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Pastoral Letter on the Ordination of Women to the Pastoral Office of the Church

Dear Esteemed Brothers in the Ministry, Fellow Laborers, and Fellow Christians:

In Christendom generally unrest prevails. The question as to whether women can be admitted to the pastoral office of the church—whether access to service as pastor or priest, traditionally denied them, should now be opened up—is the subject of lively discussion. But a commonly agreed answer is not forthcoming. The discussion of this question has been going on for a long time in the mainline churches as well as in smaller fellowships. The discussion has its point of departure and center in Europe and North America, where social change is most advanced and traditions are being challenged more vigorously than anywhere else. It is evident that the desired goal of ending the widespread discrimination against women in professional and public life is what has really ignited the discussion of women in the pastoral office. And where women in the pastoral office is contested, there the usual suspicion is that nothing much more is involved than the aftermath of the traditional downgrading of women and the attempt to perpetuate male positions of power.

I. The Eastern and Roman Catholic Churches

Remarkably enough, the ancient Oriental churches have not been at all influenced by any contemporary thoughts on the ordination of women. Now, as always, they are far removed from making any accommodation to the prevailing Protestant practices. For them the ordination of women is so totally excluded that no intra-church discussion is going on.

In the Roman Catholic Church, by contrast, there have been many voices raised that advocate an "opening up" and that see no doctrinal question in the admission of women to the priestly office, but rather consider it a problem to be evaluated in terms of canonical law. And canonical law, as a matter of principle, is subject to revision, open to change. Thus, in an essay published at the beginning of April 1994, the Roman Catholic theologian Basilius Streithofen predicted "a new ecclesiastical split in German Catholicism in the coming years" which "in its extent would not take a back-seat to the apostasy of the Reformation era."¹ Pope John Paul II has endeav-

ored to check this development with the apostolic release *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* which he issued on 22 May 1994. In this document, appealing to Holy Scripture and two thousand years of the tradition of the church, he declared consecration to the priesthood reserved to men: "So that every doubt regarding this significant matter, which involves the divine constitution of the church itself, may be swept aside, I declare by virtue of my office . . . , that the church must abide by this decision."² This authoritative word of the pope will not, of course, stifle all discussion, but it does lay down the official position of the Roman Catholic Church in unambiguous terms.³

II. The Anglican and Evangelical Territorial Churches

The Anglican Churches, by contrast (the Church of England and her daughter churches on other continents), have experienced considerably more turbulence. In November of 1992 the general synod of the Church of England voted in favor of the introduction of the ordination of women. In consequence, as expected, hundreds of pastors, bishops, and entire congregations converted to the Roman Catholic Church, because they believed that only in this way could they remain true to their consciences. The Anglican Church, traditionally marked by two different directions—an Anglo-Catholic wing and a more liberal wing (high-church and low-church)—will presumably change markedly in its profile, since the high-church wing has now been definitely weakened.

In the evangelical territorial churches of Germany the admission of women to the pastoral office has gone through a longer period of development. When, in several churches, women, for the first time, took over the functions of pastors, it was in time of war and immediately thereafter. The extreme emergency—the lack of ordained clergymen—seemed to justify dispensing with all prior rules. There was often, in addition, a lack of clarity regarding office and ordination. Later on this emergency situation was felt to be a pioneering movement in an overdue re-orientation. Without further theological justification the practice of opening the pastoral office to women was extended with increasing vigor. The action of "commissioning" was placed alongside ordination. Commissioning conferred genuine functions of the pastoral office, also on women. In society

at large those vocations which had hitherto been the domain of men were increasingly opened up to women. Such being the case, who wanted to be so old-fashioned and alienated from the world as to refuse to agree to women in the pastoral office? As soon as no basic difference is seen between "worldly" callings and the calling of a pastor, when successfully completed study and examinations are considered sufficient, and when ordination itself is regarded as a ritually inflated official act, then opposition to the ordination of women must of necessity appear as nothing more than anti-feminine traditionalism. Ordination in the context of a divine service seemed to many to be placing too high a value on the action. An administrative directive, a written commissioning transmitted by mail, could on occasion replace it.

