

P 102-1

TIMOTHY Quill  
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# Woman Suffrage in the Church.



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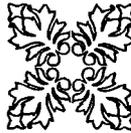
An Opinion Rendered

by

W. H. T. DAU.

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## Prefatory Note.

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A different plan and method for discussing woman suffrage in the Church might have been chosen for this tract, and a different arrangement of the various parts of the inquiry might have given greater prominence to some points of the discussion. The reasons why the tract goes forth in the form of a theological opinion are these: 1. The German original of this tract was rendered in that form by the writer with the consent of his colleagues and has been copied and circulated by a number of parties during the last seven years. 2. As a rule, the question of woman suffrage arises in our congregations in the same manner as among the people for whom the opinion was originally prepared. Its reasonings and counter-reasonings will be recognized as a piece of practical church-life, perhaps as something that has occurred in the reader's own experience. It has been thought that this feature should not be destroyed. References to persons and places in the original opinion have been removed, because they are not essential.

Any one who takes the stand which is taken in this tract will find that he is unpopular. The emancipation of woman, sex equality, and all that is connected with these fundamental ideas have gone so far throughout the world that it seems impossible that there will soon be a turning back. Thoughtful men are dreading the feminist movement of our times, principally for the women's sake. In the long run it will be found that the movement has not elevated or liberated woman, but lowered and shackled her, and the chains which the "free" woman will bear will be worse than any she was supposed to bear in the past. Woman is never safer, more honored, more affectionately treated than when she remains in the domain and relationships which the Creator designed for her as wife, mother, daughter, sister. Ideal womanhood is one of the literary and spiritual glories of the Bible. Church-life and secular life are different. They ought to be; for the Scriptures inculcate this difference in many places. If the secular State for reasons of its own adopts woman suffrage, the Church for reasons of its own may decline the same. Each follows its own authority and standard.

No doubt, a number of questions in casuistry will be suggested to the reader of this tract. Situations may occasionally be created in actual church-life to which the principle here advocated may seem inapplicable. Such instances must, of course, be studied with a full view of all the attending circumstances. But it is not conceivable

to the writer that any concatenation of circumstances can arise in the Church which really nullifies the Scriptural principle that forbids woman's rule over man. Neither a certain kind of exegesis nor any amount of casuistic references will change that principle. Men may, of course, get rid of uncomfortable Scripture-texts by a hundred different devices. They have done that as long as there is a Bible in this world. But what have they gained by it?

With the wish that this tract may stimulate investigation, guide discussion, and make for the peaceful upbuilding of the Church, this tract is sent on its journey. The writer will be very thankful if any of his kind readers will point out to him where in their opinion his argument is faulty or weak, or which points might be better stated.

St. Louis, Mo.

W. H. T. DAU.

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### The Case Stated.

St. Louis, Mo., May 22, 1916.

REV. M. AND MESSRS. J. AND R.:—

Your communication of January 26 (by Rev. M.) and of February 2 (by Mr. J. and Mr. R.) reached us about the middle of March. In our answer we shall refer to these communications by designating the former letter as No. 1 and the latter as No. 2. We have discussed these letters a number of times, and the statements following present our opinion and our advice in the matter which you have submitted to our Faculty.

We perceive from both communications your common reverence for the Word of God and your resolve to practise the same conscientiously. You are agreed in the belief that the Word of God forbids women to speak in the church. You are not agreed in regard to the question whether the same passages of Scripture which prohibit women from speaking in the congregation also forbid their casting a vote in the church. For thus we read in Communication No. 2: "We do not demand the right to speak or eligibility for office, but only the right to vote; for the other two rights are quite plainly denied in God's Word, and to that we bow in meekness." On the next page of the communication the notion of "right to vote" is more precisely expressed by the words: "that woman may have the right to vote and to take part in determining the affairs of the congregation and in the election of a pastor." At the end of the same communication the matter that is being debated between you is described by these words: "that she may cast her vote."

