

THE SAMPLE CASE

Text of the Verdict and Sentence of the Universalist Convention

At noon Sunday Rev. S. W. Sample received by mail the report of the fellowship committee of the Universalist convention of the state of New York upon the hearing in the case in which he has been tried. The report and verdict, or sentence, was read at U.V.L. hall, where Mr. Sample has been holding Sunday evening meetings. Mr. Sample then discontinued these meeting and gave notice of his intention to remove to Minneapolis, his former home, and establish similar meetings in that city. Resolutions complimentary to Mr. Sample were passed by the congregation.

V. E. Peckham, the minister's attorney in the proceedings, made a statement to the congregation. At the request of friends of Mr. Sample the full text of the report, which has not yet been published, is given below:

In the matter of the bill of complaint against Rev. Samuel W. Sample, we the undersigned committee on fellowship of the New York state convention of Universalists, upon the report of the examiner in the above entitled proceeding, do find as follows:

1st. That the Rev. Samuel W. Sample was not guilty of adultery with Ida C. Conway and that there is no evidence before this committee tending to prove said Samuel W. Sample guilty of adultery.

2nd. That Rev. Samuel W. Sample was not guilty of any evil motive in associating wit Ida C. Conway.

3rd. That Rev. Samuel W. Sample was guilty of unministerial conduct in that he commenced and continued a series of meetings of Jamestown shortly after severing his connection with the Independent Congregational church [Universalist] of that place to the detriment and injury of said Independent Congregational church.

4th. That Rev. Sample W. Sample was guilty of unministerial conduct in his persistent refusal to accept the advice and suggestion of the board of trustees and members of the L. C. church.

5th. The sentence of the committee is that Rev. Samuel W. Sample be suspended from all ministerial functions in the Universalist church for four months from this date.

F. [Frederick] W. Betts
H. W. Carr
J. W. McLaughlin
E. L. Conklin
L. C. Patterson
Edwin Leonard
Geo. W. Englehart

I, the undersigned, F. W. Betts, chairman of the committee of fellowship of the New York state convention of the Universalist church, do hereby certify that the annexed and foregoing is a full, true and correct copy of the findings and sentence of said committee in the matter of the bill of complaint against the Rev. Samuel W. Sample. F. W. Betts

In connection herewith Mr. Peckham sends to The Journal the following statement of the hearing at Syracuse, which he desires to have published:

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In the Jamestown Journal of March 14, 1898, an article was published entitled "Rev. S. W. Sample Case," in which it was stated that "he was found guilty of all that he was charged with," thereby implying that he was guilty of immoral relations with one Mrs. Ida Conway. It also stated he was guilty of unministerial conduct in "using threatening language when compelled to resign" which to my mind reflected upon his Christian character. The article also states many other things untrue, but perhaps some may find the consolation in continually perusing the statements as published. It also states that "To the earnest plea of counsel for mercy, we made it as easy for Mr. Sample as was possible consistent with an inexorable determination to rid the church of an unworthy minister." The findings of the committee, signed by the committee, I herewith hand to you for publication. It speaks for itself and denounces the truthfulness of the two first statements above quoted.

It is but just that the truth should be known, and any false impression made by the publication of such statements be corrected.

As to the last statement permit me to say I was present all the time during the examination of his case in Syracuse. On Thursday the evidence was read and objections argued. Friday morning at 8 o'clock, counsel was to argue the case upon its merits. At the our assigned we met at the church room and there I had a talk with the distinguished counsel for the prosecutor, Dr. Saxe, [and] E. J. Payne, attorney at Syracuse, and up to that time had had no conversation with any member of the committee upon the merits or demerits of the case, (no member having seen fit to call upon us or invite us to call at their hotel). Mr. Betts came from an adjoining room and stated to us the night before they had canvassed this question and decided unanimously that Rev. Sample was guilty of no evil association with the woman named, and that he could never publicly reprimand him for any other unministerial conduct.

It was conceded that Mr. Sample had after he had severed his connection with the I. C. church preached in a public hall, and presume somewhat to the detriment financially of the association. The decision having then been rendered of not guilty of any conduct defined in the law giving the action of the Universalist church for which its ministers could be furnished, kindly tell me at what time and place was the earnest plea of counsel made. There was no such plea made; there was no occasion offered and no need of such plea, in fact. Rev. Mr. Sample was suspended for four months and when the four months expire he is again in good standing and entitled to all the ministerial functions of the Universalist church in this state.

It may be it was the purpose of the committee to "rid" the church of one of its ministers, but there was not evidence to lawfully justify such action, and any person of common sense will agree with that assertion if they will read the evidence. No evidence can be found in the record reflecting upon the general Christian character of the defendant.

Evening Journal, Jamestown NY, Tue. 29 Mar 1899

Transcribed on 11 Nov 2015 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester NY