When one territorial church after another decided in favor of the ordination of women, they at first provided safeguards for the consciences of pastors who regarded the ordination of women as irreconcilable with Scripture and the confessions. What was initially assured, however, has today, in point of fact, been eliminated. These developments have swept along all the territorial churches in Germany. Bishops have resigned because of decisions made by synods. In July of 1992 the Chamber of Theology of the Evangelical Church of Germany tersely declared: "Criticism of the ordination of women as a matter of principle forsakes the basis of the doctrine prevailing in the evangelical church"; "the exclusion of women from ecclesiastical office [is] not to be categorized as one of the basic rules regulating this office, but rather it is to be considered a matter of custom and social ruling with limited historical significance"; the ordination of women cannot be contrary to Scripture because "the call of Jesus is extended equally to women and men"; and such texts of Holy Scripture as seem to be opposed to women in the pastoral office must be read "precisely in their heterogeneity and temporal conditioning."⁴ Here the spear was now turned around: all those who up to this time had voiced accusations or suspicions that the ordination of women clashed with Scripture and the confessions now suddenly found themselves accused—yes, condemned; their position was alleged to be contrary to Scripture and the confessions.

Also in the Lutheran World Federation and the Ecumenical Council of Churches more and more voices are heard which declare that the exclusion of women from the pastoral office is a position to be rejected. For the sake of the Eastern Orthodox Churches and Rome reserve is still exercised. Already, however, at the meeting of the Lutheran World Federation in Curitiba in 1991, a female theologian of India proposed that the rejection of the ordination of women was an expression of discrimination which had to count as "sexism" (and thus as a species of racism). With all these developments, then, the judgment of "ethical heresy" has virtually been pronounced.

In this jumble of divergent voices and positions one must ask who is right and how one is to decide. Which path should any church, here or elsewhere, follow if it is intent on taking the Holy Scriptures and the confessions seriously? There should be no doubt that with the question of the ordination of women we are involved in an area involving doctrine. What is at issue is not an adiaphoron concerning which opinions may vary. The significance of the ordination of women is of such importance that it has, understandably, caused churches to separate and, indeed, to divide. It touches, therefore, the doctrine and practice of ecclesial fellowship. The ordination of women involves, indeed, the very gospel itself, for it belongs to the very nature of the gospel that it should be proclaimed and handled legitimately and authoritatively. The question, therefore, of the authority and legitimation of the one occupying the office of the ministry of the gospel is clearly of vital significance.

III. Problematic Areas in the Current Discussion

There are primarily four areas of theology on which the ordination of women impinges in a problematic way: (a.) the understanding of Scripture; (b.) the understanding of the church and the pastoral office; (c.) the understanding of christology and the Holy Trinity; and (d.) the understanding of the order of creation and the order of salvation. The problems involving these four areas will be briefly sketched in what follows.

A. *The Understanding of Scripture*

The so-called "classic" passages of the Bible which are connected with the ordination of women are found in 1 Corinthians 14:33-40 and in 1 Timothy 2:9-15. Consideration is due beyond these to 1 Corinthians 11:1-16, where it is taken for granted that a woman prophesies or speaks. In the exposition and application of these biblical references we dare not oversimplify our task, but we must exert special care to see that "the biblical bases in matters of the ordination of women are not more manipulated by internalized cultural-sociological role-concepts than controlled by the biblical pronouncements themselves."⁵ It is not only those interpreters who understand these Scripture passages as opposed to the ordination of women who are exposed to this danger, but equally those interpreters who advocate the ordination of women and who cannot find anything in the biblical texts that would speak against it.