The difference of opinion, then, which exists between you relates solely and alone to that action by which a deliberating body renders a decision — the voting or casting of a vote. The question is whether women may take part in this action as having equal authority with

men. This question is answered negatively in Communication No. 1, which says on page 1: "I hold that by voting in congregational meetings the affairs of the congregation are regulated as far as they are not decided by the Word of God. If women have the right to vote in these affairs, they govern as well as the men and are no longer subject to them 'in all things.' Eph. 5, 24." Again, on pages 2 and 3 we read: "Furthermore, I regard the objection as futile that the Word of God prohibits women only from speaking in the congregation, but not from voting." On the other hand, the entire argumentation in Communication No. 2 tends towards an affirmation of the mooted question.

### **Mechanical Interpretation of Scripture.**

Each side cites Scripture to prove its position. Throughout Communication No. 1 "voting" is distinguished from "speaking." Communication No. 2 acknowledges that women are forbidden the latter privilege in Scripture. With reference to voting this question is propounded on page 1: "Does God's Word in clear and plain terms deny women this right?" and on page 3: "Where is this prohibition recorded?" Plainly, then, Communication No. 2 maintains this position: Since Scripture says indeed: "Let your women be silent in the church," but does not say: "Your women must not vote in the church," therefore women are forbidden to speak, but permitted to vote in the church. On the other hand, Communication No. 1 plainly maintains this position: Since Scripture prohibits women from speaking in the church, it prohibits them, thereby and therewith, from voting.

In order to remove the difficulty that appears at this point, we must, first, by way of reminder, offer a suggestion. When explaining Scripture, we must be careful not to form a purely mechanical understanding of the words of Scripture and must not insist on mere literalness. By such a faulty practise something is taken away from Scripture, and its teaching is weakened. If the terms "speaking" and "keeping silent" in 1 Cor. 14, 34 would have to be given a mechanical interpretation, they might be understood as enjoining women from uttering any sound whatsoever while in church. In that case they would not even be permitted to sing and pray. Also their voting, which the one party to this controversy wishes to permit, would have to be performed in a silent manner, either by rising, or raising their hands, or by ballot, or in some other way. However, would such inaudible signs not have to be regarded as a language just as the sign-language of deaf-mutes? For the same end is achieved by these signs as speaking people achieve with words. Thus, women voting without uttering a sound would transgress, not the letter indeed, but the real scope of the commandment of God. On the

other hand, the prohibition of woman suffrage in the church cannot be established by saying that there is speaking connected with the casting of a vote. For if the voting of women were forbidden for that reason, they would not be permitted to pray or prophesy in the congregation, which things the apostle permits them to do in 1 Cor. 11, 5. Hence there is nothing gained by a mechanical interpretation of the words in a text of Scripture.<sup>1)</sup>

### Silence of Women Conditional.

As regards the matter now under discussion, the teaching of Scripture is really this, that under different circumstances women are now commanded, now forbidden to speak or to keep silent. In 1 Cor. 14, 34 women are forbidden to speak only in a certain connection, namely, in so far as their speaking is not compatible with their subjection to men. For the same reason Scripture forbids women to teach, while it praises their teaching in other instances, as may be seen by the example of Lois and Eunice, who instructed little Timothy, 2 Tim. 1, 5, and by that of Tryphena and Tryphosa, of whom St. Paul writes that "they labor in the Lord," Rom. 16, 12.<sup>2)</sup> For we read in 1 Tim. 2, 12: "I suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." What has been said regarding the teaching of women in 1 Cor. 14, 34 applies also to the speaking of women mentioned in 1 Tim. 2, 12; either is forbidden whenever the purpose is to abolish the supremacy of the male over the female sex.

