

# The Religious World

## A Valuable Heresy Trial

From a Special Correspondent

A good example of the value of Councils to Congregational churches may be seen in the consociation council held in Madison, Conn., March 24 and 25. The church in Madison is nearly two hundred years old, and has always been regarded as conservative, especially under the pastorate of the Rev. J. A. Gallup, who was installed in 1865. He became pastor emeritus just before the installation of the Rev. William T. Brown in 1894. Mr. Brown was still pursuing his studies in Yale Divinity School, but his ability and personal qualities made him very popular. There was from the first a small element of opposition to his teaching, and this grew as the teaching developed, until nearly one-third of the church were disaffected. As might be expected, there was great bitterness of feeling between the enthusiastic admirers of the pastor and the minority. In fact, it was generally believed that the breach was too broad for any possible reconciliation.

No one can remember when there has been a heresy trial in Connecticut before among the Congregational churches. Even the case of Horace Bushnell never came to an actual trial. But the aggrieved party felt compelled in conscience to have a ruling on the question, and there was no other way to get it except by a council. If a trial must be had, the church thought that it had better be by a mutual than by an ex-parte council. The New Haven East Consociation, to which the church belongs, was therefore asked to call a council, including several additional churches in and about New Haven, to examine Mr. Brown upon charges of heresy upon the Atonement, the Incarnation, and the authority of the Bible. The council was a large one, and represents fairly churches and theological thought of the neighborhood of New Haven.

Testimony as to the effect of this ministry upon the religious life of the church showed that, while some had withdrawn for conscientious reasons, the loss had been more than made good both in numbers and in the spiritual life of the community. The charges were supported by quotations from Mr. Brown's sermons, lectures, and chapel addresses during the entire period of his ministry. Some of these had been preserved in note-books, but most of them were given in substance from memory.

Mr. Brown's defense was a denial of the charges, supported by a paper nearly two hours long, giving corrections to the quotations and the context in which they occurred, together with a frank, full statement of his views upon the points in question. In several cases he quoted from the instruction received at Yale in support of his views. The paper was very able and thoroughly irenic in spirit, and was accepted on the part of all as an honest and unreserved exposition of his views. It represented the type of thought commonly known as the New Theology, but in a moderate form and without any cranky and unbalanced notions. He exalts supremely the living Christ for the life of to-day, believing profoundly in the divinity and even in the deity of Christ. His doctrine of the Atonement is more than the Moral Influence theory, having a distinctly objective element, but he repudiates the Governmental theory. He reads the Bible by the historical method, and accepts the established results of historical criticism. His mode of presenting truth is unconventional, intensely suggestive and stimulating, and consequently it naturally produces a reactionary effect upon many minds not familiar with his view of truth.

The Council found the charges not proven; their finding is, however, so important in its general bearing on the "liberty of prophesying" that it seems desirable to give it as nearly in full as your space will allow:

From the first settlement of New England her Congregational churches have always insisted on the importance of an educated ministry. Being a denomination of Christians without a prescribed form of doctrinal belief, the liberty of each church has made it a matter of necessity that it should have a pastor and teacher able to expound the Word of God, as it is found in the only acknowledged authority for our churches, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. For this purpose it was required that they be learned men, acquainted with the original languages in which these Scriptures were composed, and able to tell their people of the historical setting and circumstances in the light of which each of the sacred books is to be read and understood.

To guard against the dangers of false teaching in these and all respects, the rights of every member of the church were protected by his privilege of appeal to a consociation or council of neighboring churches, should he believe the views taught by his pastor to be erroneous. It is a right to be dearly cherished, for without it no orderly and definite system of Congregational faith and worship could exist.

A large number of the members of the church in Madison have taken this mode of satisfying themselves whether the teachings of their pastor are or are not warranted by the Scriptures, as interpreted by the churches of our order.

Under the usages of our denomination a decision by a proper consociation

and council is the ultimate and final authority, so far as there is any authority superior to that of the individual church and the individual members of it.

The Congregational ministry of the present day would not be true to the principles of their fathers if they did not follow them in endeavoring to read the Bible in the best light that the closest study and highest learning can give. The result of their labors and of Biblical study on the part of Christian scholars in all denominations has been, during the last quarter of a century, to give a clearer meaning to much which had before been obscure; to remove the foundation of many of the common arguments of infidelity; and to elevate our conceptions of the nature of God and the duty of man.

