

1890 Free Methodist General Conference

Editor's Notes: This is a transcript of the debate on ordaining women at the 1890 Free Methodist General Conference. Prior to the 1890 General Conference B.T. Roberts, the denomination's founder and general superintendent, and numerous other Free Methodist men and women wrote into the denominational magazine The Free Methodist to voice support or opposition for women's ordination. By the 1890 General Conference the atmosphere was tense as the delegates continually had the "woman question" crop into debates.

This transcript is taken from the General Conference Daily Magazine, edited by J.G. Terrill. All editorial comments by him are in italics with his name following the comment. My comments are also in italics but are not credited. The punctuation, spelling and capitalization are all original to the General Conference Daily manuscript.

- Christy Mesaros-Winckles

Women in General Conference- Oct. 11, 1890 General Conference Daily Editorial

The roll of delegates shows that two women have been elected members of this general conference. There is not even a feeling of surprise among our people in regard to it. It is what has been expected. Woman has had a place in our official bodies – official boards, quarterly conferences, boards of trustees – from the beginning of our history. Their action has always been with honor, both to themselves and to the church. With us there is none of the mere sentimentalism that would put woman in office because of her sex, nor the boorishness that would keep her out because of her sex. There were doubtless the same influences that effected the election of these women that effected the election of other lay delegates to this body – the consideration that it was the best thing under the circumstances. The persons who voted for them may have been mistaken in this, but who can say that there has not been mistakes made in electing some of the brethren! Our experience as a church, has demonstrated the fact that women are no more likely to be unsexed by being elected to office than men are. One more thing has been demonstrated the fact that women are no more likely to become office seekers than men. They, as a rule, pay closer attention to church business than men, and will more quickly sacrifice for it time and energy and means.

It seems a little strange to us to see the flurry that is just now making our Methodist Episcopal friends to tremble over the bare possibility that a few women may get elected to their general conference which meets next year. One might think that the New York "Advocate" was afraid their bark would tip over if Miss Willard should happen to put her little foot on the gunwale. If it will comfort them any, we can assure them from our own experience. That they need not fear; some of their mothers and wives and sisters will do them no harm even as members of a conference. –Terrill

Conference Rules:

1. The conference shall meet at 9 a.m. and adjourn at :30 p.m., each morning
2. In conducting business the following order shall be observed:

- a. The devotional exercises.
 - b. The calling of the roll.
 - c. The reading, correcting, and approving of the minutes.
 - d. The presentation of proposed amendments to the Discipline, petitions, memorials, and resolutions.
 - e. The presentation of reports from standing committees.
 - f. The presentation of reports from other committees.
 - g. Miscellaneous business.
3. All proposed amendments to the Discipline shall be presented in writing, on paper no less than commercial note size.
 4. All proposed amendments to the Discipline, petitions, memorials and resolutions shall be referred to the appropriate committees, without debate, but the Committee of Revision of the Discipline may originate propositions to amend the Discipline without presenting them first to the conference.
 5. All committees shall report upon all matters referred to them.
 6. Ten members of the large committees and a majority of the small committees shall be a quorum for the transaction of business.
 7. All proposed changes to the Discipline, when presented to the Committee of Revision of the Discipline, shall be first voted on to get the mind of the conference., and if approved, laid over for the final vote at a future sitting.
 8. In discussing the subject, no person shall speak the second time until all others have spoken who desire to speak.
 - a. If the committee on revisals vote adversely, and by the majority of two-thirds, to any proposal to change the Discipline referred to them, they shall report the fact only, and this report shall be a final disposition of the matter for the present session.

New Rule – adopted by the general conference of 1886, and acknowledged yesterday without a formal vote: In the formation of the several committees, they shall be so constituted that the members who compose them shall not be called upon to pass upon their own work.

Resolved: No person, except those in office, by appointment of the general conference, shall be invited to honorary seats by this conference.

An Important Resolution

Resolved, That the gospel of Jesus Christ, in the provisions which it makes, and in the agencies which it employs for the salvation of mankind, knows no distinction of nationality, condition or sex: therefore, no person who is called of God, and who is duly qualified should be refused ordination on account of sex, or race or condition. – B.T. Roberts

Fourth Sitting Oct. 11, 1891

General Superintendent E.P. Hart in the chair.

The resolution, made the order of the day, was then taken up. It reads as follows:

Whereas the question of ordination of women is likely to come up during this conference, and

Whereas, on other questions involving like radical changes in the polity of the church, we require more than a majority vote in the annual conferences as well as the general conference, before they become the law of the church,

Therefore, Resolved, that it is the sense of this conference that in the interest of unity and harmony among us as a people, a like vote be required on said question before it shall become incorporated in our Discipline.

The appeal was then submitted and the conference refused to sustain the chair by a vote of 28 to 48.

Then, at the suggestion of Superintendent Hart, the consideration of the resolution was deferred until after the Roberts resolution on the ordination of women was considered next Wednesday –Terrill

W.W.Kelly (Wabash Conference): As the resolution embraces the same principle which is to come before us next Wednesday, I move to lay it on the table.

J.T. Michael (Minnesota and N. Iowa): The question is not the same.

Kelly: Mr. Chairman; is a motion to lay on the table debatable?

Michael: Bro. Kelly debated it.

Kelly: Beg pardon, I debated the question before I made the motion to lay on the table. *The motion to lay on the table was lost.*

W.M.B. Colt (Central Illinois): I think it would be better to say in the interest of disunion, and inharmony, than to say in the interest of union and harmony. This question of equal rights is a question that will not down. It keeps coming up. I do hope that this general conference will have the magnanimity to grant the sisters the rights that have been kept from them all down the ages. Let this be kept with the things of the dark ages where it belongs. I think requiring a two-thirds votes out not to be adopted.

G.P. Wilson (Minnesota and N. Iowa): It seems to me that this is not a question of equal rights, but of proper sphere and relation.

O.M. Owen (Susquehanna): I think that all should have a clear understanding of this matter. It is not, Shall we ordain women? The question is, Shall we send it back to the annual conferences? If this general conference can pass a resolution to ordain women without sending it back to the annual conferences it will bring about a good deal of confusion.

G.W. Coleman (General Superintendent): I presume this was brought in on this line because it is of more importance than some of these that change the polity of our church, and I think it will do credit to this body to say that before this new order of things takes place we refer it back to the annual conferences and let them speak upon it. If it was a matter of small movement, it would do no harm, but it involves a radical change. It is one of those questions good people differ on: a person can be just as good on one side as the other; can have just as much Holy Ghost power and hold the opposite. It took me a good while in my early experiences to learn that a good man, a very good man, was not infallible. I almost thought that a man with the power of God could not embrace a wrong view. Men can be right with God and embrace more than one error, more than one false view. I cite you to that large body of men who embraced Calvinism and did a vast amount of good; and now their successors are troubled because the error will not down. A thing is never settled until it is settled right. We ought to give the church a voice in this matter.

The president called E.P. Hart to chair.

B.T. Roberts (General Superintendent): I ask, in the name of common sense, what are we here for? Are we not here as representatives of the church? Is not this conference the voice of the church? It has determined to express its voice. Are not all these delegates sent here by annual conferences? I do not understand the language these brethren use. If we go to an annual conference for approval, why not to a society. We are here to do business for the church. I am opposed to this resolution. All restrictions should be, not for forging chains, but for breaking chains. Hear what our Discipline says: "The General Conference shall have full powers to make rules and regulations for our church under the following limitations and restrictions. The General Conference shall not revoke, alter or change our articles of religion, or the General Rules of the united societies, or establish any new standards or rules or doctrines contrary to our present existing and established standards of doctrine.' Does this change our articles or religion, or establish any rules of doctrine, or change any part of our government? Does this proposition to ordain women do any such thing? Then the conference has full power to act. I hold we have no right to send it back. We should met the question just as the church said we should. No one proposed a change in the Discipline. The Congregational church is surely as conservative as the Free Methodist church, and they do right on ordaining women without making any change in their Discipline or doctrine. I understand they have fifty ordained women in the United States. The Free-will Baptists ordain women. Let us apply the same common sense that we do to other questions.

R.W. Hawkins (Pittsburg): We have in the remarks of Brothers Roberts and Coleman a striking illustration of how two good men can differ. More than two good men differ. We talk about barbarism. We hear it here this morning. It is necessary to be a little careful about what is barbarism and what is handed down the ages. Brother Roberts says the Congregational church ordain women. Never until the present day have women been ordained.

