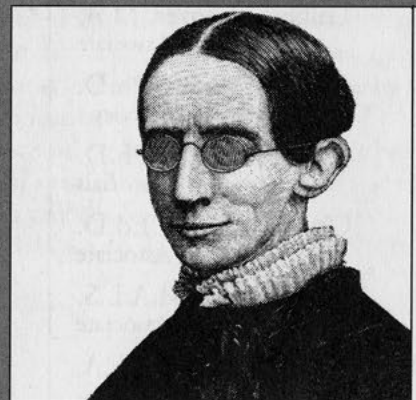


ISSUES

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Fall 1992

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WOMEN'S SERVICE IN THE CHURCH

ISSUES

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Women's Service in the Church

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editorials



Freed to be Me

ONE OF THE EARLY SIGNS of a dysfunctional family is the breakdown in communication among its members. When members stop talking and listening to each other as they work through problems and conflicts, they cease to function as a family. So it is in a church body! When its members stop addressing problems and when they no longer engage in the study of issues confronting them in the life of the church, it, too, can become dysfunctional.

In the past several decades, much has been said and written on the topic, "The Role of Women in the Church." Task forces, commissions and conventions have addressed the topic, and I pray that groups and individuals will never stop discussing topics and issues that surface as we live and work together as the family of believers.

When speaking or writing about an individual's role in ministry, as well as about the freedom we have in Christ, I often refer to an original painting that hangs in the foyer of our home. The artist used bold strokes of blues and greens in an asymmetric pattern to communicate to the viewer the title of his painting, "The Freedom to be Yourself." At first glance, one sees an abstract design of beautifully-blended colors. In studying the painting more closely, one discovers that the free style of the artist has created a series of lines, each leading to a central focal point.

reflections

During the past fifty years in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, probably no topic has been studied and discussed more than the service of women. For five decades our Synod has addressed the role of women in the church in at least fifteen conventions, involving more than ten synodical committees. After decades of effort to define appropriate activity for women in the church, questions requiring answers are still with us.

No apology for seeking answers to the questions being asked is necessary. Noting a variety of questions on the agendas of both women and men, as well as topics before congregational committees and boards, this edition of *Issues in Christian Education* has as its goal the promotion of study and reflection on the important questions being asked, but as yet not answered, regarding the service of women in today's church.

For readers looking for a rationale for the ordination of women into the pastoral office, this *Issues* will be a disappointment. Instead, the purpose of this edition is to examine the role of women in the church, with particular attention given to an identification of questions being asked, plus a rationale for addressing such questions. Also, possible strategies for engaging in study and reflection of the questions are presented.

As you read about the questions being asked regarding the service of women in today's church, why these questions deserve a response, and how our church can address the questions, may you be reminded of Jesus Christ, who came to earth not to be served, but to serve, so sinful human beings might be saved.

Jesus said, "... whoever would be first among you must be your slave; even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:26b-28).

Orville C. Walz, President

WOMEN'S SERVICE IN THE CHURCH

What are the questions?

ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 28, 1990, a Lutheran church in Montana offered its own version of the "Wittenberg door." At the beginning of the morning worship service, members were invited to propose reforms for the church, especially for their particular congregation. A broad range of "theses" was submitted and then placed on a long sheet of paper and displayed on the inside of the church door in the narthex.

The publication that carried the news item did not reveal what reforms had been proposed or if any eventually were acted upon.¹ However, the exercise itself may prove worthwhile for other Lutheran congregations whose heritage, after all, is rooted in propositions raised by Martin Luther about the practice and teaching of the church of his day.

Luther, of course, would have trouble recognizing how we, his doctrinal progeny, now "do church." Today, such questions are discussed in conference calls, disseminated over fax machines, and broadcast via phone-mail networks. Issues about church practice and teaching emerge as business items at conventions where delegates express their views using electronic voting machines. In fact, times have changed so much that were Luther to nail his ninety-five theses to a church door today, he may well be arrested for defacing private property.

One thing, though, that would be familiar to Luther even now is the hostility that is generated whenever attempts are made to "nail" questions about the service of women to our own church "door." Yet, with The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod having been cited as the most precisely-defined church body in America², there are those who believe it is time to examine some of the definitions that have proliferated over the years.

To encourage such dialogue seems like a reasonable (and Lutheran) way to get at some of the general themes that have repeatedly emerged in connection with women in the

Dr. Jean Garton is a noted author and speaker who served as Chairperson of the President's Commission on Women of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.



editorials

For What We Are—Not What We Are Not

THE LCMS CARRIES MORE WOMEN on its roster of professional church workers than does any other Lutheran synod. These women are classified as Commissioned Ministers—Teachers, and Commissioned Ministers—Directors of Christian Education. The majority serve in elementary classrooms where they daily proclaim the Word, lead worship, nurture, comfort and counsel. They teach the basics of faith to children who will become leaders of the Church. They serve as youth directors, choir directors, organists and principals. Others serve as secondary teachers, college professors, and directors of Christian education. In whatever positions these women find themselves, their purpose is to nurture faith and proclaim the Gospel—the purpose of Christian education!

The LCMS has historically struggled with the role of women in the church. How has it happened that women teachers have been "allowed" to assume more and more leadership roles? One point of view would have it that no man could be found to do the job, and a skilled woman was available and willing. Sometimes it happened because, as more than one woman (including this writer) was told, "It's cheaper to hire you than to call a man."

But there is another point of view to consider. When teacher shortages occurred in the history of the Synod, congregations prayed fervently to the Lord of the harvest to send laborers . . . God answered those prayers, as He does today, by sending both men and women to serve the church's schools. How typical of our God to provide differently and better than we expect. As God created humanity male and female to complement each other, so men and women have worked together in our schools to nurture God's people.

Yet our church struggles with the question of what roles these women formally trained by the church for ministry can actually play. Certainly there is a serious desire to be faithful to Scripture and to do things "decently and in order." But the result is that too many congregations and individuals perceive women, not in terms of the gifts they have, but rather in terms of what they are not (male) and what they may not do. As one woman administrator commented, "After almost thirty years serving this church with all that I am and all that I have, I am just plain tired of having my role defined by what I am not and what I cannot do. I have been timid about leading Bible classes and devotions. Yet when I do lead them, I've discov-

ered I am able to speak to people's hearts and minds." She is far from alone in her frustration. Congregations and Synod do not hear the wisdom and expertise of female workers, do not take full benefit of the gifts God has placed in their midst.

Today, women educated as Lutheran teachers serve the Synod as leaders in early childhood education, special education, higher education, ministry to the aging, and the right-to-life movement. How does it happen that women are articulating for The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod its responses to critical issues facing its members today—helping it to apply the Gospel in the lives of its members? God sends the laborers and equips them for the ministry he places before them.

Is this new? Is this leadership role of women a "modern development"? Scripture demonstrates clearly that women have always played a powerful leadership role among God's people. Deborah was a prophet. She led the people of Israel. Anna was a prophet. She proclaimed Jesus to all Jerusalem. Priscilla taught Apollos. Esther was sent to save her people—"for such a time as this." Our Synod's female Commissioned Ministers—Teachers and Directors of Christian Education are spiritual descendants of these women of the Bible. They have served the church faithfully throughout much of its history. They are gifts from God. Can The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and its congregations truly afford to minimize and restrain the ministry of the women in its midst?

