October 17, 1888 to February 17, 1893
14. W. H. Edwards	February 17, 1893 to February 19, 1897
15. A. G. Adams	February 19, 1897 to October 21, 1900
16. H. M. Mitchell	November 12, 1900 to March 27, 1903
17. I. H. Evans	March 27, 1903 to May 13, 1909

18. W. T. Knox	May 13, 1909 to May 11, 1922
19. J. L. Shaw	May 11, 1922 to May 26, 1936
20. W. E. Nelson	May 26, 1936 to July 10, 1950
21. C. L. Torrey	July 10, 1950 to June 16, 1966
22. K. H. Emmerson	June 16, 1966 to June 30, 1980
23. L. L Butler	June 30, 1980 to June 27, 1985
24. Donald F. Gilbert	June 27, 1985 to----

[18] [N. B. This tabulation has been edited to remove the names of two men inadvertently included when the table appeared in print in Spectrum!]

Appendix D

Women Licensed as Ministers, 1878—1975

Editors' note: Following is a partial list of women "licensed to preach" by the Seventh-day Adventist Church from 1878-1975. This list, compiled from the Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook, indicates the date each candidate first received ministerial license and the conference or other organization issuing the license. Beginning in 1915, listings were made only for every fifth year. Special thanks to Josephine Benton, who is writing a history of Adventist women ministers, for her aid in preparing this chart.

1878		1902	
Anna Fulton	Minnesota	Mrs. S. N. Haskell	Greater New York
Ellen S. Lane	Michigan	Minnie Syp ²	Oklahoma
Julia Owen	Kentucky-Tennessee		
		1904	
1879		Alma Bjdigg	Finland Mission
Libbie Collins	Minnesota	Mrs. J. E. Bond	Arizona
Hattie Enoch	Kansas	Bertha E. Jorgensen	South Dakota
Libbie Fulton	Minnesota		
Lizzie Post	Minnesota	1910	
		Pearl Field	Nebraska
1880		Mrs. Ura Sprin	Nebraska

Anna Johnson	Minnesota		
		1920	
1881		Ella H. Osborne	Northern California
Ida W. Ballenger	Illinois	Emme Wells	Greater New York
Helen L. Morse	Illinois		
		1925	
1884		Mrs. E. Flo Hawkins	Illinois
Ruie Hill	Kasas	Mrs. B. Miller	East China Union Missio
1886		1930	
Ida W. Hibben	Illinois	Mrs. E. Eder	Northern Texas
		Mrs Beulah Langdon	Northern Texas
1887		Pearl Stafford	Oregon
Mrs. S. E. Pierce	Vermont		
		1935	
1893		Lucy Andrus	Hopei Mission (China)
Flora Plummer	Lowa		
		1945	
1894		Jessie Curtis	East Pennsylvania
Margaret Caro	New Zealand		

		1960	
1895		Mrs. W. H. Anderson	Central Union Conference
Mrs. S. A. Lindsay	New York	Marye Burdick	Georgia-Cumberland
		Edna J. Cardey	Potomac
1898		Freda Ford	Kentucky-Tennessee
Sarepta Irish Henry	General Conference	Lucia H. Lee	Georgia-Cumberland
Lulu Wightman	New York	Emma Phillips	Kentucky-Tennessee
		Mary Saxton	Potomac
1899		Mary E. Walsh	Pacific Union
Edith Bartlett	British Conference	Mrs. J. W. Wilhelm	Kentucky-Tennessee
1900		1965	
Hetty Haskell	General Conference	Lois Mays	Potomac
Mina Robinson	British Conference	Julia Ross	Potomac
1901		1970	
Carrie V. Hansen	Utah	Mrs. Phil Neal	Kentucky-Tennessee
Emma Hawkins	Iowa	Mrs. Harry Weckham	Kentucky-Tennessee
Mrs. E. R. Williams	Michigan		
		1975	

		Josephine Benton	Potomac
		Clare Yauchzie	Ontario

[Source: Spectrum, August, 1985 (Vol. 16, No. 3), p. 601]

[19] Article “Words to Lay Members” published in [The Review and Herald, August 26, 1902](#), pp. 7, 8, by EGW:

²Spelling of family name later changed to *Sype*.

