

## HOLLIS STREET COUNCIL.

*Proceedings of an Ecclesiastical Council, in the Case of the Proprietors of Hollis Street Meeting-house, and the Rev. John Pierpont, their Pastor, prepared from the official journal and original documents. By SAMUEL K. LOTHROP, Scribe of the Council. Boston: from the press of W. W. Clapp and Son. 1841. 8vo. pp. 384.*

THE history of "ecclesiastical councils," special and general, from the synod at Jerusalem, in the first century, to the celebrated tribunal called the "Hollis Street Council," in the nineteenth century, affords many instructive hints. The story of any Science, traced from its beginnings in ignorance and rude conjectures to the study of facts, the development of a law, the discovery of first principles and the opening of a world of Ideas consequent thereon — this is always curious to the most superficial and instructive to the wisest minds. There is a gloomy and a bright side to human nature; and though the ludicrous may strike us at first, the melancholy features of the case will at last present themselves to all that think. Democritus and Heraclitus, — the philosophers who laugh and the philosophers who weep at the tale of human woe will have their representatives to the end of time. To a pensive mind the gloomy aspect is the most obvious. A sober wisdom, with abated fears and chastened hopes, does not come in the first moment of study, but is the result only of toilsome thought, or religious faith.

To look at the history of Morals, and trace mankind from the Cannibal to the Courtier; to see with what expense of toil and pain and tears and blood each advance has been purchased, and to consider how little has been done, even now, for the best interests of man, the sight is a sad one. To survey the field minutely, and study the two parties that wage interminable war, the one fighting the great battle for human souls, the other against them; to see the let and hindrance which Sloth, Ignorance, and Selfishness cast before the wheels of Reform; to consider the occasional blindness and folly of Reformers themselves, there is something very sad in the thought. We look back, and a tear must dim our triumph. We look forward, —

and it must be with a sigh for the future martyrs whom God raises up to bear the sins of unregenerate man.

But the gloomiest of all the pages of our human tale is perhaps the story of Religion; of what is deepest and highest in man; the cause of his greatest joy, or his most costly sacrifice. Under that name every imposture has found a shelter. The foulest rites, the most detestable doctrines, and hypocrisy the most shameful have here had a refuge, with none to molest nor fray them away. True there is progress, from the sacrifice of a CHILD in the days of Abraham, to the offerings of a LAMB in the time of Moses, still more to a DIVINE LIFE in the time of Jesus. But at what cost was the progress made? What war between the two parties of the Past and the Future, the Actual and the Ideal?

If one would read but a brief history of the "Councils of the Christian church," or turn over the folios of some ponderous collection, it would be with a sad heart. Would he ask for a completer history of human folly and bigotry? Would he not find there that each new Idea, as it dawned on the race from the eternal heaven, was at first regarded by the Shepherds of men, as disastrous, — a star of ruin? What said the household of Terah to the calling of Abraham; the wise men of Tarik to the mission of Moses; the Scribes and Pharisees of Jerusalem to the glad tidings that Jesus brought? Nay, what said the Council of Constance to Jerome and Huss; the Council of Trent to the words of Martin Luther? The chronicles of pirates; the annals of crime; Newgate calendars; the "last words and dying confessions" of scoundrels hanged, disclosed but a single phase of the sin that walks or creeps the world. A rascal armed with a bludgeon; an assassin with a knife in his belt, or poison in his pocket, is a dangerous man; no doubt of that. But crime in a cassock; villany that is "banded," surpliced, and stoled, and set off with phylacteries or a sceptre, this is greatly more dangerous. It was real heroism, and that the noblest, in him who said, The Publicans and Harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you, Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites. The obvious foes of the race it is cheap to condemn; but to attack and expel the secret enemies of man was worthy of that great soul. No doubt "a saint in crape is twice a saint in lawn;" at least the World says so. And if so, why may not a rogue in ruffles be worse than many a rogue in rags?

One needs but little acquaintance with ecclesiastical affairs, to see, that the World and the Church differ very widely in name, and very little in the spirit with which they are managed. The early ecclesiastical synods, assembled for doctrinal purposes, were often planned and conducted by a spirit disgraceful to the human race; and an acute modern writer says well, "Men of the ecclesiastical profession, however respectable or venerable in their individual capacities, have never met in bodies, but they have become examples of anything but toleration; and this must necessarily be the case, without any particular fault of theirs, from the mere operation of the most established principles of our common nature." Ecclesiastical courts, to speak of them as a whole, have been instruments of tyranny.\* Is it a century since men's tongues were cut out, and their flesh torn off with red-hot pincers, by the command of ecclesiastical authority, because they would not bow to the Host, a God of Bread? The fact is notorious. It was done in the "most enlightened country of Europe;" done by pious men, who really thought, no doubt, they did God service, by thus maltreating his image. We live in a better age, though in a land where women have been scourged naked from town to town for their religion; where "witches" and Quakers have been hanged, the one for worshipping the fancied devil, the other for worshipping the only God, and the ecclesiastical power defended both the whip and the gallows. But leaving what thoughts we have to offer respecting "councils of the church" in other times and under circumstances, to which we, fortunately, are strangers, we will address ourselves to the work before us, — the far-famed Hollis Street Council.