Priscilla Lawin
Professor of Education
Concordia-Seward

Welcome

Joining the Editorial Committee of *Issues* is William Wolfram, M.F.A., who will assume responsibility for graphics and layout. He is a Professor of Art at Concordia-Seward, where he has served since 1960.

How like our lives together in the church as God's people, His servants! When seen collectively, with all of the diversities that exist because of background, experience, culture, age and sex, we resemble an abstract painting. But as we concentrate on the focal point in our lives as Christians, our Lord Jesus Christ, we see that from Him all of our Christian living, service and freedom flow, and these make for a "neat" picture to be cherished and nurtured.

Why, then, do we in the church often fail to recognize the uniqueness of each individual as a special gift from God? I grew up in a rural midwestern community, where very early in life I discovered that there were doors closed to me. "You can't play the trumpet because you're a girl—how about the oboe?" "Girls can't play third base on the high school baseball team." And later in life: "There are ministries and activities in the church that are reserved for male members only!"

Should the day ever come that we refrain from discussing and studying any given topic and say, "The church has spoken its final word," we are heading toward dysfunction. No issue, large or small, should be left to simmer on the back burner. It could soon come to a "full, rolling boil!"

Our call as servants in the church is always to Christ. And even though we have as a basic premise that men and women are equal, yet not identical, our sinfulness will continue to precipitate divisiveness on sensitive issues. Yet Jesus has come! And He says to us today, "Behold the new has come!" As we live and work together in this "newness," all who are watching will see that we are ONE in Christ Jesus. And as we, men and women alike, share the freedom we have in Him, let us go forward as the whole people of God, so that the whole world may believe.

Florence Montz
Bismarck, North Dakota
Member of the Board of Directors, LCMS

church, especially since, according to a Synod-wide survey, the majority of people in the LCMS believes that the Synod is more restrictive than are the Scriptures concerning some areas of women's service.³

Of course, few would dare say about women (at least publicly!) what Luther is reported to have said five hundred years ago. His sixteenth century comment that sermons must be kept simple because of women's inability to "understand lofty matters"⁴ sounds like "fighting" words to twentieth century ears. His statement that nothing is worse than women discussing politics because they speak so "confusedly and absurdly"⁵ is in stark contrast to the current situation in which women are engaged in politics in record numbers.

Despite those views, when Luther spoke of the priesthood of all believers, he included women as well as men.

1 WHAT DOES IT MEAN, THOUGH, FOR WOMEN TODAY, IN TERMS OF THEIR SERVICE, TO BE MEMBERS OF THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS?

Consider, for example, the reading of the lessons at worship services. In the past year the congregational variations I have personally witnessed—as to who is permitted to read—included the following: (1) only the pastor; (2) the pastor and lay men; (3) lay men and lay women; (4) lay men who are permitted to read any lesson but lay women who are permitted to read only the Old Testament lesson; (5) everyone present at worship reading together and aloud all lessons; (6) lay men and women who are permitted to read the lessons at mid-week Lenten, Advent and summer services but not at Sunday services.

Add to those differing practices the congregations where the pastor always reads all of the lessons except for once-a-year special services such as LWML Sunday when women read the lessons.

Why, some logically ask, is it right for women to read at that one Sunday service but wrong to read at others? Why, in some churches, are women permitted to read at Wednesday worship but not at Sunday worship? Why, in some churches, can women read from the Old Testament but not from the New Testament?

While such diversity is seen by some as healthy and essential to meet the needs of individual congregations as they serve the Lord, others see that diversity as evidence of practice gone astray and teaching gone wrong. For lay people, however, the resulting confusion appears to derive less from the diversity of practice than from the intolerance on the part of some toward such diversity.

2 DO DIFFERENT PRACTICES (INVOLVING THE SERVICE OF WOMEN) RESULT FROM DIFFERING

UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE EXCLUSIVE FUNCTIONS OF THE PASTORAL OFFICE AS DISTINGUISHED FROM THE DISTINCTIVE FUNCTIONS OF THAT OFFICE WHICH, UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF THE PASTOR, MAY BE PERMITTED LAY WOMEN? IF SO, WHAT ARE THOSE FUNCTIONS?

It is clear from the historical record that the service allowed women has changed greatly since the Synod's formation some one hundred and fifty years ago. There was a time when women were not permitted to teach in church schools. Today almost seventy percent of those staffing LCMS Christian Day Schools are women.⁶

There was a time when women were not permitted to lead devotions in Day Schools or in Sunday Schools. Today, women not only lead devotions but serve as principals of Day Schools and superintendents of Sunday Schools.

There was a time when women were not permitted to sing in the church choir, play the organ for worship service or vote at congregational meetings, but those activities have been commonplace in LCMS churches for many years. Yet, when in the past they *were* forbidden for women, it was St. Paul's words concerning the silence, the submission, and the subordination of women that were most often quoted to defend those prohibitions.⁷

3 IS IT POSSIBLE, THEN, THAT SERVICE NOW PROHIBITED WOMEN WILL ONE DAY BE PERMITTED? ON WHAT BASIS DOES THE CHURCH "CHANGE ITS MIND?"

Yet, a new and greater concern today relates to the removal of some of the service opportunities in which women have long been engaged. In some congregations little girls are no longer permitted to participate in Christmas services, with some believing that to allow them to do so is to ignore Paul's admonition that women keep silent in the church. His exhortation is also being used by some today to remove women from church choirs, and there are now instances where women organists have been directed to refrain from playing the introductory note to a hymn or liturgical response because to do so is judged to place women in the position of leading the worship.

4 HAVE TRIVIAL LAWS WEAKENED NECESSARY LAWS? BY ATTEMPTING TO ESTABLISH A RULE TO COVER EVERY SITUATION REGARDING A WOMAN'S SERVICE, IS CHRISTIAN FREEDOM BEING REPRESSED?

In the LCMS, often women's service is discussed in terms of deficiencies: what women are *not*; what they do *not* have and what they *cannot* do. Yet, women and men are more alike than different, but because our likenesses are nuanced by our gender, the gifts we have are generally different. However, the LCMS now does not enjoy the contribution of

its female members to the degree that the home, education, business, and society do, despite the fact that fifty-five percent of its membership are women.

Could that be a factor in why the LCMS has been referred to as "the church that's always fighting?"⁸

5 WOULD THE LCMS BE A KINDER, GENTLER CHURCH IF WOMEN'S GOD-GIVEN GIFTS (AS HARMONY-SEEKERS AND NETWORK-BUILDERS) WERE UTILIZED MORE FULLY AT ALL LEVELS OF THE CHURCH'S PROGRAMMING AND PLANNING?

Obviously, women are different from men in many ways. Generally speaking, the way we problem-solve, manage time or even converse are different. We are different in how we think and how we come to "know" some things we know. Is it not worth considering, then, that an imbalance arises when programming and planning are based on only one kind of "knowing," one way of solving problems, and one style of communicating?