### The Order Fixed by the Creator.

Accordingly, it is of no moment whether the women who speak or teach in the church are married or unmarried. For in both passages in which Scripture forbids the speaking of women it has added a reason that applies to the female sex as such, not only to the married women. In 1 Tim. 2, 13 the apostle states the reason why women are forbidden to teach thus: "For Adam was first formed, then Eve." In this passage, then, the apostle derives the sovereignty of man from the original order which God adopted at the creation of the human species. In a similar manner the apostle in 1 Cor. 11, 8—10 insists on the external mark of the subjection of the female to the male sex, namely, on the woman having her head covered; for he gives this reason: "For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman, but

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1) This does not mean, indeed, that we must not insist on the correct interpretation of every single term in our Bible. Every word of Scripture has to be carefully studied in order that the true teaching of Scripture may be ascertained.

2) Compare what is said about Priscilla in Acts 18, 2 ff. and Rom. 16, 3.

the woman for the man. *For this cause* ought the woman to have power<sup>3)</sup> on her head." Moreover, in 1 Cor. 14, 34 the reason why the speaking of women in the church is forbidden, as an action incompatible with their submission to man, is given with these words: "as also saith the law." Which law? Why, the law in which God said to the very first woman: "Thy will shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." Gen. 3, 16.

### The Situation in the Congregation at Corinth.

Now, Communication No. 2 says on page 2: "The same may apply to the injunction addressed to Eve"; namely, the rule that the woman must be subject to the man applies to woman only in the holy estate of matrimony. Communication No. 2 wants to maintain this view as the correct understanding of 1 Cor. 14, 34, because of the words which follow in v. 35. By adopting this view our esteemed correspondents set up a claim which, we are sure, they never intended, *viz.*, first, that unmarried women in the congregation at Corinth were given a right which was denied the much more experienced and responsible married women; secondly, that Eve before her marriage to Adam possessed a right which she forfeited by her marriage. Where do we find any record of such a right of Eve? Is she not intended from the first moment of her existence, yea, in the mind of her Creator, even before her existence, as "an help meet for Adam"? Gen. 2, 18.

Furthermore, we can readily gather from 1 Cor. 7, 13—16 that the Corinthian congregation had among its members women whose husbands were unbelievers and hence did not belong to the congregation. Accordingly, if the apostle in 1 Cor. 14, 34 is speaking of women only in as far as they are living in wedlock, a part of the women in the Corinthian congregations, namely, those whose husbands did not belong to the congregation, and those who were not married, could not make use of the privilege to which the apostle called the attention of the women in v. 35. Hence the remark in v. 35 is merely an accompanying circumstance of the divine prohibition that must not be pressed. It is natural to assume that the women who might feel prompted to speak in the church were married. The younger would likely be more reluctant to speak because of the modesty natural in young women. For this cause the apostle remarks that the women who might wish to speak should ask their husbands at home. *But this is not the reason for the prohibition.* The real reason for the prohibition of the speaking of women in the church the apostle had given before by his appeal to the law. Accordingly, the apostle declares in this passage regarding the speaking of women

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3) That is, "a covering, in sign that she is under the power of her husband." (Marginal gloss in Authorized Version.)

in the church: 1) It is not right; it is contrary to the law; 2) it is, moreover, superfluous, because any proper end women might wish to gain by their speaking in church can be attained by them at home in a manner more honorable to themselves. They would violate the natural sense of propriety, which is to be their chief adornment (v. 35b), if they were to undertake to speak publicly in a gathering with men.

Strict attention must be paid to this two-fold ground for the prohibition of woman's speaking in the church: First, it is contrary to the original order adopted by God at the creation of man; secondly, it is contrary also to the positive law laid down for the first woman.

### **Woman and the Fall.**

However, Scripture offers still another reason. In 1 Tim. 2, 14 the apostle states as the reason why the woman is not permitted to teach, the following: "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman, being deceived, was in the transgression." The intended meaning of this passage is not, that the subjection of the woman to the man, which was a delight to her in the state of innocence, has now been imposed on her as a burden for a salutary correction because of her sin. For, in the first place, Adam certainly sinned together with his wife, and in Rom. 5 the apostle names no particular sex that must be charged with having introduced sin into the world; in the second place, even after the fall the subjection of woman to man is still a delight to all those women who recognize the original order which God established at the creation of man and who respect this order as Eve did before the Fall, and gladly bow to the will of God. Accordingly, Scripture commends Sarah in the state of corruption for "calling Abraham lord," 1 Pet. 3, 6. What the apostle points out to Timothy in the passage referred to is a trick of Satan, who at the temptation addressed himself first to a subordinate person, as if he had calculated that such a person would more readily enter into his blasphemous scheme of overthrowing the limitations and ordinances which God had created. Just as he had caused a great calamity in the beginning by a woman whom he enticed, so he plainly intends again, by the feministic movement of our time, to inflict a great injury on the world. We can gather this from the effects of the emancipation of women which have become manifest so far.