The interpretation of the designated passages continues to be controversial in points of detail. A description of this exegesis in detail with critical evaluation would exceed the limits of the comments here and will, therefore, have to be omitted. Without question, however, that which leaps out of the texts is a certain difference between the affirmation of 1 Corinthians 11, according to which women speak prophetically and pray, and the "command of silence" in the "congregational assembly" of 1 Corinthians 14. Questions, however, which need investigation are whether the superscription which some editions of the Bible assign to 1 Corinthians 11, "The Woman in Divine Service," is really fitting and whether the "congregational assembly" in 1 Corinthians 14 is identical with what we today call "divine service." It seems of less importance whether the texts refer solely to married women (since in that case one would also have to ask at what age people then married and who would still have remained among the unmarried). It is, on the other hand, of significance that in 1 Corinthians 14:37 the apostle makes this appeal: "What I am writing to you is a command of the Lord." A mere feeling of respect for contemporary customs and modes of behavior—doing what was appropriate to the time and adjusting to the expectations of society—can hardly be presented as "a command of the Lord."

Nor can we escape the fact that, from among all his female and male disciples, Christ chose only twelve males to form the smaller circle of His apostles. They are not arbitrarily interchangeable functionaries; He associated them with Himself and His mission in an immediate and personal way: "As the Father has sent Me, even so I send you" (John 20:21). Although Christ broke through and invalidated many usages relative to the position of women and the contacts between men and women as they prevailed in the Judaism at the time, He nevertheless included no woman in the call to be His apostles. Nor in the upper room, at the institution of His Supper, did He entrust any woman with the administration of this gift (when He told the apostles, "This do in remembrance of Me"). Nor does a single biblical reference indicate that, in their turn, the apostles, in the placing of pastors and laying on of hands, took part in the call of a woman. To do things differently today would be to depart from the procedure of Christ and the earliest Christians, which would be a weighty and, indeed, momentous decision. The earliest Christians evidently knew nothing of women in the pastoral office, even though the pagan milieu with its many priestesses would have provided a model for such inclusion.

Whoever advocates the admission of women to the office of the ministry is obligated to provide proof that he is operating within the framework of Christ's institution and in harmony with what He did. If this proof is lacking, then we have no authorization to ordain women, even if the contemporary social position of man and woman makes such ordination seem fitting, even if the emancipation of women seems to demand it, and even if women bring with them natural gifts which could be profitably employed in pastoral service. The decisive question always remains as before whether we are operating within the framework of Christ's institution. This approach, to be sure, presupposes that the office we transmit today with ordination is rooted in Christ's institution and in the call of the apostles. If "in the pastoral office Jesus Christ today provides representatives for Himself among men in the same way as He did at the beginning of the church in the case of the apostles,"⁶ then, despite the differences between the foundational apostolate and the on-going office of the ministry, a clear line of continuity brings home to us the responsibility we have when we make decisions

relative to ordination.

In expounding the scriptural references and applying them to the contemporary situation, we shall have to be perfectly clear as to what status the New Testament texts have for us. Are they to be newly interpreted in the light of the contemporary situation with all its shifting of values and changes of fashion? Such an interpretation will have to be tested in every particular situation. Can texts, however, which were written down at a certain time and for the people of that time (and to that extent are therefore historically conditioned) still provide timeless and "situation-free" principles? Most assuredly they can—and we must commit ourselves clearly to this proposition. Can such texts adequately answer questions that arise anew today? This question must be answered; in no way can the possibility be simply excluded. Does a text speak on its own or only when the interpretation—and thus a subjective element—is added? What is to prevent us from twisting the text around by means of its interpretation? The interpretation we propound must be evaluated critically—to be sure we are not reading into texts things which are not at all said there. Here we come to the problem of the clarity and sole validity of Holy Scripture—and thus to the problem of its authority. This problem has been with the church constantly, but in the Reformation found an answer from which we have no release: *Sola Scriptura* ("Scripture alone").