6 IF, BY GOD'S DESIGN, MEN AND WOMEN ARE DIFFERENT, THEN DON'T OUR DIFFERENCES HAVE A PURPOSE BEYOND CHURCH ACTIVITIES THAT ARE SIMPLY AN EXTENSION OF A WOMAN'S HOME ACTIVITIES SUCH AS FOOD PREPARATION, CHILD CARE AND HOSPITALITY—AS GOD-PLEASING AS THOSE ARE?

According to numerous reports, American churches, in general, are in for some lean times. A serious challenge to the well-being of the LCMS, in particular, is that of potential growth. In the past, our church grew primarily in two ways: through immigration and reproduction. However, because many coming to the United States today are from non-Christian cultures, few are added to Lutheran membership roles from that source. Also, Lutherans are among the group (white, middle-class and of European ancestry) judged to have the lowest birthrate in America. We are not reproducing as many next-generation Lutherans as did families before us.

Other significant growth factors include a diminishing denominational loyalty and a growing belief that the church is irrelevant. The ever-present problem of "back door" losses is about to be joined by the problem of staggering "front door" losses, resulting from the almost thirty million legal abortions of the past twenty years. Add to all of the above the fact that we are an aging church with forty percent of our members over age fifty.

At this crucial time—at this defining moment—many in the LCMS are raising questions about the failure of the church to utilize the unique gifts of women. They are raising questions about the growing restrictions on service once permitted women and the emergence of negative

attitudes toward women. They are asking whether a church that proclaims the priesthood of all believers ought not explore additional ways—which do not compromise our commitment to God's Word—for transforming patterns of church life to further include women in its vital work and witness. Underlying all of these questions, however, is a more fundamental one.

7 WHAT IS AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH, AND WHAT CONSTITUTES "USURPING" AUTHORITY?

Yet, there are those who seem to fear even the posing of such questions, to say nothing of the dialogue they would generate. Yet, in a hundred and fifty year old denomination with a five hundred year history, an exploration of such questions (in a forum that includes the members most often absent from discussions about LCMS women—women themselves) could well lead to renewed vitality and rediscovery of what it truly means to be brothers and sisters in Christ . . . partners together in the Gospel.

While the Lord "changes not" and while His Word is not "up for grabs" on the basis of majority rule or public opinion, *how* that Word is applied and communicated most effectively in changing cultures ought always be matters for discussion.

It is clear that not everyone would agree, of course, and two responses seem to be common in our midst. One is that of Lucy, a member of the *Peanuts* gang, whose solution to questions she didn't want to consider was to "turn the TV up real loud, crawl into (her) beanbag chair with a big bowl of ice cream and refuse to think about it."

Then there is the other response. That involves a hammer and a church door.

Notes

¹ *Lutheran Witness*, Montana District Supplement, March 1991.

² LCMS Planning Conference, March 8-11, 1991, Carl George, Ph.D., presenter.

³ 1985 Attitudinal Survey by CENSURCH, Concordia, River Forest, Illinois.

⁴ Martin Luther, *Table Talk*, edited by Theodore G. Tappert, in *LUTHER'S WORKS*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967, 54:384.

⁵ Plass, Ewald M., editor. *What Luther Says*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959, III:1458.

⁶ 1985 Statistical Report by LCMS Department of Planning and Research.

⁷ 1 Timothy 2:11-15.

⁸ Excerpt from a media news report following an LCMS Convention.

⁹ Malachi 3:6 and Hebrews 13:8.

Jenny Mueller-Roebke

Why these questions deserve a response

WHY ARE THESE QUESTIONS important to women? Why does the entire church need to give attention to these questions? Why do congregations need to study and discuss the service of women in family, church, and community? Why do we need to hear the questions being raised by young adults? How many responses to these questions make an impact on the life of the church in the twenty-first century?

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod needs to consider questions concerning the service of women for any number of practical reasons: over half the church consists of women; young, gifted women are leaving our church; women contribute a significant amount of the



money that supports the church; women volunteers are decreasing in numbers. . . . Certainly these are important concerns. However, there are more important concerns than those directly related to the survival of the church as an institution. The LCMS must give attention to questions concerning women for the sake of the spiritual development of the church as a body of believers and for the sake of the spiritual nurturing and development of every individual within that body—males and females of all ages. Further, the church must give attention to these questions for the

Dr. Jenny Mueller-Roebke is Associate Professor of English at Concordia-Seward.

sake of the vast numbers of people outside the church who do not know the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

Constructive and compassionate discussion of questions related to the service of women in the church will not be easy. The topic is one that engenders strong feelings in almost everyone within the church. One need only examine the overtures brought before the 1992 Synodical Convention to see that there are a variety of strong opinions on the issue. Certainly women do not agree on questions related to women's roles within the church.

There is no one "women's position" on the issue just as there is no one "women's experience" within the church. This is partially due to varying practices within specific churches. In some congregations women have visible roles in worship services, hold congregational offices, and represent their congregations at conventions. In other congregations women cannot vote. I have heard of congregations in which women serve as elders and distribute communion, a congregation in which young women are not allowed to participate in annual youth group Easter sunrise services, and another in which a woman with a doctorate in education and twenty plus years of teaching and administrative experience was not allowed to serve as Sunday School Superintendent. Further complicating the issue is the obvious fact that individual women perceive and respond to their unique experiences in the church in very different ways. Because of these differences in opinions, experiences, and perceptions, any discussion of women's role within the church, including this article, will include a certain amount of generalizing.

Despite the problems inherent in discussing the service of women in the church, one thing is undeniable: some women have been hurt by gender-related practices and attitudes within the church. Their spiritual pain and the

resulting conflict they experience within the church is reason enough to warrant serious discussion of questions related to women and the church.

Historically, the church's response to Paul's words, "women keep silent," has had a profound effect on the church. For the most part, the church as an institution has been unaffected by women's "voice." Our doctrine has been devised and articulated exclusively by males. Men have been responsible for the content and delivery of sermons, the structuring of worship services, the organization of the church, the ways in which we conduct meetings and discussions within the church, as well as the way in which we define "ministry." Although women are becoming more influential in several of these areas, we still have to ask, "To what extent has the absence of women's voice, experience, and reality limited our ability to minister to women within the church? To what extent has the absence of women's voice, experience, and reality limited our perspective and our ability to minister to all people within the church? To what extent has the absence of women's voice, experience, and reality limited our ability to bring the Good News to people outside the church?"

● THE CHURCH MUST GIVE ATTENTION TO QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE SERVICE OF WOMEN IN ORDER TO ACCOMMODATE, UTILIZE, AND ENHANCE WOMEN'S WAYS OF KNOWING, UNDERSTANDING, AND COMMUNICATING WITHIN THE CHURCH.

