



THE SPRINGFIELDER

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Editorials

The Woman as Pastor

IN SEPTEMBER, REPRESENTATIVES from the churches belonging to the Lutheran Council in the United States of America met in Dubuque, Iowa, to discuss the ordination of women. Strictly speaking, the issue before the Lutheran synods of America is ordaining the woman as pastor, empowered to publicly preach the Word and administer the sacraments. To avoid confusion at the outset, let us say that ordination is a liturgical rite of the congregation and not a sacrament giving grace to the recipient. It is an adiaphoron. Women could be ordained as deaconesses, parochial school teachers, or Sunday School teachers. The list could be as long as the legitimate services they perform in the church. So to state the issue again, the question is the ordination of women as pastors with all the rights to exercise the privileges of this office.

The Right Reverend Bo Giertz, a bishop of the Church of Sweden, states that the ordaining of women to the pastoral office is going against the entire tradition of the church. While tradition is not a source of doctrine or of mandatory practice, there must be sufficient Biblical basis for changing a tradition, at least for the sake of the Christian congregation. The repercussions of this question will have more than a disruptive effect on the lives of our congregations. The word 'disastrous' would be appropriate.

As the church studies this question, it must be remembered that merely because questions have been raised does not mean that the church has no position on the matter. It does. The Denver Convention of the Missouri Synod in the resolution acknowledging the right of women to participate with men in congregational administration specifically said that such participation did not include the pastoral office. (Resolution 2-17, Paragraph 4)

The purpose of this issue of *The Springfielder* is to bring before the pastors of the church some pertinent materials on the ordination of women. Dr. Surburg discusses it on the basis of the Old Testament and Professor Walter A. Maier, Jr. from the New Testament perspective. Dr. Naumann discusses it in relation to the 'natural orders' and Prof. Weis has some historical reflections on the issue. But this is a problem that goes beyond the Missouri Synod. Bishop Bo Giertz of Sweden has been engaged in the struggle against the ordination of women in his country as has Professor Regin Prenter in Denmark. In his book *Die Ordination der Frauen zu dem Überlieferten Pfarramt der Lutherischen Kirche*, Dr. Prenter mentions that the government of the Kingdom of Denmark made the decision to ordain the women and that the bishops carried it out without further authorization from the congregations. There was no theological commission or decision of the church to take such action. The situa-

tion was the same in the other Scandinavian Lutheran State Churches. The examples of these Lutheran state churches cannot be held up as an argument for introducing the practice of the ordaining of women, because this was a decision of the state and not of the church.

Here in America we are a church making church decisions. The decisions of government officials and the findings of secular disciplines dare not play a role in a church whose Lord speaks to it in the Gospel of the Holy Scriptures. The same caution was expressed by the Swedish delegates to the Work Fellowship for Church Renewal held in September at Neuendettelsau, according to the Reverend Herbert Lindemann in the *Lutheran Forum* (November, 1969, pp. 20f.). Ordained women pastors were causing divisiveness in the congregations. Since it was not feasible to publish Dr. Prenter's booklet in this issue, a review of it by Professor Peter Brunner of Heidelberg is included as a feature book review. Also found in this issue are items from European Lutheran churches where the custom has already been instituted.

A review of recent pertinent articles is also included. This issue of *The Springfielder* should provide some lively discussion for pastoral conferences and congregations. Bishop Bó Giertz explains the Lutheran position adequately when he states in Thesis 16 of his *Twenty-Three Theses* that the exclusion of the woman from the public office of the ministry is not to put her on a lower grade in the church, but to give her her proper function in the church. We also have the privilege of printing from the *Lutheran Forum* an editorial article. Unfortunately *The Springfielder* is circulated in the Missouri Synod and not in the Lutheran Church in America. The LCA will possibly vote on the question of the ordination of women as pastors at its June convention. Perhaps our readers can share this issue with their LCA counterparts. The following editorial from the *Lutheran Forum* firmly suggests unity of action on this front for all Lutherans.

D. P. S.

Ordination for Women? Some Words of Caution

IT IS QUITE LIKELY that the faultfinders who scan the landscapes of other Lutheran bodies in order to find reasons to dis-fellowship them will make capital of the recent news report that two women who graduated from Luther Seminary, St. Paul, apparently intend to seek ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament in the American Lutheran Church. In this case, we cannot blame them for raising questions about "what's going on" though we might question their reasons for raising them.

The "ordination" of women is a question that has vexed a number of Lutheran bodies in Europe. Perhaps only the Church of Fin-

land has found a satisfactory solution to the question, by creating a special office for women theological graduates which does not involve the exercise of the public liturgical ministry. It was inevitable that this problem should reach America's shores though it was anticipated it might first reach a crisis in the Lutheran Church in America, which presently has a study underway on the matter. A number of women have graduated from LCA seminaries, though to our knowledge none have sought ordination.

The ALC Church Council is to be commended for referring the question for study to the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A. It is extremely important that there be a common Lutheran position on this matter and that all its ramifications be thought through by Lutherans in a concerted manner.

We cannot commend the rather superficial response of the faculty of Luther Seminary, whose president is quoted as saying that it had concluded that there was no clear biblical reason why women should not be ordained. On the contrary, many Lutherans profess to see such clear biblical reasons and it is no doubt on this basis that some will raise strong opposition to any procedure which results in a female public ministry of Word and Sacrament.

We hope, however, that the discussion of the question will not degenerate into a hurling of proof-texts, of which both sides have their favorites. It should rather hinge on an understanding of the broader meaning of the ministry in the context of the economy of grace and the biblical view of the complementary, but not identical, roles of man and woman.

Until a common Lutheran understanding and procedure is reached in this matter, no church body, district or congregation should take unilateral action to authorize women to assume the public liturgical ministry of Word and Sacrament. Experimentation and change in church life is often good, but not every secular development necessarily has a claim to be copied by the Church.

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