

Women as Ministers

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Because the North American Division is determined to place women as ordained ministers in every church, and because this effort is quietly being started elsewhere in the world field, there is a need to once again discuss this matter and how we should relate to it. It is a major issue in our denomination and will continue to be so, probably till the final crisis of the National Sunday Law disrupts the plans of the liberals.

The concept that women should be ministers, pastors, priests, and bishops is a logical one. It fits in with modern thinking. Equality in every way, especially in employment. Equality in the workplace is the cry. Anything less than this is said to be “discrimination.” “Liberty and equality” (GC 274) was the cry of the insurgents in the French Revolution, and the motto appears just as innocent today.

Who can withstand such talk, especially when it is so popular today and has the backing of the politicians, feminists, homosexuals, and a variety of radicals. Many Christians support it also.

According to a document drafted by the North American Division in the spring of 1999, women are to be ordained as ministers and serve at every level of our denomination where men are positioned (*NAD Women Pastors’ Document [WM-888-890]*). The demand is for women as pastors, conference and union presidents, as well as division and General Conference officers.

Recently, a close friend of more than thirty years wrote and urged that I change my position on this matter. His was a strong appeal, based on fairness, equality, and justice for women’s rights.

It appears to me that, on one hand we have logic and a powerful modern secular and religious trend. On the other, we have the Word of God.

Today we have women in fighter planes, on battleships, and submarines (when they are not in port delivering illegitimate babies). We will not discuss the problems that this policy is bringing to the U.S. military, as enlisted men and officers are increasingly quitting in droves.

Instead, we will give our attention to women as ordained ministers and pastors in our denomination.

My friend’s position, stated in an eight-page letter to me, does sound very reasonable. Did you ever

notice that logic on both sides of an issue can appear very good. That is why I run to God’s Word. I do not believe that mankind is able to arrive at right conclusions apart from it.

What authority is to govern our lives? Reasonableness and logic, talk of equality of the sexes in all lines of activity, and the need for freedom for women from age-old restrictions—or the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy?

There is no doubt that women can be very spiritual. Indeed, they are often more spiritually minded than men. Any honest person will recognize this, as he views the lives of those around him.

There is no disputing the fact that women can more effectively reach the hearts of children and women and minister more effectively to them. They are better at recognizing the needs of the impoverished and suffering ones.

In view of these facts, why then do we find a strange absence in the Bible of women priests and pastors?

The reply is given that the situation we find in the Bible was merely the custom of those times. The people were backward back then and we are modern, more advanced. Besides, times have changed, and we need to get in step with the rest of the world.

But if we accept that idea, we may as well discard a number of other things we find in the Bible. Whenever we read something we do not like, merely chalk it off as another ancient tribal custom which we can ignore today.

But, wait a minute; whose idea was it that only men should serve in the Old Testament priesthood? Read Exodus through Leviticus. It was God who made the decision, not the custom of the times. He initially selected the firstborn son; later, when the tabernacle was erected, He selected certain males of a certain tribe.

The Korah, Dathan and Abiram rebellion was directly concerned with the fact that those men and their followers wanted a different set of ministers than the ones God had instituted (PP 397:2).

Who started a male ministry in the New Testament? It was Jesus. He selected only men to lead out.

Seriously, now. Should we go by the Bible or, after nearly 2,000 years, should we switch to something different, just because it is fashionable today

to have women leaving their children in someone else's care and working in business and industry or pastoring churches?

Everywhere we hear the cry that woman's place is outside the home. She is more valuable at an assembly line, on a warship, or in a pastor's office than wasting her time raising children. We have government and private child-care centers where they can be sent. We need to free women for other tasks. They need to realize their full potential. We hear this kind of talk all the time.

Thus we find that the concern to change the ministry from the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy pattern is also a concern to change the home from the original blueprint.

The women's liberation movement is not only causing problems in the military and in Protestant denominations, it is ruining families as well. It is thought more important to help women realize their full potential than for them to raise their children for heaven.

Raising a child to be an adult Christian is an extremely important work. It is not something which should be exchanged for new, higher levels of imagined greatness.

Did you know that the Lord gave women the most important task of all: training the next generation and preparing the young for heaven? Men work with the results from the previous generation of homes, but women mold the characters of all generations.

