



THE SPRINGFIELDER

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WOMEN IN AUTHORITY

The January 11 *Lutheran Witness* relayed without comment the news that a woman has been elected president of a congregation of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. It was an datum memorable enough to bear repetition by the March 1 *Reporter*. The less official *Missouri In Perspective*, in relating the same story, provides the background for this move, "In recent years, numerous congregations have been changing their constitutions to allow women to hold the top offices in their congregations" (February 2, p. 3). Indeed, before this issue of THE SPRINGFIELDER reaches its readers, it is quite possible that a "liberated" woman will be holding *the* top office of a Missouri Synod congregation, the pastorate. For the March 15 *Perspective* reported that one of the first two female Seminex vicars has now been certified by the Seminex faculty for a call into the public ministry. The *Perspective* article makes these observations: "'Conservatives' generally believe that women serving in pastoral roles in the church is in violation of the Scriptures . . . While some 'moderates' have questions about ordination for women, most believe that individuals should be allowed to use the full range of their talents in the service of the Gospel" (p. 3).

The pastoral call and ordination of a woman will, of course, be invalid—not merely improper, like the call and ordination within the Synod of male Seminex graduates, but essentially invalid and sacrilegious. Were one to baptize a cat seventy times, it would never become a Christian thereby, since it is not so constituted as to receive baptism. Likewise, were one to call and ordain a woman seventy times, she would never become a pastor. Women are, to be sure, suited better than most men for some important roles in the church, such as the education of children. But the Word of God is quite emphatic in excluding women from pastoral roles and, for that matter, all roles of authority over men in the church—congregational president, elder, etc. The following passages ought to suffice for the unprejudiced reader: Genesis 2:18-23; 3:6,17; Isaiah 3:12; 1 Corinthians 11:3, 8-9; 14:34-35; Ephesians 5:22-24; Colossians 3:18; 1 Timothy 2:11-14; Titus 2:5; 1 Peter 3:1-6. Basically, man's abnegation of authority to woman is an attack upon the Order of Creation, the pattern of relationships which God established from the beginning between His various creatures. Nor is this natural pattern something foreign to the church, since one's position in it is hallowed by his incorporation into Christ and His Church (as is shown by the New Testament passages cited above). Thus, the Order of Creation, translated into the Christ-grounded Order of Redemption, ought to be more apparent in the church than anywhere else in this sin-corrupted world.

The pastor, to be sure, of the congregation with the female president based his explanation of his conduct on Galatians 3:28, "St. Paul says that within the Kingdom there is 'neither male nor female' . . . I'm happy to see our congregation living that out" (*LW*, January 11, p. 25). One could argue equally well that, because there is neither child nor adult in Christ Jesus, therefore a child can be president of a congregation. The basic fallacy in this mode of argumentation is that it confuses spiritual equality with equality in authority. St. Paul is, of course, making the important point that both male and female are children of God (v. 26). But it certainly does not follow from that truth

that male and female have equal authority in the church. That, in fact, they do not is obvious from Paul's other letters (as cited above).

The Committee on Women Suffrage whose report was accepted by the St. Paul's Synodical Convention of 1956 (Res. 3-22) and commended by the Denver Convention of 1969 (Res. 2-17 itself), observing that Scripture fully sanctions the restriction of suffrage in the church to men, delivered this weighty warning: "we foresee only evil results in any change of the policy under which our church has been so signally blessed for more than a century" (*Proceedings of the Fifty-Third Convention*, p. 569). The warning was evidently justified.

Judicius

CHARISMATICS IN THE CHURCH

At its recent convention the Montana District of Synod, according to the *Reporter* (May 3, p. 7), "condemned the charismatic movement as presenting private interpretations of Scripture and uncertain human opinions as God's Word and will." The Montana District has acted boldly in defense of God's Word and Church. Attempting to ignore or appease the advancing forces of enthusiasm will only contribute to their subjugation of the Church. For, as the charismatics (Neo-Pentecostals) themselves assert, they are determined to bring all Christians to a realization of the "Spirit-filled" life. There can be no *détente* with as zealous a form of heterodoxy as the contemporary Charismatic Movement. Some have recently sought to abet the Charismatic cause in the Synod by reporting that the Seminary has retreated from the insistence voiced in its *Policy Statement* of 1975 that all its students, before their certification by the faculty for a call into the ministry, should give assurance that they do not entertain the distinctive beliefs of the Charismatic Movement or participate in its worship forms. In fact, the Seminary has not altered its position. It still stands by its pledge to the congregations of Synod that it will not inflict upon them pastors who claim to receive God's grace and power in some way supplemental to the objective Word and Sacraments of God. By this same grace and power of God, the Seminary will continue to take a Scriptural stand beside Luther and the other Confessors (Smalcald Articles, III, 8:10): "Accordingly, we should and must maintain that God will not deal with us except through His external Word and Sacrament. Whatever is attributed to the Spirit apart from such Word and Sacrament is of the devil."

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