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## A FINAL WORD ABOUT CONGREGATIONALISM IN PHILADELPHIA.

All men, even the formally accused, have a right to be regarded as innocent until the opposite is proved true. We shall therefore freely accept the "Central" Congregational Church as an orthodox body; as Trinitarian and Calvinistic—as much so as the Centre Church, New Haven, or the Park Street Church, Boston. Any objections we might have to the means used in gathering its membership, and upon other matters connected with its organization we have already expressed or are content to let pass. Even if, as we thoroughly believe, the establishment of the best form of Congregationalism is entirely inexpedient in this city, its friends have a perfect right to try the experiment for the third time, or the tenth time, if they see fit. No person within our knowledge has the slightest intention of questioning that right.

Nor shall we feel ourselves in any special manner called upon to interpose our remonstrances if an open and avowed attempt is made to set up a new class of Arminian or of Unitarian churches, or of churches without any distinct creed in our city. The field is wide and open; truth in her intrinsic greatness can well afford to let error have an equal chance before the human mind with herself. But if old and honored names are used to shield error, if names and persons doctrinally and historically associated with ourselves and popularly identified with us are freely given to endorse what we repudiate; if sectarian zeal and propagandism runs so high as to overlook radical defects in doctrine and even scandalous blemishes in the personal character of those whom it eagerly receives into its fold, it would be a breach of our trust as Christian journalists and as representatives of that branch of the church nearest of kin to the offenders, to be silent. We disavow such proceedings. We can have no affinity with those who uphold and defend them. In the name of that very Congregationalism which we once recognized and hope still to recognize, as congenial with ourselves, we resist them and brand them as schismatic and dishonorable.

We declare that the First and Second Congregational Churches of Philadelphia, recognized as such by the late council and received by the right hand of fellowship given by Rev. Mr. Gulliver, and another church, which at one time was reckoned as the "Second," but which could not be finally maneuvered by "B. H." and his associates out of its connections, were one and all of such a doctrinal character, or in such a position, that they could not and would not have been received into any orthodox Calvinistic body in this city. The "First Congregational Church" Rev. D. L. Gear, pastor, was originally a secession from the "Independent Christian" Church, in Marlborough street, near Frankford road. Rev. D. L. Gear was admitted to membership in this church, and received as a minister in the summer of 1861, on a certificate from the Second Congregational Church of Lynn, Mass., the home of the late Rev. Parsons Cooke, D. D., formerly editor of the *Boston Recorder*. Were Dr. Cooke still living, he could throw some valuable light upon this part of the subject, as documents from his pen, now in our hands, will show. We need only remark here, that Gear's credentials were not signed by Dr. Cooke, and that from these documents and other testimony, it appears that this pastor of the First Congregational Church had been Methodist, Baptist, Congregationalist and Independent Christian, and now turns up, conveniently for "B. H." and his friends, a Congregationalist again.

Having no employment, he was recommended as a preacher by the pastor of the Independent Christian Church, Rev. John G. Wilson, to the Mount Zion Christian Church, in the southern part of the city, where he laboured several months. He was then invited back to Mr. Wilson's church, where he laboured first as an associate, then, on recommendation of Mr. Wilson, who had resigned, as pastor. Mr. W. still retained his connection with the church over which he had been pastor many years. This was in the spring of 1862. Soon after assuming the pastoral office, Mr. Gear or McGear commenced a movement to revolutionize the organization and get the property into different hands. Mr. Wilson, who at first never suspected such an intention, when it became evident, moved with promptitude and energy, and having equity and the charter of the church on his side, was able to defeat the plan. His opinion of the morality of such a proceeding, on the part of a man whom he had welcomed to his church and family, and assisted in gaining employment when

an utter stranger in this city, may easily be imagined. He instantly sent to Lynn, Mass., for further information, and the two letters from Parsons Cooke above referred to were the result. Any one curious to know their contents, may be gratified by calling at our office. Forthwith, Mr. Gear *alias* McGear, and his twenty or thirty followers, with letters furnished by himself, made their exodus from the Independent Christian Church, and hence arose the "First Congregational Church of Philadelphia," *clarum et venerabile nomen!* Whether "B. H." and his friends had any hand in stimulating this secession or not, we have no means of knowing. They soon recognized and aided it, however, and the results were: the erection of a chapel (with funds furnished by zealous Congregationalists) on Montgomery avenue, near Frankford road; the landing of great hopes and schemes of Congregational extension in Philadelphia; and the final recognition of the church by the late Congregational council, in these words, addressed to Mr. Gear or McGear as the representative of the church, by Mr. Gulliver. We quote from the report of the *Independent*:

