

In the Religious World

LIBERALISM'S GREAT VICTORY

The International Sunday School Lesson for May 28 is "The Council at Jerusalem."—Acts 15:1-35.

BY WILLIAM T. ELLIS

May is the month of ecclesiastical conventions, and by the time these words are read most of them will be in full swing or already adjourned. Among ministers and church workers these gatherings are a principal subject of present interest. A striking parallel may be found between most of them and the first council of the Christian church, which was held in Jerusalem about the year 50, and which is the theme of the present international lesson.

It was the first of the great church councils—themselves an illuminating line of study to pursue, in this connection. It would be interesting to compare the greatness of the topics debated in the early church councils with the littleness of some of the themes that have engrossed the meetings this month. A broad, sweeping and serious indictment to be brought against the ecclesiastical assemblies of May of the present year is that there has been apparent in their deliberations less of the spiritual crisis created by the world cataclysm, than there has been of ecclesiastical politics and minor matters of administration.

In larger aspect, there is the same struggle under way this month as was witnessed, in the first church council—the needless strife between formalism, tradition, prescription and proscription on the one hand, and on the other the growing, expanding life of the church. The liberalists are still with us, caring more for a precedent than for a principle. The struggle for adherence to formal practices is perhaps best illustrated by the debate over amusements. The world is used to a discussion of whether Christians may smoke, or go to the theater or ride in automobiles—which was actually the subject of legislation at a recent convention of one of the minor denominations—or wear books and eyes instead of buttons, or ride in street cars on Sunday, or belong to social organizations which do not conform to the usages and convictions of certain bodies of Christians. Here we have the reappearance of the Judaizing Christians of the apostolic church, who insisted that all believers should conform to the practices which they themselves favored.

It is not generally known that one of the great problems of foreign missions is the frequent appearance on the field of emissaries who want to win the converts to their special views of Christian practice. Many a missionary could tell of his heart-breaking experiences with these "holiness" and other representatives, who shun the work of winning converts to Christ by converting native Christians to their particular tenets. The struggle between Christian liberty and church restrictions is old and continuous. What is the liberty of today may be the restraint of tomorrow. Probably it is inevitable that the issue first joined in the Jerusalem council should continue through all other ecclesiastical gatherings to the end of time. At least, it is steady to read the reports of present-day ecclesiastical meetings in the light of St. Luke's narrative of this first church council, and Paul's own comment upon it, as found in the second chapter of Galatians. Some of us extract comfort from the observation that even in the apostolic church the Christians were not angels.

Mischief-Makers in Antioch
Some Christians from Judea—the historian does not think them worth dignifying by name—had gone down to Antioch and had troubled the new church there by trying to correct its procedure. They accused the Antioch Christians of not being thoroughly orthodox. Imagine it! These nobodies, who had themselves not been on the firing line of missionary work, were taking to task that great throbbing, outreach, vital church at Antioch! The capacity of petty persons for making trouble in a congregation has been noted by all observers of church life. Men and women who carry not a straw's weight in business, or social or community life, are capable of disturbing the peace of an entire church. Most of us have seen the harmony of congregations marred by some poor little mischief-maker who in all other spheres are entirely inconsiderable. Still, they give the church a chance to prove its religion.

Such were the meddlesome saints who went down to Antioch, and troubled the serenity and unity of that great company of disciples; for these Antioch Christians wanted to do right. The most conscientious

persons on earth are church members. This group of men and women who were eager to follow the fullest truth they knew, whether the cost to themselves, are a noble spectacle. The world cannot do without this heaven of conscientious folk who are ready to follow truth anywhere. Christians are often called narrow-minded, but it is really the open-mindedness of the disciples of Christ, which makes possible all the new sects and schisms and cults, which build on the established foundation of Christian loyalty to truth.

Down in Antioch the church had wise shepherds who were not willing to let their flock be continually worried by the new issues raised. They decided to appeal to the mother church at Jerusalem. They knew the wisdom of getting a decision. Why wrangle and squabble forever over a point that should be decided once and for all? So Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem to confer with the apostles and the elders and the home church.

A Journey Over the Land

There are few persons of any imagination who have not at some time or other desired to take this trip which was made by Paul and Barnabas. Every newspaper correspondent in the world would rather go over their route today than go anywhere else on the map. What light it would shed on the present world war, in the strategic centers of Turkey, could one follow the Paul and Barnabas route, down from Antioch past the mountain where the four thousand Christian Armenians successfully withstood the Turks; down past Tripoli, in Syria; through Beirut, where an American warship rides at anchor; and through romantic old Sidon, with its vaulted streets; and to Haifa, at the upper end of Mt. Carmel, where the German colony is, and where the railroad strikes inland through Galilee. There we could learn all about the new railway system, and we could even take train for Damascus and Aleppo, there to gather war news for which any newspaper in the land would pay high prices. At Nablus we would find the headquarters of the Turkish army, and a new railway center; for now the very route that Paul and Barnabas took we may follow by rail to the city of Jerusalem. The first man in after Turkey's gates are open will write a story that will have the ears of the whole world.

