

PHILOSOPHY OF THE LITERATURE MINISTRY

A. DO WE NEED THE PUBLISHING MINISTRY TODAY?

Modern technology has made possible the saturation of society with publications and other media information. Our church leadership is asking, "Does the church need the Publishing Ministry today?"

When we go back to the counsel of the Spirit of Prophecy, we find several conclusive and positive answers. The answer is YES! Why? Because of the following reasons:

1. Written Words Endure

One writer said: *"The preacher writes his words on water, but the writer carves his words in stone"* (Unknown).

Ellen G. White agreed when she said: *"A sermon may be preached and soon forgotten, but a book remains"* (*Life Sketches*, p. 382).

The books distributed by the Seventh-day Adventist Church through the literature evangelists ten, twenty, even fifty years ago are still preaching. The books you sell or give away today will keep leading souls to Christ until He comes. Certainly, written words endure.

It may be true that some people who buy Seventh-day Adventist literature will just lay them on the shelf or place them on the parlor table and seldom look at them. But God still care for His truth, and the time will come when these books will be sought for and read (see *Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 313, 314).

Then the prophet continued: *"More than one thousand will soon be converted in one day, most of whom will trace their convictions to the reading of our publications"* (*Colporteur Ministry*, p. 151).

2. Prepare People for Heaven

"The publications sent forth from our printing houses are to prepare a people to meet God. Throughout the world they are to do the same work that was done by John the Baptist for the Jewish nation" (*Colporteur Ministry*, p. 3).

3. Reach Places Where Ministers Cannot

"Our Publications should go everywhere. . . . There are many places in which the voice of the minister cannot be heard, places which can be reached only by our publications—the books, papers, and tracts filled with the Bible truths that the people need" (*Colporteur Ministry*, p. 4).

4. God's Chosen Method

- a. At Mount Sinai, God started the Publishing Ministry. First He spoke to Moses, and then He wrote the Ten Commandments. Therefore the Spoken Word and the Written Word must go together (Exodus 31:18).

At Mount Sinai . . . God **spoke** . . . and then God **wrote!**

And so today we have. . . The Spoken Word - Preaching (2 Timothy 4:2)

The Written Word - Literature (John 5:39)

- b. At different times, men used different writing materials for writing the messages from God.

God to Moses	-	Stone
Abraham	-	Clay Tablets
Isaiah	-	Parchment Scrolls
Ellen G. White	-	Paper
Today	-	Compact Discs

But the messages are still written!

- c. Ordained of God – *“God has ordained the canvassing work as a means of presenting before the people the light contained in our books . . .” (Colporteur Ministry, p. 6).*

B. WHY THE CHURCH NEEDS LITERATURE EVANGELISTS TODAY

With the sophisticated advancement of technology in communication, where people can buy books through the Internet and other forms of media, many church leaders are asking as to whether there is still a need for literature evangelists today to work for the church.

Yes! The work of literature evangelists and their contribution to the evangelistic outreach of the church is an important and most profitable line of evangelism (see *Colporteur Ministry*, p. 8). Why? The following reasons prove this fact.

1. Indispensable Method

Our publications can go to places where evangelistic meetings cannot be held. *“In such places the faithful evangelistic canvasser [literature evangelist] takes the place of the living preacher. By the canvassing work the truth is presented to thousands who otherwise would never hear it” (Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, October 7, 1902).*

2. A Personal Ministry

While the Publishing Ministry uses selling as a medium of outreach, the ultimate objective is sharing the gospel through literature to see precious souls saved into God’s kingdom.

Personal contact still pays one of the highest dividends among the evangelistic approaches that the church employs. There are still hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, who will never come to our hospitals, schools, and even to our evangelistic crusades. Thousands will never enter into our local churches to hear the Seventh-day Adventist message.

If they do not come to us, we need to reach them through personal contact evangelism. Person-to-person and heart-to-heart ministry undoubtedly touches human lives more than many other methods. Ellen G. White said:

“The canvasser whose heart is meek and lowly can accomplish much good. . . . From family to family they carry the message of truth. Thus they come in close touch with the people, and find many opportunities to speak of the Saviour” (Colporteur Ministry, p. 38).

“As canvassers go forth into the field with humble hearts, full of earnest activity, they will find many opportunities to speak a word in season to souls ready to die in discouragement” (Colporteur Ministry, p. 36).

“As they went from house to house they could converse with the people, carrying with them the fragrance of Christ’s life” (Colporteur Ministry, p. 44).

Just a few years ago, the church has launched a new evangelistic approach called Satellite Evangelism. In this way, one evangelist can preach in Michigan and be heard and seen on the screen around the world via satellite.

The church feels that it is a successful method, and it is indeed. This program has resulted in thousands of baptisms. But, we also have to recognize that the people who come to the meetings should be personally visited, reached, and invited by individual church members including, in many instances, literature evangelists.

3. The Work of God’s People at this Time

“God has ordained the canvassing work as a means of presenting before the people the light contained in our books. . . . This is the very work the Lord would have His people do at this time. . . . We cannot too highly estimate this work; for were it not for the efforts of the canvasser, many would never hear the warning” (Testimonies, vol. 6, p. 313).

4. Will Continue Until Probation Closes

“As long as probation continues, there will be opportunity for the canvasser [Literature Evangelist] to work. When the religious denominations unite with the papacy to oppress God’s people, places where there is religious freedom will be opened by evangelistic canvassing” (Colporteur Ministry, p. 11).

