

NO WOMEN YET IN THE PULPITS

Methodist General Conference Shelves Question for Four Years

OTHERWISE EQUALIZED

Spirited Debate on Question of Admission to Ministry

(Staff Correspondence of The Globe.)

Hamilton, Oct. 10.—After unanimously granting to women equal rights and privileges with men as lay members of the Church, the Methodist General Conference this afternoon declined to extend to them the same free entrance into the ministry. The extension of the lay franchise was passed without debate, and the Conference was in high humor at having passed so easily a law which was rejected four years ago, so that when the proposal was made to throw open the ministry to the women, the delegates were in a rollicking mood, and some cried "Yes, give them everything!" Cries of "Vote!" came from all sides.

Rev. Dr. J. S. Ross rose and moved that the recommendation be definitely postponed. Upon this being voted down, Dr. Ross moved that the report be laid on the table. This was defeated, and more cries of "Vote!" arose.

Some strong pleas were made, on the ground that women had occupied an advanced place in social life during the war. Rev. Dr. W. W. Andrews said that people were slow to get rid of prejudices. "And we in the Church are afraid—afraid of what?"

"The women," interjected a quiet voice. (Loud laughter.)

Dr. Ross's Serious Objections.

Rev. Dr. Ross urged that it was not a matter of jest. They were too much influenced by the former vote to make a fair decision on the present proposal. He contended that the subject had not been considered by the people. The Conference had no mandate. They should not pass on the spur of the moment a thing which Wesley tried, and finally abandoned as impracticable. The passing of such a law might seriously affect the question of Church Union.

"Why not leave it over?" continued Dr. Ross. "There are serious questions to be considered as to the status of a woman in the ministry. Does she cease to be a minister when she gets married? If not, what about her husband? Is he to stay at home and nurse the baby? (Laughter.) These are all serious questions."

Arguments Pro and Con.

Judge Chesley of Nova Scotia said that other Churches were moving in that direction, and they should not be in the tail of the procession.

Rev. Jas. McBride of Montreal declared that if John Wesley were alive he would vote for the women with both hands. They would fill the empty churches and double the collections.

Rev. Humphrey Graham of Walkerville said that while he regarded woman as not only an equal but as superior to man, there were some positions that woman could not fill efficiently. There were no women in the combatant forces of the army, and for a similar reason they could not do the work of the Church Militant.

Methodists Should Not Lag Behind

Rev. H. B. Christie of Guelph said the advancement of women was part of a world-wide movement of emancipation, and women in future would occupy the highest places. The Methodist Church should be in the vanguard.

Rev. Capt. John Garbutt of Ottawa said that if it was possible for a young man to be called of God to the ministry, might not a young woman receive the same call? He believed the Presbyterian Church had placed women as pastors in its mission fields. Rev. A. S. Tuttle of Edmonton said that if they did not pass it then they would four years hence. The Church had been too conservative.

A Bachelor's Views.

Rev. J. C. Reid, who is a bachelor, was received with cheers. He hoped they would not be hasty in passing such legislation. If Christ had ordained twelve men and no women, that fact should carry some weight with the Conference. "I was stupendous folly; they were trying to get the men in the Church, and this would drive them away. 'The ministry is a man's task; we want men of the most masculine type, mixers with men, as pastors,'" said Mr. Reid.

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No Methodists but for Susanna.

Rev. Dr. J. Aikens said if they excluded the women from the highest place in the Church at that time it was not so at the beginning of Methodism. "If it had not been for Susanna Wesley there would have been no Methodists at all. If women were in the pulpits they might bring the preachers to their knees."

Rev. E. J. Adams of Collingwood said he believed the proposal had the support of Old Testament Scripture. One delegate said he was surprised anyone should vote against the women. For one thing, they could be sure they would not smoke.

No Danger of a Deluge.

Rev. Hugh Dobson said it would not mean that women would go into the ministry right away. They would need five years' training. There would be very few applications, and every case would be examined on its merits.

Rev. G. S. Clendinning said if they adopted the motion there would be pained astonishment all over the Dominion. There was an immense difference in the service of men and women. The question would be different if they had a celibate ministry. Any woman could pass through the training of a minister if she so desired, and they would open the door to her if she knocked loud enough. The women would be delegates at the next Conference. Let them express themselves then.

David Allison of Halifax asked the Conference to pause. God made women different, and she had a part to play in the development of the race. "What part did the husband play when the wife becomes a preacher? Who was he, then?" He said Susanna Wesley had eighteen children, and she never preached; she could not have looked after her children.

Principal Smyth's Calm Reasoning.

Principal Smyth of Montreal rose in the midst of the merriment and with a calm, sane speech put the Conference into a serious mood. "I am going to make an unpopular speech," he said, "but I am an Irishman, and I am not afraid of that. There is an element of humor and emotional haste in this Conference. It is impossible for a word of reason to prevail. We must give our votes as sensible men. There has been no attempt to answer the logical argument put forward by Dr. Ross. No one admires more than I do the services rendered by women during this war, but that has nothing to do with the question. Are women to enter into competition with men for pastorates? Are they to act as Superintendents? Are they to remain unmarried? These are questions we must face. Then the union question is a most serious one. The opponents of union would use this with tremendous effect. I don't care about unpopularity. Are you going to ignore the caution of St. Paul? He was a man of sound common-sense. In view of union, the practical difficulty and the direction in which nature points, we should pause before passing such a law."

Rev. J. W. Stewart of Weston asked the Conference to be calm, and not to settle so vital a question under the force of emotion, lest they found later that they had made a mistake. Women's place was not in the ministry of the Church, but in the higher ministry of wifehood and motherhood.

Rev. E. W. Stapleford of Regina said that women were to-day bearing equal responsibility, and they should have equal opportunity with men. They had entered the legal and the medical professions, and had improved them.

Referred to District Meetings.

Rev. Dr. Bland moved an amendment to refer the question to the Official Boards of the Churches for a report at the next Conference. He said he had no great antipathy against the proposal, but he did not want to have to decide the question. The women were not suffering any disability, the way was open to them if they wanted to preach. He believed there was no demand for their entrance into the ministry. The amendment was carried by a very large majority, and the question goes down to the District Meetings.

Women Missionaries and Baptism.

Rev. Dr. S. P. Rose of Ottawa objected to the acceptance of a memorial from the Women's Missionary Society, asking that women missionaries among Indians be allowed to perform the rite of baptism. There was a complaint that the Roman Catholic Church was baptizing Indian children and then claiming the whole family as Catholics.

Dr. Rose said he was alarmed at the proposal, as it made it appear that baptism was a sacramental rite. The memorial was laid on the table.

Memorials Rejected.

The Committee on Memorials recommended non-concurrence in the proposal that probationers receive the minimum salary while at college.

The memorial suggesting that the village of Elinton, Ont., be made a mission centre for the surrounding district, was referred to the Bay of Quinte Conference, as not being a General Conference matter.

A memorial from Nova Scotia, asking for the increase in the salaries of missionaries in that Province, was not approved.

Albert Old Boys' Banquet.

A reunion banquet of the Old Boys of Albert College, Belleville, was held at the conclusion of the afternoon session, about fifty being present.

No More Public Sessions.

On account of the epidemic of Spanish influenza which has taken hold of this city, the General Conference will hold no more large gatherings to which the general public will be invited. This is the decision arrived at by the Business Committee, and it has met with the approval of the conference, which is somewhat apprehensive lest the Medical Officer of Health shut down on its sessions altogether. This evening it was to have been devoted to the public reception of Rev. Hodson Smith, fraternal delegate from the Wesley-