It was not by rail, but aboard patient donkey, or else afoot, that Paul and Barnabas made their way down through Phoenicia and Samaria, preaching as they went. Catch that point? The great missionaries had not been diverted from their main work by the church controversy. When doctrinal or administrative disagreements hinder the work of the church, then may God pity us. The denomination that turns aside from its first work in order to debate and discuss, has been sorely misled. Paul and Barnabas were first of all and last of all preachers, and only incidentally controversialists. A good plumbline to apply to every man who thinks himself a contender for the faith is this: Is he to be found in the forefront of evangelism, and in the rescue missions, and in the teaching work of the church?

The men from Antioch were welcomed by the church at Jerusalem. The differences of opinion did not disturb their cordial relationships. And those Jerusalem Christians were more eager to hear of the gospel's triumphs in Syria and in Asia Minor than they were to talk about the controversy that had brought Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem.

The Great Debate

I talked the other day with a man who had heard the famous Lincoln-Douglas debates, and I do not wonder that this privilege had been with him a lifetime pride. Wise persons go far to attend the great debates in congress and parliament and ecclesiastical assemblies. It is pathetic when these lofty discussions are marred by petty partisanship and strife for political advantage. I have heard strong men struggling over great principles at church meetings, and I thank God that there are still mighty men to contend for the truth as they see it.

The last mention in the inspired history that we have of Peter occurs in this discussion at the first church council, when he stood up as the champion of Christian liberty. Three points he made. The first was that the Spirit had borne witness to the validity of the Gentile converts. This was the argument that had prevailed when he himself was answering to the church for his experience with the house of Cornelius.

The second point was that the yoke which Judaism was trying to

lay on the neck of the new Christians was one which even their fathers had not been able to bear. As the golden text says, "For freedom did Christ set us free."

Then the third point, and the climax of Peter's argument, was that the cross of Christ alone is sufficient for salvation. It is not rites, nor ordinances, but Christ Himself who saves the believer.

The Law of Liberty

In most meetings there is some one man who makes the motion that shows the way out. James, the Lord's brother, was that sort of hard-headed, practical man, as his epistle shows. He suggested the procedure which was adopted; a letter of greeting to the new Christians, setting forth the mind of the church at Jerusalem. He put the conviction of the whole church, apostles, elders and laity, into written form, freeing the Gentile Christians from the yoke of bondage. They were enjoined to abstain from all connection with idolatry, and to shun the immorality of heathendom, and they were also bidden to abstain from meat that had not been properly killed. To us this last point seems but a confusion of the lesser with the greater, but we can understand how it bulked large in the thinking of these Jewish Christians, to whom the Levitical law was part of their daily life.

Thus was issued the Magna Charta of Christian liberty. Christianity is not an enlarged Judaism; it is a new life and a new liberty, applicable to every nation and condition. The Gospel is not a code, but a confession; not a program, but a principle; not laws, but a life.

BIG ELEPHANTS WITH RINGLING

130 Tons of Big Fellows Coming to Detroit Sunday Morning

One hundred and thirty tons of elephants will arrive in Detroit next Sunday morning. In the morning the cargo is to be transported through the principal streets of the city and then housed under canvas.

A train load of the ponderous fellows make up the "heavy squad" of Ringling Brothers' circus, now headed in this direction. Were it possible to stand them on each others' heads the elephantine column would reach above a 20-story building. They occupy 11 of the 80 cars required to transport the Ringling show. Computing elephant energy into horsepower, the herd could, if placed in harness, pull as much as three ordinary locomotives.

Collectively, these elephants drink over 2,000 gallons of water every 24 hours, and a bale of hay for breakfast. For desert the battalion consumes two wagon loads of carrots. Whenever the circus spreads its tents near a stream they are taken into the water. "Baldy" is the only one in the group that talks when it comes to baths in an open stream—so the Ringling animal men are obliged to connect with a plug and treat the gray giant to an improvised shower. This takes as much water as would be required to extinguish an ordinary fire.

The biennial convention of the General Federation of Women's clubs gets under way today in New York city.

Eliminates Poisons,
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Blackburn's
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Cheaply, Quickly,
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Giving One of Ringling Brothers' Giant Elephants a Fire Hose Bath



This is "Baldy," one of the largest elephants with the Ringling circus, which is coming to Detroit Sunday. "Baldy" will have his bath no other way.

SIR H. B. AMES TO LECTURE HERE ON BRITISH NAVY

"The British navy in action" will be the subject of an illustrated lecture by Sir Herbert Brown Ames, M. P. of Montreal, in the Detroit armory, Wednesday night, for the benefit of the Detroit auxiliary of the National Canadian Patriotic fund, a Detroit organization formed by English and Scottish fraternal societies.

Special permission was given Sir Herbert by the British government to collect and give to the public facts and photographs, on condition that the proceeds of all lectures be used for patriotic purposes. As honorary secretary of the National Pa-

triotic Fund society, he was knighted by the king of England in June, 1915. Several pipe bands and the Imperial choir of 150 voices, under the direction of H. Whorlow Bull, will provide music for the occasion.

