

Finding their Voice: *The Expanding Role of Women—Early Adventism in Context (1865–1875)* | BY GILBERT M. VALENTINE

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Ellen G. White

Immediately following the Civil War (1861–1865) Adventism encountered a “Feminist Spring.” A surprising burst of wider public involvement of women in the church helped the church cope with a period of rapid

growth. Their involvement also nourished and facilitated the growth. It was a time that allowed women to flourish even in pastoral ministry in the developing Advent movement. But the spring never really turned into a full summer. Exploring how and why this “spring” took place is instructive and perhaps provides insights and hope for the wider future involvement of women in Adventist mission despite the current wintry blasts.

Arising from the ashes of disappointment in 1844, the Advent movement had, by 1851, developed what its leaders believed was a coherent theology and they reached out to disillusioned Millerites with a theological explanation that gave meaning to their experience and reasons to continue to hope for an imminent Advent. In the midst of the calamity of civil war a little more than a decade later, the movement had expanded to the degree that it found it necessary to adopt first a regional (1862) and then a centralized (1863) organizational structure as a church. In the period immediately fol-

lowing the Civil War, the rapid growth of the movement was assisted and nurtured by women in a variety of ways. Women found their voices to be needed in a surprising range of arenas. Their creative energies and skills were welcomed and encouraged in the work of the church. What prompted this?

Women in Church and Society

What is certain from the careful study of the church’s development is a confirmation of the truth that the church both follows and adapts to societal trends as often as it may be seen to help initiate them. The idea that the church or Ellen White were ahead of their times is at best a partial and limited truth. It is clear from the historical sources that the expanding role of women in the early Adventist church in the post-Civil War period developed to meet particular needs within the church. This development was possible, however, because it was facilitated by radically changing attitudes in the wider society beyond the church. It has often been observed by those who resist the ordination of women to ministry that the church should resist the pressure to follow social trends like feminism. It should certainly not adjust its practices and theology to such movements. Feminism is antithetical to the patriarchal models of scripture. The church must adhere to scripture. It must take a firm stand, resist the pressure of culture, and not ordain women. This kind of response is rooted in underlying assumptions that constitute the very foundations of what it is to be an intense-ly eschatological community—that society is

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getting worse not better—that is why the Lord needs to come. We should resist social changes or at the very least not bother ourselves with them. When the Lord comes all these things will be fixed. The reality, given the delay in the hoped-for Advent is quite to the contrary. The church *is* influenced by change and in turn it influences and reinforces those changes in the effort to try and fix society’s problems. The widening scope of women’s involvement in the church, post-Civil War, and the valued contribution women were thus able to make to the success of the church was *because* changes were already happening in society.

As historians of America have frequently noted, the Civil War not only created a need for women to be more widely involved in public roles beyond the “domestic sphere” of the home and family but it helped to facilitate their wider involvement. During the war, some 2.75 million men left farm, factory, and family to fight. Approximately 40 percent of the male population between the ages of fifteen and forty-five were called for various periods to serve in the military. By the most conservative estimates, the war claimed a staggering 620,000 lives; some say 130,000 more. Whatever the exact number, it means that approximately a quarter of the men who were called to fight never returned alive. Many of those who did return came home permanently injured, crippled, damaged beyond usefulness.¹ The vacancies during the war were filled by



A wounded Civil War soldier

women. Some served as nurses; some moved into desk jobs, into charitable organizations; and others moved into factories and other public activities in support of the war effort. Adventism makes a good case study of this phenomenon. It

demonstrates how the movement was obliged to adjust to these new social developments. In distinctive ways, Adventism also contributed to the changing social attitudes and helped to make the wider involvement of other women in public life possible.

Ellen White as Role Model

While most early Adventist preachers were itinerant and expected to travel without their wives, James and Ellen White were an exception. Ellen constantly travelled with James. Only very occasionally would James travel for preaching appointments without his wife. But in the years following his severe stroke in 1865 Ellen, as occasion demanded, increasingly took the lead role and, after his further strokes of the early 1870s, she aggressively found her own voice and boldly asserted her own ministry independently of her husband.