B. The Understanding of the Church and the Pastoral Office

The Lutheran Confessions view the "pastoral office" (*Predigtamt*) as the institution of God or, more precisely, of Christ, as in Article 5 of the Augsburg Confession. The commission conferred on those occupying the office—"to preach the gospel, to remit and to retain sins, and to distribute and administer the sacrament"—is seen in connection with the word of Christ in John 20: "As the Father has sent Me, even so I send you: . . . Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained . . ." (Article 28 of the Augsburg Confession).⁷ Those occupying the office "represent the person of Christ because of the church's commission; they do not represent their own person according to the word of Christ: 'He who hears you, hears Me.' When they offer the word of Christ or the sacraments, they do so in

Christ's place and stead" (Article 7 of the Apology).⁸

However different the exercise of the office in apostolic times may seem from its exercise today, however divergent the contemporary pastoral office (*Pfarramt*) may appear from the office in the earliest church through the narrowing down of the biblical multiplicity of gifts and powers to the "evangelical pastoral office" (*das evangelische Pfarramt*), these offices are clearly related in such a way that the pastoral office (*Pfarramt*) is the "one office of proclaiming the word and administering the sacraments instituted by Christ,"¹⁰ which is conferred with ordination and exercised in pastoral service. This conception we must emphatically uphold. From where else could we derive the certainty that we are acting in the name and with the commission of Christ? And the question of certainty is of fundamental significance. "What the called servants of Christ are doing when they deal with us according to divine command"—as we have learned from the "Office of the Keys" in the catechism—that must "be as valid and certain in heaven also as if our dear Lord Christ were dealing with us Himself." He, the Lord of the church, is the one who calls, blesses, and sends His ordained ministers. The office conferred is so far removed from human manipulation that there is no legal "claim" (*Anspruch*) to ordination and the pastoral office on the basis of studies completed or examinations passed or any other such qualifications.

The Chamber for Theology of the Evangelical Church of Germany has declared in its position-paper of 1992, "Women's Ordination and the Office of Bishop," that "all Christians are equal and called in the same way through baptism to be members of the church and of the priesthood" (with reference to the office of the ministry).¹¹ In defense of this position there is an appeal to words of Luther, which actually, however, occur in a different context. The conception of the EKD leads logically to the conclusion that the conferral of the pastoral office is only a legalizing act (*Rechtsakt*), while the office itself is realized in the execution of functions which, as a matter of principle, could be carried out by any Christian. In actuality, however, the pastoral office is no mere sum of functions which anyone at all who has the "gift" can carry out. It is clearly of no small significance that Christ chose only men to compose His inner

circle—as His apostles. In so doing He in no way downgraded the dignity of women. Quite the contrary, He elevated the dignity of women in that He chose a woman—Mary, the Mother of God—as the portal through which to enter the world in His incarnation. But what must not be overlooked is that it pleased the divine wisdom to appear in the form of a man and in this form to become a human being. We must, to be sure, be very careful with all "assumptions" in interpreting the "meaning Jesus may have attached to His selection of twelve Jewish men to be His apostles."¹² Also to be assigned, however, to the category of assumptions is the opinion that the Lord and His apostles did not decide the question of ordaining women "because at that time the question of ordaining women did not yet arise."¹³ Even if no word of Christ establishing the reason for binding His official representation to males has been preserved to us, the fact that He did so still counts and, indeed, denies us the freedom of choice to decide anew and differently now.

The pastoral office (*das Amt der Kirche*) is more than the mere execution of functions. The office-holder is himself called by the Lord. He remains, at the same time, a part of the congregation and its spokesman before God, a principle which is expressed by his position when he prays and confesses while facing in the same direction as the congregation. At the same time, however, he is the one who, in the name and by the commission of the Lord of the church, faces the congregation and declares to it the authoritative word of its Lord. In the exercise of this function the office takes on, in addition to its character as service, features of fatherhood as well (in line with 1 Corinthians 4:15); and both aspects of the office serve as safeguards against an "isolated aloneness of hierarchical separation over against the congregation."¹⁴ There can be no talk at all on the basis of the New Testament of a democratically-grounded understanding of equality in rank. "Are they all apostles?" Paul asks in 1 Corinthians 12:28—and obviously means they are not.

