

Women Ministries in the Church

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Statement of Purpose

This article's purpose is to help find common ground on which we can effectively worship and work toward the establishment of Christ's kingdom with believers who have different opinions about the role of women in ministry. Its primary target is members of the Reorganization, although its scope includes all believers, especially believers of the latter-day message.

The article examines the topic of women ministries from our vantage point. We place special significance on both the literal meaning of the scriptures and historical precedent. Others have different vantage points. We understand that ours is not inherently better. It is just ours.

We may not be able to resolve the differences regarding the use of women in ministry, but we can work to achieve combined fellowship and worship among those who embrace the restored gospel. One important step toward this goal is to foster both mutual respect regarding women's ministries and common consent about their role in combined worship activities.

This article explains our views concerning women in ministry and describes the limits to which we can move. Our hope is to give as much latitude to women who want to serve and still honor the precepts that we dearly hold, not necessarily to persuade opponents to our view. We will be successful if we can achieve ways in which all believers can comfortably worship while still respecting the ministry of women.

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1. The latter-day church has always been progressive in its social views. On the other hand, its doctrine has been simple and traditional. Since the church is the restoration of the past pristine principles taught by Jesus and proclaimed by His apostles, it restored and now preserves the original apostolic teachings. However, it consistently advocated advanced social relationships. Although Jesus built His church during His first advent in an empire that upheld slavery, He promised freedom and equality to all. Jesus said, "*If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed*" (John 8:36). The apostles bore the same message. Paul wrote, "*Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free*" (Gal 5:1). Latter-day revelation bears the same theme: "*Therefore, it is not right that any man should be in bondage one to another*" (D&C98:10g).

2. Christian freedom makes believers equal with each other. Jesus taught that those who are resurrected "*are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection*" (Lu 20:36). Saints are not only equal to the angels, but they are joint-heirs with Jesus. Paul wrote, "*We are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ*" (Rom 8:16-17). Jesus' followers are fellow partakers of celestial glory with their Savior and King. If baptism makes all members equal, it must strip away any social order imposed by the outside society. Paul admonished, "*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there*

is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28).

3. **Jesus bestows wonderful gifts equally on His followers.** The Savior revealed that His Father blesses all creation, both wicked and righteous people. All are His children, although many are wayward. Jesus taught, *“Your Father who is in heaven . . . maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.* (Matt 5:47). The reason that God blesses both good and bad people is that *“some of the wicked are brought to penitence by considering these facts, and amend their impiety.”*¹ While the Lord confers temporal blessing on all, He reserves spiritual gifts for His disciples. He said, *“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give good gifts, through the Holy Spirit, to them who ask him”* (Lu 11:14). Paul enumerated many of those spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:8-10). They include the word of wisdom, knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, the working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits—or beholding of angels—tongues and interpretation of tongues. These gifts of the Holy Spirit are given to all the repentant, regardless of race, status, sex or age. Their purpose is to edify every believer as they are exercised within the church. Paul wrote, *“The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal”* (1 Cor 12:7).

4. **Liberty in Jesus is not an excuse to pursue personal passions or disturb the established order.** Some suppose that once people are saved from sin, they are free to do anything they please. Paul warned, *“Use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh”* (Gal 5:13). Elsewhere, he answered a rhetorical question after asking it: *“Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid”* (Rom 6:1-2). Jesus’ redemption freed His followers from the bondage of sin. Jesus noted, *“Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin”* (John 8:34). Peter explained, *“For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage”* (2 P 2:19). Our Savior suffered on the cross not only to take away the consequence of sin, but He also died to release us from sin altogether. Those who choose to follow Jesus can leave a life of sin. Those liberated by Christ who afterwards return to a life of sin freely reenter sin’s bondage. Paul taught, *“After that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?”* (Gal 4:9).

5. **Jesus liberates His people from sin, allowing them to serve Him by serving others.** Peter taught that members should not use *“your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God”* (1P 2:16). Baptized members are liberated from sin’s addiction so that they can serve God. Service of God is demonstrated in service to others. King Benjamin taught, *“When ye are in the service of your fellow beings, ye are only in the service of your God”* (Mos 1:49). If church members are fellow participants with Jesus in glory, then they are also co-laborers with Him in serving others. Paul wrote, *“Ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another”* (Gal 5:13).

6. **True Christians serve others whatever their social standing might be.** Jesus, who is both Creator and King, left celestial glory to endure our humiliating condition and bear our sins on Calvary’s cruel cross. Although He was greatest, He was the servant of all. Those *“taking up”* (Matt 16:25) the Savior’s cross to follow Jesus promise to sacrifice personal wills in the

¹ Augustine, *City of God*, Bk. 1, Ch. 8, Penguin Books, NY, 1972, p. 13.

service of others. Each believer can become a servant of all. Jesus had taught, “*He that is greatest among you shall be your servant*” (Mat 23:8). Since each member is called to be a servant, the early Christians were admonished to serve others regardless of their social standing, even if it be a bonded servant.

7. Early Christians did not seek liberty from their social standings, but served in them.

Servants continued to serve their masters. Peter wrote, “*Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the forward*” (1P 2:18). Children still obeyed their parents. Paul advised, “*Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right*” (Eph 6:1). Citizens continued to respect their governors and keep civil laws. Paul wrote, “*Be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work*” (Titus 3:1). Wives remained obligated to honor their husbands, while husbands were still expected to love their wives. The apostle said, “*Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it*” (Eph 5:24-25). And members continued to live moral, virtuous lives. Peter noted that God “*hath called us to glory and virtue*” (2P 1:3).

8. Christians served in the church as their social obligations permitted. Every member, both men and women—and children, too—was free to exercise the gifts of the Spirit according to their faith. Heavenly gifts and the assurance that they bring obligate a Christian to invite others to Christ. Peter wrote, “*Be ready always to give an answer with meekness and fear to every man that asketh of you a reason for the hope that is in you*” (1P 3:15). Women shared this requirement equally with men. Paul specifically instructed older women to “*teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed*” (Titus 2:4-5). Women were not only teachers of female believers, but they shared their testimony with unbelieving women. Some accompanied the missionary teams that took the gospel into the world. The Bible records that many apostles took their wives with them (1 Cor 9:3). Philip took Marianne as an associate.² Normally, missionary bands were composed of several people, both men and women (Phil 4:3), so that the responsibility for the various tasks, from providing life's necessities to giving ministry, could be more equally borne. The women accompanying the apostles were called *sisters*, but were not necessarily related to them.³ Their presence freed the apostles to preach the gospel without undue concern for their physical needs.