The education for the ministry which the pastor of the church at Madison has received has made him acquainted with these views of truth, and he has naturally desired to share them with his people.

They differ in some points from those that were formerly entertained in many New England pulpits; but the founders of the Congregational Church were always ready to avow their hope that more light would yet break forth from His holy word. Liberty of conscience was never more fully claimed as the right of every man than in one of the articles of the Saybrook Platform, under which this church was originally consociated.

"God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in anything contrary to His Word, or not contained in it; so that to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commands out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience; and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also."—Confession of Faith, Chap. XXI. Sec. II.

After giving their counsel in some special respects to the parties involved in the controversy—valuable to them, but not important to the general public—the Council proceed as follows:

The Council, after careful examination of these alleged points of doctrinal divergence, having come to the conclusion that the charges as made by the minority are not sustained, express their belief and expectation that this judgment on their part will have decisive weight with all whose minds have been thus perplexed and troubled. We desire explicitly to bear record that these persons have followed the proper mode of making their protest against what has appeared to them to be the erroneous teachings of their pastor, and that they have conscientiously sought to protect what they conceived to be the faith and best interests of this church; we now advise and urge them, with the same conscientiousness and devotion, to return to their full privileges and duties in this church; and, seeking to divest their minds of previous misgivings and possible misunderstandings, to listen anew to the teachings of the pulpit in the earnest desire to receive such positive and vital truths as may be found in the sermons of their pastor; and should any expressions of their pastor hereafter seem to them to be unfamiliar and perplexing, to seek in friendly and repeated conferences with him for further light and happier mutual understanding. We earnestly urge the minority to make this effort to meet their pastor in this attitude and desire, bearing in mind the necessity which from time to time he may feel to be imposed upon him of ministering to other minds in other needs than their own, and remembering that the new doubts of a new age may best be met by new methods of Christian teaching and fuller knowledge of God's Word.

The Council, having sustained the majority in its support of the ministry of the pastor of this church, do therefore with the more urgency advise them to pay kindly respect to the tender scruples of any who may have differed from them in words of doctrine, and in all possible ways to endeavor to render this church of their common covenant and devotion, on account of this trial of their faith, more than ever before a home of mutual trust, forbearance, and helpfulness for all its members.

The Council kindly bear testimony to the admirable spirit and candor, as well as to the clearness and ability with which the Rev. Mr. Brown has presented his views in their hearing; and we also witness to his overmastering sense of the truth of his message of the divine Christ for the life of the world. The Council recognize the difficulty which confronts any intelligent and scholarly ministry of speaking the truths which may be helpful in lifting some minds immersed in modern doubt up into clearer light, without at the same time disturbing other minds happily settled in familiar ways of faith; and we would therefore place on record our conviction that the needs of both these conditions of mind should be borne unceasingly as the burden of the ministry of the Word; and we consequently counsel and confidently expect that the pastor of this church will seek, in all possible ways consistent with his own inner fidelity to truth, to make his teaching here a ministry of reconciliation for all in this church and congregation, that those who have been disturbed and estranged by their natural interpretation of some unguarded expressions of his may be led to understand him better, and appreciate the constructive aim and Christian loyalty of his ministry as a whole.

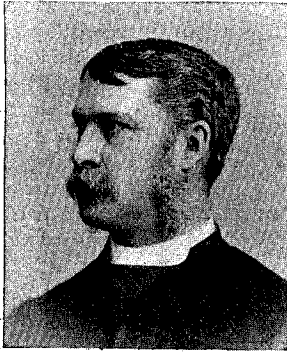
The Council, having come to this result, render to all parties this admonition and advice in the firm belief that there is nothing in the differences which have been laid before them which cannot be removed, and which should not be forgotten, in the exercise of mutual confidence and forbearance; and we would express our earnest hope that the future of this ancient church, and the further ministry of this young brother, already beloved of many, may prove to be filled with the fruits of grace, love, and peace.