Ellen’s role as a public speaker during the late 1860s, in fact, was a major drawcard for James. Not nearly as many people attended his meetings when he travelled alone. Ellen’s preaching during these years had significant novelty value. She reported to her twin sister Sarah in 1867, for example, about the experience of a congregation’s disappointment when she had to miss appointments at one set of meetings held in a grove in Johnston, Wisconsin. “James attended one appointment without me and came back much wearied and said the people were so thoroughly disappointed it was the last time he would go without me.” She related that people had come “from every direction to hear the woman talk, and our Sabbath-keeping people said if I had known how much they were disappointed I would have come [even] if I had been brought upon a bed.”² This response was typical. On other occasions when for some reason, usually sickness, Ellen failed to appear, “disappointment” and often disgruntled unhappiness was the response.³ This was true even for congregations of confirmed Sabbath keepers when little but denunciation,

rebuke, and scolding reproof were the main items on Ellen's preaching menu.

The ability to compete with male preachers Ellen White took as a mark of her success. At the 1867 Wisconsin meeting when, eventually, Ellen White did speak, she reported that she had the disadvantage of a strong wind blowing in the Pine and Oak trees sheltering the grove and "it was almost impossible to make the voice heard by all the people assembled." But she was able to speak for an hour and a half "clear and loud" and every word had been heard distinctly. "Not one man in a thousand" could have been heard as distinctly, she proudly noted, quoting impressed local observers who had made the observation.⁴ But Ellen was not just novelty value as a speaker. She was valued because she validated both for Adventist and for non-Adventist women the legitimacy of a woman's right to interpret scripture herself and to preach and speak authoritatively on it in public. In this same year (1867), just a month after the Wisconsin meetings, she was down in Kansas at a camp meeting at Tipton. Two Methodist women (one of whom was a former Quaker) attended her meetings for the express purpose of affirming their own developing convictions about women in ministry. They believed a woman could "exert a powerful influence by public labor in the cause of God." There had been much debate in their local Tipton community among pastors of several denominations and among their own congregants about the propriety of women preaching. The pastors and a large number of their parishioners opposed the idea and asserted that a woman "was entirely out of her place in the desk." The two women and the male clergy had come to the camp meeting to assess for themselves. "If I proved myself able to expound the scriptures to the edification of my hearers," reported Ellen, the women told her that the ministers would cease their opposition. The women came to hear Ellen White "feeling that much was at stake." They were not disappointed. "Such an impression was made on this



community as was never known before," reported Ellen to her son and daughter-in-law, "Prejudice against woman's speaking is gone."⁵ Ellen White's public work was facilitated by changing social attitudes—and her own increasingly public role in turn helped to further facilitate the change in nineteenth-century social attitudes. This was a symbiotic dynamic.

The Widening Scope for Other Women in Public Work

In the case of women being involved publicly in the life of the church, the recognition of Ellen White's distinctive gift and role could perhaps be seen as pre-disposing the movement to be more sympathetic to a wider public role for women in its mission. But the widening scope also came about because of a number of very practical and pragmatic factors. A primary reason related directly to the widening mission of the movement and the increasing complexity in the organizational structure occasioned by the planting of institutions. The reality was that there were simply not enough skilled males available to respond to the many needs. The urgency of the skill shortage was exacerbated by chronic and widespread illness and by the effects of overwork among the existing male leadership. James White's stroke in 1865 and his long illness epitomized the problem.

In regard to the shortage of suitable males, early Adventism also reflected the experience of older, more established church entities as they expanded their missionary work. For example, during this same mid-century period the Evangelical Church Missionary Society (CMS) based in London found it increasingly necessary and then advantageous to call upon

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women to serve as overseas missionaries because of a dearth of suitable males. Large numbers of women were assigned overseas, about a third of them talented, educated, single women and they were found to be more effective as missionaries in many cultures.⁶ And England had not experienced a Civil War.

Women in Publishing

Involving women in writing for Adventist periodicals was encouraged from the early 1850s. Annie Smith, initially employed as a proof reader, soon moved into a limited editorial role and found her voice through her poetry. Her voice gave expression to the bright hope and longing of the movement but also ventured at times into doctrinal formulations. Letters from women readers were occasionally published and this feature became more prominent in the 1860s. Such letters reflected on Christian experience and were primarily exhortatory in nature. In 1867, the *Review* was doubled in size from eight to sixteen pages in order to accommodate more news about the development of the church, more general news from society, and to facilitate the sharing of more correspondence from the growing membership. James White reported that the letters pages were among the more popular pages of the magazine.⁷ About 50 percent of letters published in the *Review* during the decade after the Civil War were authored by women writers.⁸ Adventist women were finding their voice.