9. These women assistants provided a source of ministry that the apostles themselves could not fulfill. According to the custom of the pagans, young women dedicated to their religion served as temple virgins.⁴ By the age of the apostles, temple attendants were housed in what were called the *women's quarters*. Men could not enter them without arousing suspicion. This prohibition, however, did not prevent the sisters of the apostles from bearing their testimonies in the women's quarters, or anywhere else women might gather. Clement of Alexandria (170 AD) explained that in this way the women assistants were the apostles' “*fellow*

²Roger Gryson; *The Ministry Of Women In The Early Church*; Translated by Jean LaPorte and Mary Louise Hall; The Liturgical Press; Collegeville, Minn; 1976; p 3.

³Will Durant; *Story Of Civilization*, Vol 3, *Cesar And Christ*; Shuster and Shuster; NY, NY; 1944; p 577.

⁴Alexander Hislop; *The Two Babylons*; Loizeaux Brothers; Neptune, NJ; 1959; p 223.

ministers in dealing with housewives. It was through them that the Lord's teaching penetrated also the women's quarters without any scandal being aroused."⁵ Three centuries later, John Chrysostom, while looking back to this time, envied these women's dedication. He described them: "*For the women of those days were more spirited than lions, sharing with the Apostles their labors for the Gospel's sake. In this way they went traveling with them, and also performed all other ministries. And even in Christ's day there followed him women, which ministered unto Him of their substance, and waited upon the Teacher.*"⁶

10. The apostolic church was fortunate to have a large number of women servants.

While some women assisted the apostles as traveling ministers, others served in newly-founded congregations. Converts from the women's quarters could not remain housed among the pagans, for "*what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?*" (2 Cor 6:15) Having no other means of support, these converts became dependent upon the saints' charity. Paul had charged the church to care for what he called "*widows indeed*" (1Tim 5:3). These women were bound together into a sisterhood (2 Tim 5:3-17) which eventually developed into the order of widows. At first, some needy widows lived with more affluent women, but in time, quarters for them were established in each locality. In fact, within two centuries the convents overflowed with residents. John Chrysostom tells that the number at Antioch alone exceeded 3000.⁷ The responsibility for visiting and providing care to these women fell upon other women. Propriety still prevented men from visiting any women's quarters, whether pagan or Christian.

11. Women provided two types of ministry to those residing in the women's quarters.

First, they taught the gospel, instructing non-members in the principles of salvation and teaching members their Christian duties. Second, they distributed charities. Justin (135) tells us that at each sacrament service the bishop received an oblation offering⁸ to be given to orphans and widows. Since neither the bishop nor deacons could personally distribute the oblation funds in the women's quarters, women did the job. These women used their own discretion, subject of course to the advice of the bishop, and sometimes endured complaints from widows who felt they received too little. Often, women who once received oblation funds served other women if and when their financial circumstances improved. The church quickly developed a number of capable women ministers.

12. The order of widows existed in the early Christian church. The first organization of widows seemed to be composed of older women who had given long service to the saints, such as accompanying missionary teams or serving in local congregations. Some had become dependent on the church's generosity and lived in the women's quarters. Their organization was founded on apostle Paul's advice: "*Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, well reported of for good works; if she have brought*

⁵Clement of Alexandria; *Stromata* 3:6, as quoted in Gryson; p 30.

⁶John Chrysostom; *Homily On Romans*, 30 as quoted in *Nicean And Post-Nicean Fathers*; Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Grand Rapids, Michigan; 1978; Vol 11, p 554.

⁷Joan Morris; *Against Nature And God: The History Of Women With Clergical Ordination And The Order Of Bishops*; Mowbrays; 1973; p 7.

⁸Justin; *First Apology*, Ch 67 as quoted in *Ante-Nicean Fathers*, vol 1; Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Grand Rapids, Michigan; 1986; p 186.

up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' clothes, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work" (1 Tim 5:9-10). The age requirement varied according to time and place. Tertullian (205 AD) noted that women as young as 20 were admitted to the order in Africa,⁹ but a century later the minimum was 40 in Syria.¹⁰ Women composing this order "*were allowed to teach other women; to visit women in pagan households where men teachers would not be able to reach them; and to visit and attend the sick.*"¹¹ They also served as "*door keepers on the side of the church on which the women sat.*"¹² Clement of Alexandria called the sisters who accompanied the apostles *syndakonous*, literally fellow-deacons. Paul used similar language in referring to women servants (Rom 16:1). The terms fellow-labors, fellow-ministers and fellow-servants appear in the Bible several times in reference to both men and women, applying the word *diakonos*, or *deacon*, to both sexes.

13. **Capable women servants supervised other women.** If not originally done, these supervising women were called deaconess. According to one noted researcher, some women were already called deaconess by 50-60 AD.¹³ In Egypt, supervisors of widows were called *widows who sit up front* or *widows in office*¹⁴ because they sat on the rostrum during worship services.¹⁵ Deaconesses or women in office were placed in charge of the widows. The responsibilities of these women servants, or deaconesses, included distributing charities among the widows and assisting women during their baptism. A third-century text explains: "*When she who is being baptized has come up from the water, let the deaconess receive her, and teach and instruct her how the seal of baptism ought to be (kept) unbroken in purity and holiness.*"¹⁶ This Syrian text is the first document to canonize the office of deaconess and provide for her appointment. It prohibited an ordination of a deaconess, although a document written about two centuries later authorized one.¹⁷

14. **Women ministered in a similar fashion in the Restoration.** Sarah Granger Kimball gathered a few women to sew clothes for workers on the Nauvoo Temple. She asked one of them, Eliza Snow, to write a constitution. They presented it to Joseph Smith for his consideration. According to Ms. Snow, Joseph thought the idea was good, but too limited. He voluntarily offered to properly organize the women, saying "*I will organize the women under the priesthood after a pattern of the priesthood.*"¹⁸ On March 17, 1842, Joseph Smith organized the Female Relief Society. He stated its purpose: "*That the Society of Sisters might provoke the brethren to good works in looking to the wants of the poor—searching after objects of charity,*

⁹ Tertullian, *On the Veiling of Virgins*, Ch. 9 As quoted in ANF 4:33.

¹⁰ *Didascalia Apostolorum*, Translated by R. Hugh Connolly, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, Norwich, England, 1969, p. 130.

¹¹ A. Maude Royden, *The Church and Women*, George H. Doran Company, 1924, p. 58.

¹² Royden, p. 58.

¹³ Gryson, p 3.

¹⁴ Jean LaPorte, *The Role of Women in Early Christianity*, The Edward Mellen Press, NY, 1982, p. 126.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p 147.

¹⁷ *Apostolic Constitution*, Bk. 8, Sec. 3, Ch. 20, as quoted in ANF 7:492.

¹⁸ Sarah Granger Kimball, "Auto-Biography," "Woman's Exponent" vol. 12, no. 7 (September 1, 1883): 51.

and in administering to their wants—to assist; by correcting the morals and strengthening the virtues of the female community.”¹⁹ The society elected Emma Smith as its president. She and her counselors, Sarah Cleveland and Elizabeth Whitney, were ordained to their offices by John Taylor.