My brother of the First Congregational Church [Rev. Mr. Gear], you represent, at present, a feeble band. Your work is pre-eminently a missionary work. Like that of your divine Master, your aim is to preach the Gospel to the poor. We rejoice in the labor which you have undertaken to perform, and we especially rejoice that you have undertaken to perform it upon the broad platform of Congregational principles and usages, which we believe to be the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, of which Jesus Christ himself is the chief cornerstone. In this labor, undertaken in these relations, you may be assured of the sympathy and the aid of your brethren of the Congregational churches of this country; and in the hope of that sympathy, and in the pledge of that aid, I now give you this right hand of fellowship. May the little one become a thousand, and the small one a strong people, and may the Lord hasten it in his time.

Did space permit, we should like to speak of what was originally designed to be the Second Congregational Church, in this system of movements. It will be remembered that this Gear, or McGear served the Mount Zion Christian Church for several months in 1861. After he returned to the Independent Christian Church to assist Rev. J. G. Wilson, he still retained a connection with the former organization. During this time several vain attempts were made to revolutionize this church. Finally, the powerful aid of "B. H." and his associates was summoned, and a transfer of the organization and change of name to the "Second Congregational Church," with a call to a Congregational minister, were actually voted, by a minority of the church, accidentally in a position to do so. Arrangements were also made, we are informed, for a renovation of the building, from funds to be supplied by their new friends. But the majority of the church rallied, and at a meeting held about November, 1863, ignored entirely the proceedings of the minority, called another minister and remain in undisturbed possession of the property. The fate of the unfortunate minority with their pastor-elect is unknown. "B. H." and the *Independent*, who may be supposed better informed about them than any others, are silent on the subject. Amid their loud trumpeting of success in similar fields of strategy, some regretful note might have been given to these unhappy relics of a failure which came so near being a grand achievement for their cause. But

The world which credits what is done, is sold to all that might have been.

Great achievements surely! Petty secessions, led out of isolated, comparatively unknown churches, by men whose very obscurity is a veil to something worse; these are the materials for a Congregational triumph; these are the foundations laid with such shoutings upon which the grand structure of Congregationalism in the middle and southern States is to rise; these Quixotic exploits are the themes of the jubilee proclaimed by the *Independent* and its contributors! The Congregationalist that grasps eagerly after such meat, must be, to quote the language of "B. H." himself, a "beggar for a life" indeed. But there is another and more serious view to be taken of these disreputable ecclesiastical raids. What is the doctrinal character of the churches from which these primal foundations of Congregationalism in our city are sought to be abstracted; what is the rock from which, in after time, the Congregationalists of our city are to be told they were hewn?

The "Christian Church," so far as we can learn, has no creed. When inquired of for its belief, it falls back vaguely upon the Bible. Such is the fact in regard to the Independent Christian Church, from which Mr. Gear, or McGear, and his score or more, seceded. It is true, the First Congregational Church brought with it to the council, certain "principles of its faith and polity." These principles are not given in the report of the *Independent*, important as they would have been in correcting any wrong impression as to the doctrinal position and tendency of the church, and of the council which received them. We would like to know something about them. We are tolerably sure they are vague, non-committal

and unsatisfactory in a high degree. Or let the *Independent* say whether there is anything in these "principles" which would be a security against a Unitarian, or a Universalist, or an Arminian becoming pastor of that First Congregational Church; or anything to hinder Unitarians, Universalists, and Arminians from becoming members, in full and regular standing? We risk little in asserting that there is no such security. The *Independent's* correspondent falls back upon the character of the council; and with a cheap show of indignation, asks:

"And who is this editor, that he questions the orthodoxy of Dr. Bacon and Dr. Todd and Dr. Kirk and Dr. Thompson and Dr. Stone and other men hardly less eminent? Did he not get his own theological education—what there is of it—in New England? Who has appointed him as an umpire to decide what is orthodoxy in all the religious denominations of the land? Is it for such as he to charge us and the distinguished members of our council with sectarianism?"

We are expected of course to be frightened by this parade of names and this assertion of the "distinguished" character of "our council." But we beg pardon for being so bold as to ask a question suggested by the proceedings of this "distinguished" body; viz: What is the security for orthodoxy in a Congregational council? There is no reference to any doctrinal platform in its proceedings. Each church has formed its own articles, and these men, Drs. Bacon, Thompson, and others, recognize them without reference to any standards of their own, or of the Association with which they are connected. Have confessions and platforms been thrown overboard as effects? And in place of these are we to trust solely to the individual opinions of an almost accidental concourse of men, in deciding the momentous question of the orthodoxy of entirely new organizations, playing the important part of foundations in a great ecclesiastical experiment? We protest that "distinguished" names, even if "B. H." is included in the list, will not satisfy us. The dangerous looseness of the proceedings is apparent to every one not blinded by zeal for numerical accessions and for demonstrations imposing to superficial observers. The First Church is made up mainly of seceders from an organization without a creed, it being certain that the council is itself without any acknowledged system or known standard of faith, with no doctrinal guarantee, in fact, but the character of certain individuals, "distinguished" and not distinguished, who compose it.