Annie Smith

As the decade progressed, the pages of the *Review* increasingly became a platform from which the voices of women were heard on serious topics. While not taking the role of expounding detailed doctrinal arguments and polemical apologetic articles defend-

ing the church's teaching, women writers, nonetheless, began to contribute articles beyond the correspondence section. These were significant expository and exhortatory articles generally discussing aspects of the doctrine of sanctification. Usually between 800 and 1,000 words long, the articles ventured into Christian teaching, explaining the meaning of scriptural texts and drawing out spiritual insights about passages of scripture. These articles are noted for their distinctly feminine perspectives. Some women established themselves as regular contributors.

Mary Guilford, for example, contributed a range of pieces that included such approaches as an exposition of the verse, "Sanctify them though thy truth," John 17:17, an exhortatory piece based on 1 Timothy 1:6 entitled, "The Dangers of Wealth," and a discussion of the scriptural expression "a peculiar people."⁹ Another occasional contributor, Mary Howard, ventured deeper into doctrinal reflection and exposition, quoting Spurgeon and defending the biblical doctrine of the resurrection against a dissenting position taken in the *Bible Repository*, a contemporary religious journal.¹⁰ Emma Sturgess could offer a reflective exhortation on Psalm 23, citing numerous other scriptures, and Angela Edmunds would write a discussion on the doctrine of sanctification, creatively using an extended metaphor.¹¹ While these were not technical, detailed, doctrinal, or historical articles written in dogmatic or apologetic style, they were articles that were homiletic and expository and they dared to interpret scripture and to teach others—men and women—publicly. In the 1880s and 1890s, women authors became even more prominent in the pages of the *Review*, teaching on health, doctrine, and the Christian life.

As the work of the Adventist publishing Association expanded in the late 1860s, and the shortage of skilled males was felt more acutely, women increasingly found their place in editorial roles. In 1864 Adelia Patten (who later married evangelist Isaac Van Horn) had been appointed as editor of the *Youth's Instructor*



Adelia Van Horn

and served for three years. In 1871, Jennie Trembley was appointed as the Youth's Instructor editor after a short period with Goodloe Harper Bell, who had proved unsatisfactory.¹² Mina Fairfield was appointed assistant editor of the Health Reformer, a

thirty-two-page monthly, but carried most of the day-to-day work because James White, as the editor, was frequently absent. Other women in the publishing house found roles as composers, proof readers, book-keepers, mailing clerks, and book binders. In fact, in March 1871, the Review editor, Uriah Smith, boasted that of the thirty-one employees in the publishing office, twenty were female.¹³ This was truly a sign of the times.

Thirty-three-year-old Mrs. Adelia Van Horn (née Patten) was a striking example of a woman who was drawn into a more public role and she functioned as a role model for others. In her early twenties, she had lived in the White home, tutoring the boys and serving as an editorial assistant to Ellen. In some ways, she became the daughter that James and Ellen never had. In 1869, she was appointed as the executive secretary of the church's publishing business. In 1872, when she had to withdraw because of ill health, James White, in a formal notice of appreciation published in the Review, observed that Adelia's three years as Executive Secretary of the Review and Herald Publishing Association had been exceptional. Prior to her appointment as Association secretary she had, according to White, shown superior ability in the Review and Herald counting room. White lauded Adelia's astute accounting management of the Review and Herald during the previous three years and attributed to her much of the credit for doubling the assets of the company.

He further added that the thirty-three-year-old had kept the publishing house operating for long periods in his absence.

In consequence of the absence of the President of the Association a large share of his time, and his feebleness during almost the entire time he has been in Battle Creek, and from want of any other thorough business person connected with the Association, it has seemed necessary that her active penetrating mind should reach beyond her duties as secretary, and enter largely into those of the President, in having to a very great extent, the general supervision of the entire financial workings of the Association. In many cases, our most successful plans in the interests of the Association have been those of her own devising, which, when matured, she has submitted to the President for his opinion, and his acceptance. And although she might decline accepting the credit of any share of the prosperity which has attended the Publishing Association, in doubling its capital stock in three years, yet without the interest, and care, and labor, which she has given it, all the efforts of the President to improve upon a former administration would have amounted to but very little.¹⁴



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Van Horn was having to withdraw from her role because of ill health and White urged that his fellow trustees be generous with her severance pay. He thought it would not be inappropriate to give her, above her wages, "a tithe" of what she had earned for the association. (Her annual salary was set at \$520 and White was proposing that she be granted a bonus of approximately \$3,200).