15. **Women also ministered in the Reorganization.** Emma Burton, the wife of Joseph Burton, a seventy and missionary in the Reorganization, was set apart to be a co-laborer with her husband in the mission field.²⁰ In the Society Islands, she guided the translation of the Doctrine and Covenants into Tahitian. She also began a periodical entitled *Te Orometua* “to win converts and train them in the new faith.”²¹ In her autobiography, Emma described some of her duties in the South Seas: “I had my part, was superintendent of the Sunday School Association of the South Seas Island District, and of the Religio work, made all the Book of Mormon lessons while I was there, and the Sunday School lessons, helped print, and all that.”²² Her role in the mission was significant. In 1905, she signed a letter under the title “Superintendent of the South Sea Islands District.”²³ Sister Burton was not alone in such ministries. According to her, all the missionary wives undertook specific ministries. She wrote, “Every missionary sister had one branch of work, besides the ordinary.”²⁴ Alice Case, the wife of Hubert Case, “wrote question books and answers for the Sunday School.”²⁵

16. **A few women were set apart for their ministry.** Sisters Burton and Case were set apart by the laying on of hands. Alice Case and her husband, Hubert were set apart as missionaries by Joseph III.²⁶ During an administration, Joseph Burton set apart his wife Emma for two ministries. He said, “Emma, I seal upon thee the privileges and blessings of the Melchisedec Priesthood.” One of Emma’s ministries “was with the sick and afflicted.”²⁷ Her prayer for Mary Ann Barr healed the sister from an infected tooth that swelled her jaw and neck, threatening suffocation.²⁸ Two or three years before the Burtons’ mission to Tahiti, Elder Daniel Mills spoke in prophecy to Emma, saying, in part, “Many shall be made to rejoice at thy hands.”²⁹ While in the South Seas, Sister Burton laid her hands on another woman who was suffering from sciatic rheumatism, but she did not anoint. The lady was healed.³⁰ Emma explained her understanding of this blessing to President Fred M. Smith: “There was no priesthood conferred, and very many enjoy the privileges and blessing of the priesthood, even though they are not sealed upon them,

¹⁹ Minutes of the Nauvoo Relief Society, RLDS Archives, March 17, 1842, p. 6.

²⁰ Emma Burton; Letter to F.M. Smith; February 19, 1919; RLDS Archives; p 21, f17.

²¹ John Garrett, *Footsteps in the Sea: Christianity in Oceania to World War II*; WCC Publications; Geneva Switzerland; 1992; p 249.

²² Emma Burton; *Beatrice Whitherspoon*; Herald House; Independence, MO; 1970 Reprint; p 373.

²³ Garrett, p 248.

²⁴ Burton; *Beatrice Whitherspoon*; p 368.

²⁵ *Saints’ Herald*; vol 100, No 6; February 9, 1953; p 131.

²⁶ *Saints’ Herald*; vol 96, no 11; March 12, 1949; p 250.

²⁷ Burton; *Beatrice Whitherspoon*; p 368.

²⁸ Burton; *Beatrice Whitherspoon*; p 206.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Emma Burton Spiritual Healer, *Restoration Studies II*, p.120.

one of which is to accompany the elder on his missions and another of mine was the gift of healing."³¹ The *Saints' Herald* editors answered a question about the legality of ordaining a woman to heal. While the answer was negative, it observed, "*We do not doubt the propriety of sisters applying oil and praying for other sisters, and even others, in certain times of necessity . . . but the law provides that the elders shall be sent for to anoint and lay hands on the sick.*"³²

17. **Emma Smith was also set apart to a ministry.** Shortly after the organization of the church, the Lord told the Elect Lady what her ministry was: "*The office of thy calling shall be for a comfort unto my servant Joseph Smith, Jr., thy husband*" (D&C 24:2a). In addition to this wifely obligation, Emma Smith was divinely called to minister to the church: "*Thou shalt be ordained under his [Joseph Smith's] hand to expound Scriptures, and to exhort the church, according as it shall be given thee by my Spirit; for he shall lay his hands upon thee, and thou shalt receive the Holy Ghost, and thy time shall be given to writing, and to learning much*" (D&C 24:2c). The Lord added another task: "*It shall be given thee, also, to make a selection of sacred hymns*" (D&C 24:3b). Although baptized a month before,³³ Emma was not confirmed at the time of this revelation because a mob had interfered with the baptismal service before any confirmations could occur. Emma's confirmation may be considered her ordination. Joseph stated that she was ordained to her duties about the time of the revelation.³⁴ Nevertheless, Joseph implied that Emma's divine call was not completely fulfilled until she was ordained President of the Nauvoo Relief Society. Joseph explained that her description as an elect lady destined her to preside. The Society's minutes record, "*President Smith read the Revelation to Emma Smith, from the book of Doctrine and Covenants; and stated that she was ordained at the time the Revelation was given, to expound the scriptures to all; and to teach the female part of community; and that not she alone, but others, may attain to the same blessings. – The 2nd Epistle of John, 1st verse, was then read to show that respect was there had to the same thing, and that why she was called an Elect lady is because [she was] elected to preside.*"³⁵

18. **Emma Smith was not the only person set apart to administrative duties.** As already noted, Emma and her two counselors, Sarah Cleveland and Elizabeth Whitney were set apart by John Taylor,³⁶ in accordance with Joseph's opening instructions. President Smith also told the Society to set apart all its officers. Earlier in their meeting, the Palmyra Seer "*proposed that the Sisters elect a presiding officer to preside over them, and let that presiding officer choose two counselors to assist in the duties of her office – that he would ordain them to preside over the Society – and let them preside just as [the] Presidency preside over the church: and if they need his instruction ask him, will give it from time to time. Let this Presidency serve as a constitution – all their decisions be considered law, and acted upon as such. If any Officers are wanted to*

³¹ Emma Burton; Letter to F.M. Smith; RLDS Archives; p 21, f17.

³² *Saints' Herald*, Vol. 37, No. 33, August 16, 1890, p. 531.

³³ *The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, vol 1; Herald House; Independence, MO; 1967; p 95.

³⁴ Minutes of the Nauvoo Relief Society, March 17, 1842, RLDS Archives.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

carry out the designs of the institution, let them be appointed and set apart, as Deacons, Teachers, &C. are among us.”³⁷ As already noted, the setting apart of women to specific duties was continued in the Reorganization.