Roberts: I deny it. I will prove it to the contrary.

Hawkins: I am not acquainted with any history which so states. From the apostles down we have had a certain order of things. And now we undertake to change this order. It seems to me that in the interest of harmony and unity, we ought to let the church speak. If we are so enlightened and so far from barbarism that we are ready to make the change, we ought to have the voice of the annual conferences.

J.M. Reilley (West Iowa): It seems to me the disposition is to stave off this issue. This is a representative body. We ought not to allow ourselves to adopt the political methods to keep the shackles on women and trench upon their liberties. I think that we are perfectly safe in giving our mothers and daughters the same liberties we have ourselves. I believe that the most successful work in moral reforms is done by the women. Mothers in Israel are set forth as examples. I do not think that any powers that come within reach of the mothers in the church should be withheld from them. I can see no reason for this resolution but to stave off an issue that is knocking at the doors of our church.

Clara Wetherald (East Michigan): I'm opposed to the resolution. In some conferences there will be a large majority for the resolution. Other conferences which have no opportunity to prove the efficiency of women as preachers will vote against it. Only those conferences where women have labored will not hesitate to pass it. For twenty-four years I have preached the gospel and have never been laid aside from the ministry but six months. I have had people come many miles to have me marry them, and I would not do it. I have labored many years for \$100 a year. The railways refuse to grant permits to women who

are not ordained, no matter if they are licensed. I do not stand here because I want to be honored. That is all taken out of my heart. There are those who have been saved under my labors who have desired to receive the Lord's Supper from my hands; but I could not administer it. God has given us this right, but the conference refuses it.

J.W. Hamilton (Ohio): You say we are a representative body, but we are a minority representation.

Roberts: Then we have no rights here. Unless we are here by the will of the majority we ought to go home.

Hamilton: If you are afraid to let it go back you are afraid to let them –the church- speak. Do not be afraid to let it go back [*laughter*]. I must confess I am not settled in regard to the question.

Kelly: This body represents the Free Methodist church as really as congress represents the United States, and has the power to make laws for the church. We certainly have the right to interpret Discipline.

W.T. Hogg (Genesee): I readily admit that this is a representative body. And, could it be in session as long as the United States congress is, and were the questions to be settled here to be as long pending and as widely discussed through the periodicals as those which are settled in congress, so that we could ascertain the minds of our people before a final vote, the minds of their constituents, then the argument of the last brother on the floor would have some force. But as such is not the case it is utterly without force. There is one point which has not been noted in this discussion yet. It is this: ours is a democratic form of government the will of majority of the people, expressed through the representatives they have chosen, is law. The case before us is one which has not been discussed, except in a very limited degree, among our people, and so we are unable to know the mind of the majority concerning it. The resolution only asks that the matter may be referred to the conferences for an expression of the mind of our people concerning it. Therefore, on the principle that ours is a democratic government I am in favor of referring it to the conferences for their vote. Then the president's remarks are a severe stricture on those who made the Disciplines. (*Hogg is the future Free Methodist Superintendent W.T. Hogue – he changes the spelling of his last name later.*)

Michael: I said yesterday this was no part of Methodist polity. I should have said, Methodism in this country. I do not know what it is or has been in other countries. It is not a question of ordination of women, but shall it be sent back to the annual conferences? It is my desire that it be put off until the last annual conference before the next general conference. WE are a legislative body; but we are a limited legislative body; based on a principle which will enable us to make rules and regulations for our church. Certain rules and regulations might possibly be made that it would no do to trust to the general conference. They should go back to the church [reads] Discipline p. 31 ¶66, sec. 1: (*he goes on to read the same section of the discipline Roberts had quoted earlier.*)

It may be this not a doctrinal change but it roots in doctrine. It goes back to a doctrine according to which we have not been working, and contrary to one according in to which we have been working. When one of our general superintendents for whom we ought to have the greatest respect can stand before this conference and say that there is nothing in the Discipline against it, this ought to be proof that it is necessary to move slowly. When that statement can be made we ought to hesitate and see whether there is a solid foundation. Wait and put it before the church. The words of the Discipline imply that before

any such change is made there ought to be an expression of unity before those changes are made. Did not those who made these rules mean that the general conference should not be allowed to make rules and regulations in our church until they had the voice of the church, and do you believe that if they thought the general conference without waiting for the voice of the church would have adopted such a change as this, they would have put it within the same restrictive rules? Without the voice of the annual conferences it is of more important than some of these rules.

I think you will admit when we pass upon this question here, if you vote for the ordination of women, that another general conference cannot undo what you have done. In another general conference there may be laymen and others, who think they have taken a wrong step, but they can't undo what they have done.

They have set apart women for the ministry, and they are ordained. No future general conference can undo that. It would be a mockery to undertake it. Yesterday when we proposed to change chairman to presiding elder, some said it would come in conflict with the opinions of the people on the matter. You know that this would create a thousandfold more than the changing of chairman to presiding elder.

Now, Bro. Roberts is one of the greatest men for referring things back to the people. In the east he is considered an extremist. Now if you would go back to the east and say that he had recommended the adoption of this without sending it back to the people, without hardly a recommendation from an annual conference, I believe the injury to him would be very great; to say nothing about the injury to the church. I believe the injury to him should make us hesitate in this matter. See how he has stood for years, and taking the position that everything should be referred to the people! I believe by the Holy Ghost living and working we can convince the people on this point.

Notes

Our reports of the proceedings of Saturday's sitting will be read with interest, because of the very fine debate over the Hogg resolution [returning the question of women's ordination to the annual conferences for a vote]. There were strong advocates on both sides of the question. President Roberts' decision, that the resolution was out of order, turned the intellectual tide in another direction for the time being. The result, so far is, that the general conference has decided that it has the power, if it thinks best, to require a two-thirds vote of itself on the question, and to send it to the annual conferences for ratification there by three-fourths vote of all members of the annual conferences. We call particular attention to the speeches of Rev'ds B.T. Roberts, J.T. Michael, R.W. Hawkins and Rev. Clara Wetherald; also the remarkably clear statement of the question by Rev. E.P. Hart. WE speak of the above speeches not from any special favoritism to the parties, or to either side of the question, but because of their being more elaborate and more fully discussing the question. The reader should be careful to note that there is truth on both sides of the question and the result of the debate expresses the attitude of the general conference. The willingness of the Hogg resolution to defer action upon it until the Roberts resolution, made the order of the day for next Wednesday, has been considered, shows that there is no disposition to take undue advantage by them in the consideration of the main question. The attitude of the two sides seems to be this: Some who favor the ordination of women, desire the matter to be settled at this session of the general conference. Others desire to have a strong declaration from the body and also from the annual

conferences in favor of the ordination of women before it becomes the law of the church. – Terrill

Fourth Sitting (Continued) Oct. 14, 1890 Free Methodist

D.W. Abrams (Michigan): I'm in favor of the ordination of women. I did not know there was so much opposition as there appears to be. Back of all this there must be opposition. When Abraham Lincoln was president I was an abolitionist. I was tried at his waiting so to free the slaves, yet I afterward saw he was right. We are the representatives of twenty thousand people. We can't drive prejudice out. We must not try to bring people to this without education. Let it go back to the conferences and be agitated. When the next general conference meets they will have a majority of the people. This little DAILY goes into the homes and will be read. [A voice: "And take these speeches with it."] Woman suffrage is coming, and when it comes they will vote third party prohibition. But we are willing to wait until public opinion will say yes to it. I believe in this check.

George Seacord (Kansas): I do not want to discuss the ordination of women but to talk upon the resolution a moment. I'm surprised at the discrimination. It seems to me that there is a fear with the minority and they want to hold the majority. It has been said it ought to go back to the conferences. Why then require a two-thirds vote of the general conference and three-fourths of the annual conferences if the only object is to get the minds of the people? It looks to me like hedging the way of this ever coming up.

W.A. Sellew (Genesee): Mr. President: It would appear that this is either an interpretation of this clause restricting our action, or else it is out of order. This must either be a vote putting it among the restriction or an interpretation of Discipline. If the former it should be referred to the committee of revision of the Discipline. I raise this as a point of order.

