

The Religious World

A Noteworthy Conference

The wish for a closer fellowship between the Congregational churches and those of the Christian connection seems to be in process of realization. On the 14th and 15th of this month, at Piqua, Ohio, a joint Conference, consisting of representatives of two local Conferences of Congregationalists and two of Christians, gave to this movement a strong impetus. The Christian church at Piqua entertained the Conference, and a good delegation from both denominations was in attendance. Two presiding officers, the Rev. J. B. Weston, D.D., of the Christian Biblical School at Stamfordville, N. Y., and the Rev. Washington Gladden, divided the direction of the assembly between them, and the secretaries were the Rev. J. J. Summerbell, D.D., editor of the "Herald of Gospel Liberty," and the Rev. R. S. Lindsay, of Columbus. The opening sermon was delivered by the Congregational president, upon the mission of the Church as the promoter of unity and peace in society. Such questions as "Are Congregationalists Christians?" "Are Christians Congregationalists?" and "How Can we Help Each Other?" and such topics as "The Essentials of Christianity," "Converging Lines," "Unity a Product of Life," "Unity a Condition of Growth," and the gains of unity in the nineteenth and in the twentieth centuries, were discussed in admirable papers and addresses, and the voluntary speaking was extremely vigorous and effective. The spirit of the whole meeting was the very best. From the beginning to the end not one discordant note was struck. The purpose of all seemed to be to find a way of closer fellowship and more practical co-operation. The fact of the essential unity of the two bodies was made so plain that a wayfaring man could not help seeing it. The only obstacle in the way of the complete unification of the two bodies appears to be the question of name; and there were few who were inclined to put emphasis upon this. No attempt was made, however, to secure organic unity. Such action would have exceeded the powers of the local bodies represented, and it was the unanimous feeling that the unity ought to come as the product of life, and not as the result of any well-contrived agreements. The Conference unanimously resolved that meetings similar to this with a larger constituency should be arranged for in the future, and appointed a committee to take the matter in charge. It also recommended that local Conferences of either body should take pains to invite to their meetings members of the other living in their neighborhood; that, when practicable, the local Conferences of the two bodies should be held at the same time and place, and joint sessions arranged for; that fellowship be promoted by exchange of pulpits; and that the home mission boards of the two bodies be requested to confer for the maintenance of comity and co-operation.

A Good Union Work

One form of Christian activity which knows no division into orthodox and heterodox in Massachusetts is what is called "The Convention of Congregational Ministers." It has issued its annual appeal in behalf of its charitable fund. The income of this fund it distributes, with such additional sums as may be intrusted to it, to the widows and unmarried daughters of the Congregational ministers in Massachusetts who died without pastoral settlements. About thirty such persons are receiving assistance. Last year the amount which could be given each one was only \$34. The committees are anxious to lift it to \$100, and to do this they need to have the income considerably increased. The appeal is made to both Trinitarian and Unitarian churches, which for years have united in this work. On the committee we see the names of such a Congregationalist as Dr. Alexander Mackenzie, and such a Unitarian as Dr. E. E. Hale. The treasurer of the fund is the Rev. Henry F. Jenks, of Canton, Mass. Are there not other ways in which not only these churches but all others could co-operate in what surely should be regarded as common work?

Professor H. P. Smith and the Cincinnati Presbytery

The "Evangelist" of April 16 contains a courteous and generous-spirited article by the Rev. Rollin A. Sawyer, D.D., in which he makes an appeal to the Cincinnati Presbytery to rescind its action in regard to Professor Henry Preserved Smith. Dr. Sawyer says the sentiment, in brief, is this: The trial was hasty and impassioned, and the sentence was on something which Professor Smith was presumed to represent rather than upon himself. The vote by which sentence was given does, not to-day represent the judgment of the Presbytery nor of the Church at large. Why, then, should it be suffered to stand? He then goes on to show that the Presbytery has the initiative; that the fact that judgment was affirmed by Synod and Assembly does not take from the Presbytery the privilege of reversing the sentence. He then