19. **The women of the Nauvoo Relief Society laid hands on the sick for healing.** This ministry caused some to suppose that the women who had been set apart were ordained to priesthood authority. Joseph came to a meeting of the Relief Society on April 28, 1842 to correct that growing misconception. Joseph told the ladies, “*The purport of his being present on the occasion was, to make observations respecting the Priesthood, and give instructions for the benefit of the Society.*”³⁸ Joseph explained the difference between the various offices and implied that those holding offices in the Society should not aspire to rights and duties contained in the priesthood offices. The minutes of the meeting state that Joseph gave “*instructions respecting the different offices, and the necessity of every individual acting in the sphere allotted him or her; and filling the several offices to which they were appointed, [adding] for a person to be aspiring to other stations than appointed of God – that it was better for individuals to magnify their respective callings, and wait patiently till God shall say to them – come up higher.*”³⁹ After this instruction, Joseph affirmed the right of those women who were laying their hands on the sick. After reading the Savior’s commission, which he understood was given to all the disciples, both men and women, promising, “*They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover*” (Mark 16:19), Joseph said, “*If the sisters should have faith to heal the sick let all hold their tongues.*”⁴⁰ The minutes include a description of the rest of President Smith’s remarks: “*Respecting the female laying on hands, he further remarked, there could be no devils in it if God gave his sanction by healing – that there (p. 33) could be no more sin in any female laying hands on the sick then in wetting the face with water—that it is no sin for anybody to do it that has faith or if the sick has faith to be heal’d by the administration.*”⁴¹ The Reorganized Church did not fully consent to Joseph’s instruction. In 1871, it passed a resolution limiting administrations by the laying on of hands to the Melchisedec Priesthood.⁴² The limiting resolution did not preclude other ministries to which women can be set apart and it was ignored at times.

20. **Women’s ministries did not include priesthood responsibilities.** Although a few deaconesses are mentioned in many extant early Christian writings, women priesthood is not addressed until the time of Montanus and his heresy, about 180 AD. Montanus called two women to serve as prophetesses. They brought oracles to guide that heretical sect. Tertullian, a contemporary and eventual convert to the heresy wrote, “*The very women of these heretics, how wanton they are! For they are bold enough to teach, to dispute, to enact exorcisms, to undertake cures—it may be even to baptize.*”⁴³ Two centuries later, Epiphanius, recorded that “*among them*

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Minutes of the Nauvoo Relief Society, April 28, 1842, RLDS Archives.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 32-33.

⁴² GCR 132.

⁴³ Tertullian; *On Perscription Against Heretics*, Ch 41 as quoted in *Ante-Nicean Fathers*, Vol 3, p 263.

there are women-bishops and women-presbyters."⁴⁴ Orthodox Christianity refused to ordain women to any priesthood office. Tertullian wrote, *"It is not permitted to a woman to speak in the church; but neither (is it permitted her) to teach, nor to baptize, nor to offer, nor to claim herself a lot in any manly function, not to say (in any) sacerdotal office."*⁴⁵ Around 200, Didymus the Blind, while commenting on the admonition of Paul, explained, *"He does not permit a woman to write books imprudently, on her own authority, nor teach in the assemblies."*⁴⁶ Another contemporary, Origen, taught that *"it is not becoming for a woman to be a teacher of men; but they must train young women in chastity and love of their husbands and their children."*⁴⁷ Over a century later John Chrysostom echoed the same sentiment. While commenting on Paul's injunctions, he says, *"He means to hinder her from publicly coming forward, and from the seat of the Bema [Pulpit]."*⁴⁸ Elsewhere, he emphasized, *"This declaration concerns teaching from the pulpit and giving speeches in public, which belong to priestly duties."*⁴⁹ Even the Constitutions, which authorized the ordination of deaconesses, forbid women from serving in the priesthood: *"If in the foregoing constitutions we have not permitted them to teach, how will any one allow them, contrary to nature, to perform the office of a priest? For this is one of the ignorant practices of the Gentile atheism, to ordain women priests to the female deities, not one of the constitutions of Christ."*⁵⁰

21. **Christians distinguished between an ordination to priesthood and the appointment of women ministers.** Hippolytus, who was a half-generation older than Tertullian, wrote, *"But she shall not be ordained, because she does not offer the oblation nor has she a (liturgical) ministry. But ordination is for the clergy on account of their ministry. But the widow is appointed for prayer and this is (a function) of all (Christians)."*⁵¹ Another text from the same period, once attributed to Hippolytus, states, *"The appointed widows should not be ordained, since we have in their regard the prescriptions of the Apostles. Let them not be given ordination, but prayed over, since ordination is for men."*⁵² Just as the early church distinguished between the appointment of women ministers and the ordination of men to priesthood, the restored church set apart women to non-priesthood ministerial duties and ordained men to priesthood responsibilities.

22. **Priesthood are ordained to greater power than those ordained to service.** Jesus told Peter, *"I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven"* (Matt 16:20). The power to bind in heaven or on earth is not given to every member,

⁴⁴Epiphanius; *The Heresies*, 49:2 as quoted in Tavad, p 55.

⁴⁵Tertullian; *On the Veiling of Virgins*, Ch 9 as quoted in *Ante-Nicean Fathers*, Vol 4, p 33.

⁴⁶Didymus the Blind; *On the Trinity*, 3,41,3 as quoted in Gryson, p 77.

⁴⁷Origen; *Homily on Isaiah*, 6,3 as quoted in Gryson, p 27.

⁴⁸John Chrysostom; *Homily on Romans*, Ch 31:6 as quoted in *Nicean And Post-Nicean Fathers*., Vol 11, p 554.

⁴⁹John Chrysostom; *First Homily on "Salute Priscilla and Aquila"* as quoted in Gryson, p 82.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid., p 20-21.

⁵²Hippolytus; Canon 9, as quoted in Gryson, p 50.

but only to those with a divine commission. Jesus had already ordained Peter when He gave him the keys of heaven. The Gospel records, *“He [Jesus] ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils”* (Mark 3:13). While Jesus gave the power of healing and casting out devils to the apostles, he later gave told all of them that their commission included binding or loosing on earth and in heaven (Matt 18:18). He also gave power over devils and their confederates to the seventy. Jesus told them, *“Behold, I will give unto you power over serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you”* (Luke 10:20). *“The seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject to us through thy name”* (Luke 10:18).

23. **When ordained priesthood discharge their duties, their acts on earth are binding in heaven.** For instance, when a person is baptized, he or she is numbered among the church of the Firstborn in heaven. The Bible reveals, *“Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven”* (Heb 12:22). Likewise, when the baptized are confirmed with the laying on of hands, Jesus gives them the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Bible states, *“Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given”* (Acts 8:18). Priesthood have power to seal judgment on the unbelieving. Jesus told the apostles, *“Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house, or city, shake off the dust of your feet for a testimony against them”* (Mat 10:12). He told the same thing to the seventy (Lu 10:10-11). The act of shaking off the dust has eternal consequence. The Savior explained, *“It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city”* (Matt 10:13). Jesus also explained how to deal with offenses among members. He told His priesthood if they could not resolve the issue, to take one or two witnesses. If that failed, *“tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.”* (Matt 18:17). The removal of church members for cause has eternal consequence. Jesus immediately added the consequence of the disobedient’s expulsion: *“Verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven”* (Matt 18:18). The same power that Jesus gave His priesthood to enroll believers in the church of the Firstborn authorizes them to also remove their membership for cause.