Appendix E

Words to Lay Members

Mrs. E. G. White

Our ministers are to go forth to proclaim the message of present truth to those who have not heard it. And our churches should not feel jealous and neglected if they do not receive ministerial labor. They should themselves take up the burden, and labor most earnestly for souls. Believers are to have root in themselves, striking firm root in Christ, that they may bear much fruit to his glory. As one man, they are to strive to attain one object,—the salvation of souls.

Let not church members wait for a verbal command to enter Gods service. They know their duty. Let them do it in humility and quietness. There are hundreds who should be at work, who need to be encouraged to make a beginning.

Let church members begin to work where they are. Everywhere there are souls who know not the truth. Humble men, willing to make sacrifices, to work as Christ worked, are needed. The Lord calls for self-sacrificing workers, who will labor quietly and unobtrusively, living so near to the Lord that they continually receive grace to impart. As they take up their work in earnestness and sincerity, asking the Lord to give them tact and skill, hearts will be reached by their efforts.

It is not God's purpose that ministers should be left to do the greatest part of the work of sowing the seeds of truth. Men who are not called to the gospel ministry are to be encouraged to labor for the Master according to their several ability. Hundreds of men and women now idle could do acceptable service. By carrying the truth into the homes of their neighbors and friends, they could do a great work for the Master. God is no respecter of persons. He will use humble, devoted Christians who have the love of the truth in their hearts. Let such ones engage in service for him by doing house-to-house work. Sitting by the fireside, such men—if humble,

discreet, and godly—can do more to meet the real needs of families than could a minister.

The Lord has a work for women, as well as for 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.

It is not meet for us, my sisters, to wait for greater opportunities or holier dispositions. We are inexcusable if we allow God-given talents to rust from inaction. Christ asks, “Why stand ye here all the day idle?” Let us consecrate all that we have and are to him, believing in his power to save, and having confidence that he will use us as instrumentalities to do his will and to glorify his name.

My brethren and sisters, do not pass by the little things to look for larger work. You might do successfully the small work, but fail utterly in attempting a larger work, and fall into discouragement. Take hold wherever you see that there is a work to be done. It is by doing with your might what your hands find to do, that you will develop talent and aptitude for large work. It is by slighting the daily opportunities, neglecting the little things, that so many become fruitless and withered.

There are many ways in which all may do personal service for God. Some can write a letter to a far-off friend, or send a paper to one who is inquiring for truth. Others can give counsel to those who are in difficulty. Those who know how to treat the sick can help in this way. Others who have the necessary qualifications can give Bible readings or conduct Bible classes.

The very simplest modes of work should be devised, and set in operation among the churches. If the members will unitedly accept such plans, and perseveringly carry them out, they will reap a rich reward; for their experience will grow brighter, their ability will increase, and through their efforts souls will be saved.

The Waste Places of the Earth

The waste places of the earth are to be cultivated. In humble dependence upon God, families are to go forth and settle in the unworked places of his vineyard. As the reward of their self-sacrifice in order to sow the seeds of truth, they will reap a rich harvest. As they visit family after family, giving Bible studies, opening the Scriptures to those in spiritual darkness, many hearts will be touched.

Consecrated men and women are needed to stand as fruit-bearing trees of righteousness in the desert places of the earth. In fields where the conditions are so objectionable and disheartening that many workers refuse to go to them, most remarkable changes for the better may be brought about by the efforts of self-sacrificing lay members. These humble workers will accomplish much, because they put forth patient, persevering effort, relying upon no human power, but upon God, who gives them his favor. The amount of good that these workers accomplish will never be known in this world.