TONY SUDZINSKY NOW TONY "SUDZ"

Anthony Sudzinsky found his name too cumbersome for American usage and, Tuesday morning, asked Judge Command to allow him to amputate it.

"That makes 'Tony Sudz,'" said Judge Command. "You must be in the beer business."

Sudzinsky declared that he was a plumber, and had no thought of getting a name to fit his occupation. The court authorized the change.

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WEDDING RECEPTIONS

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THE menus of Hotel Statler restaurants use French names for many dishes because they have to—there are no English equivalents. For instance how could "Barnaise" sauce or "Bordelaise" sauce be translated into English?

On the reverse of every menu, however, you will find notes explaining the more important and unfamiliar dishes. If, for instance, you do not know what "chilled eggs Poignac" are, the note tells you that the shirred (baked) eggs are served with a thick cream sauce into which fresh mushrooms have been sliced.

At Grand Circus Park Washington Blvd. and Bagley Ave.—convenient to all downtown Detroit, but as quiet as if in the residence district. Rates from \$1.50 a day.

HOTEL STATLER
DETROIT

Also operating Hotel Statler, BUFFALO, 429 Niagara, 429 Bagley and Hotel Statler, CLEVELAND, 1410 Broadway, 1410 Bagley. All buildings to be opened in Fall, 1916.

When a feller needs a friend

Don't punish Willie when he brings home a poorly marked card. It may not be his fault at all. In nine cases of ten the cause of backwardness in a child is traced directly to improper vision. It is only natural that the near-sighted boy who cannot see clearly will fall behind in his class—and later become so discouraged as to lose all interest in school life. Astigmatism or far sightedness causes headaches. You, yourself, would shirk your work if under a constant strain of pain. Don't punish him—He needs a friend—and my Optician will be that friend.

My Optical Department is the most complete in the city. Lenses are ground right in my own plant and under the supervision of the Optician who prescribes them. No possibility of mistake—and no "outside" charge. Just like having your family physician mix his own prescription.

Miller
SQUARE DEAL OPTICIAN

64 Grand River West—Entire Floor of Parker Webb Bldg.

Not Yet "Out of the Woods"

OCCASIONALLY I meet someone who has come to believe, on account of the better showing now being made by the Pere Marquette, that its troubles are over and its problems all solved. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Thanks to the loyal support of our men, the co-operation of the public, and improved business conditions, we have made good progress, but much remains to be done.

Some of the Accomplishments:
We are paying our operating expenses promptly, with a payroll of about \$8,000,000 a year and material and supply purchases of \$4,000,000 more. We are paying our taxes, this year a month ahead of time, and have paid up all arrearages—altogether \$1,500,000 in two years. We are catching up on our defaulted equipment notes and will have paid \$1,500,000 on these by the first of July. Receivership creditors have had 75%, two-thirds of which has been paid out of earnings this year. We are keeping up the property. Our plans this year contemplate more than \$6,000,000 for maintenance of way, maintenance of equipment, and additions and betterments. Good progress, but still there is much to do. We are not yet "out of the woods" by any means.

Some of the Things Yet to Do:

We must finish paying up the creditors, who more than two years ago furnished materials and supplies to the Receivers, and who have not yet had all of their money. This takes \$600,000. We must finish paying up the defaulted equipment obligations. This will require \$500,000. Then there are \$725,000 of Receivers' Notes issued more than two years ago to meet payrolls, \$600,000 of Receivers' Certificates issued two years ago to obtain funds for material creditors, \$605,000 of Certificates issued four years ago to pay taxes, and \$3,500,000 of Certificates issued three years ago to cover equipment notes and improvements, a total of more than \$6,500,000. This makes no allowance for new equipment, an adequate working fund or for the payment of any return to those who have invested their money in the property—even first mortgage bond holders have had no interest for two years and a half.

All this indebtedness has had to be incurred because the Road has not been able to earn enough to pay its way, and the Court has been obliged to borrow money to continue its operation so that the people of Michigan could have service.

Although the better earnings of today may be temporary only, due to the unusual conditions prevailing on account of the war, we are grateful for the larger income while it continues. We are using it to keep the Road in good condition and to help pay our debts. With good earnings from operation and lightened burdens due to a more liberal policy on the part of the State, we can eventually overcome the conditions brought about by low rates and over regulation in the past.

We ask for the continued help of all to bring about ultimate success. The successful policy of the future must be constructive, not destructive. Co-operation between the people of the State and the Pere Marquette will develop the State and build up the Railroad, and the Road can in turn give more and better service than ever before. The interests of each are mutual. What helps one helps the other. A policy of mutual helpfulness means development and growth. It means adequate rates for service rendered, and adequate service in return for proper compensation.

Talk No. 5
Operating Receiver,
Pere Marquette Railroad

EVERYBODY WANTS THE TIMES' TELEGRAPH REPORTS, INCLUDING OTHER EVENING PAPERS