But if this council is loose, as to doctrinal position it is at least consistent with itself. The two churches which it received as the First and Second had remarkable points of similarity in their history. Principles were involved in the career of both which should have warned the council from intermeddling with them, and which, when the churches were received, conferred necessarily a peculiar character on the council. Each was the result of a frustrated coup d'etat, which left it without status, property, or sympathy with the orderly denominations of the city. The Second Church that was to be, attempted a similar process, but failed more disastrously than either of the others. Here we have no less than three disorderly, schismatic movements identified with the rise of Congregationalism in our city, finding refuge, and deriving character and material aid from the council or its representatives.

Our readers will bear with us while we trace up more fully the history of what is now the Second Congregational Church under Rev. Dr. Smiley, and establish the position of our former article called in question by "B. H." in the *Independent*. He says:

The church which has now become the Second Congregational Church was, at its origin, chartered by the State as an independent "Evangelical Reform Congregation," on a Congregational basis; and the ninth section of its charter was, "It is also declared that nothing in this charter shall be so construed as to prevent or hinder the said congregation from uniting with any other Christian denomination, whenever it shall appear to a majority of the members of said congregation to be for their advantage." After some years of independence, this free congregation formed a spiritual connection with the Dutch Church, still, however, retaining its charter and acting under it. Wherever there was conflict, the ecclesiastical law of the Dutch Church had to yield to the chartered rights of the congregation, which were older than it and more sacred than Dutch law. Thus, although the constitution of the Dutch Church gives the consistory power to call a pastor, this church had always claimed the right to do it congregationally under its old and forfeited charter, and had always done it. At length they called Dr. Smiley, by a strong majority. Then ecclesiastical law was brought to bear arbitrarily upon them, and they were deprived of their house of worship, which they owned, and its pulpit shut against their minister. Dr. Smiley, before he came to Philadelphia, had been the successful pastor of a Congregational Methodist Church, and was both by thorough study of Scripture and of ecclesiastical history, an intelligent Congregationalist. Nothing, therefore, was more natural than that such a pastor, Congregational in all but the name, should pronounce openly for our free church polity.

How wide these facts are from the calumnious representations of the *American Presbyterian* the plainest man can see. Possibly the editor of that paper did not know what the facts are. Then it was his first business

to inform himself, and not impose upon the public with his crudities.

Considering the assumption of superior knowledge contained in these paragraphs, the ignorance of this correspondent is surprising. If he will turn to the final decision of Judge Lowrie, of the Supreme Court, in this case, (Wright's Penna. State Reports, 6, 506) he will see that the First Reformed Dutch Church not only was never in spirit or purpose Congregational or Independent, but unanimously shrank from such a position, to use their own words, as "imprudent and unscriptural." Their independence was but a temporary expedient. They originated in 1809, from the German Reformed Church, as a colony who simply desired English preaching, which they could not get in their existing relations. That they had no wish to change their polity or doctrine, appears from the name which they assumed, when they were chartered in January, 1810. By dropping a single syllable of the name, whether designedly or accidentally we cannot tell, the *Independent* obscures this important fact. They were chartered as the "Evangelical Reformed (not Reform) Congregation of Philadelphia," and the word "Reformed," in the ecclesiastical language of Germans and their descendants, as every one at all familiar with the history of the Reformation ought to know, means Presbyterian. But there is not a place left to hang a doubt upon; since, in December, 1811, a congregational meeting was held, at which the form of government of the Presbyterian Church was expressly and unanimously adopted.

At this meeting it was also resolved that, while it was inexpedient at that time to unite with any denomination, yet that to stand apart, or form a new religious sect or party "would be imprudent and unscriptural," and contrary to their traditions, as their forefathers were Presbyterians. Moreover, it was provided in their "Fundamental Articles," which, by reference, formed part of the charter, that the pastor must be "of the Reformed or Presbyterian denomination, regularly ordained." How any person of common veracity or common sense could assert, in view of these facts, that the Second Congregational Church was originally "chartered as a Congregational Church," is impossible for us to see. The people ever seem to have foreseen the possibility of such a false and unjust construction of their independent position, and to have guarded against it with jealous care, by unanimously voting themselves Presbyterians, like their forefathers. This they further proved in April, 1813, by voting, with like unanimity, to join the Synod of the Reformed Dutch Church, through the classis of New Brunswick. Judge Lowrie's view of this act is a plain inference from the facts. He says: "All that had been done before was simply provisional. This act of union was the completion of the process of organization, in accordance with their original and continued purpose." The congregation in fact never had a thought of being anything other than Reformed or Presbyterian, and simply waited for the proper moment to carry out their orderly ecclesiastical tendencies, as inherited from their fathers.

