

PASTORS DEMAND RETRIAL FOR FRANK

Condemnation of Conviction by Public Clamor Voiced in Many Atlanta Pulpits.

BURNS NOW ON THE GROUND

Will Remain Until He Completes His Inquiry—Frank Answers Se- ries of Unfriendly Questions.

Special to The New York Times.

ATLANTA, Ga., March 15.—In sermons delivered to-day by several of the ablest ministers of Atlanta strong demands were made for a new trial for Leo M. Frank, under sentence of death for the murder of Mary Phagan. All these ministers declare that Frank has not been fairly tried, and that to put him to death under the present sentence would forever disgrace the State. The ministers asserted that in finding Frank guilty the jury simply yielded to public clamor for a victim.

One of the strongest sermons was delivered by the Rev. Dr. A. R. Holderby, pastor of Moore Memorial Presbyterian Church. Dr. Holderby said in his sermon:

As a preacher of the Gospel and as a citizen of Georgia, it becomes my duty for the second time to warn the State of the sin and danger of taking a human life unless it is absolutely sure that that life has been duly forfeited. Leo M. Frank has been condemned to die. I am not asserting his guilt or innocence, nor do I care any more about Frank than I would about the poorest negro in Georgia. I never heard of this man until his arrest.

I would feel it my duty to appeal for a fair trial for any man, and that is what Frank has not had, as every unbiased man must admit—nor is it likely he can get such a trial in Atlanta, on account of the prejudice against him. This should not be, but it is true. It would be unfair to hang a sheep-killing dog on the evidence upon which Frank has been convicted.

Should this man be executed, and it be discovered that he was not guilty, then the State of Georgia would be guilty of an atrocious murder.

The Rev. Dr. L. O. Bricker, pastor of the First Christian Church, also strongly pleaded for a new trial. Dr. Bricker said:

A Fair Trial Impossible.

I believe that you will agree with me in saying that between the day of his arrest and the day of the opening of his trial Frank had already been convicted in the minds of 90 per cent. of the people, solely on the strength of the revolting and seemingly convincing stories reflecting upon his moral character as they were printed in the newspapers.

We were in no frame of mind to give him or any other man under the circumstances a fair and impartial trial. We were inflamed and indignant to the point of unreason. Looking back now, I can see that I was in no frame of mind to grant the accused a fair trial. I thought I was. I remember how bitterly I resented a man saying in my presence, "Frank has not had a fair trial." He had had the sort of trial I wanted him to have, and to admit that it had not been fair would have been to admit that I was unfair and unjust—and we do not readily do that. We believed that he was guilty, and it was the verdict we wanted rather than a trial.

Frank should have a new trial because of the apparent insufficiency of evidence under which he was convicted. Under ordinary circumstances we in the South do not take the word of a negro against the word of a white man, but we were willing to believe the unsupported story of a drunken, worthless, jailbird negro, even after he had sworn to three or four other affidavits and had admitted criminal knowledge and complicity in the crime and was a self-confessed liar and perjurer—in the face of all that, we were willing to believe his last story.

I submit that Frank should have a new trial because, under the awful tension of public feeling, it was next to impossible for a jury of our fellow human beings to have granted him a fair, fearless, and impartial trial. I do not know whether the shouts of the masses of people reached the Judge and jury, but they could not help being deeply impressed and profoundly influenced by what the people were thinking and feeling.

The Rev. C. C. Cary, a leading Methodist minister, after demanding a new trial for Frank, said: "To hang Frank on the evidence of a self-confessed degraded negro perjurer would be nothing short of a legal calamity."

The Rev. F. A. Line, pastor of the First Universalist Church, said: "That Mr. Frank has not had a fair trial—could not have a fair trial under the conditions prevailing at the time—is the conviction of an ever increasing number. This fact in itself should be sufficient for the fair-minded people of Atlanta and vicinity."

The Rev. Julien S. Rodgers, a leading Baptist minister, in a sermon to-night declared:

Leo M. Frank has never been fairly convicted of the crime. I would not hang a yellow dog on Jim Conley's testimony, much less a white man, who comes into court with a character heretofore unchallenged.

The great State of Georgia can well afford to spend a King's ransom rather than hang a man about whose guilt there is, at least, a great shadow of doubt. I am sure, therefore, that Leo Frank should be given a new trial, and, if necessary, a change of venue.

The fact that Frank is a Jew should not discredit him. His race is the miracle of the ages. It stands out conspicuously for patience, forbearance and obedience to law. If Leo Frank is a criminal, it is not because he is a Jew, but in spite of it.

There were also made public to-day scores of letters from men and women in Georgia and other Southern States, declaring that Frank was a victim of public clamor, and that Georgia would be forever disgraced if a new trial should not be granted to him. Papers in Thomasville, Dalton, and other Georgia towns are also quoted as supporting the demand for a new trial.

Burns Again in Atlanta.

Detective W. J. Burns arrived here from New York this afternoon and now will begin active work on the case. Mr. Burns would give no intimation as to his future moves. Whether he would endeavor first to question Jim Conley in the Tower he would not say. It is reported, however, that his first act will be to interview Frank.

Mr. Burns has come for a lengthy stay. Probably he will not leave Atlanta until his investigation has been completed and his final report has been rendered. He has said nothing for publication regarding the investigation he has been making into the case in New York and other cities.

Frank was cheered by the news of Burns's arrival. He had nothing new to say for publication, however. He

Continued on Page 3.

PASTORS DEMAND RETRIAL FOR FRANK

Continued from Page 1.

was visited continually during the day by friends, many of whom remained at his cell for hours. Mrs. Frank also spent most of the day at the Tower.

J. B. Armstrong, a resident of Dekalb County, has succeeded in obtaining many names of Dekalb citizens to a petition for a new trial for Frank. The petition reads:

Whereas, New evidence which tends to confirm the claim of an alibi by Leo M. Frank is being brought to light; and

Whereas, We believe that under the wrought-up condition existing at the time of his trial it was impossible that a fair and impartial trial could have been given; and

Whereas, There does exist very serious doubts as to his guilt or innocence; and

Whereas, There are authenticated instances where the innocent have paid the death penalty when, by the granting of a new trial, the guilt might have been discovered;

We, the undersigned, Therefore, do hereby express ourselves as approving of granting Leo M. Frank a new trial, doing it voluntarily and without the knowledge of Mr. Frank.

Albert McKnight, the husband of Minola McKnight, who gave damaging evidence against Frank at the trial and made an affidavit repudiating it about three weeks ago, was found unconscious this morning near the tracks of the Southern Railway. He had been struck by a train. He was removed to a hospital and may die. McKnight disappeared after making the affidavit repudiating his evidence against Frank. The police declare that McKnight was returning under cover to Atlanta after his disappearance when the accident befell him.