shows that the confidence of the members of the Presbytery of Cincinnati in Professor Smith is unimpaired and freely confessed; that they have urged him to accept a certificate of good standing to be taken to a Congregational church; he shows that the Professor is believed and trusted everywhere; and that his friends in the Presbytery of Cincinnati who are ready to move for a reversal of his sentence, if not in the majority in the Presbytery, surely have the majority of the people of God with them. The article then shows that the feeling throughout the Church is in favor of the action suggested. Dr. Sawyer says: "The good sense of our whole Church demands a change. It would hail such action by the Presbytery of Cincinnati as would show a consciousness of the presence and rights of their brethren." The article is written in the peculiarly strong and vigorous style characteristic of the author. He speaks as a Presbyterian. We have no doubt, however, that in his appreciation of Professor Henry P. Smith he voices the sentiment not only of the members of his own denomination, but of most Christian people who are familiar with the facts.

A Silver Jubilee

The Mount Vernon Church of Boston, of which the Rev. Samuel E. Herrick, D.D., is the pastor, has long been one of the landmarks of that city. In recent years it has been removed to the Back Bay, and a new church edifice has been erected. The twenty-fifth anniversary of the settlement of Dr. Herrick as its pastor was celebrated on the 11th of April. Dr. Herrick is one of the most eminent and scholarly as well as one of the manliest and truest men in the ministry of our country. He succeeded the Rev. Dr. Kirk in the pastorate of the Mount Vernon Church. The position was a difficult one, but the work has steadily advanced, and to-day is most encouraging. On Sunday, April 12, Dr. Kirk preached an anniversary sermon, and on the following day numbers of his friends gathered in Mount Vernon Hall to offer him and to the church their congratulations. Professor J. W. Churchill, of Andover, presided. Dr. George A. Gordon declared that the grandeur of Dr. Herrick's ministry lies in the fact that he has saved Mount Vernon Church from the doom that awaited it in its old location. Other speakers were Dr. A. S. Twombly, General F. A. Walker, of the Institute of Technology, Judge Chamberlain, of Chelsea, Dr. Alexander Mackenzie, Dr. Winchester Donald, of Trinity Church, Dr. Edward Everett Hale. The work which Dr. Herrick has accomplished is worthy of all the good words spoken concerning it. After listening to his friends, he said: "These lovely things you have been saying about me are not true, but that you should think them true touches me very deeply."

Dr. Herrick's Sermon

One part of Dr. Herrick's sermon on the anniversary mentioned above is particularly worthy of being reproduced in our columns. We quote from the report as it is given in the "Congregationalist": "The most masterly portion of the discourse, however, was his review of the changes in fundamental conceptions and ruling ideas which he believes have taken general and permanent possession of the thinking of mankind. Formerly men said: Christ died, therefore God is our Father. Our belief now is just the reverse: God is our Father, and therefore Christ died. In the same way men held that the Bible is an inspired book, and must therefore be accepted from beginning to end. Not so; the Bible is a book full of profound truths which appeal to the judgment and conscience, and therefore must be given of God, inspired. The ethical relations of God and man are as parent and child who stand with mutual rights and mutual duties, while the cross is the supreme expression of God's eternal altruism in relation to his children. Heaven and hell are here. 'I have been in both,' said the preacher, solemnly. With a new conception of the corporate unity of mankind, theology has become more altruistic, and a new theory of preaching, which holds that man must be a follower of Christ not merely to save himself, but to be a savior in his own place and measure, has been adopted of inward necessity."

Missionary Policy

The meeting of the Vermont Congregational Club recently held in Bennington had an open discussion on the subject of Missions, in which there was greater freedom of utterance than is common in the consideration of that subject. The Vermont Congregationalists have opened a door through which we imagine many others will soon pass. The question of missionary policy demands instant and serious consideration. The Rev. George W. Phillips, D.D., for instance, in the discussion at Bennington emphasized the duty of concentration upon fewer fields. That is important. The previous policy has been to extend as rapidly as possible, but Dr. Phillips argued that if one country could be evangelized at a time, in the end the work would be more swiftly accomplished. Finish Japan, China, and India, and then go on to other countries. But really there need be no undue concentration if there is only proper co-operation. This is the point which we would emphasize. The missionary treasures are embarrassed,