Self-Supporting Missionaries

Self-supporting missionaries are often very successful. Beginning in a small, humble way, their work enlarges under the guidance of the Spirit of God. Let two or more persons start out together in evangelistic work. They may not receive any particular encouragement from those at the head of the work that they will get financial support; nevertheless, let them go forward, praying, singing, teaching, and living the truth. They may take up the work of canvassing, and in this way introduce the truth into many families. As they move forward in their work, they gain a blessed experience. They are humbled by a sense of their poverty and helplessness, but the Lord manifestly goes before them. Among the wealthy and the poor they find favor and help. They come close in friendship to those for whom they work, the one imparting the treasures of the word, the other imparting temporal sustenance. And both are blessed. Even the poverty of the people is a means of finding access to them. As these devoted missionaries pass on their way, they are helped in many ways by those to whom they bring spiritual food. Providence opens the way for them to go to isolated places, and if they bear

the message God gives them, their efforts are crowned with success. Many will be brought to a knowledge of the truth, who, but for these humble teachers, would never have been won to Christ.

What more can I say than I have said to impress upon our churches the realization of the eternal loss they are suffering in not putting to use in God's service the ability that he has given them? If the members of our churches would but put their powers to use in well-directed efforts, following well-matured plans, they would do a hundredfold more for Christ than they are now doing. If they went forth with earnest prayer, with meekness and lowliness of heart, seeking personally to impart to others the knowledge of salvation, the message might reach the inhabitants of the earth.

God calls for workers to enter the whitening harvest field. Shall we wait because the treasury is exhausted, because there is scarcely enough to sustain the workers now in the fold? Go forth in faith, and God will be with you. The promise is, "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

Nothing is so successful as success. Let this be secured, and the work will move forward. New fields will be opened. Many souls will be won to the truth. What is needed is increased faith in God.

As humble, God-fearing men and women consecrate themselves to the Lord, he will accept them and work through them. As they place themselves in right relation to him, light from the throne above will shine upon them, making them channels of blessing to others. All that they accomplish may not now be seen, but they are sowing seed that will yield fruit unto eternal life.

Appendix F

[20]

Article: "The Duty of the Minister and the People," [The Review and Herald, July 9, 1895](#), pp. 433, 434

The Duty of the Minister and the People

By Mrs. E. G. White

God has given to "every man his work." He has not left the spiritual interests of the church wholly in the hands of the minister. It is not for the good of the minister, nor for the good of the individual members of the church, that the minister should undertake exclusive charge of the Lord's heritage. Each member of the church has a part to act in order that the body may be preserved in a healthful condition. We are all members of the same body, and each member must act a part for the benefit of all the others. All members have not the same office. As the members of our natural body are directed by the head, so as members of the spiritual body, we should submit ourselves to the direction of Christ, the living head of the church. We are as branches of a common vine. Christ speaks of us as branches that have been grafted into himself, the True Vine. If we are true believers, living in daily, hourly connection with Christ, we shall be sanctified through the truth, and shall act our part in blessed union with the other branches of the True Vine.

The minister and the church-members are to unite as one person in laboring for the upbuilding and prosperity of the church. Every one who is a true soldier in the army of the Lord will be an earnest, sincere, efficient worker, laboring to advance the interests of Christ's kingdom. Let no one presume to say to a brother who is walking circumspectly, "You are not to do the work of the Lord; leave it for the minister." Many members of the church have been deprived of the experience which they should have had, because the sentiment has prevailed that the minister should do all the work and bear all the burdens. Either the burdens have been crowded upon the minister,

or he has assumed those duties that should have been performed by the members of the church. Ministers should take the officers and members of the church into their confidence, and teach them how to labor for the Master. Thus the minister will not have to perform all the labor himself, and at the same time, the church will receive greater benefit than if he endeavored to do all the work, and release the members of the church from acting the part which the Lord designed that they should.

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. There are a few who devise, plan, and work; but the great mass of the people do not lift their hands to do anything for fear of being repulsed, for fear that others will regard them as out of their place. Many have willing hands and hearts, but they are discouraged from putting their energies into the work. They are criticized if they try to do anything, and finally allow their talents to lie dormant for fear of criticism, when if they were encouraged to use them, the work would be advanced, and workers would be added to the force of missionaries. The wisdom to adapt ourselves to peculiar situations, the strength to act in time of emergency, are acquired by putting to use the talents the Lord has given us, and by gaining an experience through personal work. A few are selected to hold responsible positions, and the work is divided up among these brethren. Many more who ought to have an opportunity to develop into efficient workers for the Lord, are left in the shadow. 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. Scores of men should be prepared to spring into action at a moment's warning, should an emergency

occur which demanded their help. Instead of this, the people go to church, listen to the sermon, pay their tithes, make their offerings, and do very little else. And why?—Because the ministers do not open their plans to the people, soliciting the benefit of their advice and counsel in planning and their help in executing the plans that they have had a part in forming.