It is a delicate matter to treat of, and we come to it with reluctance. The subject is full of difficulties; they increase at every step. There may be misunderstanding on all sides, but there must be BLAME somewhere. It is seldom all on one side. This council is a sore spot to some men. It should therefore be touched with tenderness and

\* See some curious specimens of the tyrannical spirit of the Church in the middle ages, in Thierry, *Histoire de la Conquete de l'Angleterre*. Liv. I.

a practised hand. We have waited long and anxiously in hopes that some of the experienced and venerable men, the legitimate guides of public opinion, would open their mouth and give justice its due. We have waited in vain. It is not with pleasure, but under a sense of duty, that we write. However, the fact of a Unitarian council being called in this city; its singular aspect; the character of the men who composed it; its long delays; its protracted sessions; the fame of the legal advisers retained by the two parties; the magnitude of the questions believed to be at issue; the deep interest in the case felt by the public, all these circumstances make it so significant, that we can in no wise allow it to pass over in silence.

An ecclesiastical council assembled in our city is a novel affair in this part of the century; a Unitarian council to try a minister has rather a singular aspect, considering the common views of church discipline taken by that sect. The accused was charged with no error in doctrine, but simply in practice, as we understand the case, and ecclesiastical bodies usually have contended more for the former than the latter. Some of the charges made against the Pastor, if we rightly understand them, are of a very unusual nature. The conduct of the council itself, considering the high character of some of its members, was very surprising, though no doubt substantial precedents could be quoted, both from legal and clerical usage, to justify the course pursued. But we shall not adduce them. Then again the "Result in Council" is curious and instructive; a matter every way worthy of comment in this Journal.

Now, before we proceed to the merits of this case, and in order to understand it the better, and come more successfully to our end, we must be allowed to say a word about the POSITION OF A MINISTER IN GENERAL. The real office of the Christian minister is twofold, abstract and concrete, namely, TO TEACH TRUTH and TO PROMOTE GOODNESS. Here then is a speculative and a practical work to be done. Now, in each of these divisions, it is obvious that there is a positive work to be performed, sowing the seeds of Truth and Goodness. But as the world is, a negative work also must be done, that of confuting Falsehood and exposing Crime. The soil must be ploughed before the

seed is sown. He that says "Truth is of God," though never so gently, says also, at least by implication, "a Lie is not of God, but of the Devil." If he goes seriously to work, while he says every day, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God," he must, now and then, say likewise, "Woe unto Scribes, and Pharisees, Hypocrites," or, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of God." Now this negative work is very ungrateful to the best of men, but it must be done. Who does not sympathize with that man who said, "Would I were as good as Jesus! Then I could call men by their right names and commit no sin?" No doubt, men no better than their brothers are always ready with their "Woe unto you." Still we repeat it, falsehood must be called *Falsehood*, and sin, *Sin*; wicked men be made to know they are wicked. This is a thankless task. We are sorry to say it, but the tellers of Truth and promoters of Goodness have rarely been popular till after death. "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?" may be asked in all ages. The Prophets, that are honored in our day, were murdered in their own, because they told the truth and exposed lies. Diogenes the cynic, if we remember rightly, says his father was banished because he marked bad money; always an invidious office which is certain to diminish the revenue.

Now a Christian minister, if he enters seriously into his calling, — the greatest of all human vocations, — must turn to one or to both of the divisions; to the *abstract* course of teaching truth, and combatting falsehood, or to the *concrete* course of promoting goodness and exposing crime, in what is called a direct and practical way. The speculative man inclines one way, the practical man the other. The true "Scribe, well instructed unto the kingdom of heaven," of course does both.