Recent research indicates that men and women use fundamentally different learning, communication, and decision-making processes. According to this research, many women learn and communicate most naturally in cooperative, collaborative, conversational settings in which they develop relationships with other people and in which they bring their own experiences into relationship with the content and concepts they are learning. Women consult others in decision-making, striving for consensus. Men are more likely to perceive themselves as interacting within a hierarchy in which a debate style of communication is used. Personal experience and feeling are often removed from discussion for the sake of "logic" and objectivity.¹ The organizational structure of the church, the ways in which we conduct meetings, our methods of study and instruction, and our approach to discussion within the church often tend to favor men's ways of learning and communicating and ultimately may inhibit women's ability to interact within the church. It is not surprising that some women are uncomfortable communicating in a church that has traditionally admonished women to be silent.

Further, women's styles of communicating and decision-making may be particularly well-suited to the values and

"Historically, the church's response to Paul's words, 'women keep silent,' has had a profound effect on the church."

mission of the church. A more complete incorporation of women's ways of relating and communicating could help move the church toward becoming a warmer, more caring, nurturing church—the kind of church many people in the church say they want; the kind of church many people outside the church say they are looking for.²

● THE CHURCH MUST GIVE ATTENTION TO QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE SERVICE OF WOMEN IN ORDER TO ACCOMMODATE, UTILIZE, AND ENHANCE WOMEN'S WAYS OF UNDERSTANDING AND ACCEPTING THE GOSPEL.

Men and women also have different ways of understanding, interacting with, and accepting the Gospel. Women have unique spiritual concerns as a result of their experiences as females. Women's ways of interpreting and responding to God's Word, as well as their unique spiritual needs, have not always been recognized within the church.³

Many women learn and understand best when they bring their own

experiences into relationship with the content and concepts they are learning. Traditionally, however, women's experiences were not the stuff that sermons and Bible studies, for instance, were made of. By 1984, women's images and inclusive language had not yet been adequately incorporated into synodical materials as recommended by the 1977 Task Force on Women.⁴ Many questions that are important to women simply have not occurred to male theologians in the past. Only recently have efforts been made to incorporate women's experiences and concerns into sermons, Bible studies, materials, and programs sponsored by the church, unless they were exclusively for women. We must continue and expand these efforts.

It is not surprising that women's experiences and perceptions have not been fully integrated into the church. In the past, many of our pastors were educated in institutions that excluded women. The more synodically trained the pastor, the more likely he was to have spent all or most of his twelve years of formal secondary and post-secondary education in institutions that did not admit women. Seminary instruction is still conducted in nearly all-male

classrooms with all-male instructors. Future pastors' exposure to and interaction with women as theological issues are discussed have been limited. Even when women and men are engaged in discussions together, men are likely to dominate discussion.⁵ In a church that has expected women to be silent, men have not always had opportunities to observe and learn from women as their experiences are brought to bear upon the message of the Gospel.

And there is much to be learned by listening to women's voices. Women may have a unique understanding of concepts such as human dependence on Christ, since in our society women often have been powerless and therefore dependent on others. We are to be like little children in our faith. In our society women are the ones most likely to care for or teach young children and therefore have more opportunities to learn from them. Women might be able to help men toward a more complete understanding of what it means to be the Bride of Christ rather than the Bridegroom. A number of my students reported that an LCMS pastor justified his practice of not allowing women to lead Bible studies, "even" for other women, with the argument that "women shouldn't be allowed to show their ignorance in public." I hope such opinions are rare within our church. The full incorporation of women's experiences and theological insights into our study of God's Word can contribute to the spiritual growth of all its members.

● THE CHURCH MUST GIVE ATTENTION TO QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE SERVICE OF WOMEN IN ORDER TO RECOGNIZE AND PROMOTE THE WAYS IN WHICH WOMEN ARE CURRENTLY SERVING THE CHURCH AS ADMIRABLE MODELS OF MINISTRY FOR BOTH MEN AND WOMEN.

Women are serving the church in significant roles; however, these roles traditionally have not been recognized, respected, or acknowledged as "real" ministry. Through our long church history, a type of dualism has developed within the church that pits the public against the private and the spiritual against the physical. In the church, as in our society, women have traditionally been associated with the "less important" private, physical, and affective life while men have functioned in the public, "spiritual," political, and authoritative realm.⁶ This dichotomy, which has sometimes been extreme within the church, has resulted in an incomplete definition of both *spirituality* and *ministry*. The things that happen publicly, inside the church building, are only part of the whole picture. Spiritual growth and ministry are "whole person/whole life" activities that include the physical and emotional, the "masculine" and "feminine," in an interactive relationship. A "whole" spirituality cannot develop for men or women when they function in only one half of the whole domain.

Women have always had rich and important ministries, but because they are so often played out "behind the scenes" in settings both in and outside the church where there are few adult males to observe them, they have not always been recognized by the church. I have often seen the love of God reflected in the ministry of women—in touching, serving, cleaning up after. There are men who participate in the intimate, physical, emotional-interpersonal forms of ministry so often carried out by women—visiting and physically caring for the sick in their homes, holding a hand or shedding a tear with individuals who have suffered a loss, arranging for meals to be taken to families in crisis situations . . .—and they are blessed to have such opportunities. Many more men and women could benefit from participation in an awareness of these types of ministry. I find it ironic that such loving acts, such selfless activities, the types of ministry that Jesus modeled, have so often been unrecognized and undervalued.

The church must recognize and respect these types of ministry, not to bring glory to those who perform them, but because there are so many people in and outside of the church in desperate need of such ministry. Those in need of help the church can provide include the women whose voices are least likely to be heard in the church: young women on welfare, women who work long hours at low wages outside the home while also bearing complete responsibility for children and home, women so intimidated by emotional or physical abuse that they are afraid to speak, older women on fixed incomes. The church must hear and respond to the voices of these women. The church is currently developing programs or otherwise addressing social issues that have been defined, perhaps too narrowly, as "women's issues." The church has acknowledged the reality of child, spouse, and sexual abuse. It has recognized single-parents and over-burdened caregivers as in need of special ministry. We need to do much more in these areas. We can minister to these people through one-on-one caring, supportive relationships as well as, and perhaps better than, through official church "programs."

There is potential for spiritual growth as a result of participation in these forms of ministry. Men and women are deprived of opportunities to minister and to develop a "whole" spirituality when these types of service are not recognized as ministry within the church.

● THE CHURCH MUST GIVE ATTENTION TO QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE SERVICE OF WOMEN IN ORDER TO MORE FULLY UTILIZE THE TALENTS OF ALL WOMEN IN THE CHURCH.

Just as men are deprived of opportunities to minister and grow spiritually when they are not encouraged to participate in private, intimate forms of ministry, so women are

deprived of similar opportunities when they are not encouraged or allowed to participate in more public forms of ministry. Much of women's work in the church draws upon only a small part of women's potential. Many women have gifts and talents that are not being utilized within the church. Without devaluing the types of service that women have traditionally performed within the church, women whose particular abilities fall outside the traditional realm and women whose schedules do not permit them to participate in the traditional activities for women in the church are wondering how they can use their gifts in the church.

