

SYNOD OF HAMILTON AND LONDON.

The Synod of Hamilton and London met in Knox Church, Stratford, on Tuesday evening, the 9th inst., at 7.30 o'clock. There was a good attendance of members and a very large gathering of the general public, evidently greatly interested in the proceedings.

The Synod is composed of the Presbyteries of Hamilton, Paris, London, Chatham, Stratford, Huron, Bruce and Manitoba. According to the latest statistical returns, the number of ministers in these Presbyteries is as follows: Hamilton, 35; Paris 18; London, 32; Chatham, 12; Stratford, 16; Huron, 23; Bruce, 24; Manitoba, 14; making a total of 174, with an equal number of ruling elders. The first meeting of the Synod took place in Knox Church, Montreal, in June, 1875, immediately after the consummation of the union of the churches. Rev. Thomas Lowry of Brantford, senior minister of the Synod, presided as Moderator by appointment of the General Assembly, and Rev. Wm. Cochrane, D.D., was elected clerk, a position which he has ever since retained, to the great satisfaction of the entire Synod. Dr. Cochrane's executive abilities and facility for despatching business are of the highest possible order, while his courteous manners and desire at all times to oblige, make him deservedly popular with every one. The next meeting took place in St. Paul's Church, Hamilton, in May, 1876, Rev. J. C. Smith, M.A., then of Hamilton, now of Guelph, acting as Moderator. The third meeting was held in Knox Church, Woodstock, in April of last year, Rev. John Laing, M.A., of Dundas, being appointed Moderator. At that meeting it was carried by a large majority that the next meeting should be held in Stratford.

The opening sermon was preached by the retiring Moderator, founded upon the passages in Malachi ii. 15, and Acts xvi. 31. The discourse was a very learned and at the same time practical one on the family relationship, in the course of which the preacher refuted the atheistic theories of such philosophers as Spencer, and the anti-Christian views regarding this important institution, which are held by many at the present day. The Synod expressed a desire that the sermon should come before the public in some more permanent form, which it is hoped the reverend gentleman will agree to.

After the Synod had been constituted, the roll was called by Dr. Cochrane, the clerk. He then submitted a tabulated statement of all the changes that had taken place within the bounds of the Synod during the year. Only one death had occurred, that of the Rev. George Cheyne, one of the oldest pioneers of Presbyterianism in Upper Canada. The Moderator referred in appropriate terms to this event and stated that "his end was peace." Mr. Cheyne was appointed a few weeks ago a Commissioner to the next General Assembly, but when informed of his election by the clerk replied that "he had a call to a higher Assembly which he expected to obey."

On motion of Rev. Thos. Macpherson, seconded by Rev. R. Hall, and supported in a highly complimentary speech by Rev. Dr. Ure, Rev. R. Hamilton, of Motherwell, was unanimously elected Moderator. Having assumed the chair, the Moderator-elect expressed his high appreciation of the honor conferred on him, and a cordial vote of thanks was given to the retiring Moderator, Rev. John Laing, M.A.

Committees were then appointed on Elders' commissions, on Presbytery records, on bills and overtures, and to audit the treasurer's books, after which the Synod adjourned till Wednesday morning.

Wednesday, April 10.

REGISTRATION ACT.

Mr. Laing, ex Moderator of the Synod, gave in a report, including correspondence with the Premier of Ontario, in reference to the grievance that ministers performing funeral services, should make returns of the death of persons at whose funerals they may officiate. A committee was appointed to consider this important matter and report at a future sederunt.

USE OF THE BIBLE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

Mr. Laing presented a report of an interview held with the Minister of Education, and also subsequent correspondence, in reference to the use of the Bible in public schools. The following is the substance of the report:

A deputation from the Synod of Hamilton and London, consisting of the Rev. John Laing, M.A., moderator, and the Rev. W. Cochrane, D.D., clerk, have submitted for my consideration the following questions, viz:—

1. May the local trustees, without contravening the School Law, require teachers to use the Bible in whole or in part as a text book, giving such instruction as is needed for the proper understanding of what is read?

2. Is there anything in the regulations and programme at present in force to prevent the introduction of such reading of the Holy Scriptures as part of the regular course of instruction and work of the school, when the trustees desire this to be done?

I explained verbally to the deputation my views of the law and regulations upon these important points, and promised to express them officially in writing in order that they might be generally understood.