E. Leonardson (Kansas): This only says they shall not change these things.

Roberts (General Superintendent): Read the first clause of paragraph 66.

Leonardson: "The General Conference shall have full powers to make rules and regulations for our church."

Sellew: I insist in having the point of order settled.

Coleman (General Superintendent): I think no one questions the power of this general conference to pass it on a majority vote, but I think in the interest of peace and harmony it should be sent back.

Roberts (General Superintendent): The question of order is taken. I do not believe that the general conference can take this action in the interests of peace and harmony. We ought to be willing to submit to the majority. I'm used to that language. They used that language in the Genesee conference: "They are pious men and they will submit to anything."

Sellew: I insist on my point of order.

The question at this point was, Is the resolution in order. Superintendent Roberts, in the chair, decided it was not. Superintendent Hart appealed from the decision to the house.-Terrill

The Preamble and the Resolution

Whereas, the question of the ordination of women is likely to come up during this conference, and

Whereas, on the other questions involving like radical changes to the polity of the church, we require more than a majority vote in the annual conferences as well as the general conferences, before they become the law of the church,

Therefore, Resolved, that it is the sense of this conference that in the interest of unity and harmony among us as a people, a like vote to be required on said question before it shall become incorporated into our Discipline.

Coleman (General Superintendent) rose to speak – Terrill

Sellew: Is an appeal debatable?

Chair: It is.

Coleman (General Superintendent): There is no question but this body has the power to decide question. Brother Roberts says we have no right to send anything back.

Roberts (General Superintendent): No; I said we had no right to that except on the restrictive rules.

Coleman (General Superintendent): I do not think you will want to tie yourself to that. It isn't wise to do it.

T.B. Arnold (Illinois): I understand that we have now come to a law question. Is it a proper thing for this general conference to take up this resolution and pass it? It seem to me that we have authority to take up any question and make any law that we may deem best for the church.

Hart (General Superintendent): To my mind the question is not, have we the power to do or not to do, but the manner of doing it. Have we any right to settle it as in the resolution? I think we can for we are ordered to settle it immediately. The president says we have not the right. I appeal. I find nothing in the Discipline against this manner of settling it.

Seacord (Kansas): Does not this amount to a revisal of the Discipline, and as such should it not go to the committee on revisals?

Reilly (West Iowa): I believe that the intent of the Discipline is to hold in check any tendency to lower the standard, and hedge up the way and shut the gates through which other churches go into worldliness. Anything that hampers the work of the Lord, or lowers our standard, is to be held in check.

As this question doe not ten in any of these directions – as I have no doubt that the majority of the Free Methodist church believe in the ordination of women and it can have no tendency to lower the standard – this general conference has no excuse for referring it back.

Michael (New York): The question is on the appeal, whether we will sustain Brother Roberts or not. If the position taken is right, it would be no more right to send it back for a majority vote than for a two-thirds vote.

Sellew: I do not understand it as Brother Michael does. The decision of the chair is not on that line. We are hampering ourselves. The Discipline says we shall make rules. If this passes, we hamper the question next Wednesday so that it will require a two-thirds vote. It is against our written constitution: it should go before the committee on revision of the Discipline.

Leonardson (Kansas): Outside of these restrictions we have full power to require a two-thirds vote.

Ebey (Missouri): Is anything out of order before a general conference?

Wilson (Minnesota and N. Iowa): It ahs been intimated that some are influence by fear. I do not know what they are afraid of, whether it is a Don Quixote mind mill or what.

J. Hayden (Ohio): If any other question, no matter how great or important, how much above the free seat system, have we the right to require a two-thirds vote of this conference and a three-fourths vote of the annual conferences?

Colt (Central Illinois): The Discipline plainly says, the general conference has full power. We have full power to decide this question by a majority vote. Let us like men meet it. The one-third can defeat the two thirds.

Hart (General Superintendent): I hold it is not a question of what we may or may not do, but the manner of doing it. Shall a majority of this conference say how it is done or not?

Michael: The superintendent shall have full power to make decisions, but he may consult the other superintendents, so we have full power to pass this by a majority, but we may require a two-thirds majority.

The vote was taken and the appeal was sustained by a vote of 28 to 48.-Terrill

Roberts (General Superintendent): Let me ask you to defer this till the matter come up on Wednesday. Your action reminds me of Cicero. A man condemned to be hung and he was asked to hear his defense; he said, "I will hang the man first and hear him afterwards."

Speech of Mrs. Clara Wetherald

On the Ordination of Women, Delivered Oct. 16, printed in the Oct. 21, 1890 General Conference Daily

Let women be considered in the matter. They say woman is not adapted to the regular ministry. I think she is peculiarly fitted to care for souls. I remember reading of a man out in the Rocky mountains, who, when a part of his flock of sheep were missed at night, chose from his shepherd dogs, the one that must leave her puppies. The night was dark and the sheep were astray in the mountains, but the master said, "She will never come back till she finds them." She came back in the morning, weary and foot-sore, but she brought the lambs. As she dropped down beside her little ones and almost instantly fell asleep while they were nursing, every eye was moistened with tears.

I know we have responsibilities that others do not have; and I think of all others we should have the support of the church. I do not see why the heavens should fall and everything be turned bottom side up if five elders should lay their hands on my head and say, "Take thou authority to preach the word of God and to administer the holy sacraments in the congregation." I know that the Lord has laid his hand upon my head, and he will carry me through. You say that the financial question should not come into this discussion. Why not, if it comes in with the men? I say it is a question of equality. If it is said that it means males only when it says "he," then we must all sit down without hope of salvation. But I deny that it has that meaning. A man said to me, "There is no salvation for woman in the Bible. There is no place in the Bible where it says she has a soul."

I remembered that when Rachel was dying it was said, "When her soul was in departing." So, if her soul departed she certainly had a soul. And we consider that although in nearly all cases in giving conditions of salvation and privileges of the gospel the term "if any man" is used, as it also is in giving the qualifications for ordination, yet it is intended to include women also; and we consider we have hope in Christ, and there is "no difference between Jew and Greek, between bond and free, between male and female, but all are one in Christ." *Clara Wetherald was asked to preach this message at one of the evening services. There were normally two to three preachers who preached a service at a few different churches in the*

area near General Conference at least a few nights during the conference. She was the only female preacher at the 1890 General Conference and she preached two sermons on women's role in the church.

B.T. Roberts Sermon

At May Street Church on Oct. 12, 1890, published Oct. 15, 1890 in the *General Conference Daily*. Sermon preached at the dedication of the new First Free Methodist Church in Chicago on Sunday morning.

When we started out we held street meetings; I keep them up yet. Brother Hart held street meetings in Marengo. One man would swear at them, but when he thought he was going to die, he said, "Send for Elder Hart." He was not at home. They asked him if they could send for the Baptist minister. He said, "No, send for Mrs. Coon." While he persecuted he approved.

One man came into one of our conferences and said he was a hotel keeper. He always lived harmoniously with his wife and never had any trouble. His wife went to a funeral among our people, and was deeply convicted. She went right among the pilgrims and got converted. Persons would go to the hotel and tell him what she did, how she got blest and shouted, but if they said anything against her religion he would knock them down. He would persecute her but he approved. We must see to it that we are persecuted for righteousness sake, not because we have done wrong or shunned the cross. I knew one man when this work first started – he was a graduate of the Dartmouth college – who cut out the platform of the Free Methodist church; but he said, "I hold myself ready to defend that platform from the Bible with any man." He approved but could not take the cross. "Commending yourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." If you cannot commend yourselves to their tastes you can their consciences.

This platform the Free Methodist church was raised up on, consider of the poor, no distinction, all to be respected alike, pay just as much attention to a millionaire as to a poor man, and give him just as good a seat. The Lord has raised us up to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. The rich and the poor meet together. The Lord is the maker of them all. This is the basis on which this house has been built. This city will be better for having this church here.

One place where I got off the train, a gentleman met me and took me to his house, and the next day took us in his carriage and as he was leaving he said, "I should be glad to remain but I cannot, but if you will let me know when the meeting closes I will send for you." I said to him, "I do not understand all this kindness from a perfect stranger." He said, "Mr. Roberts, I consider myself under greater obligation to you than any man I know." I am an elder in the Presbyterian church. My father is also an elder in that church, but he was so worldly that it was almost impossible to live with him. He thought we were all going to the poor house. My sister sent him the "Earnest Christian," and since he has read that, he has been pleasant and kind to all. It has made a greater change in him that is usually does in men at conversion. Then I have a sister in Mobile, Alabama, who is a member of the Presbyterian church, where they do not believe in women speaking in church. The "Earnest Christian" was sent to her, and after reading it, in spite of the custom of the country and the rules of the church to which she belongs, she will give testimony in social meetings."