Inconsistency in practice, conflict, and confusion over questions related to the limitation of women's service in the church are having a detrimental effect on the church. Most obvious, perhaps, is the loss of service that could be provided by women in the church. Whose loss is it, for instance, when a woman with a doctorate in education is not allowed to serve as Sunday School Superintendent? Women gifted with theological insight are leaving our church. These women are leaving the LCMS because of growing commitment to a life of service in the church. They have a burning desire to put their gifts and abilities to work in the church, but the opportunities to do so are not there. What do we, as a church, lose when these women leave?

In an opposite response, some women use the restrictions placed upon them as an excuse to avoid personal responsibility to God and the church. I have caught myself using the argument, if only in my thoughts, that if "they" don't want me to serve in the capacity I choose, I just won't serve at all. I have sometimes been secretly relieved that I am not asked to take on certain responsibilities in the church because I am a female. But what strengths might I discover in myself if I were "forced" into new situations? All of us have the responsibility to be good stewards of the talents we have been given. Further, we have the responsibility to discover and develop abilities we might not know we have.

Valuable time and energy is being wasted in argument over what women can and cannot do. Confusion concerning what it means to have "authority" or to "lead" worship

"Many women struggle with feelings of anger, alienation, and loneliness within the church."

within the church has led to an incorrect but common misunderstanding of some positions in the church as power positions rather than positions of humble service. There is confusion over inconsistency in practice related to women's service in the church. Why is it that the woman with the doctorate in education is not allowed to serve as Sunday School Superintendent in one congregation but would be allowed, and probably begged, to perform that service in another congregation? There is confusion over the meaning of Bible passages used to support different views on the service of women. Some are confused by limitations placed on women's service in the church today that seem to conflict with examples drawn from Scripture of women's service in the New Testament church.

Questions concerning the service of women need answers. With so much work to do we cannot afford to waste time in non-productive, uninformed argument. The church must find a way to address questions related to the service of women in an efficient and educated manner so that men and women together, using all their skills, can get down to the business of proclaiming the message of the Gospel throughout the world.

● THE CHURCH MUST GIVE ATTENTION TO QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE SERVICE OF WOMEN IN ORDER TO EASE THE SPIRITUAL PAIN AND CONFLICT OF THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN HURT BY GENDER-RELATED PRACTICES AND ATTITUDES WITHIN THE CHURCH.

Regardless of the original reasons behind the restrictions placed on women in the church, the ways in which these restrictions have been explained, understood or misunderstood, and the ways in which they have been implemented in specific instances within particular congregations have too frequently resulted in serious spiritual hurt for many women in the church. Some women in the church, our sisters in Christ, have feelings of inferiority, low self-esteem, alienation, conflict, or anger in response to their experiences as females within the church. I have heard these feelings expressed by women of all ages from various walks of life. Often, when women express their hurt, they are hurt again by the suggestion that they should not be hurt. Women are told: you shouldn't feel that way; you can't feel that way; you don't really feel that way; you choose to feel that way; you're the only one who feels that way; it doesn't matter that you feel that way. Those of us who are hurt are too often made to feel that there is something wrong with us for having the feelings that we have, that it is somehow sinful for us to be hurt, and that a really good Christian would be able to rise above it.

In fact, not all women in our church have experienced these hurts. Does that make it less important to respond to those



who have? And, it is not safe to assume that women who are not saying anything about it have not been hurt. Communication research indicates that women tend to avoid conflict almost at all costs.⁷ Many of my female students, while deeply hurt, tell me that when they do try to express their feelings, in class for instance, they perceive themselves as outnumbered and overpowered by male students who argue with them rather than listen to them. As a result, they believe it is pointless to try to discuss issues related to women and the church or that discussing these issues actually does more harm than good. Women who are dedicated, professional church workers have told me that although they are concerned about attitudes and issues related to women's service in the church, they are hesitant to speak up for fear of being perceived as maladjusted, aggressive, whiny, too emotional, like a "typical woman," or worst of all, "like I'm not a good Lutheran."

Again, it is not surprising that some women have experienced hurt within the church. Even a superficial glance at church history provides ample evidence that the church has

failed to support the worth and dignity of women. The words of Luther, cited by Jean Garton earlier in this issue, are notable examples of the type of attitude displayed by influential men in the church. But even when attitudes have not been so blatantly negative, even when there was no intention to hurt, women have internalized damaging messages.

Most of us reading this issue probably responded in horror when we read in Jean Garton's article that in some congregations little girls are not being allowed to participate in Christmas Eve services. Girls traditionally have participated in these services, and denying them participation now seems excessive and unnecessary. It is hard to imagine that such exclusion would not have a damaging effect on the little girls involved. What about activities from which women have traditionally been excluded? Can we also empathize with the middle-aged woman who as a child watched from the pew while her brothers or male classmates served as acolytes? Can we empathize with females of all ages who are being excluded today?

I have heard hair-raising stories from women of varying ages about how female exclusion was explained to them. Despite all the logic they try to apply to their memories now, as adults or young adults, many cannot rid themselves of the feeling they had as children that it was their very femaleness that was the problem, that was somehow unacceptable and repugnant even to God Himself. Some women have internalized images of themselves as "less favored" children of God. They have interpreted the words "women keep silent" to mean "you have nothing important to say." These women understand all too well that their presence in some parts of the church is offensive to some and they understand just as well that any offense they may take is not worthy of consideration; they know that it is wrong for them to give offense and just as wrong for them to be offended. They struggle to overcome hurt feelings. Although no one in the church intended to send these messages, they are too often being received.

Many women also struggle with feelings of anger, alienation, and loneliness within the church. They are sincerely confused by relationships within the church that seem to be inconsistent with the message of the Gospel. These women do not want to leave the church. They value the church. If they did not, their solution would be a simple one; they would get out, as is sometimes recommended to them by both well-meaning and mean-spirited individuals. It is their attachment to the church and their desire to grow and serve within it that is the problem. How can we answer the concerns of these women?

I recently heard a comment, made by a pre-seminary student, that illustrates a number of misconceptions about

concerns related to women in the church. The student argued that concerns related to women were not important issues within the church because "it's the older women who give the money and they're all conservative anyway." I don't need to point out all the assumptions implicit in this statement. However, the comment refers to exactly what concerns related to women's service are not. They are not related to financial or any other kind of power play, and they are not related to theological or doctrinal conservatism or liberalism. Those asking questions about women's service in the church, women and men, do so out of genuine spiritual concern and a sincere desire to make our church the best place it can be for all of its members and for the sake of the work we have been given to do. For these reasons, our questions deserve a response.

Notes

¹ See the following sources for a complete discussion of these differences:

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² Murren, D. *The Baby Boomerang: Catching Baby Boomers as They Return to Church*. Glendale: Regal Books, 1990.

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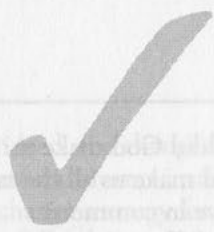
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Christine Johnston

How we can address these questions: nurturing imprints of discipleship

THIS ARTICLE IS WRITTEN with the belief that God calls each of us into discipleship and service within our families, our congregation, our community, and the world-at-large. Based upon this belief, the following article examines how we, as members of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, can identify our God-given opportunities to spread His Gospel and leave the imprints of Christian service and ministry upon the lives with whom we come in contact. This article further suggests specific ways the church can increase opportunities for service for all its members of faith.