What "B. H." means by the congregation forming "a spiritual connection with the Dutch church" is not obvious. Surely he does not intend to mislead the reader into the idea that there was no subscription to its authority, no ecclesiastical dependence upon the Reformed Dutch Church at large. Surely he does not intend to ignore the fact that, as soon as the union was formed, steps were taken to have the charter changed, to conform to the new circumstances, which was effected in 1815; and that from the date of the union, until 1860, forty-seven years, all their pastors have been installed by the classis, and were men pledged to adhere to the symbols of the Reformed Dutch Church. As for the claim of the church under the charter to call its pastor congregationally, instead of through the consistory, "B. H." must know that this is a Presbyterian no less than a Congregational feature, and can be of no use whatever, by itself and especially in connection with the unanimous vote of 1811, to prove the Congregational tendencies of the church.

And now where are "the chartered rights" of which this correspondent declares, in the face of the decisions of our Common Pleas and Supreme Court, "the majority" were deprived? They were chartered as a "Reformed" Congregation. Their unanimous vote and Fundamental Articles declared them to be Presbyterians, and they expressly repudiate any suspicion of their purpose to be anything else, which might have been aroused by their temporary independence. "B. H." must therefore renounce the absurd idea that the church was originally chartered on a Congregational basis. But, if they were not Congregational in the outset, had they not a right to become so, and were they not unjustly restrained from exercising that right by the courts? It is true their original charter provided that the congregation might unite with any other Christian denomination; whenever a majority of the members should decide

it to be to their advantage. And just here, the decisions of the two Courts, inferior and superior, diverge. Judge Allison, in the Court of Common Pleas, decided that a majority of the members might have taken the church from its Reformed Dutch connection. Had there been such a majority—the correspondent in his hasty view of the case evidently thinks there was—Judge Allison would have given them the property. But the fact, as brought out in the trial, was that the transfer had never been voted by a majority of the members, but only by a majority of a quorum at a congregational meeting. The evidence at the trial showed that the congregation numbered 166 voters; hence 83 votes would have been required to constitute a bare majority, whereas only 75 votes, lacking nine of the lowest necessary number, could be raised by the friends of the transfer. The majority, therefore, so pathetically spoken of by "B. H.," vanished "into air, into thin air." It never existed. Judge Allison further ruled, that even if a majority of votes, as required by the charter, should be given for a change of relation, it would not be competent for the church to call Dr. Smiley as a pastor, on account of his Arminianism; for, in or out of the Reformed Dutch Church, their charter required the pastor to be of "the Reformed or Presbyterian denomination, regularly ordained." He accordingly issued an injunction restraining Dr. Smiley from occupying the pulpit of the church.

At this point, "B. H.," with quite a show of familiarity with the case, asks, if we are not aware, that a higher Court has, in part, reversed Judge Allison's decision? If "B. H." knows as much as he affects to, he is guilty of intentionally misleading his readers; for the fact is, that the Supreme Bench, to whom the case was carried, reversed the decision of the inferior court in no manner or degree, except to make the position of the seceders far worse than Judge Allison had done; it in fact rendered their case utterly hopeless. Under Judge A.'s decision a large loop-hole was left them; an accession of nine votes to the strength of the seceding party would have given them control of the property, and all the chartered rights "B. H." imagines they had; but under Judge Lowrie's decision even the vote of the majority could not have effected the change. We quote his words (page 510):

"It is supposed because, in the charter, the right is reserved in the majority to make such a connection, a majority may dissolve it. But we do not see it so. According to the mere terms used, that article was fulfilled, and the right exhausted by the exercise of it and in the act of union, and we do not see how it can be implied that it was to extend further." Judge Lowrie has not the remotest idea of making the case any better for Congregational defenders of the secession, like "B. H.," than Judge Allison had left it; for he says: "Surely no respectable denomination would accept and foster congregations who would reserve a right to separate from it at their pleasure. This they would regard as; NO BETTER THAN CONGREGATIONALISM."