What White did not mention in his valedictory piece for Adelia Van Horn was that she was also currently serving as the Treasurer of the General Conference and had for a time served as Association Secretary at the four-year-old Health Institute across the road from the publishing house. What is striking about this period in the church is the number of talented women who were appointed to very public offices in the young denomination. Anna Driscall, who had served as publishing book-keeper/cashier, was appointed as treasurer of the Publishing Association; Jennie Trembley, in addition to her role as *Instructor* editor, was appointed as secretary of the Michigan Conference; and Addie Merriam accepted the role of Michigan Conference treasurer. During the 1871 General Conference session, five women were given high profile administrative roles in Battle Creek.

Credentials and Licenses to Preach

Given this much more open attitude to the utilizing of women in public roles in the church it is probably not surprising that it was during this very same period that the church for the first time took action to formally acknowledge the public role of Ellen White as a pastor and preacher. At this same 1871 set of annual meetings, the Michigan Conference voted to issue Ellen White with ordination credentials. It was not right, it was argued, that she should be working as a minister and not be paid as one. The question appears to have not been whether it was appropriate or not to recognize her ministry but rather simply who should do it. The action read "That

Sr. Ellen G. White receive credentials from this Conference."¹⁵ That the role was a ministry role and not a "prophet" role that was intended seems clear from the wording adopted the following year when the credential was renewed by the Michigan Conference. The minutes read "on motion it was voted that credentials be renewed for the following ministers: James White, E. G. White, J. H. Waggoner . . . [and nine others]."¹⁶

The need for more preachers and evangelists to meet the rapidly expanding needs of the church had been a major concern of the General Conference session the previous year, 1870. Prior to that conference, plans had been laid for the first time to actually train and prepare new men and women beyond those who had been involved in the cause thus far. There was a need to expand the ministry ranks. A Bible Institute comprising professional development classes in preaching, writing, bible study, and other aspects of public ministerial work, were scheduled to follow the 1870 session and there were hopes for at least 100 men and women to attend. This was a major new initiative. "We hope this class will number 100 ardent men and women who are anxious to qualify themselves to teach the truth to others," wrote James White in announcing the plans.¹⁷ Again, a few weeks later, White appealed for "proper men and women, especially the young," to consecrate themselves "not simply as ministers and lecturers," but also as helpers in the various departments of the cause such as Sabbath School and colporteur work. The institute was held immediately following the General Conference session.

That women attended the institute and found their way into the preaching ministry seems clear from the presence for the first time of a number of names of women among those who were granted preaching licenses in various conferences in following years. One example is Sarah Hallock Lindsey of New York who had, as a single woman,



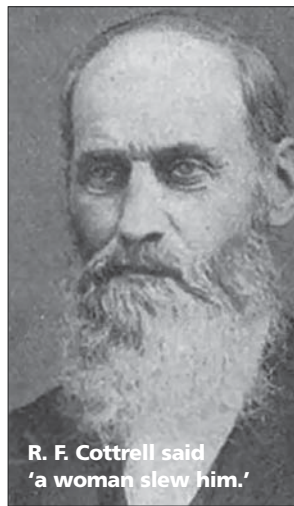
James White

begun preaching as a lay preacher in New York and Pennsylvania a number of years earlier, in the 1860s. Her letters of enquiry to the *Review* indicate that she was a well-educated, thoughtful young woman. She began preach-

ing after responding to a call through the pages of the *Review* for women to become involved in public ministry. This was, however, only after she had first sought clarification through the pages of the *Review* that such traditional texts as 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 and 1 Timothy 2:11 were not to be interpreted in such a way as to prohibit or prevent her.¹⁸ She had been successful in her evangelism and had baptized many and then, sometime between 1863 and 1866, she had married another lay preacher, John Lindsay. Surprisingly for the era, she retained her maiden name—another sign of the times! In recognition of her ministerial giftedness the New York Conference had, in either 1869 or 1870, granted her a ministerial license. She had conducted funerals, given bible studies, and delivered many public evangelistic addresses. In 1871, her husband John was also granted a ministerial license.¹⁹ Two other women in the conference were also apparently given, or at least considered for, licenses in 1871.²⁰