The reading of the result of the Council to the church was followed by some addresses to the people. A few manly, generous, and well-chosen words of acceptance were spoken by the pastor, the pastor emeritus, and the chairman of the minority. One member of the Council read from the "Bonnie Brier-Bush" the reconciliation of Lachlan Campbell and his young pastor. The hearts of all were melted into common sympathy and Christian charity. Before the session closed there had been many pathetic scenes of reconciliation and hand-shaking. The assurances were ample from the leading spirits of all parties that the animosities should cease and unity be restored.

The minority were reassured by the Council as to the orthodoxy of the pastor, and in that assurance were able to rise above the passions which their doubts had engendered. It is difficult to see how any other ecclesiastical device or procedure could have accomplished the desired result so directly and satisfactorily as this Council has done. No one who saw this accomplished will again speak lightly of the results of Congregational councils.

The decision has far more than a local importance, because it

is a specific declaration that the New Theology comes within the limits of the faith commonly held by evangelical Congregational churches and taught in the Scriptures. Moreover, this judgment is rendered by an authority than which there is none higher recognized in the Congregational order; and it is rendered with great unanimity, by men representing all shades of theological belief.



Bishop Satterlee

On Wednesday, March 25, in Calvary Church, New York, the Rev. Henry Y. Satterlee, D.D., was elevated to the episcopate of the new diocese of Washington. The ceremony was an imposing one. About five hundred men took part in the procession, and of course the church was crowded. The presiding prelate was Bishop Coxe, of Western New York. The sermon was preached by Bishop F. D. Huntington, and the Bishop-elect was presented for consecration to the presiding Bishop by Bishops Dudley and Leonard.

After the service a reception and luncheon for the new Bishop was held in Calvary Parish House. In the evening the first episcopal act of the Bishop was the confirmation of a class of one hundred and twenty-five persons whom he, as the rector of Calvary Church, had prepared. Although a decided Churchman, Bishop Satterlee is liberal-minded and tolerant. He has not hesitated to preach in other than Episcopal pulpits, and his relation, not only with the ministry of the Protestant Episcopal Church, but of other churches in and about New York, has won for him many earnest and loving friends. Bishop Satterlee was one of the founders of the League of Catholic Unity, and is one of the most aggressive and earnest advocates of the unity of the Christian Church. In his new position he will be able to do much, both by teaching and example, for the cause which he has so loyally championed.

#### Armenia and the Evangelical Alliance

The Evangelical Alliance of the United States of America was founded for the purpose, among other objects, of promoting religious liberty and preventing persecution for conscience' sake. It has carried on this work for nearly fifty years, and acquired influence and recognition throughout the world. It is due to this influence and position that it has just received a solemn and impressive appeal from the whole force of American missionaries at Harpoot, imploring sympathy and moral influence in behalf of the persecuted Armenian Christians. The Alliance has taken immediate measures to secure favorable action from the Sultan through the Government of the United States and the various branches of the Alliance throughout the world. It has also published in full and distributed copies of the letter from the missionaries, believing that it will awaken pity for the persecuted, and aid in forming a public opinion which will compel a speedy cessation of these persecutions and the redress of injuries which have been inflicted upon the unhappy people. We have not space to publish the letter in full, but we give our readers a few extracts from it: "The plundering and burning of houses and shops, the massacre of thousands of inoffensive, helpless, unresisting victims, and the terrible suffering which has come in the wake of this desolating flood, is beyond the power of the imagination to conceive. Even we who are in the midst of it cannot take it in. It is too vast, too awful for the human mind to comprehend." "We see few newspapers, and everything relating to Turkey is torn out of those admitted into the country, so we know little of what is being done in the world outside for the rectification of these wrongs which have been inflicted upon the Armenians, except that large contributions are made for the relief of the destitute, who are numbered by the hundreds of thousands. Does the Christian world know that this has been, and is, a clearly defined religious crusade? It is part of the Moslem creed that men of all other creeds are inferior, and the Christian races in the country have always been treated as such; and now that the Armenians have sought for some equality of rights, for greater freedom from oppression and injustice, and for the protection of person and property, the Turks have sought to crush them. . . . They have been killed because it is a work of merit to remove unbelievers from the face of the earth." "It is estimated that within the limits of their mission field more than 15,000 persons, perhaps 20,000, were killed during the recent massacres, and many of the bodies of the victims were horribly mutilated." "Another element in this crusade . . . is to compel men to accept the Mohammedan faith. . . . In this crusade Christians, even before they were plundered, often voluntarily offered all their property on condition that their lives might be spared, but after being despoiled of their goods they were told that the only condition on which they could be spared was to accept the Moslem faith." "It is estimated