Then he said, "You are doing a great deal more through your influence on other denominations than in your own." The doctor was right. We are doing much more in our influence on other churches, than we think. I remember when we started as a church, there was hardly such a thing as a free church in any of our large cities in the east. Soon after I began publishing "The Earnest Christian," there was an appeal in a New England paper for a free church in Boston. I read it over and found that nearly every word of it was from the "Earnest Christian." The Free Methodists are exerting a tremendous influence on other denominations. If we stick to these principles, and have the joy of the Holy Ghost, you need not stop to answer those that oppose you. You will triumph over all opposition, you will see the kingdom of God. I want the King to come in his beauty, but I want just as many as possible, prepared for his coming. O God, give us this religion in all its fullness, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Seventh Setting Published Oct. 17, 1890 General Conference Daily
The Wednesday Oct. 15 Session & Debate on Ordaining Women

B.T. Roberts (General Superintendent): Mr. President: I would like very much to do the subject justice but I am not in a condition to do it this morning. I have lost heart and lost strength. An old Roman said in the time of famine "It is hard to speak to men's stomachs for they have no ears to hear." It is a very hard thing to speak to men's prejudices. They are stronger than the sense of justice. They are stronger than the love of truth, even in many good men. We can hardly estimate the power of prejudice, and yet I think as Christian men we ought to conquer our prejudices and adhere to truth however it may be in conflict with our training. Prejudice on this subject are the growth of centuries. Truth may be in conflict with our training and prejudice on this subject. We have been brought up to regard woman as inferior to man, and are not willing the same rights to be given to her. Very many were brought up under English influences and German influences, and they are powerful in opposing our opinions on this subject. My ancestors were Welsh. I was born with a love of freedom. My earliest recollections of my great-grandfather was as a Revolutionary soldier, and as far as I know I have always stood on the side of the oppressed at any risk. Some of men's prejudices are one way and others are another. My prejudices are one way and those of many of you are another; and I think I can make it clear from the Bible, if you will listen candidly to me, that the resolution before us ought to receive a unanimous vote.

The scripture that is generally used by those who oppose the equal rights of women in the church is, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection; but I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over a man, but to be in silence." I Timothy 2:11. "Let your women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted unto them to speak." I Cor. 14:34. Now Mr. President, these passages do not stand in the way of this resolution, for as church in common with all other churches, we refuse to accept these passages in their literal application. Women is placed by our law, under great disabilities, and not as great in the United States as in England, but still we have inherited these prejudices. I want to read you a few words from one of the most eminent of the modern writers, John Stewart Mil. Some of his books are used in John Hopkins university as text books. He says:

[see tomorrow's paper]

I say Mr. President, that the burden of proof lies with those who dispute the resolution. The presumption is that they were in favor of equality of rights, and when a person comes and claims that there is no justice or equality or rights they should show why it is not so. The burden of proof does not lie with me but with those who object to the resolution. Still, I will give you some reasons which I think are very substantial reasons why this resolution should be adopted. In the first place there is no proof against it. The scripture that is commonly quoted is I Timothy 2:11 and I Cor. 14:34. Now, Mr. President, these passages do not stand in the way of my resolution at all. There is no church which would accept these passages in their literal signification. There is not a single church in Chicago that commands or allows the women to keep silence in their churches. Wherever they have a church they have singing, and wherever they have singing they have the voice of women, and that is breaking silence. These passages stand just as much in the way of permitting the women to sing in church, or to teach in the Sabbath school, or to give their testimony in the love-feast as they stand in the way of their teaching in the pulpit or being ordained. So it seems to me I have nothing to do with them. You have disposed of them already. We have got to go back on our action if you are going to be governed by these passages. You mustn't let a woman talk in love-feast or prayer meeting, or teach in Sabbath school, or write for a religious paper. Therefore they do not stand in our way of ordaining women any more than they do in the way of what we are doing. Let her do nothing in the church? Absurd! I do not think there are any churches that understand them in their strict literal meaning, but suppose I say what I believe to be true: that is, that their application is temporary. It certainly is not in accordance with the custom of Paul, for Paul gave directions for women to prophesy in public and pray in public; therefore the words according to his application are not to be taken in their strict literal meaning. They have no more application to this resolution than they have to our action in allowing women in love-feasts. But, Mr. President, if you will go back to the beginning you will find that in the beginning God made woman in perfect equality with man. In Genesis 1:26: "And God said let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion." The dominion he gave was common dominion. In Genesis 2:18 it says, "And the Lord God said, It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him."

The word here translated "a helpmeet" denoted perfect equality.

Adam Clarke says on that Hebrew word that it means a counterpart – a being like himself, possessing neither inferiority nor superiority, but in all respects equal to himself. She lost that in the fall and the curse fell upon her first. Before the fall she was perfect in every respect. IN the gospel she is placed back again in the relation she held before the fall in every respect. In Galatians 3:13 we read, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law." So that the curse that cam upon woman at the fall is removed by Christ. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law. The Jews placed the curse upon woman very much as it is in this country. We find Christ reversing the decision of their law in the case of the woman who was brought before him guilty of adultery. Their law said she should be stoned to death. He placed her on the same platform as man, and said, "Let him that is without sin cast the first stone." In the New Testament she is placed upon perfect equality with man. All that you find in the New Testament to support these prejudices that have become so common are passages which I have read from Paul, but all through the New Testament teaches that women have perfect equality with men. Now that inference from the

resolution is correct, therefore no person who is called of God and who is duly qualified should be refused ordination on account of sex, race or condition.

You will see that every woman should not be ordained any more than that every man should be ordained; but it does follow that every one duly qualified should not be refused on account of sex, race or condition. In the Bible we have no form of ordination laid down. It is simply setting apart from an office. I insist that the women shall be set apart just the same as the men. This I infer from the plain teaching of the word of God; but for further reference turn to Rom. 16:1. The work diakonos, rendered servant, in its primary meaning, means servant, but in our ecclesiastical terms, so far as I know, without an exception, had primarily, a secularly meaning. The work church – ecclesia, in the original has a secular meaning and is so used in Acts 10:32 where it speaks of a riotous assembly. It is so used in Acts 19:39 and 19:41. But all through the New Testament generally the word ecclesia means – church. Take the word presbuteros, a word found in the New Testament some seventy times, the primary meaning is elder – an elderly person. It is used in the New Testament in this sense but a few times. Generally, it means an officer in the church – an elder. The same word is that by which Paul designated himself when he wanted to say he was a minister.

But here come in our prejudices – here where they seem to be stronger than the truth. The only place in the New Testament where this word is applied to a servant is where it applied to poor Phoebe, and that because she was a woman; and I am sorry to say that our revisers have given way to this English prejudice, yet this word all through they have called ministers; yet when it applies to women our revisers have got it servant. There you see our prejudices our stronger than our sense of justice; to-wit if there was any evidence that Paul was ordained a minister, there is the same evidence that Phoebe was ordained a minister. The evidence is just the same. You cannot make out any stronger proof in one case than the other. So much for the word deacon.

But if you will turn to I Cor. 12:28, also to Eph. 4:11 in that passage you have heard now, you will see that it states that God has set some in the church, and this term “he has set” is the term that usually relates to ordination. And if there is anything that is a permanent arrangement it is that word “has set,” and I don’t care what arrangement men may make when they go into the church, if they have the life and power of the gospel in them; they have this difference in themselves.

Well now the apostle says that God has set some – ordained some – in the church, first apostles and secondly prophets. Well now, are women to be prophets under the New Testament dispensation? If you will turn in Genesis you will find that Miriam was a prophet. If you will turn to 2 Chron. 32:14, you will find that Huldah was a prophetess. If you will turn to Luke 2:36 you will find that Hannah was a prophetess under the New Testament dispensation, and so it goes on; and t here is just the same reason to believe that these woman prophets were ordained as there is to believe that these men prophets were ordained. But are women to be prophets under our dispensation? If you will turn to the very beginning of it in Acts 2:17, you will find that at the very initiation of Christian dispensation there is the announcement that woman were to prophesy, so that there is the same reason to believe in the ordination of one as the other. And there is the same reason to believe that the word that is used in relation of the ordination of women that there is to believe that elder men were ordained precisely the same. And now I want to give you one more passage – if you will turn to Rom. 16:7.