There are to be no secret societies in our churches. “All ye are brethren.” The minister’s work is the lay member’s work as well. Heart should be bound to heart. Let all press forward, shoulder to shoulder. Is not every true follower of Christ open to receive the teachings? And should not all have an opportunity to learn of Christ’s methods by practical experience? Why not put them to work visiting the sick and assisting in other ways, and thus keep the church in a workable condition? All would thus be kept in close touch with the minister’s plans, so that he could call for their assistance at any moment, and they would be able to labor intelligently with him. All should be laborers together with God, and then the minister can feel that he has helpers in whom it is safe to trust. The minister can hasten this desirable end by showing that he has confidence in the workers by setting them to work.

Who is to blame for the deficiency in the churches? Who is to be censured because willing hands and zealous hearts have not been educated to labor in a humble way for the Master? There is much undeveloped talent among us. Many individuals might be laboring in towns and cities, visiting from house to house, becoming acquainted with families, entering into their social life, dining at their tables, entering into conversation by their firesides, dropping the precious seeds of truth all along the line. As they exercise their talents, Christ will give them wisdom, and many believers will be found rejoicing in the knowledge of the truth as a result of their labors. Thousands might be getting a practical education in the work by this personal labor.

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 cautiousness, so 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. Those who would be laborers, who see the great necessity for consecrated workers in the church and in the world, should seek strength in the secret places of prayer. They should go forth to labor, and God will bless them, and make them a blessing to others. Such members would give strength and stability to the church. It is the lack of spiritual exercise that makes church-members so weak and inefficient; but again I would ask, Who is to blame for the state of things that now exists?

God has given "to every man his work." Why is it that ministers and Conference officers do not recognize this fact? Why do they not manifest their appreciation of the help that individual members of the church could give? Let church-members awake. Let them take hold and help to stay up the hands of the ministers and the workers, pushing forward the interests of the cause. There must be no measuring of talent by comparison. If a man exercises faith, and walks humbly with his God, he may have little education, he may be accounted a weak man, yet he can fill his appointed place as well as the man who has the finest education. He who yields himself most unreservedly to the influence of the Holy Spirit is best qualified to do acceptable service for the Master. God will inspire men who do not occupy responsible positions to work for him. 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 to this work by prayer and laying on of hands. In some cases they will need to counsel with the church officers or the minister; but if they are devoted women, maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in the church. This is another means of strengthening and building up the church. We need to branch out more in our methods of labor. Not a hand should be bound, not a soul discouraged, not a voice should be hushed; let every individual labor, privately or publicly, to help forward this grand work. Place the burdens upon men and women of the church, that they may grow by reason of the exercise, and thus become effective agents in the hand of the Lord for the enlightenment of those who sit in darkness.

There is a world to be warned. Let not humanity presume to stand in the way, but rather let every man stand aside, and let God work by his Holy Spirit for the accomplishment of the redemption of his purchased possession. Some of these new workers may make mistakes, but let the older ones counsel with them and instruct them how to correct their methods. They should be encouraged to surrender themselves wholly to the Lord, and go to work in a humble way. Such service is acceptable to the Master, and he will supplement their efforts by the power of his Holy Spirit, and many souls will be converted. [21]

Let every church awake out of sleep; let the members unite themselves together in the love of Jesus and in sympathy for perishing souls, and go forth to their neighbors, pointing them to the way of salvation. Our Leader has all power in heaven and in earth. He will use men as agents for the accomplishment of his purposes whom some of the brethren would reject as unfit to engage in the work. Heavenly intelligences are combined with human instrumentalities in carrying forward the Lord's work. Angels have their places assigned them in connection with the human agents on earth. They will work through every person who will submit himself to labor in Heaven's ways; therefore, not one human being should be cast aside or left with no part to act.