### **Luther on the Fall.**

Luther says in his comment on 1 Tim. 2, 13, 14: "Nearly all interpreters take this passage to mean that Adam was not led astray, but sinned purposely, and was not persuaded by the devil, but loved his delight and joy, that is, his wife, more than God. They want to prove that this opinion is credible by asserting that the serpent was afraid of the man because he was lord, and hence approached the

woman, who, though also holy, nevertheless was a weaker creature and hence more likely to yield to persuasion. Eve alone, then, was tempted by the serpent, but not Adam. For he was tempted both by himself and by the woman. . . . This opinion I do not reject." (1, 222.) In his comment on Gen. 3, 15—17 Luther says: "Observe here why God issued the command to Adam before Eve is created. Without doubt, Moses wrote this being moved by the Holy Spirit, and St. Paul (1 Tim. 2, 13) also urges this point. The woman was not to hear the Word of God without an intermediary agency; she was to learn it from Adam. Hence, even before the Fall the government and sovereignty was with the male person." (3, 63f.) Again: "Eve was not as prudent as Adam; . . . she was more simple and too weak before the wily devil, not foreseeing the consequences. . . . Thus you see here how the devil can work a make-believe. . . . In the first place, he attacks man in his weakest point, namely, in the female." (3, 73.) Again: "She was a simpleton, easily led astray." (3, 77.)

### **The Practise of the Apostolic Church.**

Finally, Scripture adds a fourth reason why women are to be prohibited from speaking in the church: the general practise of the church in the age of the apostles. For in the much-debated passage in 1 Cor. 14 the apostle begins his prohibition in v. 35 with these words: "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." He regards it as an act of self-conceit on the part of the Corinthians to want to adopt a different polity in this matter than the rest of the Christian congregations of that age. For he concludes his admonition in v. 36 by addressing this question to them: "What? came the Word of God out from you? Or came it unto you only?" As if he meant to say: If you Corinthians were the real mother church or the only church in all Christendom, one might somewhat understand your practise of permitting your women to speak in meetings of men; at any rate, this practise would then create disorder only in your congregation. But now you give offense by your practise to all the rest of the congregations. You ought to learn from the other congregations, whose Christianity is of longer standing, but you act as though you must first show all Christendom the right way in this matter.

### **What Does Voting Mean?**

Accordingly, this is the plain teaching of Holy Scripture, that the woman who wants to live sincerely in accordance with the will of God must not do anything by which she ceases to be subject to man. The question now is whether the act of voting, the exercise of the right of suffrage, is an act by which woman obtains the rule over man. When the vote is taken in a congregational meeting and a woman declares, "I vote aye," or, "I vote nay," "I am in favor of