Now, Mr. President, this shows you that some woman was an apostle and was a distinguished apostle among the apostles; and that some have those English prejudices in their comments and that they yield to their prejudices somewhat, but still are learning, and have almost got the better of their prejudices.

It is said as to whether this means that Junia was an apostle (and it seems that she was distinguished among the apostles). Dr. Clarke says that we might enter her name high up; and I think that this is a wonderful confession for an Englishman to make. (Brother Hawkins – Dr. Clarke was an Irishman.) Well that may only account for it. In these days some commentators try to raise the question whether after all Junia was not a man. They do not assert it, but they try to raise the question. Here we have the testimony from the Bible that God has set some women among the prophets, some among the apostles, some among the elders, some among the deacons. If that does not settle the question I want to know what does. I will give you a comment on that by a man who lived almost up to the time of the apostles, who was a strict Greek – spoke the Greek language – the Greek language was his mother tongue, and of course that man understood it. His name was Chrysostom, which name means golden-mouthed, because he was a man of unsurpassed eloquence. Now remember that he lived only about 300 years after the days of Christ; was a Greek and understood the Greek language as we cannot understand it.

(Chrysostom was the Archbishop of Constantinople and an important early church father. He was a gifted rhetorician, speaker who was an expert in Greek literature.)

Now could anything be plainer than that? And I want you remember that these are parts in the statements of a man that lived near the time of the apostles, and a holiness man, a man of great learning and eloquence. I want you to notice the position taken by our churches in these days. The Protestant Episcopal and the Methodist Episcopal churches have deaconesses. But what are they? They bear about the same relation to a scriptural deacon, as does a woman who takes a side degree in Masonry to a full fledged Mason. They try too, to settle the demand that they be allowed the same position as men, by giving women the name of deaconesses without permitting them to discharge the duties which according to scripture belong to that office.

I am heartily opposed to all such shams. If we recognize her at all, we should give her the place that properly belongs to her.

They say it is contrary to a woman's nature. What is there contrary to their nature? They preach and pray = I wish men would pray.

“There's not a spot on earth or heaven,
There's not a task to mankind given,
Without a woman in it.”

(“The sphere of woman” written by C.E. Bowman)

And you may take employments that are the most uncongenial to woman and the most contrary to her disposition, and yet in spite of all the prejudices, in spite of all the considerations, there are times when she rises superior to them all and shows her general manhood. More than 450 years ago in the history of France there was a time when they carrying on war with England. The English army had overrun France. They had the possession of Paris. They had possession of almost all the large towns except Orleans. They had almost possession of the country. In their crisis there was a girl, a peasant girl, one who noted her piety and for going to church. That devoted girl said that God had laid it on her to save France and crown the king. Her father said that if she attempted to do it he would

drown her; if they wouldn't he would drown her himself. But she was sent away to an aunt, and met some of the officers, and she finally succeeded in getting one of the officers to take her to the king. She said: "I am going to do a man's work and want man's clothes and a man's armor." She knew nothing about war. She put on man's dress and armor. They brought her to the king. She rode 450 miles in eleven days, and she went to the king and told him her mission. She told them to give her men at arms; with them she went to Orleans, and in a few days Orleans was taken; and in the short the king was crowned at Rheims and the English were expelled from the country. And what treatment did that girl receive? Why, our English forefathers burn her over at the stake as a witch.

Do you know that one of the greatest churches of the day has a woman at the head – the church of England? She is the leading power, - the pope of that church so to speak. If you want to put a woman in the president's chair I say I have no objection to having a woman preside there. I have no objection to it at all. Let her stand on the platform, and you will have no right to complain, no matter what her nationality or race.

O.M. Owen (Susquehanna): Mr. Chairman – The speech of Bro. Roberts on the affirmative has been largely to remove difficulties found in the Bible, on this question. The positive proof has seemed to be wanting. He referred to property rights and quoted from English law on the question. We do not deny women property rights. We have no such oppressive laws in this country on the question. Woman is being fast emancipated from the oppression of barbarism. The passage, "Let the women keep silence in the churches," has reference in my opinion to their speaking on matters pertaining to church government. Bro. Roberts says it must have been of temporary application, since if it was not it must apply to her singing, speaking and praying in public. If this passage has only a temporary application, how can we tell but every other question he made from the New Testament in reference to this matter has only temporary application? If God intended woman should be ordained and occupy the same position in the church, why was it not made so plain it could be understood without so much searching of scripture, and such searching among Greek roots? Why was it not made as clear as the fact of the ordination of man? Why was it not made so plain to the wayfaring men though fools need not err therein. It seems to me the time has not fully arrived for the passage of this resolution. It will be time enough to agitate this question, and pass this resolution, when the sisters of our church, generally, shall ask to be ordained. I do not understand that the female evangelists, as a rule, ask for ordinance to it. I am in favor of according to woman all the rights and privileges which pertain to her sex. I would favor her laboring in public and private for the salvation of the people, but when you come to ordain her into the regular ministry, and put her on the same basis as man in assuming pastoral and other ecclesiastical relations, you are placing her out of her sphere. No nation accords to woman the rights and privileges that our nation does. In heathen countries we see her debased; bought and sold as a slave, the wife often degraded below the brute. We would give her the full benefit of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and all the privilege in the church accorded to her by the Great Head of the church. We would give her the same educational advantages, and the same property rights as man. We would acknowledge her to be the equal of man in intellect, equal in ability, but not equal in authority. She has her sphere of labor, and in that sphere she may equal and sometimes excel man, in this sphere. That God never intended woman to be the leader in the church, nation, or family may be seen from the law and the testimony. In the Bible we read "God created man – in the image of God created he him." If God intended woman should be the

head and take the lead in affairs of state or nation, church or family, why did he not create woman first? Why did he not take the rib from the woman out of which to make man? Why did he not create man as a "help meet" to woman? God said: "It is not good for man to be alone, I will make him an help meet for him." That is woman's proper sphere a help meet to man. Thank God for so many help meets. It is the exception that woman preaches, woman becomes queen. It was never intended as a rule.

If God designed that woman should occupy the same position in church authority as man, permit me to ask when the Son of God chose the twelve disciplines whom he would honor as the leaders in the Christian church, why did he not choose twelve handmaids as the leaders in the Christian church, why did he not choose twelve handmaids in Israel? It is remarkable – not one chosen was a woman. Still later when Jesus sent out the seventy apostles, not a woman was sent among them. Here you have the Son of God again choosing leaders in the church, and the whole seventy were men. Once more: At the last supper if Jesus designed woman should administer the sacrament why did he not say to her, "This do in remembrance of me"? So far as we can tell no women were present on that occasion. Still later when he took his departure from the hillside of Bethany and gave his great commission to his disciples he said to the man not to the woman, "Go and teach all the nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world."

Further, with profound reverence and in all sincerity I ask, if God intended woman should be the leader and head in affairs pertaining to the church, why did he not send us a redeemer in the person of a woman? God designed in the creation of man, in the work of redemption, in commissioning those whom he would honor as rulers in the church, that man should take the lead. The church of Rome exalts Mary the mother of God in a very high position. Mary can make her Son do as she pleases. Mary recognized as the Mother of God and with such authority delegated to her is out of her sphere; so is woman at the altar taking the ordination vows, and receiving the authority to assume the same ecclesiastical relations as man.

Again it would often place woman in a very awkward position to confer upon her this authority. Instance the baptismal service by immersion. When some little woman is called upon to immerse a man weighing 250 pounds, it might be a question as to which one of them would go under the water. Perhaps both might get an immersion. Ordination would often place her in a position improper for her to occupy, and unbecoming that modesty which should characterize her sex. Ordain woman and we shall have female pastors, chairmen and superintendents. Suppose a woman, with two or three little ones, is ordained, assumes the pastoral relation, or is elected chairman or superintendent. Her husband may be a good and true man, but most men would have to be remodeled to perform the duties of the house satisfactorily. It would be out of harmony with God's law, the law of common sense and decency, for the woman as a preacher to earn the support for the family while the man bakes the bread, scrubs the floors, etc. – not that a man ought not to help his wife in her work in the home. A man who will not do it ought not to have a wife; but it is contrary to divine law, physical law, the law of common sense, to place woman in a sphere designed for man. Give to woman her place, and let her in her sphere occupy a position equal with a man. In her sphere she can do a great work as man and oftentimes a greater work. But do not place her as a ruler in the church of God.

