

Women Preachers

Considerable discussion has been recently taking place on the question of Women preaching in Church with an ultimate view of admittance to Holy Orders. The movement which advocates this proposition arose by perverting privileges given to women by the Bishop of London and the Bishop of Chelmsford with regard to the National Mission. Such a perversion, as their lordships confess 'has surely been the work of the devil' and it has caused them to withdraw the sanction of their original permission, viz., that during the National Mission they would allow women to speak to their sisters in the House of God, on religious matters relating peculiarly to the trials of woman's life - provided the speakers did not speak from the pulpit, lectern or chancel-steps.

Using this privilege as a lever to advance the Woman's Movement, a certain section of women who up to the time of the outbreak of the War were advocating the burning of Churches, and profanely interrupting Divine Service at Westminster Abbey and other Houses of God, now want to usurp the sacred office of the Ministry, to promulgate their wild theories. Knowing that they would alienate themselves from public sympathy were they to continue their attacks on the Government during the war, they now turn to the Church and try to use that as a cloak for their purpose.

Although not surprising from the nature of their previous conduct, it is nevertheless truly sad to think they can attempt this at a time when brave lads are giving up their lives for them. This is decidedly hitting the Church 'in the back' because most of the bravest sons of the Church are now at the Front and unable to raise a protest. As a chaplain writes 'Many men now serving in the Army are sadly surprised that any such break in Catholic usage should be permitted at a time when many Communicants are in the Army and therefore unable to raise an official protest, as they say they would have done had they been in their parishes.'

Yes, the devil has many devices for trying to ruin the Church of Christ, and surely no more subtle device has been brought forward than this one. It is not a question of equality of the sexes at all. It is a question of obedience to the laws and principles advocated by Christ Himself, as to who are to be the officials of the Church.

The twelve Apostles were men, not chosen hurriedly, but after Christ had spent a whole night in prayer (S. Luke VI, 12.13.). If our Lord had thought it advisable to have women as officials on the foundation of His Church, He would surely after such careful consideration, have chosen some. But no! Our blessed Lord with His forethought could see what was best for His Church, and for us to attempt to supersede His plans and methods, would be presuming against God Himself.

All true sons and daughters then of the Catholic Church must sternly and resolutely set their faces against such an innovation as this. It does not require any special power of mind to see that if this proposal were accepted it would cause a tremendous division in the Church as well as confusion and scandal.

We do not for a moment think such an innovation in the least degree probable, nevertheless all those who are loyal to the principles of the Church should reject even such a dangerous suggestion. It is certainly gratifying to know that while many women are in sympathy with the Woman's Movement most of them have a strong aversion to women taking part in the Sacred Ministry.

There are many outside the Church who are always willing to lend their support to anything that would bring the Church into ridicule, and that of course is why any movement can always find supporters who are ever ready to introduce the deadly sin of schism into the Church, either by innovation or by non-conforming to the principles of the Catholic and Apostolic Church.

We can read of 'Priestesses' in the profane religions of Greece and Rome where shameful things took place, and we can read of women leaders in several modern professing religious bodies, but as regarding the Holy Catholic Church as St Paul says of all such contentious matters, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians XI. 16, 'We have no such custom, neither the Churches of God.'

(This article, from the St George's Headstone Parish Magazine of September 1916, was written by the Rev F C Baker, Assistant Curate of St George's 1915-1924.)