the motion," or "I am opposed to the motion," what is she doing by that act? She does not merely make a statement by which she declares her opinion. That is never forbidden; it may even become a woman's duty to do so, namely, when a confession of the divine truth is demanded. In such a case the text, "There is neither male nor female," would be applicable; for in matters of faith and Christian confession all Christians are "one in Christ." Gal. 3, 28. To make confession always pertains to faith, and the faith of a woman is essentially the same as that of a man. Furthermore, when a woman casts her vote, she does not merely express a wish. That, too, is everybody's privilege, and on occasion a woman may make manifest her wishes no less than a man, and that not only before men, in the presence of male persons, but also before God in her prayers. But what happens at the casting of a vote is something entirely different. In all the world the casting of a vote is regarded as an act of sovereignty, by which some one declares his will and proposes to realize his will. Let us assume, for instance, that at the voting on a certain matter six votes of women are cast in favor while five votes of men are cast against the proposed measure. The result is that the women by their votes frustrate the will of the men. The men are thus handed over to the rule of the women. We are referring to the general effect of voting. It is, of course, possible that what the six women want is the correct thing, while what the five men want is wrong. But that is not the point just now, unless we want to take the position which every Christian abominates, *viz.*, that the end sanctifies the means. God knew very well that the men are just as little immune from error and infallible as the women; still He accorded the overlordship to men. If the women want to assert their right will over the wrong will of the men, they must choose a different way, by which God's Word is not rendered void, as it would be by making the women the equals of the men in the right of suffrage. Luther says: "Preaching is enjoined upon man, not upon woman, as Paul teaches (1 Tim. 2, 12), as far as Christian affairs are concerned. Otherwise it may easily happen that a woman offers the better advice, as the instances of which we read in Scripture show. Outside of this man is given the command to discharge the office of the ministry, to preach and teach God's Word." (3, 89.)

### Does Voting Follow from Contributing to the Church?

You claim that the woman's right to vote naturally results from the fact that she contributes to the maintenance of the congregation; for we read in Communication No. 2 as follows: "She makes her contributions for the maintenance of the congregation like the men; in accordance therewith she should also have the quite simple right of every congregation-member, *viz.*, to be permitted to cast her vote." We are persuaded that when you wrote this, you were not conscious

of the full scope of the thought which you have expressed, and that we need but point out a few necessary consequences which would follow from a consistent application of your principle in order to show you that giving for the maintenance of the kingdom of God and voting in a congregational meeting are two actions that do not belong in the same class. If the right of a member of a congregation to vote is determined by his contribution, or if his contribution helps determine this right, then the right to vote would have to be denied to such as pay no contribution, hence to poor members, by the same principle by which this right is granted to such as pay a contribution. At any rate, according to the principle which you assert, the congregation *would be permitted* to withdraw the right to vote from non-contributing members. Furthermore, a member of a congregation who pays twice or three times as much as the others might set up the just claim that he ought to be permitted to cast two or three votes, etc. However, if this arrangement were adopted, the right to vote in a congregation would rest entirely on a financial or materialistic basis, and the congregation would be ruled by money. Of course, you do not mean to say that this should be done, and we are far from imputing such thoughts to you. Our only aim at this point is to show what you might *have to* do eventually according to your own principle, if a serious effort were made to apply this rule, that there must be "an analogy, quite simple and self-understood," between a person's membership in a congregation as a contributing member and his right to cast a vote.

Contributing to the maintenance fund of a congregation is only one form of giving for the kingdom of God, which is a general duty of all Christians because such giving is a public profession of faith. Such giving is really faith made active in deeds of love for God and our fellow-men. The sex, age, social position, or any other external features are absolutely of no moment in this matter. In this instance the passage "There is here neither male nor female" would again be applicable. Within the Church of God every member, with all that he is and has, belongs entirely to God and our Lord Jesus Christ as His purchased possession. Old and young, rich and poor, high and low, all of them jointly and each of them individually, are to dedicate themselves wholly to service for the Lord. Each one is to do what he can and wherever an opportunity is offered to him to be active for his Savior. All service of this kind is the divinely intended outflowing of the living faith of the heart, the sincere gratitude which the redeemed render to God for the unspeakable gift of their reconciliation with God by the blood of His Son. For this manifestation of their faith believers ask no reward of God. They do not ask, "What shall we have therefor?" Matt. 19, 27. They simply do these things and cannot help doing them. This activity

is one of their noble privileges as members of the kingdom of their Lord and Savior. Nor is there in this activity much account taken of the greatness of the gift or the quality of the achievement; the widow's mite is not treated as inferior to the banknotes of the wealthy. Only the cheerful faith of the giver is considered in this activity. The arranging of the affairs of the congregation, however, the office of governing and making provisions for the congregation, — and the right to vote belongs under this head, — is a peculiar duty imposed on some; a duty, moreover, which requires for its execution a certain degree of maturity of the natural mind, spiritual experience, and the ability to formulate spiritual judgments.