We know there is a *tertium quid* sometimes heard of. A Christian minister who is not serious in his calling; one of those who "climb, and intrude, and steal into the fold," takes the general average of theological opinion in his district as the standard of truth and the general average of popular virtue as the standard of goodness, and never goes beyond either; preaches profound, speculative sermons,

(sound in more than one sense,) on the antiquities of the Jewish Church; the color of the red heifer, it may be, or the size of the Ark, the manner in which Noah collected and disposed the animals he preserved; the times when the High Priest went into the Holy of Holies, and the typical signification of all these mysteries to the present age; he preaches also smart practical sermons against obsolete vices, the worship of ancient idols; the sins of the Jewish Sadducees and Pharisees; against doubts that nobody shares, and extinct or unpopular classes of unbelievers. If he have still hours not occupied, and a mind that loves work better than the "rack of a too easy chair," and sleep after dinner, he busies himself with the trifles of literature; makes "collections" of "puffs, powders, patches, Bibles, billet-doux;" dabbles in the history of everything but Morals and Religion; plays on the surface of some easy science; catches butterflies; collects epitaphs and conundrums; gathers antiques;

"He has a fourth o' auld knick-knackets;  
Rusty airm caps and jinglin jackets,  
Wad haud the Lothians twain in plackets,  
A two-mont' gude."

Such a man "never gets into trouble." His pulpit is neutral ground, "like some free-port of trade." Truth and falsehood shake hands; crime and goodness kiss each other. He is born for his tucker and his bib, and never sells his birth-right. Good dinners are got ready for him, and "wine of a noble mark." "He is always on the right side;" while he lives, has the reputation of a "mild, inoffensive man, who hurts nobody," and has not an enemy in the village; a man who never meddles with exciting topics and matters too high for him. When he dies, it will be recorded of him as of patriarchs before the flood, that "he lived and begat sons and daughters." The great representative of this class was the famous Vicar of Bray.

Now if a minister pursue either of the two courses first mentioned, he may "get into trouble." Yes, though he is "wise as serpents and harmless as doves." If he turn his attention to the speculative side, and ask, "what is truth?" then he must differ in some respects from the theological opinions of the public. He will differ just in proportion to his ability, activity, and honesty. He must

then abandon his early prejudices as mistakes; expose theological errors; set forth truths not commonly accepted, and depart widely from the doctrines that public opinion declares sound. Then comes the question, Shall he disclose his convictions, or keep them to himself? If he is a serious man, he will do as Luther and Paul, and not "shun to declare the whole counsel of God," asking no question, whether public opinion will tolerate or condemn him. If the minister does this, he "gets into trouble." The Church,—and by this we mean in this place the great guardian of established *opinions*,—comes up to him, lays its hand on its ample conscience, and says, "Sir, you hurt our feelings. You don't believe as we do; not even as your father did before you. We shall not be responsible for your opinions for we doubt your faculty for thinking. You are a dreamy, foolish person at best. Do turn your hand to some practical work, and leave speculation to us, whose business it is. It is better for you to give up thinking altogether, till you can think and feel as we do. We are good Christians, and would not disturb freedom of thought and speech for the world! Nay, we prize that above all things. But if you preach such opinions as we dislike, we will burn you alive, if we can, and at all events will give you a bad name in this life, and the expectancy of damnation in the next."

If on the other hand, the minister takes the practical division of his work, turns his attention more to the doings than the doctrines of the public, he "gets into trouble" none the less. He comes to conclusions respecting the public virtue, which differ from the opinions commonly entertained, just in proportion to his ability, activity, and honesty. He sees the sin of society. Then the question comes, Shall he be silent; or when the watchman sees the evil coming, shall he cry aloud and spare not? He has great examples in favor of either course; but that of Paul and Luther in favor of speaking. If he publish his opinion, he comes in contact with the Selfishness, the Sensuality, and the Sin of society. Then the World,—and by this is meant the great guardian of established usages,—comes up to him, lays its hand on its conscience,—broad and conspicuous organ,—and says, "Sir, you hurt our feelings. You have spilled our rum, and put out the fires

of our distilleries. You say that we shall not murder the Indians, nor enslave the Negroes, though we are Christians and they but Pagan dogs; that we shall not tyrannize over our brother men, nor make them bear our burthens and earn our bread, though we are richer, stronger, and more cunning than they. We are good Christians, but we get our living by what you call *sin*; we must get our living, and our way must be right, for it has always been followed 'from the beginning.' We love God,—that is our religion; but you ask us to love men, which we can't do. We have faith, enough of that, but you ask works beside, and grace into the bargain. You hurt our feelings very much, and we can't be responsible for you any longer. We respect you for your learning and piety, but you are a dreamy, imaginative person, who know little about human nature. We think you had better turn your hand to doctrines and give up practical affairs, leaving them to us, who understand them perfectly. If you will preach Christianity,—and we pay you for that,—pray confine yourself to its doctrines, and preach them with what freedom you will. We respect your holy calling, and have no doubt of your 'apostolical succession,' and right to bind, and to loose, and make men *believe* what you will, but let us *do* as we please. We are patient men; but when you talk about our wrong doings, and sins that we commit, we can't bear you, and we won't. Are *we* the only sinners in the world? If you will continue to tell us *our* faults and rebuke *our* sins, we will give you a bad name, and starve your wife and babies."

