

Obscure and Intriguing Franz Pieper Quotes

on the Ministry, the Order of Creation, and Church Fellowship

In your *Church History* you touched upon the dispute between our faculties. By that, you made it impossible for us to recommend your History. We shall point out that the parish office (*Pfarramt*) has existed since the time of the Patriarchs and before.

(Franz Pieper, oral statement made to John Philip Koehler [1917]; quoted in Koehler, *Reminiscences* [1930]; quoted in turn in Peter M. Prange, "The Wauwatosa Gospel and the Synodical Conference: A Generation of Pelting Rain," *Logia*, Vol. 12, No. 2 [Easter 2003], p. 42 [translation slightly revised]. In his *Lehrbuch der Kirchengeschichte* [Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1917], Koehler had written: "**The Wauwatosa faculty considers that the parish office [*Pfarramt*] is a species of the preaching office [*Predigtamt*] that first originated in the German Middle Ages, and that likewise the local congregation is a species of the concept of church. In both cases the faculty considers that when we use the word 'institution' [*Stiftung*], it is not to be understood that God has distinguished these two species through a special decree over against other similar structures of Christian life and church life that also have been created [*geschaffen*] by the gospel. Rather the 'institution' [*Stiftung*] is a divine creating [*Schaffen*] of the forms (parish office, local congregation, synod, office of school teacher, office of professor, and others) through the working of the Holy Spirit in Christendom, when Christians in Christian freedom arrange these things according to the external circumstances"** [p. 712; quoted in Thomas P. Nass, "What is 'divinely instituted' and what is 'necessary' in regard to the public ministry?" (2003) (translation slightly revised)]. Koehler had also written: "**In the first years after 1848, a controversy existed over the teaching of Church and Ministry. Kliefoth, Vilmar, Muenchmeyer and Loehe had a High-Church view of the pastor's office and the church, similar to that of Grabau in America. Most Lutherans of other circles stood against it, especially the Erlangen faculty. Very freely and correctly – according to Scripture – stood only Hoeftling with some of his colleagues"** [p. 659; translated by Lange]. Pieper responded to this in Volume III of his *Christliche Dogmatik* [originally published in 1920]: "**During the middle of the last century there was considerable dispute in the Lutheran Church, particularly in Germany, regarding the divine institution of the public ministry, but the results were unsatisfactory. Only a few, e.g., Stroebel, took the correct Scriptural position against two aberrations. Hoeftling of Erlangen grants that the ministry is divinely ordained, but only in the sense as 'everything wise, appropriate, morally necessary' can be said to have 'divine sanction,' not in the sense that an express divine command for the establishment of the public ministry can be shown. Acts 14:23, where Paul and Barnabas ordain elders in the congregations gathered by them, and Titus 1:5, where Paul charges Titus to ordain elders or bishops in the congregations of Crete, Hoeftling gets rid of, ...by declaring without any good grounds that these passages refer to 'newly formed congregations,' speak of 'primitive conditions,' from which, therefore, 'no dogmatic deductions for all the future may be made.' ... One is inclined to judge Hoeftling less severely because his opponents (Muenchmeyer, Loehe, Kliefoth, etc.) taught a strongly Romanizing doctrine of the ministry"** [Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. III (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), pp. 445, 447].)

Throughout the whole New Testament the public ministry is spoken of in such terms as can be used only of a divine arrangement. Though we are indeed able to offer no word of specific institution, yet the whole New Testament shows us that divine ordering is involved.

(Concordia Seminary faculty, Letter of August 3, 1916; in "Basic Documents in Church and Ministry Discussions," *Faithful Word*, Vol. 7, No. 1 [February 1970], p. 25)

Quoting an earlier *Lehre und Wehre* statement, “The preaching office [*Predigtamt*] goes through the world in a twofold form, in a missionary [*missionisierenden*] and a parish-pastoral [*pfarramtlichen*] one,” F. Pieper argued that missionaries called by Synod or its Districts should also be called and ordained: “This Call is not a human, but a divine Call, and those who have received and accepted this Call, have received and accepted a divine Call just as much as those called to parish-pastoral activity by already existing congregations.”