24. **The keys of the kingdom are not given to all believers.** The Bible states, *“No man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron”* (Heb 5:4). Just as Aaron was called by God through Moses (Ex 28:1), Jesus specifically chose His apostles after a night of prayer (Lu 6:12-3). While with the Twelve after the Last Supper, Jesus reiterated that He had chosen them: *“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit”* (John 15:16). The apostolic church followed His precedent. They called and ordained men to priesthood responsibilities. When the apostles needed to fill vacancies in their number, *“They ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away”* (Acts 13:2-3). When the apostles needed help caring for the widows, they appointed deacons to the task: *“Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom,*

whom we may appoint over this business” (Acts 6:3). The Twelve even supervised the missions of the Seventy. Apostle Thomas sent Thaddeus, one of the Seventy, to Edessa. His mission fulfilled the promise that Jesus had made to its sovereign, King Abgar.⁵³

25. **Jesus’ priesthood were specifically called and ordained from among His disciples.** Peter wrote the church and said, “*Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people*” (1 Pet 2:9). This announcement reiterates the Lord’s hope for ancient Israel: “*Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation*” (Ex 19:6). Just as ancient Israel had appointed priests among a much larger number of followers, Jesus appointed His chosen priests to labor among a much larger number of His followers. Both the Hebrew congregation under Moses and the apostolic church were a royal priesthood because they contained chosen priests. Some might suppose that the apostles and, perhaps the seventy, constituted all Jesus’ disciples, implying that all of Jesus’ disciples were priests. The Bible disagrees. It says, “*Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John*” (John 4:1). It also records that John had many disciples: “*There went out unto him [John] all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and many were baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins*” (Mark 1:4). The number of Jesus’ disciples exceeded the many who came to John from Jerusalem and all the land of Judea, of which the apostles and seventy comprised only a part. This observation is reinforced by the fact that Jesus told the apostles to lay the matter of an unrepentant member before the church (Matt 18:17), implying that the rest of Jesus’ disciples and followers constituted the church.

26. **All Jesus’ disciples received a special spiritual blessing.** John foretold it: “*Thus came John, preaching and baptizing in the river of Jordan; bearing record that he who was coming after him had power to baptize with the Holy Ghost and fire*” (Mat 3:40). Before His passion Jesus promised to send His disciples “*another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever*” (John 14:16). This “*Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost,*” (Jn 14:26) is, according to John the Baptist, the baptism of fire. Jesus breathed the Holy Ghost on His apostles after His resurrection (Jn 20:22) and then publicly manifested it in the apostles on Pentecost (Acts 2:2-4). Church members received the Holy Ghost through the laying on of the apostles’ hands. It is an abiding blessing that not only strengthens believers to serve Jesus, but also empowers them to serve others. All the Lord’s disciples, including men, women, children and priesthood, are ordained when they are given the gift of the Holy Ghost, but, as already shown, not to priesthood responsibilities. The Bible says, “*As many as believed were ordained unto eternal life*” (Acts 13:48). After confirmation, any member can be set apart (or ordained) to a more specific area of service. The ordination of setting apart bestows an additional spiritual blessing and empowerment. Thus, elders can be set apart as seventy and high priests can be set apart as apostles or bishops, but members can also be set apart. That kind of ordination blesses and empowers them for specific tasks in a variety of areas of service and ministry.

27. **The Reorganization considered forming an organization for women to enhance ministry.** In March 1934, Dr. Ruby S Cummings petitioned the Joint Council. She claimed to receive revelations and interpret hieroglyphics. “*She sought endorsement for these inspirational*

⁵³ ANF 7:651.

messages and ordination to the Melchisedec Priesthood.”⁵⁴ While this event may have no bearing on Brother’s Smith’s guidance, only two weeks after the discussion in the Joint Council, he mentioned in his regular chat column for the Herald “*the need of some form of organized expression for the women.*”⁵⁵ He had asked an unidentified woman, who appears to have been a social advocate, to participate in “*the council of the organization.*” Nine days later, Mrs. Charles Kohler addressed the women at the General Conference on the work of the friendly visitor. She advocated an authorized group to lead and direct the women in an orderly way, describing the office of these sisters: “*The office work of this group is not only to aid in a physical way, to visit the sick and the distressed, but to encourage and cheer, to bring them spiritual uplift and development; to educate the mothers.*” She added, “*She must take God with her into the homes of the needy both physically and spiritually.*”⁵⁶ The 1934 General Conference established a Council of Women. President Smith observed, “*That there is a demand for a women’s organization to permit the group expression cannot be denied.*”⁵⁷

28. Fred M. Smith explained the duties of the Council of Women and its local groups.

He wrote Sisters Pauline Arnsen and Mildred Grabske, “*I quite strongly believe that if the women were organized there would result a contribution to the Cause which would enhance our progress.*”⁵⁸ Among the responsibilities of this General Council of Women, he listed establishing prayer unions, developing education opportunities—both in the church school and outside it—organizing large groups of women in higher membership areas, giving opportunity for women to “*discuss common problems, or even the problems of the church, and express opinions thereon,*”⁵⁹ establishing “*close cooperation between the women and the men of the priesthood,*”⁶⁰ surveying of saints’ homes, especially in the land of Zion, making plans for improving the saints’ homes, including reducing the disparity between rich and poorer members and intelligently and scientifically interpreting the Word of Wisdom. Brother Smith explained, “*This suggests visiting, and friendly visiting is one of the lines along which the women of the church can make one of the best contributions towards helping the priesthood in their work.*”⁶¹ He explained how women can help the priesthood. “*So before the women lies a fine opportunity to assist . . . visiting of their own and also for the purpose of directly as well as obliquely assisting the priesthood in their official visiting.*”⁶²

29. President Smith considered including an order of widows in the new organization.

Fred Smith had been interested in the order of widows and hoped that the Council of Women

⁵⁴ Joint Council Minutes, January 14, 1927–November 28, 1934, Reel #884, RLDS Archives, March 15, 1934, p. 268.

⁵⁵ *Saints’ Herald*, Vol. 91, No. 14, April 3, 1934, p. 422.

⁵⁶ *The Saints Herald—Conference Daily Edition*, April 12, 1934, p. 95.