If we forget or deny the rooting of the pastoral office in the apostolate and the commission of Christ, if we no longer see its institution as coming from the Lord of the church—but instead consider it only the exercise of certain functions which could logically be passed along to any Christian and which only need some

ordering by common agreement—then we, in fact, forsake our stated confession at a decisive point—yes, at its very foundation in Scripture. For it is Scripture that summons us to confess Christ as the Lord of the pastoral office today. Nor is the church of Christ established and intended as a mere human society in which all have equal rights and equal duties. It is—and is meant to continue to be—the body of the exalted Lord in which He Himself is present through His word and sacraments and in which He Himself distributes His Holy Spirit and wills to work through the office-holders whom He has put in place. That offices and services could at any time be rearranged arbitrarily, according to the possibilities and gifts at hand, conflicts with the Lutheran understanding of Scripture and the confessions of faith and instead has its roots in enthusiasm (*Schwaermertum*).¹⁵

There is no need to underline that we vigorously reject a priesthood that separates itself from the congregation and lays claim to prerogatives on the basis of a supposedly different and higher status of grace before God. Something of this kind confronted Luther in his day. Neither, however, should we succumb to the danger of flattening out the pastoral office so as to set all services and assignments in the church on the same level, of viewing the church as nothing more than a humanly-ordered union of people with common beliefs. Both church and office are, according to the New Testament, clearly something more. The office of the ministry can by no means be equated with simply bearing witness. The first witnesses of the resurrection of Christ were, according to the Scripture, women. They received the commission to announce the resurrection of the Lord to the disciples—to the disciples, be it noted, not to all the world. It is twisting logic gravely, however, to argue from the appropriate witnessing of women to the legitimacy of women in the office of the ministry.

C. Christology and the Understanding of the Trinity

The introduction of the ordination of women—with the accompanying shift in the understanding of the Holy Scriptures, the pastoral office, and the church—cannot be seen in isolation from the thinking known as feminist theology. The effects of this theology include, above all—sometimes unconsciously and sometimes consciously,

with the goal clearly in mind—a transformation of the picture of Christ and the Holy Trinity which is revealed in Scripture and assumed into the confession of the church. Whether the ordination of women has followed in the wake of feministic theology or *vice versa* is a pointless debate. The fact remains that, even if the one has not developed directly from the other, the close connection of the two phenomena cannot be denied. And feminist theology, without question, adamantly and decisively demands the ordination of women, in line with the striving of feminism in general to achieve "emancipation" from the dominance of the male in all areas. The process, likewise, by which feminist theology seeks to change the male-patriarchal stamp of Holy Scripture and the divine service strengthens and promotes the call to ordain women to the pastoral office.

To speak of God as "Father" is, in the estimation of feminist theology, an expression of thinking which is hostile to women unless "our Mother" be used as well. The Holy Spirit is spoken of as "she," an entity to be treated as female. These are no linguistic games, but rather serious endeavors to transform the biblical picture of God. Together with this transformation come mythical concepts from many non-Christian religions in which female deities play a role. That the picture of the Divine Judge and Father of Mercy has fundamentally changed—since the concept of sin has also changed—has long been evident. In this turning away from presumed "patriarchal values and norms" more lies hidden than we see at first glance. The "theology of fellow-humanity" (*Mitmenschlichkeit*), which has been rampant in the Protestant churches for a long time, has issued in a feminist theology which has also taken on elements of "liberation theology." If the hope is to find and experience God in loving encounters with one's neighbors, then in the female office-holder, with her feminine-motherly disposition, one obviously sees a better administrator of feminist interests than in the male office-holder and the "patriarchal" concept of shepherd and flock.

The picture of Christ as the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls (1 Peter 2:25) grows pale if, in His name and by His commission, shepherds no longer speak and function as representatives whom He

has sent forth. Then experiences and wishes, needs and expectations—derived from people and relating to them, especially to women—can quickly form a new picture of God and Christ. This picture no longer derives from His revelation but is projected and transferred to God from His creation. We have to ask ourselves, then, what picture of God we would be promoting by introducing the ordination of women. It would be the kind of transformation which feminist theology seeks to attain. Are we not obliged, however, to stay with the picture of God given in the Bible, seeing how much we would lose were we to veer away from it?

