

**A STATEMENT OF FACTS,
CONCERNING THE TROUBLES
IN THE CHURCH, IN SOUTH
HADLEY FALLS, MASS**

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A Statement of Facts, Concerning the Troubles in the Church, in South Hadley Falls, Mass by
Various

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VARIOUS

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The Bookends 128 Springfield Mass.

Yours sincerely
Richd Knight

Pastor of the First Congregational Church,
SOUTH HADLEY FALLS, MASS.

A STATEMENT OF FACTS,

CONCERNING THE

Troubles in the Church,

IN

SOUTH HADLEY FALLS, MASS.



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S T A T E M E N T .

THE troubles in the Congregational Church in South Hadley Falls have been made the subject of so much observation, and have generally been so much misrepresented and misunderstood, that it is high time the churches around, and the public generally, should know something from an authentic and reliable source as to their real history.

It is due also to those ministers and friends who have so nobly stood by us throughout our trials, that we should supply them with proof such as shall satisfy them that they have, in so doing, been the upholders of truth and uprightness.

It is likewise due to those who may form the church when the present generation has passed away, to leave them some account of its difficulties, that they may know how much has been suffered by their predecessors in the defence of the truth as it is in Jesus, and of the pure principles and polity of Congregationalism.

The "First Congregational Church, in South Hadley Falls," therefore, now puts forth this plain statement of facts, that it may be understood by all who are willing to be informed, that a deep wrong has been committed against it; and that all the measures which have been adopted to cause its downfall, have been based upon the fraud and falsehood of a few unscrupulous men.

We enter into no vindication, we use no special pleading, we simply stand upon righteousness, and truth, and justice; and from this foundation all the *ex parte* councils in the world can never move us.

The *apparent* commencement of the troubles was on this wise: Our pastor, Rev. R. Knight, had been much grieved for some time, by the endeavors of the chorister to sift into the minds of some of the young people of the congregation, very pernicious doctrines; and was very much rejoiced when said chorister told him on Saturday, October 15, 1859, that the next Sabbath would be the last of

his exercises unless the Society would pay him for his services. The pastor informed the chairman of the Parish Committee of this resolve of the chorister, and he too very greatly rejoiced, that without trouble a long desired object was about to be accomplished, and that the incongruity would no longer exist, of one end of the meeting house contradicting the other. Another chorister was therefore temporarily engaged for the following Sabbath; but when this was discovered, certain disaffected men immediately prevailed upon the former chorister to stand his ground, and retain his position in spite of the known wishes of both pastor and committee. It was now plain that when the Sabbath came there would be a collision if the usual services were proceeded with; and therefore for the sake of peace, and a proper regard for the sanctity of the Lord's house, the chairman of the committee requested the pastor not to give out any hymns at all; dispensing with that part of the worship simply because of the determination of these men to cause a disturbance in the sanctuary.

Upon this non-reading of the hymns was afterwards based nearly all the factious opposition under which our pastor had to labor, although he acted under the direction of the chairman of the Parish Committee. And at subsequent church meetings Mr. K. was accused of bullying—gagging—popery—John Bull tyranny—and also of falsehood. Many such charges, and elegant phrases and epithets were again and again made against and applied to him. At a meeting of the church held November 2, 1859, after a great deal of this kind of abuse the church voted by ballot, 47 to 1, that it had the fullest "confidence in the integrity and truthfulness of the pastor." Before the vote was taken some eight or ten of the opposers left the meeting. Notwithstanding this expression of confidence, however, the opposition and abuse from the disaffected party became so great that the pastor by the advice of friends, asked the church to unite with him in calling an Ecclesiastical Council, to advise what course should be pursued under the circumstances. That council was held on November 29, 1859, and the following is the official report of its doings:

"Pursuant to letters missive from the Congregational Church in South Hadley Falls, an Ecclesiastical Council convened at the meeting house in that place, Tuesday, November 29th, 1859, at ten o'clock, A. M.