I RECENTLY USED THE IMAGE OF THUMB PRINTS when I led a spiritual life retreat in Northern New Jersey. I chose this image because finger prints and hand prints form a common picture-language of service and salvation in the New Testament (Luke 23:46; 24:39; John 20:20, 27; Matthew 10:13-16). I used the image as a starting place to explore the uniqueness which each of us bears and shares as a child of God. The thumb print or finger print is an interesting part of our created uniqueness. Neither indicates gender, age, or race. However, each print identifies each human as a unique individual created by God. Besides our finger prints, we examined single strands of our hair and compared them with how the world views us: as social security numbers, as names and birth dates, as bytes on computer chips. The infinite knowledge of God's awareness of who each of us is and for what He created us was contrasted with the world's picture of mass productivity, anonymity, and conformity. We reflected upon a number of questions:

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- In whose image did God make us?
- Why didn't God make us all the same?
- What do we have in common?
- What makes us different?
- How do those differences divide us for good purposes?
- How do these differences separate us for ungodly purposes?
- What was God's intent as spoken in Genesis about the differences He had created when He made MAN and WOMAN (Larsen, 1973)?
- What have we as humans done with those differences? Which have we glorified? Which have we abused? Which have we ignored?
- Which differences has the church recognized? Which has the church glorified? Which has the church abused? Which has the church ignored?

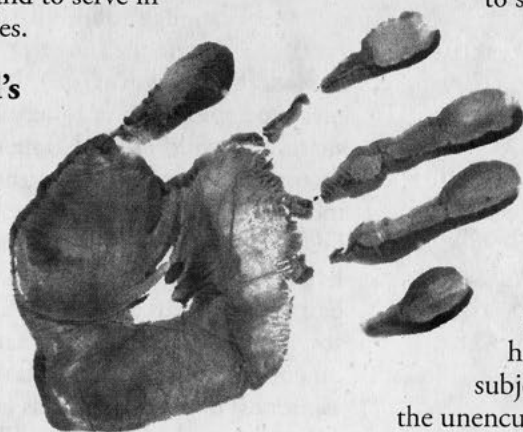
We then did some "on-the-spot" witnessing. Headlines were drawn from a paper bag, and those present identified how they would witness to others within the context of the situation as it was briefly described in the headline. We took turns sharing our approach and discussing how the Scriptures spoke to the issue. We soon realized that we saw situations differently and witnessed in different ways to the love of Jesus Christ as we felt it was appropriate to the situation. At the end of the witness exercise, we drew some conclusions:

- ✓ God created each of us in His image.
- ✓ Each of us is unique, from finger print to personality, from thought to action.
- ✓ As His baptized children, we are blessed with a uniqueness to witness and to serve in many different capacities.

The Uniqueness of God's Imprint Upon Us

This was a time for exploration, questioning, study and prayer. We searched the Scriptures, and we listened to one another as we struggled to understand and nurture each other's uniqueness as God's witnesses and servants. We did not resolve all the issues of uniqueness; we committed ourselves to continue to study the Word and to seek to witness from our unique vantage points.

The retreat was held as a part of the Christian Growth Program of the New Jersey LWML. Forty-one of the forty-three persons in attendance were women. The question we



studied concerning mission and ministry, service and witnessing, was not the question most often raised concerning the service of women in the church (Note 1). The discussions were not related to man or woman, but instead to the broader scope of God's people and focused on "How can each of us with our God-given uniqueness serve the Lord?" and "How can I as God's child nurture the uniqueness of others and join in service to our Lord as the Body of Christ?"

The God-given Worth of our Thumb Print

What we determined from our study of the Scriptures was that God uses His people and their uniqueness in the way that He chooses. Scripture witnesses to that. We might well have failed to observe the unique service of a clever Rahab, the potential for service of a bitter Naomi, or the strength of courage for service of meek Esther. We might have failed to see the potential of a rough-hewn Peter to witness, the ability of a pompous Saul to provide mission outreach, or the ability of an "inside-trader" like Zacchaeus to rejoice. But Jesus saw. As Jesus used these unique individuals, He too uses us as His hands, thumb prints and all.

Is the Church as all-embracing as her Lord? The early Church apparently affirmed the unique gifts of its followers of The Way. And as Jesus made A Way out of No Way, He empowered the young church with His very breath to gather all people, men and women, young and old, Greek and Jew, to use their uniqueness to spread the Gospel to all the world. It is only over the centuries that the Church politic often has chosen to redefine the servant role and to separate our service on the basis of our physical attributes.

The Effect of Ignoring God's Imprint for Service

As we enter the 21st century, where does this change in our definition of the servant role find us? It finds us arguing. It finds us ignoring. It finds us with hurt and pain. It finds us separated, divided, and isolated. That, however, is not where we find our Lord on this subject. We need only look at His hand prints to see the unencumbered hands of a servant. These are the hands of God's Son: God and Man. The hands of a carpenter, a rabbi, a traveller, a servant. The ultimate servant. These hands bore the thumb prints of a unique personhood. These thumb prints witness to us of the uniqueness of the servanthood we have been called to perform. There are no barriers here. We are called to the service of discipleship. What better opportunity to serve in witnessing and upholding one another than to witness in our homes, our

neighborhoods, on the job, and in our schools! Yet we have not resolved the opportunities to witness to those within our own household of faith. Here our uniqueness is often diminished, down-scaled, or ignored. We are categorized into "work" opportunities, committees, and tasks. Consequently, as we conclude the first two thousand years of Christianity, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod is still struggling to resolve, "Who can serve and in what capacity within the household of faith?"

The Church's Opportunity to Develop an Awareness of God's Imprint for Service

Any examination of how the Church can explore the service of women must take place at two levels: the personal level and the organizational level. Why? Because exploring the topic of service means we are open to change, and change fundamentally means a change in people (English & Hill, 1990). Just as building up the church begins with bringing individuals to faith, likewise changing the church begins with changing people's perspectives and understandings. As the literature on change describes, people develop scripts of behavior, and scripts are difficult to change. These scripts are based upon tradition, culture, and training.

Scripted behavior interferes in our seeing a new situation for what it is—new. We are so prepared to see or experience as we "always" have that we don't observe, analyze, and integrate the new 'data.' When we allow a well-ingrained script to override what we are actually experiencing, we find ourselves acting out of sync with our previous ways of doing things. We feel very uncomfortable about it. This dissonance with what we have customarily accepted as informed behavior is the beginning of new, learned behavior (Johnston, 1992).