⁵⁷ Letter to Mrs. Shankland Arnsen and Mrs. Charles F. Grabske, August 22, 1935, RLDS Archives, RG 24-1, f4, p. 2.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 7.

could study its feasibility and application for the church. He wrote, “*In Paul’s time there existed some form of Order of Widows, who functioned as those to offer special prayers, comforters of the distressed or despondent, and administrators to the sick. More information should be secured on the work of this order for I can see where such an organization could be of great assistance, if rightly conducted in their work to the priesthood.*”⁶³ Brother Smith added, “*Allied with this is the question of the Order of Deaconesses. Was there such an order among the former day Saints? What were its functions? Should we have one now?*”⁶⁴ Don Lents testified that the apostolic quorum disliked the idea and refused to sanction the formation of an Order of Widows.⁶⁵ We do not know if Fred Smith advocated that appointed women should be set apart in office. However, in 1928, the Joint Council believed that stewards for Zionite enterprises should be set apart: “*The selection and setting apart of stewards was considered. The consensus of opinion was . . . that the setting apart should be with due ceremony and at some designated place at headquarters.*”⁶⁶

30. **Like the apostolic church, the restored church did not ordain women to priesthood.** Joseph Smith specifically told the ladies of the Nauvoo Relief Society that they should not aspire to duties to which they were not called. He emphasized “*the necessity of every individual acting in the sphere allotted him or her . . . [and added] for a person to be aspiring to other stations than appointed of God—that it was better for individuals to magnify their respective callings.*”⁶⁷ Only two weeks before, Joseph wrote and published instructions concerning spiritual manifestations, denoting which were of God. In his article, Joseph discussed the role women played in other contemporary movements. He wrote, “*A woman has no right to found or organize a church; God never sent them to do it.*”⁶⁸ As editor of the *Times and Seasons*, Joseph also taught, “*Circumcision was merely a sign of priesthood.*”⁶⁹ This implies that priesthood, like Abrahamic circumcision, was reserved for men. John Taylor agreed that the women in the Relief Society were not ordained. He said, “*Some of the sisters have thought that these sisters mentioned were, in this ordination, ordained to priesthood. . . It is not their calling of these sisters to hold the Priesthood.*”⁷⁰ Parley Pratt underscored the church’s position regarding women priesthood when he wrote, “*Now, it is a fact well known, that we have had no female preacher in our connexion, for we do not believe in a female priesthood.*”⁷¹ The Reorganization continued this position. In 1934, the Joint Council considered Ruby S Cummings’ request to be ordained to the Melchisedec priesthood. It appointed E. A. Smith, F. H. Edwards and P. M. Hansen “*to take*

⁶³ Letter to Mrs. Shankland Arnsen and Mrs. Charles F. Grabske, August 22, 1935, RLDS Archives, RG 24-1, f4, p. 8.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Testimony of Neil Simmons

⁶⁶ Joint Council Minutes, September 5, 1928, p. 101.

⁶⁷ Minutes of the Nauvoo Relief Society, April 28, 1842; RLDS Archives.

⁶⁸ *Times and Seasons*; Vol. 3, No. 4; April 1, 1842; p 746.

⁶⁹ Ibid.; Vol. 3, No. 21; September 1, 1842; p 904.

⁷⁰ *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 21, p. 367-368.

⁷¹ Parley P. Pratt; *Plain Facts, Showing the Falsehoods and Folly of the Rev. C. S. Bush*; 1839; p 13.

*this matter under advisement with a view to recommendations.”*⁷² They concluded, “*The Council feels no spiritual direction to order the ordination asked for, neither could do so consistently with the customs and laws of the church, under which there is no provision for the ordination of women to the Priesthood.*”⁷³ The committee’s report reflects one of its members’ earlier statement. In his 1920 Mother’s Day sermon, Elbert Smith said, “*Women have no priesthood, it is true, but in some regards they are the best religious teachers.*”⁷⁴

31. **Nature teaches us that the Creator is masculine.** Our species, like most mammals, generates and nurtures offspring in the womb of the female until the babe is ready to interact with the father. Our Creator revealed Himself as our Father. That revelation is consistent with His purpose. The male’s role in reproduction is to deposit his essence into his wife’s womb. The Bible teaches that the first woman was made from the rib of the first man (Gen 2:28). In like manner, God created the world outside His personal presence from substance that came from Him. When He uttered the words, “*Let there be light*” (Gen 1:6), “*light proceedeth forth from the presence of God, to fill the immensity of space*” (D&C 83:3a). God placed mother earth in this separate environment to nurture our first parents, whom God deposited there. When this life is complete, each person generated from that initial deposit is brought back “*to stand before God*” (Rev 20:12). His act of creation relates every person to the Creator in the same way a father is related to his children in procreation.

32. **Nature teaches us that priesthood is a masculine function.** Nature’s pattern also describes the relationship between Jesus and His church. Like Eve was formed from Adam’s rib, the church was created from Jesus’ blood, which flowed from his wounded side (Acts 20:28). Arthur Oakman taught, “*I saw that the sleep of Adam was typical of and representative of the death of Christ. And I saw from the wound in his side, was taken that which became a woman. And from the death of the Lord Jesus, the spear thrust in His side, there came that which is known to us as the Church of Jesus Christ.*”⁷⁵ Likewise, as Eve was Adam’s espoused bride, the church is the bride of Christ. While Adam and Eve generated mortal sons and daughters, the church regenerates sons and daughters of God. Preparation begins when the word of God is planted in the hearer. Regeneration starts in baptism and is completed when the Holy Spirit is implanted as an abiding comforter during confirmation. Afterwards, church ordinances, such as administration and the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, further anoint or renew the Holy Spirit’s presence within the prepared member. All these ordinances are masculine in nature and need to be administered by male priesthood for them to be effective.

33. **The church includes a maternal duty.** Brother Oakman also said, “*Just as woman has become the mother of all living according to the flesh, so the Church becomes the mother of all living according to the Spirit.*” The church nurtures the converted until they return to the Father. That nurturing begins after baptism by nursing the repentant with “*the sincere milk of the word*” (1 P 2:2). It continues until each one can ingest the meat of the gospel (Heb 5:14). While

⁷² Joint Council Minutes, March 15, 1934, p. 268.

⁷³ Letter dated March 16, 1934 contained in Joint Council Minutes, between pages 265 and 266.

⁷⁴ *The Saints’ Herald*, Vol. 67, No. 21, May 26, 1920, p. 496.