The members of our large churches are not in the most favorable situation for spiritual growth or for development of efficient methods

of labor. They are inclined to let others bear the burdens that the Lord designs all should have a part in carrying. Perhaps there may be a number of good workers, and these take up the work so spiritedly that the weaker ones do not see where they can get hold, so they settle down in idleness. It is a mistake for our people to crowd together in large numbers. It is not in harmony with God's plans. It is his will that the knowledge which we receive of the truth should be communicated to others; that the light which shines upon us should be reflected upon the pathway of those walking in darkness, so that we may lead others to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. But where a large number are congregated together in one church, this work in a large measure is neglected, and the light of truth is often only reflected back and forth upon the church-members; the world is left in darkness, the alarm is not sounded, the warning message from Heaven is not given.

The Lord has given "to every man his work," and he must have space to work. If one is ignorant of ways and means of carrying on the work, the Lord has provided a Teacher. Jesus said, "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." There is altogether too little said concerning the sufficiency that God has provided for every soul that accepts the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Eternal Father, the unchangeable one, gave his only begotten Son, tore from his bosom Him who was made in the express image of his person, and sent him down to earth to reveal how greatly he loved mankind. He is willing to do more, "more than we can ask or think." An inspired writer asks a question which should sink deep into every heart: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Shall not every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ say, "Since God has done so much for us, how shall we not, for Christ's sake, show our love to him by obedience to his commandments, by being doers of his word, by unreservedly consecrating ourselves to his service?"

Where is the faith of those who claim to be the people of God? Shall they also be included among that number of whom Christ questioned, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on

the earth?” Jesus died to redeem us from the curse of sin and from sin itself, and shall we render him only a feeble half of those powers which he has paid such an infinite price to ransom from the hands of the enemy of our souls?

“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” He in whom “dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,” descended to our world, humiliated himself by clothing his divinity with humanity, that through humanity he might reach the human family. While he embraces the human race with his human arm, he grasps the throne of God with his divine arm, thus uniting humanity to divinity. The Majesty of heaven, the King of glory, descended the path of humiliation step by step until he reached the lowest point possible for humanity to experience; and why? That he might be able to reach even the lowest of mankind, sunken in the very depths of degradation though they be, that he might be able to elevate them to the heights of heaven. He has promised, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” Wonder of wonders! Man, a creature of the earth; dust, elevated to the throne of the King of the universe! Marvelous love! inexpressible, incomprehensible love!

Appendix G

The Ordination of Deaconesses

By Arthur N. Patrick

“Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands.”—The Review and Herald, July 9, 1895.

Did Ellen White imply ordination by this statement? As Adventists in recent years have discussed the larger issue of ordination of women to the gospel ministry, they have disagreed sharply over her meaning in the 1895 *Review* article.

Now church records from the same period that appear to make Ellen White’s meaning clear have come to light.

Ellen White resided in Australia from 1891 to 1900. She lived in the suburbs of Sydney and the village of Cooranbong, close by the property that became Avondale College, from 1894 to 1900. Her son W. C. White, an Adventist minister, was also in Australia.

June 24, 1899, the Ashfield church in Sydney elected G. F. Goodman as elder. The church records tell us that he “was ordained as elder by the laying on of hands.” Clearly, Adventists at the time understood the laying on of hands as effecting ordination.

Which officers were ordained to their tasks? Again the Ashfield church minutes, in two separate entries, give us the answer. At the meeting on August 10, 1895, the nominating committee rendered its report. The record notes: “Immediately following the election, the officers were called to the front, where Pastors Corliss and McCullagh set apart the elder, deacons, [and] deaconesses by prayer and the laying on of hands.”

On Sabbath, January 6, 1900, Elder W. C. White presided over the regular Sabbath meeting at Ashfield. The clerk’s minutes note: “The previous Sabbath officers had been nominated and accepted

for the current year, and today Elder White ordained and laid hands on the elders, deacon, and deaconesses.”