Sarah Hallock Lindsey was a well-informed and skilled minister who was able to ably engage in doctrinal discussions using arguments based on technical textual variants. If her preaching was like her writing it was clear, tightly-argued, and very persuasive.²¹ The local non-Adventist postmaster at Beaver Dam in New York, where she ran a series of meetings attended by many of the local town officials, was very impressed. He reported to

the *Review* that she represented the cause in a very effective manner with good results for the local church.²² Sarah, however, was not just a good preacher. She was also assertive and confident enough to respond to the challenge to a full-scale formal debate in June 1872, over the seventh-day Sabbath, when it could not be avoided. Experienced debater R. F. Cottrell, who witnessed the discussion, was highly impressed. The challenger was a first-day Adventist minister. Held outdoors in a grove and lasting all day, the debate concluded when Sarah Hallock Lindsey gently, and without personal attack, pushed her opponent into a corner. According to R. F. Cottrell, the challenger thus unexpectedly and abruptly closed up the discussion before all the points listed for debate had been covered. It seemed to Cottrell that the reason may have been to simply avoid embarrassment at



R. F. Cottrell said 'a woman slew him.'

having been beaten by a woman. "Like Abimelech at Thebes, who when mortally wounded by a piece of millstone cast from the hand of a woman, called hastily to his armor-bearer to slay him with the sword, lest men should say, 'a woman slew him.'"²³

The Importance of Social Context

Was the sudden interest in granting credentials and licenses to Adventist women preachers in 1871, and the broader administrative involvement of women in publishing and institutional work, simply an internal response to the rapid church growth and the dearth of qualified and willing male workers? Reading through the *Review* alone might tempt one to conclude so. In the recent past, the *Review* had published several short articles discussing the public role of women, and on scriptural grounds defended

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their right to preach.²⁴ The rationale for these articles had been primarily to defend Ellen White from criticism and to justify her public role in the church but of course, in doing so, they legitimized a public work for all women and that was clearly understood.²⁵ It should be observed, however, that even as such public work was encouraged it was with the proviso that women were to make sure they were not “usurping authority over men and becoming dictatorial in public assemblies.”²⁶ As Denis Fortin points out, James White’s cultural framework at this point was not so flexible that he could imagine or believe that a woman could function as being in charge of even just a church business meeting. Women exercising “authority” over males could not be entertained. Maintaining the principle of submission seemed critical for early Adventists in these first steps away from the patriarchal model even as the surrounding society itself, in this matter, was already having to adjust and in which the church would also have to follow. Women as headmistresses or principals of schools or as hospital administrators would have challenged this cultural framework of James White.²⁷

The *Review*, however, provides important clues to the wider social context around the church that constitutes the background for these new developments within Adventism. During this same period, editor Uriah Smith, who seems clearly to be a sympathizer with the women’s rights movement that became very active in this same decade following the Civil War, encourages his readers to be aware of respectable women’s rights literature. In January 1871, he drew the attention of readers to *The Woman’s Journal*. Published in Boston, Massachusetts, the magazine was devoted to the sole object of “advocating the equal rights of women, and especially the right of suffrage.” He was not put off by this but expressed interest in the issue of the suffrage movement because he thought it might have religious liberty implications (which he does

not bother to spell out). His mention of the price at only \$1.50 per annum was an encouragement to readers to subscribe—it was not expensive. Three months later, Smith published an endorsement of another monthly women’s journal, *Woman and Her Work*. This journal, Smith reported, was published by the Women’s Christian Association, the purpose of which was to assist “those women who labor in the gospel.” This journal’s mission focused on “enlarging the sphere of woman’s usefulness” especially in the department of



**Victoria
Woodhull**

“Christian charity.” But this was too narrow, Smith thought. “We are not among those who would hedge up before woman any avenue of labor or usefulness,” he wrote. He thought it appropriate that women should be able to work “in whatever

position her varied capacities may render her efficient,” and again, he mentioned the subscription price, hinting that it too was a journal worth subscribing to. *Review* readers were thus clearly made aware of the meritorious perspectives on woman’s rights issues then stirring up communities across the country, even as denominational leaders such as James White would find occasion to express disgust at the “free love” emphasis of women’s rights activists such as Victoria Woodhull.²⁸