Because people are individuals with their own unique histories, scripts, and ways of doing things, we need to take into consideration how people change and under what conditions they positively subscribe to new behavior. Because individuals also operate within the context or the climate of the organization, the organization strives to teach how, why, and under what conditions they are to perform within the organization's structure. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, as a religious organization, has its own history based upon its purpose, goals, and system of operation (Note 2). A key goal of this organization is to assimilate the individual member of the faith into the doctrine and mission of the Synod. Because of the close linkage between the individual and the organization, organizations like the LCMS change in the same way people change, i.e., slowly, step-by-step, as a result of evolving insights into the Scriptures as well as a change in attitudes

and perceptions. Indeed, the changed behavior brought about by this process transforms institutions (Combs, 1985, 40). An emergent change strategy for both individuals and organizations is the following sequence of phases:

- ✓ Awareness and Exploration
- ✓ Commitment and Training
- ✓ Adjustment and Changeover
- ✓ Adaptation and Institutionalization
- ✓ Renewal (Klausmier, 1977, 288).

Phase I: Awareness and Exploration

With that understanding, we now begin to explore what change looks and sounds like when it occurs within the individual and within the church organization. Specifically, we now explore how change within an individual's understanding of the service of women can lead to a more complete and productive sense of discipleship in the service of the church.

The study of the Scriptures is the place to begin and continue. Notice, I do not suggest "end," because searching the Scriptures is an ongoing faith walk. How can we begin this? Who is prepared to lead us in this study? Who is prepared to provide trained leaders for this purpose? What materials are available to guide this study?

The primary building block for discipleship and Christian education is the family. Where better to begin to explore the thumb prints of unique servanthood than in the family setting? Here both mother and father share the God-given tasks of teaching, disciplining, adjudicating, and nurturing children. Here, too, children experience their parents proclaiming the Gospel to them. This is done with the church's blessing, for within our baptismal service parents are reminded, "That the Christ first known by your child is the Christ seen in you" (Poston, 1990). What better place to begin learning how men and women disciple together than within the family unit! For families in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, the support system for sustaining the family unit of discipleship is the local congregation. Here families are nourished weekly with the Word and Sacrament. Thus the family is supported in its ministry of education through the congregation's educational program and the professional and lay staff whose leadership in the study of the Word encourages the disciplining of men and women, boys and girls, in the work of the Lord.

As the Word is studied within the congregational context, individuals have an opportunity to examine their uniqueness and their imprints of service. When they do, they soon recognize that the service we provide as God's redeemed is not to be limited and confounded by cultural bias, limitations of tradition, and an unspiritual motivation to limit who can be engaged in the "Go ye therefore . . ." of God's Great Commission.

Phase II: Commitment and Training

A study of discipleship of this magnitude within The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, will have bearing upon the nature and content of Sunday School materials, Day School curricula, children's devotionals such as *My Devotions*, adult devotionals such as *Portals of Prayer*, confirmation ministry materials, vbs resources, and bulletin inserts. The publications of the synodical offices, boards, and commissions will also reflect an expanded view of service and discipleship. Such a committed study of the Word would also involve our colleges, universities, and seminaries. In these educational and professional preparatory contexts, students could study the uniqueness of God's basic unit of discipleship, the family. The modeling of discipleship begun in the home setting would be continued throughout the student's preparation for full-time ministry as teacher, DCE, deaconess, or pastor. Male and female professors could share their perceptions on the complexity of ministering to a society which does not value God's creation or God's image (Poston, 1990). Beyond any doubt, the opportunity for professional church workers to explore topics of mutual interest in ministry involving both men and women would be most valuable.

Phase III: Adjustment and Changeover

To teach discipling in this manner would truly affirm the sending out "two-by-two," so that visiting the elderly, the infirm, and the widow or widower would include two caring perspectives, each unique to the disciple making the visit. The opportunity to share in hospital ministry may be best understood by a disciple of one gender or another at such times as the experience of a miscarriage, the bitterness of infertility, or an unplanned pregnancy (Johnston, 1976). These are examples of the God-given use of our unique thumb prints of ministry. Whether in Sunday worship or family devotions, whether visiting the sick or providing administrative assistance, God calls each of us through His Word to disciple as His servants.

Phases IV and V: Adaptation, Institutionalization, and Renewal

As we enter the 21st century, we can count it as our privilege as members of the Body of Christ and The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod to seek a change in the church's hesitancy to study the unique role of discipleship which God has in mind for both men and women. It is our privilege to seek a change in our attitudes toward service and disciples in the church. Finally, it is our privilege to allow the Holy Spirit to change people through the study of the Word. What remains is to renew our commitment as a church to be what God has called each of us to be as His servants and His hands!

Notes

1. During the past two years, I have reported the work of the President's Commission on Women, LCMS, to three circuit pastors' conferences in the New Jersey District. In each instance, the pastors steered the discussion to the issue of the ordination of women rather than the work of the commission or its broadbased appeal for opportunities for women to serve within the church in varying servant roles.
2. Change within the LCMS has been an on-going phenomenon. While the seating arrangements within worship and the wearing of hats often are cited as examples, I believe there is another which is more illustrative of how a perspective can change over time based upon the study of the Scriptures. I refer to the LCMS stance not that many years ago which labeled the purchase of life insurance as a failure to trust that God would care for His children.

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book reviews



VEILED AND SILENCED by Alvin John Schmidt. Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1989.

If anyone is looking for a well-researched and impressively comprehensive book on the historical attitude of the human male toward the human female, as evidenced by what writers in virtually every area of literary discourse have said about it, this is it.

If anyone ever doubted that the human female has been the victim of centuries long and worldwide discrimination and degradation, the massive marshalling of data in this volume ought to dispel the last vestige of such doubt.

If anyone is inclined to cling to the hope that institutional religion, including the Christian church, has not for the most part allowed itself to be co-opted by the cultural forces which have systematically assigned woman to a lower status than man, such inclination can hardly survive a careful reading of this book.

Does this scholarly work answer all the questions, solve all the problems, and quiet all the controversies that remain high on societal and ecclesiastical agendas in the contemporary debate? I doubt that the author himself would make such a claim.

Some, of course, will argue that Schmidt, who makes a good case for "the hidden dimension of culture" and its effect on ecclesiastical policy and practice, has a hidden agenda of his own, namely to lay the groundwork for dismantling the opposition to women's ordination in those churches that still deny them the stole.

Others, conversely, will criticize him for not pursuing that inflammatory issue aggressively enough, claiming that he leads the reader to water but he doesn't make one drink.

Still others will wonder whether his experiment with mixing oil and water, i.e., socio/anthropology (science) and theology (faith), isn't an inherently flawed methodology, one which will only add to the confusion.

It seems likely that the argument of this book will appear more powerful to those who let Aristotelian logic and socioanthropological science play a magisterial role in the interpretation of Scripture.

By the same token, the person who believes in the literary uniqueness of the Old and New Testament Scriptures and seeks to understand their message within the framework of verbal inspiration and "Scriptura Scripturam Interpretantur," while granting logic and science a proper ministerial role, is likely to ask whether the "what saith the Lord" question wasn't preempted by "what saith culture."

These interpretations, however, may be more reflective of the reader's perspective than the author's intent.

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DIFFERENT VOICES/SHARED VISION: MALE AND FEMALE IN THE TRINITARIAN COMMUNITY by Marie Meyer, Marva J. Dawn, Dot Nuechterlein, Elizabeth A. Yates, and Richard T. Hinz. Afterword by Paul R. Hinlicky. Delphi, New York: ALBP Books, 1992.