⁷⁵ Arthur Oakman; *Endowment Series Lectures*, Lecture 1, *God’s Spiritual Universe*; 1966; http://www.communityofchrist.net/Potpourri/Oakman/Oakman_1/oakman_1.html.

the ordinances are exclusively masculine, the nurturing role of the church is primarily feminine. Both men and women may be able to provide spiritual parenting, but women should have a prominent place in all nurturing ministries. Elbert A. Smith pointed out, “*No, it is not given to woman to have the stewardship of priesthood; but every priest sometime is the stewardship of some woman.*”⁷⁶ Wives and mothers are particularly important to priesthood members. Brother Elbert explained, “*It may finally be when his work is all done and the minister comes into the presence of God, and God says, ‘Well done, thou good and faithful servant,’ he will also turn to the man’s wife and mother and say, ‘Exceedingly well done, good and faithful servants; enter in also with him into joy. Without you, he could never have served.’*”⁷⁷ Such honor should also go to children’s Sunday School teachers. Most are traditionally women. In addition, women often set the tone of our worship environment, from decorating the building to providing music. They teach other women, both old and young, and visit the widowed and orphaned. As the church meets the growing emotional and mental problems of our modern and stress-filled world, it must develop new avenues of ministry to people’s needs. Counseling, mediation, and education are emerging ministries that need providers and coordinators. Women can give them and should be included in those tasks, especially where the maternal touch is needed. In fact, women can participate in every aspect of church life, except those duties specifically assigned to priesthood.

34. **Cultural changes have expanded the ministries that women can perform.** Just as social improvements have ended slavery, they have increased the role that women can play in the church. For instance, in apostolic times, women were not allowed to teach men. Paul told Timothy, “*I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence*” (1 Tim 2:12). By the time of the Restoration, society no longer forbade women from teaching men. Neither did the church. Emma Smith was divinely authorized to “*to expound Scriptures, and to exhort the church*” (D&C 24:2c). The Reorganization featured many competent women, such as Marietta Walker, Christiana Salyards and, in our day, Mildred Smith and Verneil Simmons, who taught classes, produced curriculums, managed periodicals and wrote books. The Lord reflected the change in cultural expectations by inspiring Joseph Smith to remedy Paul’s injunction against women speaking in the church, making it more applicable to members of the Reorganization. The King James Version admonished, “*Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law*” (1 Cor 14:34). The Inspired Version applies the injunction against women ruling in the church instead of speaking in the church. It also removes the word *command* from the requirement to be obedient. It says, “*Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to rule; but to be under obedience, as also saith the law*” (1 Cor 14:34). Since priesthood tasks include the act of issuing rulings, such as approving priesthood calls or determining verdicts in church courts, the cited scripture tells the Reorganization that women may not perform priesthood tasks, but they may participate in all other church activities.

35. **Many church members carry misconceptions about priesthood.** Priesthood are given specific duties tied to the individual offices that they hold, but over time, members have attached

⁷⁶ *The Saints’ Herald*, Vol. 74, No. 4, January 26, 1927, p. 97.

⁷⁷ *The Saints’ Herald*, Vol. 74, No. 4, January 26, 1927, p. 98.

other responsibilities to them that are not necessarily divinely assigned. For instance, one of a priest's duties is to "*visit the house of each member, exhorting them to pray vocally and in secret, and attend to all family duties*" (D&C 17:10d). Some suppose that a priest's divine commission to "*attend to all family duties*" gives the priest special spiritual insight into marital and family difficulties. Priests can even believe that their ordination makes them ideal marriage or family counselors. This assumption is simply not true. Similarly, one duty of the teacher, which is to "*see that there is no iniquity in the church, neither hardness with each other*" (D&C 17:11a), is often construed to mean that Aaronic teachers are the best counselors of reconciliation. This assumption is equally false. Priesthood members, whether Aaronic or Melchisedec, are assigned responsibilities pertaining to the gospel in formal services and personal application, not the attending nurturing tasks. Priesthood not especially trained in providing such ministries should refrain from them. Recent rulings by various US courts have held ministers liable for incompetent counseling and behavior.⁷⁸ Since these duties are not specifically assigned to the priesthood, any member can gain the competency to perform them. In fact, the developing needs in our society place increasing demands on the church to meet these areas of ministry. Since any member especially trained in the respective fields can offer them, all interested saints should be encouraged to gain competency to adequately provide this needed ministry.

36. **Priesthood are commissioned to preach Jesus and His gospel.** The bulk of their duties deal with the promulgation of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the ordinances by which the gospel regenerates people. Latter-day revelation specifies, "*This calling and commandment give I unto you concerning all men, that as many as shall come before my servants Sidney Rigdon and Joseph Smith, Jr., embracing this calling and commandment, shall be ordained and sent forth to preach the everlasting gospel among the nations.*" (D&C 35:2a). Lest anyone suppose that the gospel includes any philosophical or religious message, Jesus clearly stated its definition: "*This is the gospel which I have given unto you, that I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me; and my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, I might draw all men unto me: that as I have been lifted up by men, even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil; and for this cause have I been lifted up; therefore, according to the power of the Father, I will draw all men unto me, that they may be judged according to their works. And it shall come to pass, that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name, shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father, at that day when I shall stand to judge the world*" (3 N 12:25). Simply stated, priesthood are to preach Jesus and His gospel, whose principles are faith, repentance, baptism, the laying on of hands, the resurrection and eternal life (Heb 6:2). Doing anything more than this steps outside our Lord's will.

37. **Priesthood are also authorized to perform the ordinances included in the gospel.** Once people understand the good news contained in Christ's gospel, they realize that they are a sinner, fully dependent on God's grace as manifest in Jesus. They need to confess Jesus as their Savior and have faith in Him to remake them into one of God's children. They must also repent

⁷⁸ *Nally v. Grace Community Church of the Valley*, 47 Cal. 3d 278, 763 P.2d 948, 253 Cal. Rptr. 97 (1988); *Baumgartner v. First Church of Christ, Scientist*, 141 Ill. App. 3d 898, 96 Ill. Dec. 114, 490 N.E.2d 1319 (1986).

of their dead works and be washed in the waters of baptism that they may obtain a remission of sins. Afterwards, they receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, the earnest deposit testifying of their future resurrection to eternal life. For this reason, priesthood may baptize the repentant and bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost through the laying on of hands. They distribute the oblation, emblems of the body and blood of Jesus to church members, a sacrament in which members remember the sufferings of the Son and receive a renewal of the Holy Spirit. Sprinkled among those duties are administration for healings, visiting the sick, widowed, orphaned and member and seeing that there is no iniquity in the church. These are the duties attached to the priesthood's commission. Some of these duties that do not pertain to ordinances may also be adequately done by any committed member, including women.