Review readers who also subscribed to the denomination’s thirty-two-page monthly *Health Reformer* during the same period however, (and that included all of the denominational leadership and a large proportion of the church membership) would have been even more directly exposed to the debate about the involvement of women in public life. If they agreed with the editorial stance of that Adventist journal they would have been much

more disposed to the necessity of making a place for women in the public life and work of the church. Beginning in late 1869 and running through 1871 until early 1872, the *Health Reformer* had repeatedly reported on sensational stories in the national press of prejudice against women in medicine and in other professions. It took a firm editorial stance against such prejudicial conservative positions and vigorously supported the place of women in public roles. The *Health Reformer* provides a highly illuminating context for the new developments within the church. It is not unreasonable to conclude that General Conference actions fostering the public participation of women in the work of the church in 1871, and recognizing that involvement through credentialing and licensing, were to a considerable degree conditioned by such reports and by the palpable social change swirling around them. This is, again, a clear illustration of the fact that the church is both unavoidably shaped by social change and is, at the same time, inextricably involved in influencing social change.

The issue in the *Health Reformer* was the role of women in medicine and the resistance to social change. The first one or two women to be admitted to the study of medicine in the United States were admitted in New York and in Pennsylvania around 1850. Hostility and prejudice made the undertaking exceedingly difficult. Later women-only colleges and hospitals were established in Boston, New York and Philadelphia in order to cope with the prejudice and make the path for women into the profession easier. For those women who undertook the journey it was painful, and obtaining adequate clinical practice was particularly difficult, for it placed them in direct competition with men for what was a limited resource. In the fall of 1869, male medical students at Pennsylvania University had been exceptionally rude, insulting their women colleagues in classrooms and mobbing them in the streets in



Dr. Phoebe Lamson

protest over their access to scarce clinical sites. The professors of medicine in the university had sided with the male students and defended them, and as a result, newspapers all over the country and internationally reported the story.²⁹

Subsequently, the Philadelphia Medical Society at its June 1870 meeting, formally voted in support of the male medical faculty and determined to expel from their membership any doctor who subsequently worked professionally with or associated with a woman physician. They would not recognize or admit either female or African-American physicians. They took this stance on the grounds that woman has too much “delicacy,” too little intellect, and African-Americans had not the right kind of anatomy supposedly “in the heel and shin.”³⁰ The United States National Medical Association soon followed the same policy. The New York State medical establishment followed Philadelphia shortly afterwards, after similar episodes of boorish behavior on the part of male students to their female counterparts, and newspapers around the country again erupted in vigorous denunciation and indignation both for and against. In 1870, the University of Michigan in Lansing took the step of banning the admission of women students into medicine, as did the new university opened the same year in Missouri. The role of women in the professions had become a topic of heated national debate—just at the time of Adventism’s “feminist spring.” The Adventist’s *Health Reformer* reported all this in detail and the editor lent his voice vigorously to the protests and in support of a fair hearing for women.³¹ “Women are slowly, but

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surely, working their way into the professions of medicine, divinity, and law, and into numerous industrial avocations heretofore occupied with rare exceptions, by men alone," he observed. "Whether her 'sphere' should be ultimately so enlarged to include voting and holding office, we do not propose to discuss in the *Reformer*," he added, but it was the position of the *Health Reformer* that when she becomes healthy, self-reliant, and independent, she should be able "to decide for herself her political privileges and social status."³² This was in fact a backhanded



endorsement of suffrage. The editor concluded that "nothing is clearer than the fact that women are rapidly working their way into the medical profession, and nothing is surer than the fact that they will stay there." The magazine looked forward to the day when the healing art would be "mainly in the hands of educated and competent women."³³ In the meantime, under any and all circumstances she should be entitled to "respectful attention" and women's rights activists should be given fair and accurate reporting. The editor singled out for disdain those journals like the *New York Tribune* who misstated, perverted, and misrepresented the advocates of "Women's rights."

For the rest of the year, the *Adventist's Health Reformer* took pains to notice advances and progress in the participation of women in the medical field, both in North America and overseas, citing cases of progress in France, Scotland, and London as examples.³⁴ The journal also noted approvingly the appointment of women physicians to the role of City Physician in a number of important American

states, roles where they were expected to exercise authority over men.³⁵ The magazine reported favorably on those women who successfully broke through barriers. A woman physician, Dr. M. Webster, who won a prize for her clinically supported research, was applauded enthusiastically in the *Reformer*, even if she had to at first get recognition by using a pseudonym.³⁶

Dr. Trall's alternative therapy Bellevue College, in New York, was totally committed to the involvement of women in medicine, as was Dr. Caleb Jackson's Home on the Hill institute in Danville, both of which were the direct models for Adventist health care. The Adventist's Health Institute which opened in Battle Creek in 1866 had, by 1869, employed two women physicians, Pheobe Lamson and a Mrs. Chamberlain, and prominently involved them in the delivery of health education and health care. Dr. Phoebe Lamson established herself as a much-quoted authority on health matters. Their articles and columns were regularly featured in the *Health Reformer*, as were their authoritative answers to questions. And they were both credentialed and addressed as "Doctor," not as "commissioned" physician.