D. The Order of Creation and the Order of Salvation

In the discussion of the ordination of women a considerable role has been played by the question of what conclusions we are to draw from the words of the Apostle Paul in his Letter to the Galatians (3:28): "there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Here, without question, the equal value of woman and man before God is expressed, the same worth as children of God is asserted, and the lack of significance in ethnic or social differences is underlined. For all such differences belong to this aeon, the world whose end has begun with the redemption accomplished by Christ. The differences, however, enumerated by Paul can be understood and interpreted only in part as a consequence of the fall, of the separation of man from God. The difference, at all events, between man and woman derives not from the fall, but rather from the creative will and plan of God: He created them "male and female" (Genesis 1:27). This difference (at least in regard to sexual activities) recedes into the background in the new life of the future world or, indeed, is eliminated: "they are like angels in heaven" (Matthew 22:30).

We may, to be sure, say that what will be realized in the new creation is even now, in a dawn-like way, having its effects among the redeemed. The theology of anticipation, however, reaches into the future and attempts to seize beforehand what is promised us in the "new heaven and the new earth" (2 Peter 3:13). This kind of anticipatory theology plays a considerable role in contemporary responses to almost all ethical questions and even far beyond these. Among Christians and in the church, supposedly, the kingdom of

God has already, as it were, been realized. The well-informed, of course, will easily recognize how far all such thinking is removed from the Lutheran Confessions and biblical sobriety—and how close it comes to the enthusiasm that always wants to rule this world with a "new righteousness" and, in the process generally, distorts the liberating gospel into a new, enslaving law.

In actuality, however, the order of creation is not abolished by the order of redemption, or order of salvation. The words of Paul in Galatians 3:28 speak forcefully, of course, of the order of salvation since he addresses those who "through faith are children of God in Christ Jesus" and "have put on Christ because they have been baptized into Christ" (Galatians 3:26-27). In no way, however, do these words invalidate the order of creation. Nor, by the same token, have all the other statements of Scripture which address the relationship between men and women become suddenly baseless, thoughts we have moved beyond and words to be brushed aside as temporally conditioned. The defining, to be sure, of male-female relationships in terms of the apostolic exhortations brings us many problems when concretely transposed on the contemporary world. But the person who thinks he can brush aside the aforesaid statements of Scripture as being temporally conditioned is making things too easy for himself.

The biblical evaluation of women is, of course, discredited if they are stamped as less gifted, treated as incapable of making decisions, and pushed into the background. All too often such discrimination has hidden behind an appeal to biblical pronouncements, whereas, in point of fact, it was a specific *bourgeois* understanding of roles that was being propagated. In this way the biblical message was made a veil for crass injustice and male arrogance. Such misuse of Scripture should not be allowed to hide in silence, nor should it be excused.

The recognition, however, of the abuse of Scripture cannot be used to eliminate what Scripture clearly teaches—the continuing validity of the order of creation, even when it has long been surrounded by the order of redemptive salvation. Also in the church, what God has established in creation continues to be valid—the difference between men and women who can respectively use their

special endowments to the common good. Meanwhile, however, neither such gifts and endowments nor the equal worth of all the children of God before their Father in heaven provides a basis to claim ordination to the pastoral office. To make a personal claim on the office of the ministry is, indeed, inadmissible. In contradistinction to a "secular" calling, which one can choose for oneself, one is chosen and called by God to the pastoral office, and the church confirms this choosing and calling when it ordains a man to the office of the public ministry. Nor will it do to deny ordination to women without at the same time asserting the biblical and confessional necessity of this denial. We are deceiving ourselves if we think that the practice of restricting the pastorate to men can be sustained in the long haul if the conviction and insistence do not back it up that, in this way and in this way alone, are we acting in faithfulness to the will of Christ, on the basis of Scripture and in accordance with the confessions of the church. In this age and culture we shall need to make continual efforts to attain and retain such certainty of purpose. Adherence to Holy Scripture and so to the Lutheran Confessions is what is at stake here. And these are concerns which could well fracture the church—may God forbid!