### Prophesying Women.

Furthermore, Communication No. 2 points to the fact that the apostle says in 1 Cor. 11, 5: "Every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered, etc." "This shows that in the time of the apostle women had greater freedom within the congregation than they have with us at the present time." If you will examine this text closely, you will find that the apostle in this text states what may happen eventually, not what is a common right of women in the Church. For he does not say: "The women shall pray and prophesy in the Church," but this is the way he speaks: "Every woman that prayeth or prophesieth," etc. Such instances occurred in the time of the apostles. Look up Acts 21, 9, where we read: "And the same man," namely, Philip the Evangelist, "had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy." Similar instances may have occurred after the time of the apostles, and such instances may occur again; for God has promised through Joel, chap. 2, 28: "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy." If such an instance should occur in your midst, you would have to act in the same manner. It is written, 1 Thess. 5, 19: "Quench not the Spirit." Commenting on this text, Luther says: "Although the spirits are to be judged by the church, 1 Cor. 14, 29, still, on the other hand, they must not be suppressed or expelled without an examination, but they should be given a hearing and should be tested, as every prophecy and all doctrine should be." However, even this text does not say anything regarding the woman's right to vote, but it only speaks of the praying and prophesying of *such* women as had received the peculiar gift of prophecy from God. Accordingly, you cannot claim that women in the time of the apostles had greater liberty than nowadays. The moment any woman rises in your midst or ours and does what is written 1 Cor. 11, 5, she has the same right to-day as in former times. — Even those interpreters who understand this text as referring to the praying and Bible explanation of women

in their home circle admit that by their understanding of this text the prohibition in 1 Cor. 14, 34 is not invalidated, but rather strengthened. They understand 1 Cor. 11, 5 to mean that it is possible for women to pray and prophesy at home, but never in a public gathering of the congregation.

### **Women and Elections to the Pastorate.**

There is one matter to which we must call particular attention. We read in Communication No. 2, page 3, that "the right to vote or to help determine" of woman is referred to "the affairs of the congregation and the election of a pastor." We would not place the right to determine the affairs of the congregation and the right to determine who is to be pastor on such a perfect equality as you do. The act of conferring the office of the holy ministry on a certain person takes place by virtue of the peculiar church-power which Christ has given to His Church on earth. All believers, without distinction of age or sex, possess this power in equal measure; for it is vested in, and conferred together with, faith. Moreover, it must be exercised in the name of all members of the congregation, and such members as for natural reasons cannot cast their votes directly, as children, or such as are prevented from doing so by extraordinary reasons, as the sick, must be given an opportunity to declare their will in this matter. For this reason, whenever there is to be an election for a pastor, the congregation makes a public announcement to that effect and states who are the candidates. In no case, for instance, could the voting members of a congregation appoint some one to be the curate of souls for the entire congregation whom one or the other person in the congregation will not have for pastor. Even if a protest should be raised by a boy against a candidate, that protest would have to be respected by the voting members of the congregation. This applies, of course, in a still higher degree to the women. Even though the woman cannot speak or vote in the congregation at the election of a pastor, because of the order which God has made, she has nevertheless the right of veto: she can make known to the congregation that she will not accept a certain person as her pastor, and the congregation is compelled to heed her protest. For in this case there are spiritual blessings and the interests of immortal souls at stake. If at the election of a pastor the voting members of the church were to neglect to respect the protest of a woman, they would set up an abominable tyranny of consciences and would cease to be coworkers of God in the work of the Church.