Conclusion

The wider social context beyond the confines of the early Adventist church helps to explain the "feminist spring" for women, in the public life of the church itself, in the decade after the close of the Civil War. Furthermore, it is a matter worthy of note that the Advent movement readily embraced the recognition and employment of both woman physicians and women preachers at the same time, in 1869–1871, in the face of significant societal resistance but following the lead of others who were even more progressive. In the decade after the Civil War, Adventists were at least in step with the times in helping women find their voice in ministry and in medicine. It is a matter of huge irony why the embrace of women physicians in the pub-

lic life of the church, and their treatment on equal terms with men soon became universal practice and their numbers multiplied to bless the church, while women in ministry and in the administration of the church flourished for a time and wilted away to almost nothing in the years after the first World War. The late nineteenth-century “feminist spring” in medicine blossomed into a full summer. No one now dares suggest that “Dr.” is a title only to be borne by males. On the other hand, the embrace of women in ministry and in administration continued as a very cool and sporadic “feminist spring,” skipped summer altogether, and then descended into a prolonged winter. The spring was to prove as ephemeral as the recent “Arab Spring.”

Now, after a further 150 years, there is still much prejudice and resistance to overcome. Perhaps the social change now swirling around the church may yet provide urgency enough for it to see that for it to be effective in its mission in Western contemporary society it simply and absolutely must adapt. It must enable women to exercise their gifts, find their voices, and appropriately recognize and affirm their ministerial roles. It has now become not just a social necessity but a moral issue. Mission is at stake. ■

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edited, with Woodrow Whidden, a Festschrift for George Knight entitled *Adventist Maverick* (2014). He is married to Kendra Haloviak Valentine, who also teaches at La Sierra University, and enjoys visiting his Kiwi homeland with him.

References

1. Of a total population of approximately 31 million, in 1860, about 7.5 million were aged between 15 and 45. Some scholars estimate on the basis of statistical analysis of census data that there were 750,000 Civil War deaths and point out that they exceeded the cumulative total of all other US war deaths from that time to the present. James McPherson, *The War that Forged a Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 2, 48.
2. EGW to Stephen and Sarah Belden, Sep. 24, 1867, EGWE-DC
3. See *Review and Herald* (Aug 24, and Oct. 26, 1869).
4. Ibid.
5. EGW to Edson and Emma White, Oct. 1879 (Ltr. 16, 1870); *Review and Herald* (Nov. 1, 1870): 156.
6. Sean Gill, *Women and the Church of England* (London: SPL, 1994), 173, ff. By 1909, more than 50% of CMS missionary personnel serving overseas were women and 438 of the total of 1,390 personnel were single women.
7. James White, “Review,” *Review and Herald* (Oct. 1, 1870): 252.
8. See for example, *Review and Herald* (Oct. 27, Nov. 3, and Nov. 10, 1868).
9. *Review and Herald* (May 16, 1871): 175; (Sep. 27, 1870): 114; (Jan. 14, 1873): 39.
10. Mary Howard, “Christ the Life,” *Review and Herald* (Jan., 1869): 34.
11. E. Sturgess, “He Restoresh my Soul,” *Review and Herald* (Aug. 9, 1870): 59; Angelia Edmunds, “Cleansing the Heart,” *Review and Herald* (Mar. 28, 1871): 115.
12. Nine of the twelve editors who produced the magazine during its first thirty years (1852–1882) were women.
13. *Review and Herald* (Mar. 21, 1871): 96.
14. *Review and Herald* (Nov. 12, 1872): 176.
15. “Michigan Conference of S. D. Adventists,” *Review and Herald* (Feb. 14, 1871): 69. Uriah Smith was the session chair and Adelia’s husband, Isaac van Horn, the secretary.
16. *Review and Herald* (Sep. 10, 1872): 102. Ellen White was never “set apart” by laying hands upon her in a formal religious ceremony by the church. Conference delegates simply formally recognized and affirmed her call to ministry by the raising of hands to approve the