In another place he says: "It is therefore of no sort of importance what may be the majority in such matters, it cannot weigh a feather against well known law in affecting the rights of a minority. Before civil authority the question is, not which party has the majority, but which is right according to the law, by which the body has hitherto consented to be governed. We have no doubt that a majority of a congregational meeting transgressed their own law, and attempted to violate the rights of the minority by calling a pastor whom their classis would not accept, and by resolving the secession from the Reformed Dutch Church. The majority may direct and control consistently with the particular and general laws of the organism but not in violation of them."

In such a hopeless plight, Judge Lowrie upon his unappealable seat of justice, left these seceders. It was Peltion piled upon Ossa. The little finger of Judge Lowrie's decision was thicker than the loins of Judge Allison's.

And who is this Daniel come to judgment, this questioner of the solemn decisions of our inferior and superior courts; what judicial experience, what stores of legal learning, what weight of character warrants him in assuming censorship of these decisions of our purest and ablest men? What good end has he to serve by sowing distrust in these irrevocable judgments and by weakening so far as his influence goes, the confidence of the people in their highest and most trusted judicial officers? Is his cause of such a sort that it can prevail only in an atmosphere breathing of revolution? Must the stones with which the foundations of Congregationalism among us are to be strengthened, be, in part, piled away from our most venerable temples of justice?

[We are compelled to lay over the conclusion of this article until next week.]

## MINISTERIAL VACATIONS & HABITS.

This subject was discussed not long since by an association of ministers, with somewhat differing views. All agree that a rest from active pastoral duties and a change of scene, at least annually, is better for both pastor and people. How and when to take the interlude to labour is a more difficult inquiry. That such arrangements should be made in cities that the people who remain there in the warm season may have a congenial place of worship, and know what to look in time of affliction for it needed ministerial attention, is, we think, a duty imposed upon pastors, alike by religion and humanity. It is certainly not Christian, without a clear and unquestionable necessity, to deprive the people of the means of grace by closing churches. Time and death do not wait on our comfort and pleasure.

How the allotted time shall be spent must depend on conditions of health, taste and means. Whatever the recreation, and wherever it is taken, that a minister or Christian layman, especially the former, should not forget Christ and his commission, so far as the sacred office is concerned, is undeniable. To affirm that to have relaxation one cannot be a living, happy Christian, is a libel on the gospel, and this in the face of revelation.

That no clergyman can "puff" his cigar along the streets, or sprinkle his path with the juice of his quid, and retain that most precious treasure unsullied, influence, is the voice of Christendom. To shrink from the sight of a fashionable dance in the hotel of a watering place, and parade before the crowd a scientifically twirled Havana, is an odd moral distinction. The resolution we give under Methodist religious items, and the noble words of Bishop Janes express the growing moral sentiment of the church. John B. Gough, all speak earnestly of the bar-room affluities and associations of the habit of using tobacco; and the indecent pictures often found in the shops of the retailers indicate the views of too many of those in the traffic. In the plain, free suggestions we have made, we arraign no man, nor answer for his conscience, but simply express our convictions.

## THE PUBLICATION FUND.

Mr. Editor:—The acknowledgment donations to the Publication cause received in the month of June, which I send you for insertion, taken in connection with preceding acknowledgments will encourage those of your readers interested in this enterprise. The friends of the work will see in these contributions evidence that it is not only to live but to expand and increase its influence for good.

The call of the General Assembly for contributions to complete the \$50,000 Publication Fund, on the part of those who had not already given their proportion of the sum has not been unheeded. Collections are coming in daily—some large, some small—and churches that have not yet found a good opportunity to take up their collections, are arranging to do so as early a day as seems to promise success.

If a little effort is made by each church the result will be the completion of the Fund. We hope that no church will by its neglect endanger the success of this important movement.

Yours, J. W. D.

## HAMILTON COLLEGE.

The commencement of Hamilton College, Clinton, N. Y., will be held on July 21st (Thursday).

President Fisher will deliver his Baccalaureate on Sunday afternoon, and Rev. Herrick Johnson, of Pittsburg, will address the Society of Christian Research, Sunday evening, July 17th.

Hon. Charles P. Kirkland, LL. D., of New York, will address the Alumni, and Professor Edward North, of Hamilton College, will deliver a Poem, Wednesday, P. M.

The convention of the Psi Upsilon Fraternity will be addressed by Charles D. Warner, Esq., of Hartford, Ct. Poet, Francis M. Finch, Ithaca.

The Y. M. Christian Association contemplate making their annual excursion to Atlantic City on Friday next.

\*An eminent Methodist divine in this city suggests the inquiry whether Mr. Gear had not laid aside a syllable of his name, and whether he was not known as Daniel McGear, a local preacher in Cumberland and Salem counties, N. J., in 1858.