Now if the minister takes both horns of the dilemma, exposes the falsehood of the popular doctrines, and the sin of the popular doings, his case is very hard. "Hungry ruin has him in the wind." The "Church" and the "World" are out upon him in full pursuit. The "hue and cry" is raised. "Infidel," "Atheist," screams the Church. "Madman," "Reformer," roars the World. "Away with such a fellow from the earth, crucify him, crucify him," exclaim both. "He hath blasphemed against Moses," says the one, "and against Cæsar," says the other. "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die."

The speculative or practical reformer has a sad time of it. Public Opinion sets a bounty on compliance with the

prejudices and sins of the time; invites men to say "Peace, peace," when there is NO peace. She looks among the simple ones, and discerns some young man devoid of understanding, passing near her corner, in the twilight, or the evening, or the black and dark night. She catches him, kisses him, and with impudent face says, "I have peace-offerings with me; this day have I paid my vows; therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee. I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with fine linen of Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon; come in let us solace ourselves with lies." With her much fair speech she causes him to yield; with the flattery of her lips she forces him. He goes after her as an ox to the slaughter; a fool to the stocks; a bird to the snare, not knowing it is for his life! She has cast down many wounded; strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, the descent to the chambers of death.

If a man resists the allurements, "he loses his usefulness," and then comes the *doctrinal* issue of Truth *versus* the Church, or the *practical* issue of Righteousness *versus* the World, or it may be the minister litigates in both suits. The manner in which such cases are tried by *men* is very plain; the sentence passed under the law of the Almighty he may read that runs, in the three most notorious instances of the Mosaic, the Christian, and the Protestant Reformation.

Now the "average" ministers take the average of opinions, and the average of morality for their standard of truth and duty. Their Ideal is the Ideal of the mass of men, and of course is but little above the Actual of the mass of men; at any rate is only a little higher degree of the same thing; the Christianity of the majority of pulpits is only the Christianity of society slightly idealized and elevated. Since then there is so little speculative or practical difference between the pulpit and the pews, quarrels between a minister and his people in general come from a want of prudence, rather than from a superabundance of wisdom or zeal on his part; and in *such* quarrels we think the minister is almost always the party to be blamed.

Now into this general and difficult position Mr. Pierpont

entered, as he came into the Christian ministry; and what was a special mischief in the case, he came, as the "Result in Council" informs us, into a place where "the circumstances of his parish and the condition of things . . . were peculiar, and such as called for a large measure and constant exhibition of that wisdom which is from above." Of course, then, to do justice in the premises, the general and essential difficulty of a minister's position is to be taken into the account, and the special and accidental difficulty of a position in the midst of such peculiar circumstances, as require a large measure of wisdom from above.

The circumstances of the case are unfortunately but too well known, and require no reiteration in this place. The public know of the border-war between the Pastor and the Parish. Letters were circulated through the press; "the skirmish was long and the foray was hot." Then came a rumor that a "Council" was to be called. The preliminary measures began to be taken; letters were written; "letters missive" issued. That rumor was followed by another, that the council had come to an end. Then came a third rumor, of another council. Public expectation was aroused; of whom should the council consist; of men already implicated, who by their conduct had prejudged the case against one of the parties; or of men not yet committed, if such men exist? Will any council do justice in the premises, to either side; with what authority will it speak? These are questions which Time has answered, as he will many more.

But "the world was not made in a day." Men think the whole will fall through. They reckon without their host. An *ex parte* council assembled; the parties appeared; the question of "jurisdiction in the case" came up, and was settled; the *ex parte* became a mutual council. After many grievous delays and hard words, on the first day of June, in the year of grace, 1841, behold the Council on its feet, ready for action, and "preceded by the Moderator," passing "into the Supreme Court Room."

The Council was surely a most respectable body. Not to mention the lay portion thereof, among the clerical members there were men of talents, of education, of up-