38. **Priesthood power can be easily lost.** Priesthood works by faith, not through education and certainly not by demand. The Book of Mormon says that the power of the Holy Ghost is “*received by faith on the Son of God*” (1N 3:24). It only attends those who are humble. James wrote, “*God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble*” (Jam 4:6). When priesthood claim functions that are not theirs, they can become proud and lose the power of the Holy Ghost. Perhaps, this is one reason why healings and other spiritual gifts have declined within the Reorganization. The elders in Nauvoo lost spiritual power. When many saints were sick and dying in Montrose, “*Brother Joseph, while in the Spirit, rebuked the Elders who would continue to lay hands on the sick from day to day without the power to heal them. Said he: 'It is time that such things ended. Let the elders either obtain the power of God to heal the sick, or let them cease to administer the forms without the power.'*”⁷⁹ Some elders lost the power of the Holy Ghost in the Reorganization. Emma Burton observed why she could heal some sick people when some elders could not: “*I wondered, why it was that the individual's were made free when I had no priesthood. The words came to me thus 'It is the Spirit of God that they are subject to rather than the priesthood.' I understood by that, the Spirit of God without priesthood was more effectual than Priesthood without the Spirit of God.*”⁸⁰ One reason for the Reorganized Church's consideration of the ordination of women may have been a substantial loss of spiritual power among its priesthood.

38. **We can accept ordination of women as a setting apart to service.** Although ordination and/or setting apart of women to any kind of ministry is virtually unknown to us, we realize that the setting apart or ordination of believers, including women, to ministries of service is within the law as traditionally applied in the church, both in ancient times and in the latter days. It is also consistent with the practice of the church in both dispensations. The title of the women so ordained is irrelevant, although the only titles known to us are widows and deaconesses. We believe that women set apart or ordained may minister in any function of the church except that reserved in the law for priesthood.

39. **The LDS Church organizes women in local Relief Society chapters.** The Female Relief Society at Nauvoo was not continued on any factions after Joseph Smith's murder. Brigham Young re-introduced the formation of a relief society throughout the LDS church in

⁷⁹ *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, UT, 1968, p. 294.

⁸⁰ Letter to F.M. Smith, Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Archives, p. 21, f17.

1867.⁸¹ Today, the Relief Society is a worldwide philanthropic and educational organization of that Church. Leadership in each ward (branch) consists of a president and two counselors. Stakes have a Relief Society Presidency. It coordinates the activities and ministries of the local societies in that stake's ward. Administration of the church's Relief Society is overseen by a General Relief Society Presidency, whose officers, all women, are considered general officers of the church, but not general authorities. Ladies serving as Relief Society officers are called by the appropriate priesthood officers and set apart to their duties with the laying on of hands.

40. **The Church of Jesus Christ sets apart dedicated women as deaconesses.** Their duties include assisting women being baptized, preparing the communion emblems, preparing the wash basin for women during the washing of feet ceremony, teaching in women's circles, visiting and otherwise giving aid to women. They are ordained, but their ordination is not considered as bestowing priesthood authority.

41. **Women in the Community of Christ are eligible for ordination to any priesthood office.** Their duties are no different than the duties of men serving in the respective priesthood office. The Community of Christ is the only part of the Restoration that ordains women to priesthood.

42. **Women in Restoration groups are organized into women's departments.** Their organization, where sufficient numbers and interest allow, mirrors the traditional RLDS structure. It is a social, philanthropic and educational organization, but the focus of each group can significantly vary from branch to branch. Any service orientation tends to be aimed at church members. Women leaders are elected but rarely, if ever, set apart by the laying on of hands.

43. **Women in the Church of Christ, Temple Lot participate in the United Workers.** They are not vital to the ministry and functions of this church. Neither do they exist in every local (branch). Where formed, they initiate fundraising activities, provide kitchen support for church gatherings, such as meal preparation, and give social opportunities for women. They, too, are rarely service oriented and if so, tend to focus their ministry on church members.

44. **We are unable to resolve the different uses of women ministries in the various Restoration groups.** We agreed to bind ourselves to the Rules of Order, General Conference Resolutions, administrative policies and decisions of the Reorganized Church as they existed on January 1, 1958. We recognize the limitations that body of church law contains, but need the stability that they provide. Those provisions prohibit women from being ordained⁸² and restrict them when healing the sick by laying on hands from anointing.⁸³ Outside these two restrictions, women were free to serve in the ministry of the church, both in former and latter-days, as already reviewed. While this framework is insufficient to resolve difference in organization and ministries of women in the Restoration's various parts, we are able to respect the right of each group to decide how to utilize the devotion, service and ministry of its women. We can also worship with them in the spirit of friendship and union. Since we can accept the setting apart of women to ministry, except to those ministries especially reserved to priesthood, we are

⁸¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Relief_Society.

⁸² Joint Council Minutes, March 15, 1934, p. 268 and attached letter.

⁸³ GCR132.

comfortable and theologically compatible with each group's use of women in ministry except one.

45. **We can accept the ordination of women in the Community of Christ as a setting apart to ministry.** Further, we can support women's ministry in the following activities: public teaching, public speaking, public praying, publicly receiving offerings, publicly reading scripture, planning worship services, preparing the needs for church services, visiting the saints' homes, visiting the sick, praying for the sick—including laying on of hands—comforting the distressed, counseling, mediating, and any other form of ministry that is not specifically assigned to priesthood. We can comfortably worship and work together with Community of Christ members within these parameters.

46. **We advocate worshipping and working with all parts of the Restoration.** Our goal is to achieve mutual service and joint worship in ways that respect the practices and traditions of each group, including the ordinances and the kinds of women ministries of each. We have no desire to change any groups' practices, nor do we advocate a union of organizations. While we realize that there are times when we cannot participate together, we believe that there are more times when we can. If the various parts of the Restoration will worship together in a spirit of mutual respect, God will bless the combined gatherings with His Holy Spirit and show us ways to become better united, including the use of women in ministry. We endorse the revelation that came in 1919 to Clarence Wheaton, senior apostle of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) and believe it applicable to our interest in a common worship. *“This is your work; to gather together in one all those of my sheep who are scattered upon the face of the earth. Ye shall lay aside all contention with your brethren of the different branches of my church, for in the day that I shall come to my temple I will perfect them in theory and in doctrine, and in all things pertaining to my church. Ye shall continue to strive for a unity of my children.”*⁸⁴

47. **Joseph Smith taught that Christians should cultivate union and friendship.** In July 1843, Joseph said during his sermon, *“If I esteem mankind to be in error, shall I bear down on them? No. I will lift them up, and in their own way too, if I cannot persuade them my way is better. I will not seek to compel any man to believe as I do, only by force or reasoning, for truth will cut its own way. Do you believe Jesus Christ and the gospel of salvation, which he revealed? So do I. Christians should cease wrangling and contending with each other, and cultivate the principles of union and friendship in their midst; and they will do it before the millennium can be ushered in and Christ takes possession of His kingdom.”*⁸⁵ This is our goal. If Christians must become friendly and united before the millennium, members of the Restoration should lead the way. We are committed to the effort.

⁸⁴ *Zion's Advocate* 2, no. 8 (September 15, 1925): 12.

⁸⁵ LDS Church History, vol. 5, p. 499.