It has been argued that woman should be ordained, in order that she may receive the benefit of clerical railroad reductions. This savors too much of worldly policy, and is hardly in keeping with that holiness which we profess. What! Ask the church to sanction an ordinance not founded on scripture in order that she may ride at a cheaper rate on the cars? Never. The railroads west must be quite different from those in the east, else they would grant evangelists one-half passes without ordination.

It has been said that not to ordain woman would be a reflection upon our mothers and sisters. On the contrary, we should reflect upon them a great deal more if we place them in man's position in the home or in the church.

W.T. Hogg (Genesee): Mr. President, I desire to say a few words on this subject. As the conclusion of the able, eloquent and thrilling plea of our worthy senior superintendent on this question in this morning's sitting a certain member of this body said to me in a whisper. I'm converted. Now, sir, I was not converted by that remarkable address, though I was ready to say at its conclusion, "Almost thou persuaded me to believe" – in the ordination of women.

I desire before speaking further on this question to ascertain how many of the members of this conference are Greek scholars. Were it proper I like to ask all members of this body who understand that language to arise? I am sure that there are very few here who understand it. It is certain, then that this question cannot be settled here by appealing to the Greek language. And a discussion about Greek roots and verbs and nouns is an inexcusable waste of time. Five words of plain English on this subject are worth ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.

Now, Mr. President, the question before us should be reduced to a narrower limit than that which has been given in this discussion. The real question at issue is this: Do the scriptures recognize the general practice of ordaining women permanently to all the functions of Christian ministry? Will brother Roberts please tell us how many unmistakably clear cases of ordination of women he finds in the New Testament? (Answer Two.) You will readily see, Mr. President, and members of the conference, that, according to the best showing the supporters of the resolution before us can make, they do not assume to have proved the ordination of women to have been a general practice in apostolic times. The utmost that can be claimed by these brethren is that in very exceptional cases women were ordained to the general functions of the ministry. And these exceptional cases are so far from being perfectly clear as to require hours of dispute over the precise meaning of Greek words to determine what the passages in question mean. Now, sire, Mr. President, in making so radical a change of the discipline involving such a radical departure from the age-long usage of the church of Christ, it is plain to me that we ought to have clearer light and a fuller scriptural warrant for such a course than any of us can claim to have at present before rendering our decision in support of this resolution.

Let me call the attention of this body to what is said concerning Junia being "of note among the apostles." The scriptural expression is certainly ambiguous. Bro. Roberts' quotation from Dr. Clarke states the matter just as it is. I wish he would favor us with the quotation again. Let us here it. (*The quotation was repeated – Terrill*). I think Dr. Clarke is correct in saying that it is not clear if Junia was an apostle or not. Whatever faults Dr. Clarke may have had as a commentator, he possessed one commendable characteristic which is not possessed by all modern commentators; and that was the frankness to say of a scripture passage which he found himself unable to explain clearly, "I do not understand its

meaning,” So he tells us concerning this passage that he is not clear as to whether it means that Junia was an apostle of note or simply that she was a person who was considered notable by the apostles. It may be interpreted either way, and so proves nothing in the case. The probabilities, however, are against the belief that Junia was an apostle. Suppose I state before this body a few facts concerning some person of my acquaintance, and conclude by saying, “He is of note among all the preachers of the Genesee conference.” Would you of necessity infer from such a statement that the person described was a minister? By no means unless there was something more than this to convey the impression you would infer just the contrary. So when we read that Junia was of note among the apostles, we reasonably infer she was a person whom the apostles considered notable for her excellent qualities and her usefulness in the work of God. So, I cannot conclude from my investigation of the matter that Junia was an apostle. Certainly the English rendering does not make it clear that she was. And we are not a conference of Greek critics.

Now as to the term deacon. It means a servant. This is admitted by all. The first occurrence of the term in scripture was in connection with the setting apart of service of seven men to attend to the temporal service of the church, so that the twelve apostles might give themselves exclusively to preaching the gospel. (Reference was made to Acts 6th chapter – Terrill). That some who were invested with all the functions of the ministry were called deacons I readily grant; but that all who were appointed to the position of deacon were invested with all the functions of the ministry none will dare to claim. Every ordained minister here is a servant of the church; but there are many here who are not recognized as minister in the ecclesiastical sense. And that Phebe is called a deacon proves nothing more than that she was recognized as a servant appointed to supervise some particular department of the temporalities of the church. I wish here to read the following extract from an article in the Encyclopedia Britannica; “Deaconess’ was the title of ministry to which women were appointed in the early church. They performed certain functions towards female catechisms during the ceremony of baptism by immersion. The age of such as first fixed at sixty years. Afterwards it was reduced to forty years. No married woman was eligible to this office. Abuse of the office gradually became prevalent, among the deaconesses which led to the suppression of their ministry in the Latin church in the sixth century, and in the Greek church in the seventh century.”

Now, Mr. President, I desire to direct attention briefly to I Tim. 1:1,2, which has been referred to in the progress of this discussion. “Rebuke not an elder but entreat him as a ‘father,’” etc. I would like to ask Brother Roberts if I was correct in understanding him to say that this passage the word elder is used in the ecclesiastical sense? (*Answer, Yes, sir.-Terrill*). And that the expression “the elder woman” the same term is used in its ecclesiastical sense? (*Answer, Yes sir – Terrill*) Then we might read it “the woman elders” instead of “the elder woman”? (Roberts –Certainly.) I call attention of the conference to the fact that it does not read that way, if it might. Now, Mr. President, I desire to ask Brother Roberts if in this passage he considers the “younger men” referred to to be in ecclesiastical order also. (*Answer, I am not sure-Terrill.*) And are the “younger men” referred to in an ecclesiastical sense? (*Answer, I’m not sure – Terrill*). In my opinion, Mr. President, none of these classes are referred to are to be considered as in ecclesiastical orders, then by parity of reasoning, the younger women are also referred to as in ecclesiastical order. Now that these were not referred to me from the reading of verse fourteen, where the apostle says, “I will therefore that the young women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none

occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. For some are already turned aside after Satan." Then I pass on to the first verse of the next chapter, where the apostle continues to say, "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor.," etc. Now, sire, one of the rules of interpretation of a passage we must interpret according to the general scope of the writer; applying the rule here we find that the scope of the writer is to give various social and domestic relations and the duties of growing out of them, and not to discuss the function or orders of ecclesiastical ministry. Hence we may justly infer that the term elder as used in both cases in verse 1 of chapter 5. Is not used in an ecclesiastical sense at all. The argument from this passage therefore proves nothing of this question.

And now before I conclude allow me to ask the supporters of the resolution before us to show us what particular advantages in the way of increasing their efficiency as agencies in accomplishing the salvation of men, either men or women derive from having the hands of a bishop laid upon their heads in ordination? Let us note carefully the wording of the resolution. It is ingeniously constructed.

That the gospel makes no distinction, based upon nationality, condition or sex in its provision for the salvation of mankind, we are all agreed. That it makes no such distinction in the agencies it employs for accomplishing that work., we are all agreed, if, by agencies for accomplishing it is meant such agencies for the proclamation of religious truth as are essential to the salvation of lost men. But, if the expression is intended to imply that no distinction is made in any of the matters relating to ecclesiastical government in the church, then, sir, we take exception to the resolution. There are certain governmental functions recognized in the New Testament which are not essential to the effectiveness of either men or women as agencies for accomplishing the salvation of men.

I know of no advantage in the way of increased efficiency in the work of saving men from being secured by the ordination of women sufficient to warrant such a radical change in the interpretation of Discipline and scripture and in the usages of the church, as the resolution before us contemplates. Nor do I believe that any of the members of this conference, our worthy senior superintendent excepted, are sufficiently enlightened on the question before us to vote without any misgivings in favor of so unlooked for and so radical a change in the interpretation of our Discipline on this subject as the resolution involves.