**Maintaining
the principle of
submission
seemed critical
for early
Adventists in
these first
steps away
from the
patriarchal
model.**

**They took this
stance on
the grounds
that woman has
too much
“delicacy,” too
little intellect,
and African-
Americans had
not the right
kind of anatomy
supposedly
“in the heel
and shin.”**

motion of recognition by the Michigan Conference session and she was subsequently employed and remunerated as an ordained minister. It was only in later life Ellen White would assert that she had been “ordained” by God to emphasize the point that her call was not dependent on the recognition of a committee, though of course her work would not have been possible without the validation of her call by her faith community.

17. “Course of Lectures,” *Review and Herald* (Jan. 31, 1871): 56.

18. B. F. Robbins, “To the Female Disciples in the Third Angel’s Message,” *Review and Herald* (Dec. 8, 1859). Robbins suggested that it was the “sectarian” background from which many early Adventists had come that caused them to have “prejudice against woman’s efforts and labors in the church,” and that this discouraged many women from ministerial endeavor. See also “Sarah A. Hallock,” *Review and Herald* (Jan. 12, 1860).

19. The action of the Conference session in 1871 was to “renew” her license. *Review and Herald* (Sep. 12, 1871): 102.

20. Brian Strayer, “Sarah A Hallock Lindsey: Advent Preacher on the Southern Tier,” *Adventist Heritage* 11:2 (Fall, 1986): 16–23. See also Josephine Benton, *Ibid.*, 111, 112.

21. “That One Text,” *Review and Herald* (Sep. 19, 1871): 107.

22. *Review and Herald* (Nov. 14, 1871).

23. “Discussion at Woodhull, N. Y.,” *Review and Herald* (Jun. 25, 1872): 14

24. See for example, “Shall Women Speak in Church,” *Review and Herald* (Mar. 14, 1871): 94; I. Fetterhoof, *Review and Herald* (Apr. 8, 1871): 58.

25. Beverly Beem and Ginger Hanks Harwood read their way through every issue of the *Review* and helpfully explain how early Adventist leaders interpreted and used scripture beneath its plain superficial meaning in order to justify the public role of Ellen White. “‘Your Daughters Shall Prophesy’: James White, Uriah Smith, and the ‘Triumphant Vindication of The Right of The Sisters’ to Preach,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* Vol. 43, No. 1 (2005): 41–58. Also Beverly Beem and Ginger Hanks Harwood, “‘Quench not the Spirit; Despise not Prophesying. Prove all Things. Hold Fast that which is Good’: Early Adventist Hermeneutics, Paul’s Teachings, and Women’s Spiritual Leadership,” *Adventism and*

Adventist History: Sesquicentennial Reflections, (General Conference Archives: Silver Spring, MD, January 6, 2014).

26. “Shall Women Speak in Church,” *Review and Herald* (Mar. 14, 1871): 94;

27. Denis Fortin, *Ibid.*, 90. A woman serving as a school headmaster would have fractured James White’s cultural framework on this point. The Civil War, however, facilitated a change in cultural attitudes in this arena as well. Phebe Sudlow, for example, was first appointed principal of a public school in Davenport, Iowa, in 1861, because so many men had gone to war and there were none available for the post. In 1874, she was subsequently appointed the superintendent of a public school district in Davenport, the first woman superintendent to be so appointed in the United States. In this role, she exercised considerable authority over men. The traditional boundaries for “exercising authority” were of necessity being stretched in the wider society White inhabited. See http://www.iptv.org/iowapathways/mypath.cfm?ounid=ob_000175

28. “There were those women, doubtless, in the apostle’s day as well as in ours, who could prate about “Women’s Rights” as glibly, if not as filthily, as the notorious Victoria Woodhull.” James White, “Women in the Church,” *Review and Herald* (May 29, 1879): 172.

29. *Health Reformer* (May 1870): 201, 202; (June.1870): 224, 225.

30. *Health Reformer* (Aug. 1870): 27.

31. *Health Reformer* (Sep. 1870): 44.

32. *Health Reformer* (Jan. 1870): 122.

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Health Reformer* (Sep. 1870): 44.

35. *Health Reformer* (May, 1870): 134.

36. Dr. Webster had succeeded in having her research articles accepted for publication in the *New York Medical Gazette* only using by a male nom-de-plume.