and many of them deeply in debt, and one reason is because there is so much competition between societies and so little co-operation. The missionary work in its present proportions could be administered with far greater economy both of men and means. If all individual societies would concentrate and co-operate, at least so far as to advise with one another as to what fields they should enter, there would be better service in all the fields, and few if any would long be without the leaven of missionary influence. One of the sad things of the present embarrassed condition of the treasuries of the various Boards is the fact that there has been so little mutual consultation as to how the work might be conducted more economically. Instead of that, a new force of agents has been put into the fields to raise the debts. Possibly no other course could have been followed, but we should like to see the experiment tried of all the American societies meeting with but one object in view, and that the consideration of the question how the whole work might be conducted with greater efficiency and economy. The result would be some very revolutionary changes, no doubt, but we believe that among them would be no contraction of salaries on the field and no reduction of appropriations. Does not denominationalism stand in the way of the wisest administration of the great and glorious missionary enterprises of the Church? And why should not the denominations co-operate?

Forward Movement in Australia

About thirty-five years ago the Wesley Church in Melbourne was erected, and was intended to be a kind of Methodist Cathedral. It was regarded as the finest church building of the denomination in the world. At the present time there are few that are finer. It is a Gothic structure of imposing proportions, and accommodates about two thousand people. As a church for the "classes" it was never a success. Recently, however, it has been utilized in the interests of a movement similar to that which is led by Hugh Price Hughes in the West End Mission of London. Its location is favorable, being near to the center of the city and also near to many of the worst localities. The need in that city is great for something which, in the best sense, shall be a forward movement. For this work the Rev. A. R. Edgar has been secured. He is a famous open-air preacher, and is said by the writer in the "Christian World," from which we take these facts, to be hated by the publicans, or saloon-keepers, more than any other man in Victoria. He is about six feet six inches in height, and as large every other way as he is physically. Under the new order the great building is thronged both winter and summer. The subjects considered are level to the comprehension of common people. Manifestation of approval is welcomed as in a public hall, and all are made to feel at home. About four hundred are enrolled as members of the "Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Club." The "Sisters of the People" are of great service in visitation. On Sunday evenings a brass band plays in front of the church, and sometimes marches round the neighborhood leading a procession to the church doors. Occasional stereopticon services are held, to the great delight of the people. Among the agencies used none render better results than what is known as the Sisters' Department. Four Sisters are in constant service. "One attends the police court daily to look after women and children who may be 'run in.' She also leads a large class, gives Christian instruction in a day-school, and visits among the sick and poor. Another looks after the converts who give in their names, and also speaks at evangelistic meetings. Another is employed in rescue work, living in a refuge for unfortunate women." In such ways these Sisters are proving themselves the true friends of the people. Another branch of work is the Relief Department, which uses a large warehouse as the center of its activity. There is a night shelter, for those who are out of work, in which are seventy beds, and any man, sober and destitute, can obtain one for the asking. Many are fed there, and it is a center of charitable work. The bakers and produce-dealers of the city have become so interested in this movement that they regularly contribute, and we read that "only once has a half-crown been spent in meat since the place was opened." These centers of the forward movement in London, Birmingham, Melbourne, and other places are more like the service originally rendered by Wesley and his followers than anything to be seen elsewhere in the world. The need of such a movement in Melbourne was as great as in London. It was far more sensible to utilize that great church for such a purpose than it would have been to sell the building and move the church to a neighborhood where it would be surrounded by the homes of the rich and well-to-do. The example could be followed with profit in many other cities.

Foreign Missions Again

The "Review of the Churches" for the month of April contains a Round Table Conference on the subject of a commission to examine into the way in which foreign mission work is conducted. The Conference is the outgrowth of a suggestion made at the Parliament of Religions. Among the writers is Mr. Arnold White,