Before I sit down allow me to state, Mr. President, that I accord the utmost sincerity to brethren who have expressed themselves in favor of the resolution. I do not believe they have been governed by prejudice, but by their convictions of truth. However this question may be determined I propose to regard brethren who oppose my views as sincere. And I hope my feelings toward them may be reciprocated., and that I may be regarded as honest in this matter, and not as having been dictated by prejudice. I purpose to keep a good spirit, a tender conscience, and a mind open to conviction of this subject, and possibly four years for now I may be able to vote on such a resolution, though I cannot possibly do so now.

Mr. President I don't know but I ought to say a few words on this question, especially as some of my friends think I ought to put myself on the record. And this I desire to do. I suppose the real question to be, Does the New Testament by its teaching authorize the ordination of women? I am ready to answer most unqualifiedly and decisively in the negative. I think the question should have come up in a form different than it comes up in this resolution. Three years ago at the session of the Central Illinois conference a sister was presented for ordination, and my ruling was that there is no provision in our Discipline for

ordaining women. Brother Roberts stated yesterday that we need no change in the Discipline in order to ordain women, only the exercise of a little common sense in the interpretation. I think the question should come up on my decision, and be squarely met. I am not a debater. I have not been trained in the arena of debate. My stronghold is to get a congregation before me where they can't talk back, and then give it to them.

To my mind this question should be stripped of everything like mere verbiage and embellishment. An image may be made to change greatly by merely changing the drapery. It is not a question of woman's rights: this is not a woman's rights convention. I remember old Father Mead used to say, "The men may be the head, but the woman must be the neck for she is next to the man – and you all know that the neck always turns the head." I once heard a lady speaking on woman's rights who met the teachings of the apostle Paul as to women's keeping silence, etc. in this way: "Had the apostle Paul lived in our day and possessed the light we do he never would have written that." It makes me think of the young man on shipboard who was called by the captain to the wheel while he went below to rest. The captain pointed out the north star and said, "Keep her headed for that." Suddenly a squall sprang up and amid the tangle of spars and ropes the young man lost sight of the star; and meantime the vessel got headed in the opposite direction. The young man looked around for the star and discovered it away in the rear. He sent immediately for the captain and cried out to him, as he came on deck. "We've sailed past that star, give us another to steer by."

Mr. President, in matters of truth and righteousness I think we can still be guided by the apostle Paul. It is not a question of emerging from barbarism. We are not in England or in Germany, but in the republican America – in the land where the question of human rights and equality is being solved on a basis of right and equity as it is in no other land. The women of America may in their sphere wield an influence for good that can be equaled under no other conditions. It is the soft hand of woman that rocks the cradle of the nation. This question stripped of all that is foreign to it should be discussed on the basis of New Testament teaching.

Brother Roberts asserts that wherever the word translated "deacon" occurs in connection with the church office, it always denotes a minister, and consequently that Phoebe mentioned in Romans 16:1 must have been a minister. But I would inquire, does not the word occur in Acts 6:2 where it is rendered "serve"? If so, it certainly sometimes means servant; and I believe Phoebe was as servant of the church at Cenchrea just as some of our sisters are servants of the church to-day.

We are told women are spoken of as prophesying. I think the prophesying of the New Testament is different from the prophesying of the Old. Prophets, under the Old Testament dispensation foretold future events; but prophesying under the New Testament dispensation is to speak as man of our women do, under the influence and baptism of the Holy Spirit. I read I Timothy, 3:12, "Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well." It may be said the term "Man" and the pronoun "he" and "him" are used in a generic sense and include women as well. But here I believe we are taught that the deacon is a man, and if married is to have but one wife. If women were ordained deacons there would be some mention of the fact, and directions as to husband and family.

Four years ago the general conference when it would more fully recognize women in the gospel work, found it necessary to put a new chapter into the Discipline and had it read, "IF

any brother or sister feels called of God," etc. I cannot see that the New Testament teaches or gives any warrant for the ordination of women.

G.P. Wilson (Minnesota and N. Iowa): While it was true that there had been prophetesses, etc. yet there was no evidence of any woman having been divinely appointed to or sent on missions of authority. There is no objection to women laboring and helping man in the work of the Lord. She was given man for a help-meet. The question is not right but of proper sphere and relation; hence the idea of inferiority does not enter into the case. But the question is, Is woman called to office and responsibilities of the ministry in the same sense as man is? The Bible makes a distinction. And in interpreting scripture we must remember that influence is not always evidence, especially when it stand against positive statement. Now if women were ordain prophets in the same sense which men were, why is that there prophecies do not have the same prominence and importance of place in the scriptures and the prophecies of men do. Does the term *elder* as addressed to the men and women in the Bible refer to the office of ordination, or simply to their age in the grace or service? It is not then to be inferred that if Junia was of note among the apostles, it was because she was accorded this distinction, without ordination as we now accord it to William Taylor?

J.W. Hamilton (Ohio): It appears from the reading of Romans 16: that the original translators were not fully convinced as to the correctness of the Greek Testament concerning Phebe being a deaconess, as is shown by their placing the term "deaconess" in the margin. Again the late revisers of the original translation show by placing the word "deaconess" in the margin that they were in doubt concerning the correctness of the Greek Testament declaration that Phebe was a "deaconess." It is unfair to say that prejudice alone keep men from taking the side of those who are in favor of ordaining women. There is not, as I believe, a man in this conference who is opposed to women preaching. It is not a question of whether woman is man's equal; whether she is a slave, or whether she shall preach, but whether she shall be *ordained*. I am opposed to the insinuation thrown out here that the Free Methodist church looks upon woman as a slave and desires to keep her under bondage. The Free Methodist church believes in women being *free*. The speeches of those in favor of ordaining woman would make the world around us believe that we as a church would keep woman in a state or condition of barbarism. We do not desire any such things. We are not here to revise the scriptures, which will certainly have to be done before we can make them teach that woman should be ordained. If we accept the argument as mad on this floor that we are, in the question pending, to listen to the Greek then we should have the Greek interpretation to may other positions we take as a church. What do scriptures, as we have them, say in reference to the question in hand? I cannot accept the mere interpretation of one or two men as to the Greek when so many equally wise men have failed to say that Phebe was a deaconess. If we are going to revise the scriptures let us appoint a number of persons to do that work. The arguments in favor of ordaining women are largely made up of sympathetic expressions and not of sentences fraught with weighty arguments, relevant to the question at hand. I believe in keeping to the question; and so not waste time. No doubt every member of this conference has his mind made up as to how he will vote on this question. Why did not Jesus ordain women among the twelve? Why did not the apostles ordain a woman among those whom they sent out to preach the gospel? In as much as I fail to fin any place in the scripture where women were ordained I shall vote against the proposition until I can find such a declaration.

W.M.B. Colt (Central Illinois): He said he had no hope from a critical literary interpretation of the scriptures. Great stress has been put upon the word permanency as applied to the call to the ministry, as though there were no permanency until the laying on of hands. But the call of God to preach the gospel is always permanent. In the case of Phoebe he read from an old volume the following:

“These women,” says he, “were more fervent than lions in their zeal, partaking freely with the apostles in the labors of preaching;” and of Phebe whom our translator calls a servant of the church which is at Chenchrea, and thereby has made some thing she was only one who looked after the church in some inferior office; - “Behold,” says Chrysostom, “how he honors her, for he remembers her before all the rest, and calls her sister: ‘I commend unto you Phebe our sister, who is a minister of the church at Chenchrea;’ ‘tis not a thing of small moment to be called the sister of Paul. He adds also dignity in calling her minister.”

(Chrysostom, referred to as the archbishop of Constantinople, AD 349-407)

And Theodoret *(a Christian theologian, author and bishop in Syria, AD 393-457)*, almost a contemporary with Chrysostom, about three hundred years after the apostles, says, “The fame of Phoebe was spread throughout the world; and that she was known not only to the Romans and the Greeks, but also to the Barbarians.”

Chrysostom and Theodoret also take great notice of Junia, mentioned to the apostles salutation. In our translation it is “Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles.” By the word kinsmen one would have taken Junia not to have been a woman, but a man, and no doubt she passed for such ever since the translation was made; but Chrysostom and Theodoret, who were both of them Greeks and consequently knew their mother tongue better than our translators, say she was a woman. It should therefore have been translated, “Salutations, Andronicus and Junia, my kinfolk.” “This,” says Chrysostom, “seems to be spoken in their praise; this is a magnificent crown, a notable testimony; again he extols them; “who are of note among the apostles;” that they were apostles is a thing, but consider what a great encomium it is to be best note among them. They were of note for their labors, and good works. Oh, wonderful! How great was the heavenly wisdom of that woman Junia who was thought worthy of the appellation of the apostles.