The page from W. C. White’s diary for this date confirms the Ashfield church’s records: “Spoke at Ashfield. Twenty-five present. Ordained J. Hindson Elder, Thos. Patchin Deacon, and Mrs. Brannyrane and Patchin Deaconesses.”

So Adventists living close to Ellen White in the 1890s, over a five-year period at least, ordained women along with men to local church office by prayer and the laying on of hands. Surely Ellen White would have instructed to the contrary if she had not intended ordination by her *Review* statement of 1895. Her son Elder White usually understood well the intent of her writings, and he officiated in the ordaining of women.

—Arthur N. Patrick is registrar at Avondale College, Australia.

[Copies of original Ashfield church minutes and the W.C. White diary are available at the Ellen G. White Estate Resource Centers.] [23]

Appendix H

Clarence Crisler Responds To an Inquiry Concerning Ordination of Women

“March 12, 1916

“Mr. Clarence Crisler, Sanitarium [Calif.]

“Dear Brother: Will you please inform me in regard to the setting apart of women who can give some time to missionary work, by laying on hands in prayer found in *Review and Herald* back in the early part of the 90’s, probably back in about 1892 or 1893, from the pen of Sister White.

“The reason I ask for this, I was in a recent meeting where Elder Adross set aside women by the laying on of hands, and when I asked him for the authority for so doing, he referred me to you, and as I have been a Bible worker for a number of years and have recently been granted a ministerial license, I want this information.

“Please answer at once, as I want to hear from you before I go to the Southwestern Union Conference, which convenes April 7th. Please send me two or three copies of her statement as the president of our conference wants one.” Mrs. L. E. Cox, 134 Agarita Ave, San Antonio, Texas.

“March 22, 1916

“Mrs. L. E. Cox, San Antonio, Texas

“Dear Sister: I have your letter of the 12th inst., making inquiry regarding the ordination of women who give some time to missionary work—particularly to some statement which you believe to be found in a *Review* early in the 90’s, from the pen of Mrs. Ellen G. White.

“As this query will require some study on my part, and searching, and as I must go to Mountain View in the morning for a few days, I am under the necessity of asking that you excuse me from answering for a few days. Upon my return, early next week, I will endeavor to send you a reply, accompanying same, if possible, with the extracts

called for. However, I might say that I have not understood these extracts as teaching positively the ordination of women as ministers of the gospel. I have supposed, rather, that they refer primarily to the ordination of God-fearing women as deaconesses in local churches. But of this I will speak more fully when I write again.

“I hope to write you about the 28th inst., and will address you as above. If you are leaving San Antonio for other parts, it would be well for you to leave a forwarding order, so mail addressed as above will reach you in due time at the Union Conference.”—Clarence Crisler.

“June 16, 1916

“Mrs. L. E. Cox

“Dear Sister: In my answer under date of March 22, I was unable to forward you copy of the *Review* article called for, but ventured to say, ‘I have not understood these extracts as teaching positively the ordination of women as ministers of the gospel. I have supposed, rather, that they refer primarily to the ordination of God-fearing women as deaconesses in local churches.’

“Since writing the above, I have found the article in question and have had same copied. Enclosed find a copy of this article. I am also forwarding copy to your local Conference president, Elder E. L. Neff; and to the president of your Union, Elder J. W. Christian, that they may know what I am sending to you.

“While I do not make it a part of my work to presume to interpret that which has been written, yet I may be pardoned for expressing as my conviction the thought that this article published in the *Review* does not refer to the ordination of women as ministers of the gospel, but rather touches upon the question of setting apart, for special duties in local churches, God-fearing women in such churches where circumstances call for such action.

[25]

“And may I add that Sister White, personally, was very careful about expressing herself in any wise as to the advisability of ordaining women as gospel ministers. She has often spoken of the perils that such general practice would expose the church to by a gainsaying world; but as yet I have never seen from her pen any statement that would seem to encourage the formal and official ordination of women to the gospel ministry, to public labor such as is ordinarily expected of an ordained minister.

“This is not suggesting, much less saying, that no women are fitted for such public labor, and that none should ever be ordained; it is simply saying that so far as my knowledge extends, Sister White never encouraged church officials to depart from the general customs of the church in those matters.”—C. C. Crisler