

## THE BROOKLYN COUNCIL.

The Advisory Council, called by Plymouth Church, to deal with certain questions of discipline involved in its recent action in relation to Mrs. Moulton, and Deacon West and others, met on the 15th February, and continued its sessions for about ten days. One hundred and twenty-four churches were represented by pastor and delegate, besides which there were present twelve ministers personally invited, making it the largest Council of such a character ever convened.

The first two questions submitted to the Council related to the teaching of the Scriptures concerning the method by the which connection of members of a church can be terminated; in regard to which the Council decided, "That a church may declare itself released from all responsibility for a member: (1) By finally separating him from its fellowship with censure, after giving him a fair trial and using all reasonable measures to bring him to repentance. (2) It may do the same without formal ceremony in many cases, in which a person signifies by his acts that he has abandoned fellowship with the church in doctrine, or worship, or Christian sympathy. (3) The case may occur that a member should openly and notoriously abandon all communion with the church, and also be charged with a scandalous offence, either by public rumour or by specific allegations. In such a case the church may, to avoid greater scandal, use a wise discretion in selecting the offence on which it shall separate him from its fellowship, and discharge itself from all further responsibility for his conduct and character."

In respect to Rule No. 7 of Plymouth Church, the Council suggested that it is deficient in not providing that notice should be given, when practicable. In

the ordinary practice of the church, the Council found nothing to condemn.

In regard to members who, for various reasons, deliberately, purposely and permanently absent themselves from the services and meetings of the church, without asking for letters of dismission, the Council declared their conviction that such a course is altogether schismatic and unchristian. The example is destructive of all church organization. If a member is so far dissatisfied with the decision of the church that he cannot share in its fellowship, he should at once ask for a dismission in an orderly way.

It further declared that any one who persists in making charges or insinuations of gross immorality against other members of the church, and who declines either to affirm or deny the truth of such reports or of such charges, ought to be cast out from the fellowship of the church.

To the fourth question, viz., "Ought Plymouth Church to have called a mutual or other council of churches, for the purpose of investigating the character of its pastor, when requested to do so by a member of the church who has never submitted any charges against the pastor, and when such request is made for the first time more than one year after an investigation has been had by the church itself, and the pastor has been sustained by a unanimous vote?" the Council reply, that the local church is the tribunal appointed by Christ for the investigation of the offences of its members, and that in the case supposed, "a Council cannot properly be called unless the aggrieved person has submitted specific charges against the pastor and can furnish *prima facie* evidence that he can make them good."

The Council also decided that the com-