rightness, and of piety. Of course they had their prejudices, (as all men,) which would silently bias their judgment to the one side or the other. It is not for us to bring a charge against the Council; they acted as such men under like circumstances would act. But if the Journal of the Council is to be trusted, (and its veracity and fairness we do not question,) then we must say, there appears a disposition almost continual to throw the weight of that body against the Pastor, whenever it was possible to do so, in the trial, and to thwart and censure him, while full swing was given to any that opposed him. To cite but one case out of several, and perhaps we have not taken the worst, — though the most obvious it may be, — if any one will read the record of the meeting, on the 12th of April, 1841, (pp. 99 to 107 of the Journal,) if he is not reminded of some proceedings in the English State trials, he will at least, we think, doubt that a fair hearing is likely to be had of the case. The facts were these: the twelve churches that composed the original Council were not all represented, as one clergyman had left his parish. The Pastor complained of this, and also that he had not been consulted as to the *day* of holding the Council, while the other party had been consulted. — pp. 100, 101. It subsequently appeared, however, that no partiality was shown in the arrangement. There is nothing in the reported language of the Pastor that strikes us as offensive. But one member of that body says, "the gentleman [Mr. Pierpont] has poured out the torrent of his censure upon the Council, and was about to pour out the torrent of his sarcasm," &c. — p. 101. The Moderator suggests to the Pastor "that the strain of his remarks must be different." — p. 102. The Pastor says, that he will take back anything he has said that is wrong. The Moderator again; "No farther reflection upon motives can be permitted." — p. 103. Mr. P. "Wherein have I called in question the motives of the Council?" Moderator; "It will be better to proceed to the objections," &c. However, Mr. P. was allowed to explain himself, and at length presented other objections to the Council proceeding at that time. One member "wished to know if these were all the objections, and whether, if these were considered, others were not to be presented." — p. 106. Another, alluding to a remark of the Scribe, says,

"The Scribe says he sees but three points. How many the Pastor of Hollis Street Church sees I do not know. I saw but one point this morning where the Scribe sees three, and if there are three seen by the Scribe, the Pastor may see twenty." Another adds, "Suppose the Pastor should say he has no other points, he may discover them before the 1st of June, and he would then have a right to present them."—p. 107. There was no rebuke from the Moderator. Facts speak for themselves.

Let us now consider the "charges" brought against the Pastor. Every body knows, that for a minister to be useful, he must be *free*, free to *think*, *speak*, and *act*, and also that the parish be free to think, speak, and act. But if both are free, a collision may come between the pews and the pulpit. The preacher may be over timid, and wise men in the pews complain of that. For example, if the minister preach a sermon on temperance, and say at the end of it, "But, my beloved brethren, I would not have you think my words apply to *you*; no, God forbid that I should suspect sin of *this sober village*." Good men will say, "He is not the man for us." Then again the minister may be unduly bold, and meddle with matters too high for him. Good men will have a right to complain. If he is impertinent, sarcastic, scornful, insolent; if he abuses his pulpit by introducing personal spleen, and vents his ill-humor in sermons on laymen by profane swearing,—and cases of this kind have happened,—all good men should exclaim against it. Explanations, or a separation must follow; but neither party would lose its freedom. "Take heed how you hear," is a good rule. But in such cases of disagreement the issue that is made ought to be the true one. It is unfair to contend with a minister for not preaching Anti-slavery and Temperance, when the fault is, that he has neither Zeal nor Grace. We should rejoice to see the time, when a perfect openness might prevail, and when not only the preacher did the abstract and concrete work above hinted at,—for the greater part of the clergy, no doubt, still aim at that,—but when the laity, if they did not find their minister a spiritual guide, should tell him plainly the facts of the case, and say, if it were so, "Sir, we can't bear you; we are hungry, you give us no meat; we are

thirsty, you give us no drink; we are in prison of our prejudices, and sick through our sins, you do not come to us, your words don't visit us, nor comfort us. Why should we trouble one another? The world is large and wide; we wish you may be very useful to others, but you cannot be a Christian minister to us. You don't speak to our souls. Let us part in peace and good understanding." This would be fair to all parties; both would know what they were about, and the "charges," like the grand juror's bill, would make a "true presentment" of the case as it was supposed to be. The active man would not be condemned as a drone, nor the drone as one over active.

Now the "grounds of complaint," alleged against the Pastor before the Council, are in substance as follows. 1. That he has neglected his *professional* duties for mere *secular* concerns. 2. That he has preached in an *unkind manner on exciting topics*, such as *ardent spirits*, *imprisonment for debt*, and *slavery*. 3. That he has *not treated his opponents well*. 4. That he has shown a *want of reverence for the Scriptures*. 5. That he has made *indelicate statements* in the pulpit. 6. That he has not been *honest*. 7. That he has not been *true*. 8. That he has *promoted quarrels*. 9. That he has *not shown a proper ministerial decorum* in the pulpit and elsewhere.

Now there come up two questions. I. Do these charges make a true presentment of the real subject on which the parties are at issue? II. Are the charges true?