We have been told, through the Spirit of Prophecy, that the special work assigned to women is more sacred, more holy than the work given to men (AH 231; FE 141; 3T 565). That work is raising children for responsible adulthood and eternal life in heaven. What work can be greater than that? Is there any work which men do that is greater? None, absolutely none. The only work which comes close to it is the work of fathers.

Indeed, the special work assigned by God to women is not only more important than that allotted to men, but it is broader. If they will remain in the sphere God has assigned them, women are able to help more people than men can.

First, women are the most important influencers of children, from infancy on into the teen years. Those children are the next generation. They are also 25 percent (probably more) of the population.

Women are able to help other women better than men can. Women are about 50 percent of the adult population.

So, when women accept their proper role, they can help at least 75 percent of the people in the world.

What is left? primarily adult men. Fathers greatly influence their children, increasingly as they become teenagers. But, outside the home, men work mainly

with men. And the characters of the men they work with were earlier molded by women.

Can liberated women accomplish as much? Not really.

There is a strange silence in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy about women as priests and pastors.

Tracking this down, we find that the few Spirit of Prophecy statements, about dedicating women to a ministry, concerns providing them with encouragement and help as they minister to the needs of children and women, and provide help to the poor and suffering.

But, with just one exception, there is one thing Scripture—Bible and Spirit of Prophecy—never assigns to women: being religious leaders (pastors) over adult men.

If you will think about it awhile, you will recognize that this point is the key to the puzzle. God chose to not have women as the religious leaders (pastors) over adult congregations.

They can lead out in religious guidance over children's and youth groups. They can lead out in family worship (frankly, often because the father does not do his part). They can lead out in women's group meetings. Once again, we have three-fourths of the world's population, whose meetings they can lead out in.

But not once in Scripture were they to be ongoing pastors or priests.

I said there was one exception. That one is very clear: Women have, at times, been called of God to be inspired prophets. But notice that even Baruch, who was given instruction from God through a woman prophet, was reproved for needing her to accompany him in the work so he could have success.

Theoretically, it would be Scriptural for women to hold church offices on higher levels as directors of Women's Ministries, Youth Sabbath Schools, or even ADRA. These would all be in accordance with Bible-Spirit of Prophecy statements about the work of women. But, as the accompanying article about Malawi reveals, women placed in such offices would then be sent out into the field to preach at Sabbath worship services. Church officers normally spend every weekend preaching to congregations or other gatherings.

It is an interesting fact that people get in trouble when they try to do that which Scripture did not tell them to do: The Mormons said that polygamy was all right, and they still practice it today in Utah. But, from the beginning, God's plan was clear: one husband and one wife, and no other conjugal arrangement. The homes of polygamists are miserable. Not only the children, but the wives and even the husbands are damaged by the arrangement.

Then there is abortion. It is said that the Bible

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did not explicitly forbid killing unborn children, so it should be acceptable. But this is an argument by silence. The Bible did not forbid eating your parents either.

Actually, the Sixth commandment forbids murder, the killing of human beings (and, we might add, the needless killing of other creatures).

In our perverse generation, we even have homosexuals claiming that the Bible gives them the right to carry on their vile practices. Other “Christians” declare that God made the Big Bang, and everything evolved over billions of years. Has not the thinking of mankind become twisted in these last days? Is there not abundant evidence of it? Dare we follow after this latest fashion, that women be placed over our congregations?

Before concluding this comment, please notice this: Satan always devises a counterfeit for everything God specifies.

Instead of the other trees in the garden, Satan led our parents to the one tree of disobedience.

Instead of the Sabbath, the devil gave us Sunday sacredness.

Instead of baptism, he gave us sprinkling of infants.

On and on the list goes.

But add this one to the list: For thousands of years, instead of men as priests and ministers in Christian churches, Satan offered mankind satanic cults with women as the priests! This was done in the most ancient religions. It was done in Egypt, Babylonia, India, Asia Minor, and Greece. Whether it be vestal virgins or witches, Satan has held a monopoly on women ministers, until a few decades ago,—when feminists in the United States decided to gain the ascendancy. It is now known that the women in charge of the feminist movement were lesbians.

Why does the Adventist Church choose to be in captivity to these practices of modern Babylonians? Why should worldly fads determine our conduct?

Have we lost our nerve to stand for principle in the face of opposition from liberals in our midst?

Why do our people not arise as one and demand that a stop be made to the ever-increasing apostasy in our denomination?