(Kurt E. Marquart, *The Church and Her Fellowship, Ministry, and Governance* (corrected edition) (Fort Wayne, Indiana: The International Foundation for Lutheran Confessional Research, 1995), p. 222. The quotations are from *Lehre und Wehre*, Vol. 9, p. 179 [translation slightly revised]; and Vol. 71, No. 12 [December 1925], p. 425.)

It is the clear teaching of Holy Scripture that Christian women should also teach God’s Word. According to Titus 2,3,4 the aged women should teach the young women. St. Paul declares of Timothy that he knew the Holy Scriptures from childhood because his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois had faithfully instructed him, 2 Tim. 1,5. For this reason Luther demanded that Christian schools be taught not only by men, but also by women (St. L. Ed., X,477.459.). However, while all this is very true, Holy Scripture excludes Christian women from all public teaching in the presence of men. ... Even in our own circles the question has often been raised as to whether women and girls may teach in our Christian day-schools. Our answer is that they certainly may do so, provided they are to teach children; for woman dare not in any case be barred from instructing children. But if religious instruction is to be given to grown men or even to adolescents, she cannot be permitted to teach.

Now, I know that the objection has been raised against this stand of ours that the Old Testament records a number of instances in which women did serve as teachers, and not of their own accord, at that, but because they were moved by the Holy Ghost to appear before the congregation of the Lord and to instruct them in God’s Word. We have such an example in Miriam, the sister of Moses, as recorded [in] Ex. 15,20.21. Our explanation of this passage is that Miriam in this case acted as the musical director of Israelitish women, not of the men. However, even the case of Deborah, who was both judge and prophetess, and who by divine command acted as a teacher of men (cf. Judg. 4 and 5), does not prove the contention that women may serve as teachers of men. God Himself most certainly may grant exceptions to the rules which He has laid down for us; but it is not for us to do so. We are forever bound to observe His rules. To make exceptions is His business, never ours. Luther has this fact in mind when he declares: “God hangs the Law downward, but He never draws it up to Himself again.” He means that God acts as He pleases; but we mortals are always bound to His Law. For this reason, too, we cannot countenance the objection that in many cases women are much more eloquent and more fluent talkers than men. We concede this; God, too, of course knows it; and yet He gave the unmistakable command: “Let your women keep silence in the churches,” 1 Cor. 14,34, and again: “But I suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve,” 1 Tim. 2,12.13.

With regard to woman's suffrage, let me make this statement: Since woman's suffrage in the state implies participation in the rule over men, it is contrary to the natural order which God has established to govern the relation between man and woman. Just as invalid in this connection (as in the matter of the ordination of women) is the objection that women are more prudent than men, more adroit at making election speeches, and more intelligent in the use of the ballot. We are bound to the order which God has instituted, Gen. 2,18; 1 Tim. 2,12.13; and wherever this order is perverted, His punishments are sure to follow.

(F. Pieper, "The Laymen's Movement in the Light of God's Word" [1913], *What Is Christianity? And Other Essays* [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1933], pp. 154-57)

The Associated Press announces from Austin under date of January 20 [1925]: "On this day a woman assumes the gubernatorial seat of Texas, which heretofore has been occupied by men." There are other things which offer even more definite proof that even before its end the world has completely lost all common sense.

(Franz Pieper, "Texas Has a Woman Governor," *Lehre und Wehre*, Vol. 71 [February 1925], p. 61; quoted in *Christian News*, Vol. 48, No. 2 [January 11, 2010], p. 20)

When a General Council church in St. Louis had a vacancy in the early twenties, they applied to Dr. Pieper for someone to conduct services, and he asked me to take over. I said: "I suppose I will have to make sure and voice my disagreement with General Council practices." Dr. Pieper answered: "Oh, not at all, those people know exactly where we stand." Then I found that he had been often an intermediary when the church had vacancies, which occurred quite often, and he would then send a student or a colleague to help the people out.

(Theodore Graebner, *Prayer Fellowship* [Saint Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1945], p. 9. If Graebner is remembering the time frame correctly, this congregation would actually have been affiliated with the United Lutheran Church in America – which was formed by the 1918 merger of the General Council, the General Synod, and the United Synod in the South – when he preached and conducted services there "in the early twenties.")