The Council was organized by the choice of Rev. Dr. Vaill as Moderator, and Rev. H. M. Parsons as Scribe.

The following brethren presented credentials as Delegates from the churches invited:

	Pastor.	Delegato.
Palmer 2d,	Rev. Dr. Vaill,	Bro. William Holbrook.
Springfield 1st,	Rev. H. M. Parsons,	Bro. W. B. Calhoun.
Monson,	Rev. T. G. Colton,	Dea. Marcus Chapin.
Chicopee 1st,	Rev. E. B. Clark,	Dea. Giles S. Chapin.
Chicopee 3d,	Rev. C. H. Cone,	Dea. C. M. Kendall.
Warren,	Rev. S. S. Smith,	
Holyoke 2d,	Rev. J. B. R. Walker,	Bro. E. G. Pierce.
Granby,	Rev. H. Mills,	Bro. Percy Cook.

Prayer by the Moderator.

The letter stating the object for which the council was called was then read, viz:—"A mutual council, to advise respecting the following matters, viz:—The pastor's conduct in reference to the singing; and the gross abuse heaped upon the pastor by a member of the church in consequence thereof, and such other incidental matters as may grow out of these main points of difficulty between us."

On the call of the Moderator, Deacon Bardwell responded as the "member of the church" alluded to in the matters submitted for the advice of the council—and presented a petition to the council praying that in justice to himself, Mr. Edward P. Gillett might be admitted as his council.

Rev. Mr. Cone moved—and it was *voted* by the council—that the statements of the pastor be heard before action on this petition.

Rev. Mr. Knight was then heard in relation to his conduct in reference to the singing, and the abuse heaped upon him by Deacon Bardwell.

Voted—to hear the statement of Deacon Bardwell concerning the matters at issue.

Voted—to adjourn till two o'clock and then resume the statement of Deacon Bardwell.

Council met at two o'clock and Deacon Bardwell resumed his statement.

The committee of the church were then invited to make their statement.

Voted—that the society's committee make such statements as they have in their knowledge.

All the parties having been heard,—*Voted*—that the council be by themselves. *Voted*—that Brother Clark, Brother Calhoun and the scribe, be a committee to draft and present the decision of council. After recess the committee reported the following decision :

WHEREAS, the pastor's conduct in reference to the singing has been the cause of grievance to some in the church ; and, whereas, one member in his language concerning the pastor is thought by him grossly to have abused him,

Resolved, 1st. Although the frank and impulsive nature of Rev. Richard Knight, may have led him to some indiscreet expressions, yet we feel that his character as a sound preacher, faithful pastor, true Christian and honest man is fully sustained by this investigation.

In relation to his conduct about the singing, we find that he followed implicitly the direction of the society's committee, and was influenced by a desire to maintain the purity and order of this part of divine service in the sanctuary.

Resolved, 2d. In regard to the member of the church referred to above, whose language towards the pastor is complained of, we find that language to have been such as is not becoming one making a Christian profession ; and in connection with his course in sustaining an opposition to the pastor in the church and society, as deserving the censure of the church ;—but we trust the offending member will see cause in the spirit of Christian meekness to make confession of the same before God and the church, that he may stand right and acceptably before both.

Incidentally as connected with these main points, the council regret to find a seeming reluctance on the part of the church, to assume their proper responsibilities ; and also an unhappy alienation of feeling among some of the members. Accordingly we advise this church, first, promptly to assume the burdens properly belonging to them, and relieving their pastor of the office of clerk, to sustain him more fully by their prompt action and sympathy—and by securing, in the proper way, a new leader for the choir.

Second. We advise the church, in a prudent and Christian spirit, firmly to insist on a confession from the erring brother above-mentioned, acknowledging his wrong and injurious treatment of his pastor ; also to insist on a humble confession on the part of those at variance in the church, and a healing of the breach which has caused