“It was,” says Theodoret, speaking of Andronicus and Junia, “a great thing they were apostles, especially since Junia was a woman, but much more so that they were of note among the apostles.”

As to the prophesying of Phoebe baptizing her own coverts, he thought a little woman would look as well baptizing a large man, as a little man baptizing a large woman. He deprecated what he thought was a sign of getting in the way of woman’s usefulness.

The general conference voted on the question of ordaining women. The Roberts resolution was lost by a vote of 38 to 40 nays. – Terrill

The Meaning of the Vote – It is not for those who favor the ordination of women to be discouraged, nor for any who are opposed to it, if there be such, to glory in its defeat. The vote Wednesday evening was not decisive of that question. There was involved with it other questions, that distracted the minds of some, and caused others to apparently vote contrary to their pronounced positions. There are some among us who believe there is nothing natural or scriptural in the way of ordination of women. But they hold that we are not prepared for it

until the church as a body has expressed its opinion on the subject; and they therefore favor its being submitted to the annual conferences; and because the ordination of women is such a wide departure from the custom of the church universal, they think it best that more than a majority should decide it. For these reasons, though favorable to the main proposition, they could not vote for the Roberts resolution. Again, there are those who favor the largest liberty to women in Christian work, but who doubt the propriety of ordaining them, and who voted for the resolution lest the general conference should put itself on the record as opposed to women preaching. If the friends of ordination had accepted the preamble and resolution, that favored submitting the question to the annual conferences for three-fourths vote, it would have been adopted almost unanimously. The friends of the measure made the mistake of asking too much at this time. – Terrill

- As expected the discussion of the ordination of women drew out a large audience of members of the Free Methodist and other churches. The interest in the question was most intense. The issue is two-fold: 1. Shall woman be ordained? 2. Shall a majority vote of this general conference, and a majority vote of all the annual conferences, or shall it require a two-thirds vote of the members of all the annual conferences to settle the question? It is claimed by those who advocate the ordination of women that it should be granted as a matter of right. It is objected by some that the women of the church do not generally ask for it; others that there is no occasion for it. Miss Fannie Sparkes, a returned missionary from India, of the Methodist Episcopal church, related to the writer the following incident, as an illustration of the necessity of the ordination of women. The wife of a converted high-caste Brahmin in India was held back from public confession of Christ for a long time by the dread of being baptized by a man, although it would be by sprinkling. Her religious training had been, that to be touched by a man but her own husband would be wrong, not only to cause her to lose her caste, but to be despised by her people as having compromised her virtue. At last she overcame this sufficiently to kneel for baptism; but as the minister's hand was about to be placed upon her head, she sprang to her feet like a frightened faun and fled from the congregation. This occurred several times on as many occasions, when finally, as she was about to spring to her feet again. Miss Sparkes put her hand on the woman's head, and the officiating minister laid his on hers., and thus Miss Sparkes assisted in the baptism. – Terrill General Conference Dailies Oct. 16, 1890 notes.

Speech of Mrs. Clara Wetherald

Tuesday Oct. 14, 1890 at the May Street Church, printed in Oct. 22

General Conference Daily (preached the night before the debate on ordaining women)

Text: 1 Cor. 14:34, 35 "Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak," etc.

I see more than one reason why this text should be preached from to-night. As a church we believe in living up to the Bible. We believe that God intends something by every word in the holy scripture. We know that some say, "You can't live up to the whole of the Bible, for there is the admonition about women keeping silence in the churches. Now, if you are going

to keep one part why not keep all of it? Why not live up to this as well as any other command?" Now there are only two passages that seem to forbid women speaking in the church, and yet if you say anything about living up to the word of God they will point to these passages and say, "Why don't you live up to these?"

I once spoke to a woman on the subject of pride, and she told me that she had searched the Bible and had only found 144 passages speaking that subject; and yet with all this said against pride the church will hardly conform to the plainness in dress; yet one or two passages are sufficient in the minds of many upon this subject. But I was not going to preach on the subject of pride.

Paul was the best educated of all the apostles and he was well versed in scripture and knew these facts, and he would not present a doctrine or standard contrary to these passages quoted, and that would make him contradict himself.

I pity any woman who is down on her own sex. I suppose there are some; God help them! Then on the day of Pentecost you know how they did. They thought they were all drunk. I suppose they meant the women, too. They were partakers of the same blessing; for in Acts 1:14, after naming the apostles it says, "These all continued with one accord," etc. Now Peter, as a big coward as he had been, stood up and told what God had done. I should have thought he would have been afraid to have stood up before all that multitude, women and all, but he did.

I should have thought St. Paul would have a hard time there where there were so many women, if he opposed them so much.

Then notice what is said of Aquila and Priscilla. They lived according to St. Paul's advice, learned in silence, etc. – but when the great Appollos came, as it is spoken of in Acts 18:24,25, who was mighty in the scriptures, but knew only the baptism of John. Priscilla and Aquilla heard him, or asking questions, or debating as Paul condemned those Corinthian women for doing, and thus causing a disturbance and a public broil, they took him aside and expounded unto him the way of the Lord more perfectly, and he afterward became the great Apollos spoken of by Paul.

And then you will find in Philippians the following from St. Paul: "I entreat thee also, true yoke-fellow, help those women which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other of my fellow laborers, whose names are in the book of life." So he did not only hinder them but he helped them. For God's sake don't hinder these sisters but help them. I wish St. Paul were down here to exhort a little now. Listen to him as he refers to Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchrea. He says: "Receive her in the Lord," etc. He has also told them how they should regulate their appearance while preaching. He says in the 15th verse that her hair is given her for a covering, and this is the reason why I don't have mine shingled.

Then look at the case of the woman at the well. As soon as she was converted she went to the city and told the men, and many believed on him through her testimony. Then the women at the sepulcher – they didn't run away as the men did, they sat there weeping for their Lord. Mary was looking down into the grave and Jesus asked her what she was weeping for. She supposing him to be the gardener said: "Tell me where thou hast laid him and I will take him away." Oh, she felt such love for Christ that she couldn't leave. He speaks to her – "Mary" – and she cries out, "Rabboni" – that is to say, "Master": and Jesus said, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended," etc. And he honored her by making her the first preacher of the resurrection, and by preaching the first resurrection sermon.

Now if it means that women are to keep silence, then they are not to sing, speak or pray. But did you ever know that in the same chapter there is a passage that commands the men to keep silence also? He goes on to tell them what these public assemblies are. He says, "When we come together, every one hath a psalm, hath a doctrine," etc. and it was all confusion. One was seeking to have one way and another way. Paul wanted to regulate this matter. If there was no one to interpret then let them all keep silence, - let him as well as her keep silence in the church. One who had the gift of tongues might get up and blubber away, but who could tell what was said? The spirit of the prophets is subject to the prophets. Here he gives the man the right to disturb, interrupt, or dispute, but let the women not do this, but keep silence. For it was not permitted for them to speak in this way! Dr. Clarke says: "The yoke not having been long broken from off their necks they had abused their liberty by contradicting and asking improper questions to be propounded in the public assembly." But you are not doing so here to-night, for you are not contradicting - only saying amen and sanctioning what is already spoken. But does not Paul say, "If they would know anything let them ask their husbands at home?" But certainly it cannot be that he would refute what he had just said. He was a man of too good sense to do that; but he would not permit a woman to dispute the church. May God save us from disputing or causing unnecessary disturbance in the public assembly. The time has been when woman did not occupy the position God designed that she should, and only as the light prevails does she arise to her noble and exalted place. I pray that she may never misuse her privileges. God only knows how much opposition is met by a woman in her work of souls. Only those do know who have passed through it. It required consecration for me to answer to the call God gave me in this direction. I had never heard of a woman who preached, and supposed the only way to work for God was as a preacher's wife. I therefore gave up marrying a farmer to whom I was engaged and married a minister of the gospel that I might give my life to the work of God. God has showed his approval of my course by giving me hundreds of souls as seals of my ministry.