### **The Royal Law.**

Now, such distress of conscience cannot arise in regard to the external affairs of the congregation. However, we would like in this connection to call attention to the royal law of love, which regulates

all actions of the children of God. The sovereignty of the man over the woman does not mean that in such matters as have not been decided by God's Word the men may do as they please, without regard for anybody. For instance, if the time for service is to be decided, the housewives naturally have a direct interest in the matter, and the men should make inquiry among the women what time would please them most before they make their decision. The very authority of sovereignty which the men possess lays upon them a great responsibility over against the woman. They dare not use their sovereignty like tyrants, but should place their great right at the service of the woman and do what is meet for all and may be of benefit to all. The better they know how to do this, the less desire for woman suffrage will be voiced among them.

### Church Rules Not State Laws.

Now, all that we have said in the foregoing refers to the state of affairs which in accordance with the will of God is to prevail *in the Church*. In the Church men listen to the Word of God, and by doing this they are and remain members of the Church. In the world and in the secular state the Word of God is not used for setting up ordinances. Not as though the state ought not to insist on the natural order of creation; rather, it is not unlikely that the state may arrive at the conviction that woman suffrage is more harmful than beneficial. The end is not yet; the feminist movement of our time, which borders on fanaticism, may collapse as suddenly as it originated, and the same people who believed that they must champion woman suffrage on grounds of reasonableness and expediency may arrive at a point where they want to abolish woman suffrage on the same grounds. We read in Communication No. 2, page 1: "Since woman suffrage in our time is a movement which like a huge billow is rolling across the countries in the whole world and nobody is able to stop it, its effect is inevitably felt also among Christians, who instinctively ask: 'Does God's Word in clear and plain terms deny woman this right?' Public and political opinion answer this question with an absolute and decisive No, especially in our country, where women not only have suffrage and the right of speech, but are also eligible to offices in the commonwealth. Quite naturally this has its influence on all institutions of the country. . . ." We readily understand what you say. We are passing through the same experiences in our country. Accordingly, we do not wish to be understood as having decided anything by this opinion regarding the exercise of suffrage by women in the affairs of the State. We are convinced that in a State which has introduced universal woman suffrage conditions may develop and interests may be at stake which cause a Christian wife to regard the exercise of suffrage as a duty

of self-protection. We would not categorically condemn such an action, but examine each case. However, something that is a right in the State and in the world is not for that reason a right also in the Church. The Church need not imitate the fashion of the world. Has not the Church been fully warned by God to beware of the world? Most probably the situation in your country is the same as in ours, *viz.*, the demand to accord suffrage to the women in the congregation is caused by the spirit of the times and the present movement throughout the world in favor of woman suffrage. If it were not for these causes, it is likely that this question would not have arisen in our congregations, but the Church would have continued to conduct its business in the same manner as during the eighteen hundred years previous.

### Woman Suffrage and Church Union.

There is one more point mentioned in both communications regarding which we should like to offer you our well-meant advice. We read in Communication No. 2, page 1: "Since the 'Evangelical Lutheran Free Church' has under advisement a union with the 'Evangelical Lutheran Free Congregations' here in D., the question of woman suffrage in congregational affairs is proving an obstacle which, quite likely, it will seem impossible to overcome. Since the delegates from our side do not want to assume the responsibility for wrecking an increase in the membership of our Free Church on this question, we take the liberty to request that. . . ." Referring to the same matter, Communication No. 1 states on page 1: "The question of woman suffrage has just now become a burning one among us for the following reason: For several years we have carried on negotiations looking towards a reunion of the two D. Free Churches, which prior to 1895 formed one Free Church. Recently these negotiations, which had been checked for a while, have been taken up again, and, not mentioning other difficulties, we have so far failed to agree, especially regarding woman suffrage in the congregation. As long as I have labored in D., I have always opposed woman suffrage and have never tolerated it in our congregational meetings." Finally, we are informed in Communication No. 2, page 3: "From the time that the Free Church was organized, our women always had the right to vote; it is only since a few years ago that they were deprived of this right, on the ground that God's Word prohibits it."