I. To look at the first question, after a careful study of the records of the Council, we confess to a general and very strong impression, that these charges, as a whole, do NOT represent the subject at issue. We must, as impartial judges, agree with the confession of the Moderator, "I HAVE NOT A DOUBT THAT TEMPERANCE IS THREE QUARTERS OF ALL OUR TROUBLE."—p. 204. We confess that, if much stress was *really* laid on the other offences, we should suppose the complaint would be made at the time the offence was committed. Was such the case? It does not appear. On the contrary, it does appear, that the offence in some cases was favored at the time by some of the very men who brought the present complaints. Mr. Pierpont has doubtless his faults; faults as a minister, faults as a man. They are apparent in this trial. But was he really

on trial for *these faults*, or were they brought up to serve another purpose? To our mind there is no doubt of the answer which a majority of unprejudiced readers will make.

II. The next question is, are the "grounds of complaint" proven against the Pastor? Here we have not only the opinion of the Moderator, but the whole Council, in the negative. However, the decision of the Council is but a *qualified* negative. They divide the charges into three classes:—those affecting the Pastor's *moral* character, his *ministerial* character, and those *growing out of the difficulties between him and his parish*. They think the first "are not sustained."\* "The Council are of opinion that he cannot be so regarded, [that is, as 'wanting in purity, integrity, and moral truth,'] and ought not to be so pronounced."—p. 378.

The *second* class of charges are also dismissed by the Council as not sustained. "They think that *few clergymen could have a ministry of more than twenty years so thoroughly scanned and investigated, and not have more instances of neglect and evidence of inattention brought forward against him*. Upon this point the Council cannot but consider the investigation had before them as honorable to the Pastor."—p. 379. This decision, however, is somewhat qualified. The Council think he has not always been "wise, prudent, and discreet." "*He might have manifested more of calmness and moderation, and through them have been more useful.*" "The circumstances of his parish, and the condition of things in that quarter of the city, where his ministry was chiefly exercised, were peculiar, and such as called for a large measure and a constant exhibition of that wisdom which is from above," &c.—p. 380. "In this wisdom the Council consider the Pastor has been somewhat deficient." "It is to be considered probable also, that, if there was sometimes a want of prudence in the Pastor, there may have been on the part of some of his hearers, unconsciously, a susceptibility to offence, and thus the difficulties have arisen from faults and failings in both parties."—*Ibid.*

In respect to the *third* class of charges, the Council find

\*See the whole remarks, pp. 375-379.

in the Pastor's conduct nothing "vindictive," nor any "intentional irreverence for the Holy Scriptures," though he has made a "use of Scripture language painful to the feelings of this Council." [!] With these exceptions, however, the Council think the charges are "in a measure sustained."—p. 381. See also pp. 382, 383.

"The Result in Council" is concluded with this resolution, "That although on such of the charges preferred against the Rev. John Pierpont, as most directly affect his moral character, the proof which has been presented has been altogether insufficient; yet on other charges such an amount of proof has been brought forward, as requires this Council to express their disapprobation of Mr. Pierpont's conduct on some occasions, and in some respects, but not sufficient, in their opinion, to furnish ground for advising a dissolution of the connexion between him and his parish."—p. 383.

This is the sum of the whole matter. With this the Council concluded their long and laborious session. We have spoken before of the pure and high moral character of individuals of that body. It is not for us to inquire what were the motives that weighed with them; not for us to ask how far prejudice or spleen choked the course of justice on the one hand, or how far a deference to public opinion, and a diplomatic fear of the popular sympathy, setting strongly in the Pastor's favor, prevented a full expression of the censure which is insinuated rather than roundly delivered. We know there was a time when ecclesiastical councils governed public opinion. "We have changed all that." Does public opinion govern ecclesiastical councils? We know not. At the time the Council, "preceded by the Moderator," first passed into the Supreme Court Room," we heard grave men, and pious men say, "A just judgment is not to be looked for from that body; if they let him off with no censure, they condemn themselves, for God knows they have not undertaken his work. We honor and love the men, but hope no justice from them in this case." Another said, "The Council is a farce. The Boston ministers, instead of trying Mr. Pierpont, ought themselves to be brought before a council for *not* having done in a good spirit, what he is accused of

doing in a bad one." To our mind there was no little truth in both sayings. We question no man's motive in the matter, but we take it no plain man, who reads the volume before us, will doubt which way the prejudice of the Council tended, or what would have been the decision of at least some of its members, if public opinion, the despot of the vulgar, had not so plainly favored Mr. Pierpont. In every single case, as we understand it, the weight of the Council was thrown against him; offences were sought committed months after the charges were first brought; he was rebuked for a trifle at the very least, and his opponents—members of the Council—allowed to insult him with no reproof.\* Facts tell their own story. It is admitted by the Council that the wrong is on both sides; but how daintily is the complaining party rebuked! In the case of the litigation, was all the "vindictive" spirit on one side? Let the reader decide.