Overview: This little volume of less than one hundred pages is by no means "small." The "Afterword" by Paul R. Hinlicky and the appendix by George L. Murphy with an appeal to the Missouri Synod for the ordination of women [reprinted from the *Lutheran Forum*] encourages Missouri to review its Scriptural base, review its tradition and take seriously the theological issues before us. For some the fact that the little book is an ALBP publication and the "Afterword" is by the editor of the *Lutheran Forum* would be enough to table the discussion. But unlike most critics of Missouri's historic position on the role of women in the church and especially ordination, the discussants in this little volume are not contentious nor insensitive to Missouri Synod's historic position regarding ordination of female pastors and its stubborn refusal to surrender its Biblical and Confessional commitment for the sake of changing times. For that reason the essays could well serve as the basis for exegetical studies among pastors and teachers and for other discussions within Missouri.

There are six major essays. The work begins with an introductory essay by Dot Nuechterlein on "Our Trinitarian Identity." Rev. Richard T. Hinz, President of the Southeastern District of the LCMS, raises in chapter one the question of the "Gospel's Free Course?" Chapter two by Marva Dawn provides some hermeneutical reflections on the key Biblical texts on the role of women in general, and chapter three focuses on 1 Timothy 2:8-15 in particular. Chapter four by Elizabeth A.

Yates deals with 1 Corinthians 14:34-36. The last two chapters by Marie Meyer discuss the "Orders of Creation," the Biblical concept of "Headship," and "Christ as Head of the Church."

Anyone who raises serious questions regarding exegetical and theological judgments even as recent as the CTCR study on *Women or The Ministry* [or retroactively to the precipitous times of *Faithful to our Lord and Faithful to our Calling and A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles*] is going to evoke strong reaction and disagreement. But though dissonance is expected, do notice that the essays are much more weighted, upscale, and Biblically literate than the many early arguments of the last three decades. No longer will it suffice to write off the essayists as radical women-liberation advocates, New Age Gnostics, Gospel-reductionists or doctrinal pluralists! This reviewer also is weary of those who dismiss the Pastorals, accuse Paul of inconsistency, label him a misogynist and chauvinist, assert that he is unable to live by the freedom of the Gospel he preached, and is incapable of freeing himself from his Rabbinical tradition. The essayists do not advocate a "politically correct" Bible, a calling for a "Mother-God," and a rewriting of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Though the essays do not address the whole of the standard arguments against ordination of women, or the vast body of literature in and outside the Synod, or deal with much of Luther's reflections on the topic, they do involve us in the "battle of the lexicons" [as some suggest the current debate has become]. The essays do compel pastors, teachers and laity to re-experience the foundational texts and become involved once more in the exegetical task. The reader will find much with which to disagree since non-traditional handling of the standard texts abounds. The reader may be unconvinced that women can be pastors, but the essays should prompt us to ask whether we have truly enhanced the role of women in Synod and enabled the talented and gifted women of our Synod to serve in the "other" ministries as the CTCR urged we ought.

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SUFFER NOT A WOMAN—RETHINKING 1 TIMOTHY 2:11-15 IN LIGHT OF ANCIENT EVIDENCE by Richard and Catherine Kroeger. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992.

It is the contention of the Kroegers that the common translation of 1 Timothy 2:12 is able to be maintained but that literary evidence provides a new way to understand the meaning of these words. They insist that the time and context when Paul wrote 1 Timothy surely had an important part in determining the meaning of Paul's words.

continued from page 19

The resources that form the scholarly bases for their conclusions are as primary as are available from that period of time.

In the preface these authors describe the problem that occurs in translating the *hapax legomena* form of the verb, *authenthein*, which is commonly translated "domineer over, have authority over." They say, "Our purpose is to maintain on the basis of Scripture that both men and women are equally called to commitment and service, wherever and however God may lead" (p. 14).

The Kroegers present their approach, rationale, content, and conclusions in three parts. Part 1 discusses "Approaching the Text in Its Context." Many of the standard questions regarding Paul's visit to Ephesus are considered. Part 2 concentrates on "The Prohibition (1 Timothy 2:12)." The target verse is examined for the possibilities of its translation and meaning. Part 3 deals with "The Prohibition's Rationale (1 Timothy 2:13-15)." The authors examine carefully the evidence that bears upon the text in order to get inside the sacred words during the time that they were spoken.

In order to keep the text as abbreviated as possible (182 pages), the Kroegers added seven appendices that detail their understanding presented in the main text. End notes are replete with sacred and non-sacred authors who are contemporaries in their own time.

The authors contend, on the basis of their research, that the common translation of the text of *authenthein* is not so much a problem as the way

of understanding the sense and meaning of this word in its context. They say, "In this book, we shall suggest that 1 Timothy 2:11-15 is not a decree of timeless and universal restriction and punishment but a corrective: a specific direction as to what women should not teach and why" (p. 23).

These two authors indicate that "We need to make a careful distinction between inspiration, the action by which God gave the Word to humanity, and interpretation, the human process by which we perceive its meanings" (p. 33). To understand the very meaning of God's holy Word, they strongly encourage a mastery of the Bible in the original tongues so that each generation can grapple with the Biblical words in its own time.

The Kroegers recognize that the verb *authenthein*, which is used only once in the New Testament, is particularly difficult to translate because it has only one context. They say, "*Authentein* . . . is defined in New Testament dictionaries as meaning to usurp authority or to dominate, although Greek writers used the term to imply other values such as to kill someone, to begin something or be responsible for the initiation of something, to lay claim to property as being one's own, to claim to be the author of something, and so forth" (p. 37).

The authors write in detail about the goddess, Artemis of Ephesus, against whom St. Paul had much contention. In that culture the distorted idea that Eve gave life to Adam appears to have been part of the social fabric of the day. Artemis (Diana) was associated with Eve. This certainly would draw a strong attack from St. Paul. The silversmiths also recognized Paul's attack on the

political, economic, and social existence of Ephesus.

In chapter six the authors examine *authenthein*. They say, "We believe that the verb here forbids women to teach a wrong doctrine, just as 1 Timothy 1:3-4 and Titus 1:9-14 also forbid false teaching" (p. 81). An alternative translation for 1 Timothy 2:12 provided by the authors is: "I do not allow a woman to teach nor to proclaim herself author of man" (p. 103). Thus these authors conclude that "the writer of the Pastorals was opposing a doctrine which acclaimed motherhood as the ultimate reality. Our Bible maintains that God, who far transcends all limitations of gender, created the heavens and the earth, and that all things are of God" (p. 112).

This book by the Kroegers is a helpful resource for the information gathered to examine the words that the Lord has given us through the inspired authors. It is helpful to evaluate carefully the material they have gathered in order to give it a sound hearing even though one may not agree with their conclusion. The authors are wrestling with a difficult question that has rent many relationships. This work has a place in the ongoing question because each person wants to understand what the Lord is saying to His church.

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