What kind of church do we want to be and become? Surely we wish to be a church which stands on the foundation of Scripture "in the unity of the one holy church."¹⁶ Surely we wish to be a church which still has the pastoral office which was instituted by Christ and based on His command and action. Surely we wish to be a church in which "we have introduced nothing, either in doctrine or in ceremonies, that is contrary to Holy Scripture or the universal Christian church" (Conclusion to the Augsburg Confession)¹⁷—a church which has preserved, in other words, its true catholicity. Among us, then, women are carrying out many services with selfless devotion, for which we thank God from whom every good gift comes. In some places, admittedly, there are still hindrances to be overcome. At the same time, however, we must always remain aware that we have no authority to confer upon a woman the office of an ambassador in the place of Christ, of a shepherd of the congregation. Among us there prevails the "certain doctrine that the preaching office derives from the general call of the apostles" (Tractate 10),¹⁸ and to this office Christ called only men and so He

will continue to do. May God help us to move forward. May He grant us all unanimity and the joyful confidence that He can and will prevent anything which would harm the church. Let us implore such help of Him—from the heart and persistently!

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Jobst Schöne, D.D.
Bishop of the Selbständige Evangelische Lutherische Kirche

The Endnotes and Editorial Note

1. Basilius Streithofen, "Duerfen Frauen Priester sein?" *Die Welt*, April 12, 1994, G1.
2. The complete text can be found in *Herderkorrispondenze*, 7, 1994, 355ff.
3. Dr. Alvin Barry, the president of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, in a letter of June 1994, specifically thanked Pope John Paul II for his decisive action in this regard: "Our church . . . restricts ordination to the holy office to men only, and we greet your vigorous affirmation of this apostolic doctrine." *Reporter: News for Church Leaders*, August 1994, 7.
4. *Frauenordination und Bischofsamt. Eine Stellungnahme der Kammer fuer Theologie* (EKD Texte 44; Hannover, 1992), 3-5.
5. Volker Stolle, "Neutestamentliche Aspekte zur Frage der Ordination von Frauen," in *Frauen im kirchlichen Amt?* (Oberurseler Hefte 28; Oberursel, 1994), 78.
6. Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, *Apostolat und Predigtamt*, second edition (Stuttgart and Cologne, 1954), 37.
7. *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche* (Goettingen, 1952), 121.
8. *Ibid.*, 240.
9. Wilhelm Rothfuchs, "Thesen zu Aspekten aus dem Gebiet der Pastoral-theologie," in *Frauen im kirchlichen Amt?* (Oberurseler Hefte 28; Oberursel, 1994), 86.
10. *Grundordnung der SELK*, Article 7:1.

11. *Frauenordination und Bischofsamt* (EKD Texte 44; Hannover, 1992), 3.
12. Volker Stolle, *ibid.*, 79.
13. *Ibid.*, 73.
14. *Ibid.*, 73.
15. The application of the term "enthusiasm," in accordance with the linguistic usage of Martin Luther and the confessional writings, is made here particularly to that trend in Protestantism which assumes that the Spirit of God can be received without the mediation of the "external word." According to the Smalcald Articles (III, 7, 3), "In these matters which concern the external, spoken word, we must hold firmly to the conviction that God gives no one His Spirit or grace except through or with the external word which comes before. Thus we shall be protected from the enthusiasts—that is, from the spiritualists who boast that they possess the Spirit without and before the word and who therefore judge, interpret, and twist the Scriptures or spoken word according to their pleasure." Tappert, 312.
16. *Grundordnung der SELK*, Article 1:1.
17. *Bekennnisschriften*, 134.
18. *Ibid.*, 474.

Editorial Note: Bishop Jobst Schöne distributed the original form of his *Hirtenbrief* on the ordination of women to the clergy of the SELK in the course of 1994. It was then slightly expanded by the bishop in its theological argumentation, translated by the Reverend Dr. Armin Moellering at the instance of the president's office of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, then slightly abridged by the assistant editor by removing sentences relating uniquely to the SELK (as suggested by the office mentioned and resolved by the editorial committee of the *Concordia Theological Quarterly*), and has now been authorized by the bishop in the form printed here as the official English version of the letter concerned. D.McC.L.J.