It is clear from the foregoing that the reason why you have asked us for our opinion regarding woman suffrage in the Church is because the movement for a reunion of the D. Free Churches has been started once more. Communication No. 2 declares that this question is the rock upon which the whole movement may be wrecked, while Communication No. 1 hints that there are still "other difficulties" that have to be overcome. Besides, Communication No. 2 emphasizes the

fact that until a few years ago woman suffrage was practised in the D. Free Church. We understand the statement just cited from Communication No. 1 to mean that this practise has always been opposed by Rev. M. Or does the remark, "I have never tolerated it," refer to something else, maybe to the matter to which Communication No. 2 refers, when it says: "It is only a few years ago that the women were deprived of this right"?

### Advice and Encouragement.

It would indeed be a matter of profound regret if the effort to establish church-fellowship among the Free Churches in D., or to effect an organic union between them, were to be wrecked upon this question of woman suffrage in the Church. For this matter, viewed by itself, is not an article of faith with which the Church must either stand or fall. However, we would ask you to consider one thing: If your conscience is bound by the Word of God, so that you are convinced that God does not want women to exercise suffrage in the congregation, because by so doing they would rule over the men in the congregation, you cannot possibly recede from your position. No earthly advantage which the Church might obtain by putting the Word of God behind her, by concealing or denying a known truth, is a real advantage; it is rather a dangerous loss. For when a person begins to evade the authority of the Word of God in questions pertaining to faith and life, there is nothing to keep him from continuing this practise and emancipating himself more and more from Scripture. He has sacrificed the principle of the authority of Scripture and, instead, permits reasons of expediency and opportunist reflections to determine all his actions. Accordingly, while the difference between you and the parties with whom you are conferring may seem slight, when it is considered merely by itself, it can become a very weighty matter by its consequences. If you were to yield to the other side in spite of your conviction that you are advocating the truth, you would ultimately forfeit their esteem, and you might later have to trade off other matters after you have once begun this kind of bargaining. Solomon issues this warning: "Buy the truth and sell it not." Prov. 23, 23.

Accordingly, you should not surrender the conviction which you have gained from Holy Scripture regarding woman suffrage in the Church. But while you continue with the greatest kindness, with holy zeal, and indefatigable patience to explain your position, you should at the same time reflect whether it is not possible, in spite of this difference between yourselves and the parties with whom you are conferring, to accord to each other fraternal recognition and to establish church-fellowship with them. The Apostle Paul had to wrestle with differences among the members of the congregation at Rome

that were very disturbing; these differences, if pushed to the extreme, would have destroyed essential parts of Christianity. He describes the situation at Rome thus: "One believeth that he may eat all things; another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth; for God hath received him. . . . One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike." Rom. 14, 2. 3. 5. We believe that in view of the fact that there is complete unity among you in all essential parts of Christian doctrine, the situation confronting you as regards the practical issue of woman suffrage in the Church may be placed side by side with the state of affairs in the congregation at Rome. On account of such a difference you should at least not hinder each other in your work as church-bodies; the measure of unity already existing among you should rather make it possible for you to find a way for aiding and advancing each other in your church activity. Just in what way this might be done we cannot say because of our lack of information regarding your local conditions. Accordingly, we must content ourselves with having called your attention to this possibility and having recommended to you the consideration of such a possibility. It would be a matter for great regret if the movement for union among you should be frustrated by such a matter as woman suffrage.

Accordingly, while urging you to hold fast your Scriptural conviction and your testimony, we would with the greatest earnestness counsel you to think of ways and means for establishing church-fellowship among you spite of the difference in this practical question which still exists among you. You must exercise care lest the just charge can be raised against you that you did not in all seriousness seek the peace of the Church. The Word of God enjoins upon us both teaching and being patient. 2 Tim. 4, 2. The Word of God is powerful; it will give you strength to confess and bear witness, and to bear with such as may not yet be your equals in knowledge. The Word of God can also bring it about through your calm, kind, and patient testimony that the present opposition to your position on woman suffrage on the side of your opponents will subside and the latter come over to your side.

We offer you our cordial greetings as companions in the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ and commend you and all your cares and afflictions to the grace of our faithful God, who has promised that He will never leave us nor forsake us.

With sincere esteem,

Your devoted servant,

W. H. T. DAU.