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PRESENTS

Frankly Speaking Notes . . .

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Ed Smithson, Editor

DRIFTING AND WOMEN'S LIB

On NBC's Today Show on Thanksgiving Day many years ago, Bill Monroe interviewed Allison Cheek who was celebrating her first Thanksgiving as an Episcopal priest. Her and eleven other women had been ordained in the Episcopal church as priests a few months earlier.

We have heard of other denominations who have traditionally kept women out of the pulpit, (Baptists, Methodists, etc.,) who are now "ordaining" them as ministers. When we hear such reports we shake our heads and wonder how it can be happening. Brother, you had better take a look around and wake up because it is happening in the church.

Take a little trip with me back to the Bible: "...as in all the churches of the saints, let the women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but let them be in subjection, as also saith the law. And if they would learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home: for it is shameful for a woman to speak in the church." (1 Corinthians 14:33-35 ASV) "But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness. For Adam was first formed, then Eve; and Adam was not beguiled, but the woman being beguiled hath fallen into transgression: but she shall be saved through her childbearing, if they continue in faith and love and sanctification with sobriety." (1 Timothy 2:12-15 ASV)

For many years in the restoration movement we have regularly adhered to these instructions. In this area as in others, we believed the Bible to be literal and specific. We have refused to bow to the

demands of those who would have women play a larger role in the church than is outlined in these and other passages. Not so any longer! All one has to do is to pick up one of our brotherhood publications or visit a typical congregation of the Lord's church to see what an expanded role women play today.

Some time ago I checked one of our brotherhood publications over a period of several months. Women wrote almost twenty percent of the articles during that time. I checked the same publication for a same period of months a few years earlier and none of the articles that appeared were written by women.

At one time our preaching brethren (with the consent and urging of the leadership in the church as well as the average member) were preaching against handles and titles being used or given to any man in the church. Even preachers preferred to be called just a preacher.

Now, we have "Ministers" (with capital letter, not preachers), "Assistant Ministers," "Associate Ministers," "Personal Work Directors," "Youth Directors," "Educational Directors," "Supervisors," by department, etc., and the list goes on and on. I will not use the space to list all the different types of "Ministers" many churches have on the payroll these days. I was on one church web site the other day and counted 19 people who used the "Minister" title in some way or another that was on the church payroll.

In more of these situations than not, we see "departmental heads" all the way from the tiny ones to high school and beyond. We have the idea, (and those who are in favor of a more active role for women advocate this) that a man cannot supervise a woman or does not know enough about small ones to qualify as a supervisor. Without being picky, who says we have to have departmental supervisors and titles anyway. It is true that we have "come a long way," and sometimes the way we have traveled has been in the wrong direction.

The church cannot seem to get anything done without appointing committees. I am not sure that anything is done even after that. There is nothing wrong with asking certain people to see that certain tasks are done. I cannot help but almost agree with him who said, "the best way to kill a project is to appoint a committee." But we have

to have a “Chairman” (capital C) with an “Associate” or “Assistant” with all the committees. Many times fifty percent of the committees are women with the same authority as the men. This was started in smaller classes in the educational or Bible study work of the church but is certainly no longer limited to such.

Now we must have “Educational Committees,” “Benevolent Committees,” “Personal Work Committees,” “Workshop Committees,” “Evangelical Committees,” and “Building And Grounds Committees.” It won’t be long until we also have “Pulpit Committees” with women on them just like the denominations who will select the next “Pulpit Minister” to work with the local church. Oh, oh, I forgot. We already have them.

I am certainly not against women being active in the church. I am for more activity on their part. Through the years a lot of work would not have been done had it not been for the women. I am against women usurping authority in the church and acting as if they are men, to whom God has given the responsibility of leadership and judgment. We are still restricted by His Word, regardless of what some try to get us to believe.

If we continue the trend which has been set in many places in the church today, it will not be long until we will read a notice in the newspaper somewhere that a certain woman who insisted on her “rights” brought the sermon in a certain church of Christ pulpit. Oh wait, we have already done that!

Brethren, are we drifting???

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ed Smithson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

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