What then? Is the Pastor justifiable in all things? We think not. There is something that we must censure, several things we cannot understand; sometimes he pursues, as we think, an oblique course, when a straight one would better compass the end; he allows himself an indignant eloquence, which were better let alone; he gives blow for blow, and scorn for scorn; he does not speak gently. He rebukes sin more strongly than beautifully; we would try him by no vulgar measure, but by the absolute standard of Ideal goodness. As a minister and as a man he does not come up to the measure. It may be said, "His provocation was great." Nothing more true; but what then? The courage that will not stand fire is no courage for us; the Christian virtue which is not superior to ALL temptation is no Christian virtue to our taste. For such departure from the true spirit and the true method let him be censured.

But are we speaking of angels? Let us see how other men of flesh and blood have done under similar circumstances. The Prophet Jeremiah is a man held in some estimation by the Christian Church; but when men said,

\*See p. 99-107

"come let us devise devices against Jeremiah," what did that prophet return for answer? "Give heed to me, Oh Lord, and hearken to the voice of them that contend with me. Deliver up their children to the famine, and pour out their blood by the force of the sword, and let their wives be bereaved of their children, and be widows; and let their men be put to death. . . . Forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight, but let them be overthrown before thee."\* But that Prophet was a *Jew*; let us now hear how a Christian minister, an "inspired" man, the very chiefest apostle, speaks in the New Testament. The magistrate commands the bystanders to smite Paul on the mouth. What says the Apostle? "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall," &c.† That was the way *flesh and blood* treated its opponents in the days of the Bible.

To take another case. There were *peculiar circumstances* in the early days of the Christian church, and "liberal measure" of divine wisdom *was* needed; but what says "a servant of God and the Lord Jesus" to men that committed a sin? "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten. Ye have heaped treasures together for the last days! Behold the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of those which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts as in the day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just, and he doth not resist you."‡ Let the "Pastor of Hollis street Church" be condemned, if need is, for foulness of speech, but let it be remembered, how far the charge goes, and on what other names it shall rest. We would not excuse him, because Jewish and Christian Reformers sinned with their lips in the same way. Let the camp of Reformers be pure as the holy of holies; let no selfishness, nor violence, nor vengeance be found in it, "to make the camp of Israel a curse." Are Reformers warring on sin? Then let their hands be clean; let there be none of the "accurs-

\* Jeremiah xviii. 17, sqq.

† Acts xxiii. 3.

‡ James v. 1, sqq.

ed thing" found in their tents. Is their cause glorious? Then the purer should be their hearts, and the holier their weapons. In the pirates' battle for gold we look for false weapons and foul play; not in the saints' battle for the souls of mankind. We expect dirt on a butcher's frock; not on the wing of the Angel, who comes down to trouble the pool of Bethesda, and make its waters healing to the impotent folk that lie in its gates.

But to speak humanly, there is no little palliation for the Pastor. Let him be weighed in an even balance; his heroic virtues be matched with his faults. He has then nothing to fear. Honor to that man, who in an age of selfishness and sin lifts up a manly voice, and cries out against the actual crimes and oppressions of his own time, his own neighborhood, till the ears of sin tingle. There is a time when few lift up the hand against vice, because sin is popular. How warily some "Temperance men" came up to beat the bush, years ago; how fearful were they of hurting the feelings of the men that drank Rum, sold Rum, made Rum! They were prudent men, and it was then doubtful how the issue would terminate! Now, when the victory is won, these men do the chief part of the shouting, and almost the whole of the denunciation, and, as we believe, are driving the temperance party to madness and ruin. Wine is the only Devil, and wine-drinkers the only demoniacs with them! Oh the shortness of human memories! The coward forgets where he was when blows were to be got.

Mr. Pierpont came forward as a Reformer, a rare character in the Pulpit, at a time when there were no honors to be won, no victory to be rejoiced in. The "peculiar circumstances" of his parish were Rum-selling, Rum-making, Rum-drinking. The head and front of his offending, we honestly believe, is this, the crime of preaching against the actual sins of his own parish. An exciting topic, no doubt; it requires much of "the wisdom that cometh from above" to do the work well. He preached, as Paul at Ephesus, *against the Idolatry of the place he was in*; and with a similar result. "Moreover ye see and hear," said the opponents of the Apostle, "that this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no Gods which are made with hands, so that not only this our craft

is in danger to be set at nought, but also that the temple of the great goddess . . . be despised." We do not place the opponents of Mr. Pierpont among idolaters. Some of them are men whose personal character is noble, beautiful, Christian; can we say more? We would go far to honor such men, and would repel any assault upon the general righteousness of their motives. But good men are sometimes deceived, wise men see not all things, it is difficult for most men to see anything wrong, in a calling which is sanctioned by the laws of the land, and which, more than all, brings money to their pockets. Certainly, a *reasonable* allowance is to be made in such instances.