who has traveled widely, and who is quite severe in his criticisms. "What we want to know," he says, "is whether it is worth while to spend another hundred millions sterling on Protestant missions as they are now conducted, or can we do better with the money?" He says: "We have spent seventy millions already, and are keeping up fifty-four societies at a cost of a million sterling a year." He thinks the public are not well informed as to the results of mission work as a whole. He says: "We have spent seventy millions sterling in teaching a lesson we have not begun to learn ourselves." By that he means to say that the churches at home have not reached the standard of the teaching of the missionaries abroad. Another writer is Dr. Cust, of the Indian Civil Service, who supports the views advanced by Mr. White. On the other side Mr. Eugene Stock, Secretary of the Church Missionary Society, and Mr. Wardlaw Thompson, of the London Missionary Society, defend the missionary policy with great earnestness. The former says that the character of the missionaries is steadily improving; that the annual expenditure of all Protestant missions is only equal to the cost of a single Cunarder. Mr. Thompson grants that in some respects the positions of missionaries are preferable to those who minister among the poorer classes at home, but claims that so far as that may be true it is a reflection on the home churches rather than on the foreign field. Most of the discussion concerns India, and is, as we said before, largely from the point of view of the Anglican missions. It has been our privilege to study mission work on other fields, and we are able to say that, however it may be in one or two lands, the statements of Mr. White and Dr. Cust are not true in all lands. The missionaries whom we have seen are devoted and self-sacrificing. Most of them could do better at home, if they were actuated by selfish motives. They are earnestly seeking the welfare of the people, and are tireless in preaching the Gospel. They live with the greatest frugality, and have proved their heroism in ways that do not need to be recounted.

Another Criticism

Another criticism of the same kind as that to which we have referred is in an article published in the "Far East" by Professor Ukita, of Japan. Like Dr. Cust, he arraigns the nations which are only nominally Christian for sending missionaries to the "heathen." If sending missionaries assumed that all the people in the lands from which they were sent were Christian, there would be an absurdity in the whole missionary enterprise; but the Christians from among whom missionaries are sent are equally faithful at home. They are tireless in the great cities and on the frontiers. Foreign missions are only one branch of the whole service. The theory of foreign missions is that the people must hear and know the Gospel before they can have the strongest motives for living righteous lives. We do not send missionaries to Japan because we are entirely Christian in the United States, but in order that Japan may know the Christian Saviour. The missionary enterprise in Japan and India is only a small part of what the Church is doing. It is easy for the Japanese professor and the English official to sneer at England and America as unchristian nations. No one knows what truth is in that statement better than the Christian people who are not relaxing their efforts at home because of what they are doing abroad; but America and England know the Gospel as some other nations do not, therefore missionaries are sent.

Brief Mention

Last week the Rev. W. H. Davis, D.D., formerly of the First Congregational Church of Detroit, was installed pastor of the Eliot Church in Newton, Mass. The church is one of the strongest suburban churches in New England, and its new pastor is a man who has been well tried in other fields of labor. During his ministry in Detroit a new and beautiful church edifice was erected and nearly eight hundred new members were received.

American and English Christians, among whom he is widely known, will sympathize with the Rev. Henry Loomis in the loss of his home at Yokohama by fire. Mr. Loomis is no longer a missionary of any Board; he represents the Bible Society in Japan. His denominational connections are with the Presbyterians, but almost all Christians who visit that Empire have received courtesies from his hands. His hospitality is large, and his position in the leading port of the nation gives him peculiar opportunities for meeting and greeting those who come from England and America. We extend to him our hearty sympathy.

The Rev. George Leon Walker, D.D., of Hartford, Conn., has been selected this year to deliver the course of lectures annually given at the Hartford Theological Seminary on the Carew foundation. Dr. Walker is well known for his historical studies, and his subject is "Some Phases of the Religious Life of New England, with Special Reference to Congregationalism." The titles of the individual lectures, with the dates on which they will be delivered, are as follows: (1) "The Religious Life of the Puritan Period" (approximate time, 1620-1660), on April 15; (2) "The Decline of Religious Feeling in New England" (approximate time, 1660-1735), on April 20; (3) "The Great Awakening and its Sequels" (approximate time, 1735-1790), on April 22; (4) "The Evangelical Reawakening" (approximate time, 1790-1859), on April 27; (5) "The Current Era" (approximate time, 1859-1896), on April 29. The lecturers in other years on this foundation have been such men as the Rev. Charles Cutbert Hall, D.D., on "Qualifications for Ministerial Power;" President E. Benjamin Andrews, LL.D., on "Wealth and Moral Law;" and Maurice Thompson on "The Ethics of Literary Art."