5. God’s Calling

“God calls for workers from every church among us to enter His service as canvasser evangelists [literature evangelists]. God loves His church. If the members will do His will, if they will strive to impart the light to those in darkness, He will greatly bless their efforts” (Colporteur Ministry, p. 20).

C. PHILOSOPHY OF THE LITERATURE EVANGELIST'S MINISTRY

1. Personal Evangelism

The work of literature evangelists is no doubt a personal evangelism. There are two areas where literature evangelists can reach souls for Christ:

- a. Distribution of Free Literature - Given to some people who are not able to buy our literature.
- b. Personal Outreach - Literature evangelists conduct personal evangelism activities such as Voice of Prophecy (VOP) enrollment, inviting interests to church, visiting backsliders, praying for customers, and giving Bible studies.

2. Selling for Witnessing and Livelihood

Literature evangelists are self-supporting church workers while giving their full-time service for the Lord. Their only source of livelihood is from proceeds of the literature containing the Seventh-day Adventist message, which they sell to the public. The different classification of books and magazines they sell are designed to meet the different needs of the people.

Books

- a. Health
- b. Character Building and Education
- c. Home and Family
- d. Spiritual or Religious

Magazines

- a. Health and Home
- b. Religious

D. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

1. General and Ultimate Objective - ***Saving Souls for God's Kingdom***

"Our publishing work was established by the direction of God and under His special supervision. It was designed to accomplish a specific purpose" (Testimonies, vol. 7, p. 138).

2. Specific Objectives

- a. To Make the Truth Clear and Plain

"Our publications have a most sacred work to do in making clear, simple, and plain the spiritual basis of our faith" (Colporteur Ministry, p. 1).

b. To Call Men's Attention to the Living Truth

"The great object of our publications is to exalt God, to call men's attention to the living truths of His word. God calls upon us to lift up, not our own standard, not the standard of this world, but His standard of truth" (Testimonies, vol. 7, p. 151).

c. To Light the Whole World with Truth

"Our publications should go everywhere. . . . There are many places in which the voice of the minister cannot be heard, places which can be reached only by our publications . . ." (Colporteur Ministry, p. 4).

"By the canvassing work the truth is presented to thousands who otherwise would never hear it" (Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, October 7, 1902).

"The world is to receive the light of truth through an evangelizing ministry of the word in our books and periodicals" (Colporteur Ministry, p. 5).

d. To Prepare a People to Meet God

"The publications sent forth from our printing houses are to prepare a people to meet God. . . . And in a large degree through our publishing houses is to be accomplished the work of that other angel who comes down from heaven with great power, and who lightens the earth with his glory" (Testimonies, vol. 7, pp. 139, 140).

E. NATURE AND IMPORTANCE

1. A Sacred Work

"The canvassing work should be considered as sacred, and those who have unclean hands and defiled hearts should not be encouraged to enter upon it. The angels of God cannot accompany the unconsecrated to the homes of the people; therefore all those who are not converted, whose thoughts are corrupt, who will leave the taint of their imperfections upon everything they touch, should refrain from handling the truth of God" (Colporteur Ministry, p. 29).

2. A Work Second to None

"The canvassing work, properly conducted, is missionary work of the highest order, and it is as good and successful a method as can be employed for placing before the people the important truths for this time" (Colporteur Ministry, p. 6).

3. Equal in Importance to the Gospel Ministry

"Canvassers must go out into various parts of the country. The importance of this work is fully equal to that of the ministry. The living preacher and the silent messenger are both required for

the accomplishment of the great work before us" (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, April 1, 1880).

4. As Important as Preaching

"The ministerial evangelist who engages in the canvassing work is performing a service fully as important as that of preaching the gospel before a congregation Sabbath after Sabbath. God looks upon the faithful evangelistic canvasser with as much approval as He looks upon any faithful minister" (Colporteur Ministry, p. 45).

5. Printed Message Remains

"It is true that some who buy the books will lay them on the shelf or place them on the parlor table and seldom look at them. Still God has a care for His truth, and the time will come when these books will be sought for and read" (Colporteur Ministry, p. 150).

And then she continued, *"More than one thousand will soon be converted in one day, most of whom will trace their first convictions to the reading of our publications"* (Colporteur Ministry, p. 151).

6. Supervised by Angels

It was shown to Ellen G. White that *"... the publishing work was arranged and established under the special supervision of God"* (The Publishing Ministry, p. 53).

From the editor's desk until the time the literature reaches the hands of the people, the angels are in charge.

- a. Articles at the editor's office - *"... angels of God ... [supervise] the articles that were being published ..."* (The Publishing Ministry, p. 60).
- b. Manuscript at the printing room - *"The angels of God have supervision of the work. If the eyes of those who run the machinery could be opened, they would discern the heavenly guardianship"* (The Publishing Ministry, p. 60).
- c. The literature at the literature evangelist's hands - *"Angels of heaven will accompany you, preparing the way"* (Colporteur Ministry, p. 22).

"Those who engage in this [canvassing] work ... should place themselves where they can learn of Christ and follow His example. Angels are commissioned to go forth with those who take up this work in true humility" (Ellen G. White, Manuscript 81, 1908).

- d. The literature at the customer's bookshelves - *"The same ministry of angels attends the books that contain the truth as attends the work of the minister"* (Testimonies, vol. 6, p. 316).