Let the case of the Pastor be examined ever so minutely, by eyes howsoever partial, and it is only a few details that can be censured; the main parts of his course, when tried by the standard of Christianity, must be commended. The World and the Church have prowled about his parish; have hunted with hungry maw, through and through a ministry of twenty years' continuance; nothing was too little to escape their scrutiny; nothing too great for their assault; nothing too private for their examination. Yet after all, what have they started and run down? There has been a great beating of the bush; baying and shouting enough, for a Persian hunting in the days of Cyrus; but they who have made this cry and ado find but little game at the last. After all the "investigation," notwithstanding the Pastor was in fact tried for offences committed after the indictment was made out and presented; spite of the diligence displayed in searching for sins of omission and commission, the World and the Church have scraped together but a small amount of filth; enough to soil their own hands, not to bespatter the reputation of him at whom it has been thrown. Well says an ancient, "Gold shall be tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of adversity!" Both come out of the trial purer than before.

But we must bring our desultory remarks to a close, though we have still much to say. What judgment will an impartial man pronounce on the "Result in Council;" what on the conduct of the *clerical* portion of that Council, who, we are told, with but a few honorable exceptions, decline extending ministerial fellowship to the Pastor, as formerly? The thing speaks for itself, and needs no declamation of

ours. But there was a time when ecclesiastical councils ruled public opinion. When giants made the law and applied it, few dared complain, and they got their bones broken for their pains. Now the case is different. Public opinion, though often an unclean beast, is mightier than the breath of an ecclesiastical council. Had the state of things been different, had public opinion lifted up its seven heads and ten horns *against* the Pastor, and not in his favor, we should have expected a very different "Result in Council." We cannot but fancy the latent venom of that most extraordinary paper would have been obvious and not to be mistaken. As a piece of diplomacy, — designed to serve many ends, — it strikes us as worthy of a college of Jesuits. Higher praise in the diplomatic line it were difficult to win. The whole thing reminds us powerfully of an old story, which we are sorry to be the first to record. But the story tells, that it came to pass in the latter days, when Kilsol was High Priest, and the candlestick of the Lord flourished in its place, that the sons of the chosen people waxed valiant, and the children of Levi (to his name be praise) began to prevail in the land of Bagdat, where the seed of the dispersion were gathered together. But iniquity did abound through the pride of heart that was in the sons of Belial, not fearing the Lord. The Priests were busy with the sacrifice; the Scribes with the law; the Pharisees were enlarging the borders of their garments. These had no time to take heed to the sins of the people. Then arose Zadok and began to prophecy. The spirit of the Lord came upon him. He opened his mouth and rebuked the men of Belial, who eat the wages of iniquity. He lifted the veil from the Scribes and Pharisees. He spared not the sellers of purple and fine linen, those that sold and bought in the temple. Yea, he smote them hip and thigh. The people said, "This is Elias come back from the sky; the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof; blessed be Zadok, a prophet in the latter days; the God of Abram shall fight for him," for the people heard him gladly.

Then gathered together the council, even the great Sanhedrim, to consider what must be done. There were assembled the Rabbis from the east and the west, from the isles of the south and the tents of Gog el Rush.

They sat in the hall of council which is in the ward of the Weavers. They brought diverse charges against Zadok. They said, "He hath a devil, and is mad; he hath spoken lies against such as buy and sell; he hath stirred up the elders on the Sabbath days, and exhorted the young men in the time of the new moons; he hath been wroth in holy places, and we cannot bear him." The Scribes swore by their beard that they would cut him off. But the witnesses, who witnessed against him, agreed not in their speech, but were confounded. Then the elders were troubled, and said, "God do so and more unto us, if we do not overturn him; for if he be suffered to live we be all dead men." Four days they sat in silence, with their beards divided. At last the daughter of the voice came upon Rabbi Kozeb the Beth Din, and he spake with his mouth, "Alas, woe hath come upon the seed of Abraham because of this Zadok. If we condemn him not, — and God forbid that we let him escape, — then the people will condemn us, because we prophecy not as Zadok, but say, 'Peace, when there is no peace,' and we shall be undone. If we condemn him without witnesses against him, we fear the people, for they count him a prophet, and son of God, albeit they repent of his violence. Go to now, let us speak him fairly with our tongues, but with our actions let us cut him to the soul. Let us insinuate evil in good words; thus shall we overthrow him, and get favor with the people, and become men of renown." Some said, "Nay, for then innocent blood shall be upon our hands." But the saying of Rabbi Kozeb pleased the council, and they said, "It is the voice of a God, not of a man. Let him live forever, and let his posterity be like the sons and nephews of Abdon, the son of Hillel." And they followed his saying until this day.

P.