that there have been more than 15,000 forced conversions to Islam in this district." "The physical suffering about us, the suffering from cold through insufficient clothing and from lack of bedding and fuel, touch our hearts most deeply; but multitudes of these poor people say that this suffering is nothing in comparison with the agony of spirit which they experience in living such a life of hypocrisy and in apparent denial of the Saviour who bought them. Many of them declare that they would welcome death joyfully, even if accompanied with torture, if their families could first die, or if they could be sure that they would be saved from the clutches of the Turks and Kurds." "Since the Inquisition the world has seen no such persecution as the present. Christianity is threatened with extinction in the land of its birth, and in the very presence of the Christian world." "It is not as Armenians we have suffered, but because we are Christians." "We do not ask for armed intervention, but for the exercise of such a moral power by the nations as shall free the poor Christians from this intolerable yoke."

The Rev. Charles H. Parkhurst, D.D., recently preached a sermon on "The Modern Prophet," which has been published by request; and the Rev. Charles F. Dole, pastor of the Unitarian church at Jamaica Plain, Boston, has recently published an article on "The Training of Candidates for the Ministry." The two in certain important respects are much alike. The main position of Dr. Parkhurst is that Paul was the prophet that he was because he had had a vision of God. He spoke as one who had seen and experienced, rather than as one who had learned about God in the schools. He was not a product of theological training, but of a profound spiritual experience; and the inference is that the preacher who will do the best work to-day will be the man who has the profoundest experience of the reality of God and of the Christian redemption. What is needed is seers rather than scholars. He does not minimize the value of careful scholarship, but exalts the importance of the religious experience. From a different point of view and by an entirely different method, Mr. Dole comes to much the same conclusion. He pleads, not for less thorough theological training, but for that which is broader and more sympathetic with life. He would do away with the theological seminary as such; would have students for the ministry, if they had to choose, know science and history, especially modern history, rather than Hebrew and Greek and the records-exhausting controversies of the early Church. He would have professors of theology in the universities, because theology is the highest of all sciences, and would have candidates for the ministry trained in the universities where they will be daily compelled to bring their theories to the test of the life through which they are passing. His point is that religion is a living reality; that in order to preach it ministers must know it as it is to-day in its relations to the life of the world. He does not make light of scholarship, but pleads for a broader scholarship. He claims that other men may be specialists, but that the preacher must know how to apply the truths of religion to all the various departments of life. Both Dr. Parkhurst and Mr. Dole agree in their emphasis upon what possibly we may call "the continuous revelation" and the necessity of individual experience, and in their assertion that knowledge of what is occurring in these days is more important to the minister of religion than of Greek and Hebrew and of the interminable debates over long-forgotten theological theories. Both of these pamphlets are suggestive and helpful. There is danger, no doubt, that a certain class of young men without patience for thorough work may be tempted to use them in justification of some easy way into the Gospel ministry. Such should remember that the lines of thought emphasized by these two writers carefully carried out would require quite as much and as long training as the usual course in our theological seminaries. They are not pleas for less work, but strong appeals for a more diligent, comprehensive, and thorough preparation of those who would be religious teachers.

The Free Church Congress of Great Britain was organized in 1892. It is composed of most of the Nonconformist denominations of that country. Its inspiring spirit and great leader is the Rev. Dr. Alexander Mackennal, whom many Americans will remember as the Secretary of the International Congregational Council of 1891. The fourth annual meeting of the Congress has just been held in Nottingham, England. About nine hundred delegates and guests were in attendance, and the number would have been far larger had there been a building in the city suitable for larger gatherings. The object of this Congress is to unite the various Nonconformist bodies in the work which all have in common, and especially for more efficient co-operation in the cause of Disestablishment. There is a National Congress, and the whole country is organized into smaller "Nonconformist Councils" representing counties and cities. The body is steadily growing, and it represents quite as many of the Christians of Great Britain as the Anglican "Convoca-