Just because the other denominations are rejecting Biblical principles, must we timidly follow their example? Just last night on the radio news, it was announced that 86% of the bishops in the Episcopal Church in America have issued a statement approving cohabiting couples and homosexual unions as legitimate forms of marriage in their denomination. As a result, more than 25 Episcopal congregations have already severed ties with the Episcopal Church. They refuse to send their offerings to support men who support apostasy.

There are three modernist trends in Protestant denominations today:

1 - Women as ministers and church leaders.

2 - Abortion quietly tolerated and not to be forbidden, especially when the mother considers it necessary.

3 - Homosexuality tacitly accepted.

When the first two gain a strong foothold, the third gradually enters. We have already capitulated on the first two.

North American Division leaders are heavily promoting the placement of women as pastors and officers. Efforts are being made to introduce it overseas.

Official General Conference statements on abortion carefully avoid a clear statement against it while permitting it when the physician or mother consider it necessary. Yet even the AMA has officially stated that there is never an instance, in modern medical practice in Western civilization, in which abortion is necessary to save the life of a mother.

So two down, one to go. Our denomination is in ever-increasing captivity to the Babylonians. Our leaders are determined to follow the lead of the fallen churches, wherever that path may take us. They foolishly believe that, whenever they wish, they will be able to pull back and change course. But when the members have been trained into wrong practices, it is will not be easy to retrace their steps. — *vf*

CRISIS IN MALAWI—Twice the General Conference Session has voted a rejection of women’s ordination and women ministers in our denomination. But there are church leaders in many parts of the world field who want to please world headquarters, by pushing through women preachers in their territories. Here is a report released in mid-October, 2000, by a church press agency (bold ours):

Regular worship and congregational activities

were halted when members of the congregation and church leadership **wrangled over women preaching in the pulpit** at the Bangwe Seventh-day Adventist Church, fifteen kilometers from the center of Blantyre, the capital city of Malawi.

Worship services were disrupted when Mrs. P. A. Neniwa, Women’s Ministry director for the region, was not allowed to address the congregation. **“There is no Scripture in the Bible that authorizes women to preach,”** stated one church elder. According to re-

ports from the Malawi Adventist Church, subsequent meetings with the local congregation “degenerated into rivalry between the pastor and the members,” and the church administrators initially suspended services for two weeks. The incident received media attention in the country and throughout Africa.

In an uncompromising move, the Bangwe and Nimiyanogo church congregations, which together with other smaller companies in the area number approximately 1,000 members, separated from the denomination. “The uncompromising members are still meeting in the church that was closed,” states Ken Bilima, communication director for the Malawi Seventh-day Adventist Church. “They broke into the [Bangwe] church and removed the old locks and put in six new locks.” Bilima says that the Bangwe and Nimiyanogo assets remain the property of the denomination.

A smaller, 200-member congregation, which supported a greater involvement of women in the ministry of the church, is worshipping at a local government school located near the Bangwe Church.

In an official statement on April 16, the Malawi Union of Seventh-day Adventists announced “the disbandment of Bangwe and Nimiyanogo Seventh-day Adventist churches,” stating that all efforts to redeem and reconcile the churches failed, that **the two churches have continued to bar women from participating in the church ministry**, and that the churches introduced **teaching which “openly rebelled against the Seventh-day Adventist Church.”**

“The Church’s position regarding the matter

of women preaching from the pulpit is clear,” says Pardon Mwansa, president of the Eastern Africa Division (EAD) of the Church with headquarters in Harare, Zimbabwe. “Women are as free to share the gospel from the pulpit as are their male counterparts,” he added. The Malawi Adventist Church is part of the EAD territory.

Although not referencing any details of the Bangwe situation, Mwansa said that “the church does not condone violence as a means to handle differences. A more appealing approach is that of talking matters over as brothers and sisters.”

The *Panafrican News Agency* referred in its report on the situation to a survey published by the *Weekend Nation* on July 15 which showed that **most churches in Malawi are reluctant to have women share the pulpit** with their male counterparts. According to the paper, while most churches have indicated a willingness to elevate the position of women in churches, conservative congregations and church leaders are wary of the efforts.

The *Weekend Nation* cites the Bangwe Church situation as the most recent example of the issues occupying the Malawi Christian community. Three years ago, the paper reports, women of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian held mass demonstrations in the streets of Blantyre to protest the discrimination of women in the church.

There are more than 175,000 Seventh-day Adventists in the country worshipping in more than 1,700 congregations throughout the country.

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