After giving lengthened extracts from the School Law, the Minister of Education continues:

According to my interpretation, therefore, of the law and regulations applicable to public schools in Ontario, I beg to reply to your two questions in the affirmative, and to advise your synod that, *firstly*, school boards and trustees can lawfully require their teachers to use the Bible or portions thereof as part of the ordinary exercises of the school, giving however, such explanations only as are needed for a proper understanding of what is read, and *secondly*, there is nothing in the regulations or programme respecting the public schools now in force which can prevent the introduction of such reading of the Holy Scriptures as part of the regular course of instruction and work of the school when the trustees or school boards require this to be done. But, on the contrary, the law permits, and the regulations strongly recommend, the daily practice of such religious exercises.

It will thus be seen that it is open to parents generally, whatever may be their different churches, to cordially unite with trustees, school boards and teachers, in promoting such religious exercises in the schools, and thus to improve the character of our youth, and so form a community distinguished not only for its intelligence, but for its fair dealing and law-abiding and moral qualities.

On motion of Mr. Laing, seconded by Mr. King, a series of resolutions were agreed to, thanking the Minister of Education for his courteous answer and the great satisfaction of the Synod with the conclusions at which he has arrived, and indicating other steps to be taken by the other Courts of the Church, and by co-operation with other evangelical bodies to secure united action in the direction desired by the Synod.

OVERTURE ANENT HYMN BOOK.

An overture from the Presbytery of London after considerable discussion, was sent back to the Presbytery to be brought up again at a future sederunt.

PETITIONS FOR THE ERECTION OF A NEW PRESBYTERY.

The Synod next considered petitions transmitted by certain members of the Presbyteries of Huron and Bruce, asking that a new Presbytery be formed, by certain congregations at present within the bounds of said Presbyteries. Representatives from these Presbyteries were heard in reference to the proposed new Presbyteries. On motion duly seconded, the petitions were transmitted *simpliciter* to the Assembly.

SABBATH DESECRATION.

Rev. R. N. Grant, of Ingersoll, the Convener of the Sabbath Observance Committee, gave in the report on Sabbath Observance for the past year. On motion of Rev. Thomas Macpherson, seconded by Rev. J. A. Murray, of London, the following resolution was unanimously adopted:

"Receive the report, adopt its resolutions, commend the diligence of the committee and especially that of the Convener, express its thankfulness that Sabbath desecration on some of our railways is somewhat on the decrease; recommend that the report be printed in the CANADA PRESBYTERIAN, and that the attention of the members of our churches be called to its suggestions, in the hope that they will exercise their influence against every form of Sabbath desecration." The Synod also desires to express its most emphatic condemnation of Sabbath funerals, and would earnestly counsel the ministers within its bounds to refuse the performance of services at said funerals, except in cases of absolute necessity, and calls upon our membership to support their ministers in such action."

The committee on Sabbath Observance was appointed for next year as follows: Rev. R. N. Grant, Convener, Dr. Bell, Dr. Ure, and Messrs. Fletcher, Murray, Burson, ministers, and Messrs. Thomas Gordon, Adam Spence and John Charlton, M.P., elders.

A PROTEST AND APPEAL.

The Synod then proceeded to take up the protest and appeal of Mr. D. McLellan, of Hamilton, against a decision of the Presbytery of Hamilton, in dismissing his dissent and complaint, against the McNab street Church session, which had resolved to submit to a vote of the members of the congregation the question of introducing additional hymns in the service of praise in the public worship of the congrega-

tion. Mr. Laing in the absence of Mr. McLellan from indisposition was permitted as requested by the appellant, to plead his case. Dr. James and Mr. McGuire appeared for the Presbytery of Hamilton.

The clerk having read the papers, parties were heard, after which the Synod proceeded to deliberate.

THE STATE OF RELIGION FOR THE YEAR.

Rev. J. W. Mitchell, M.A., convener of the Committee on the state of religion, gave in the annual report. The report on the whole was exceedingly encouraging and indicated a considerable amount of religious interest and spiritual life in the congregations within the bounds.

After addresses by Dr. Bell, Mr. Straith and others, the Synod resolved to receive the report, to thank the committee, and especially the convener, for their diligence in the matter submitted to them, and that the Synod proceed to confer regarding the topics submitted in the report.

Short and pithy addresses were then delivered by Rev. Messrs. Thomson, P. M. McLeod, D. D. McLeod, McQuarrie, Gordon, Scott and others, and the following recommendations of the committee adopted:

1. That the Synod urge on Presbyteries the holding of an annual conference on the state of religion within their bounds.

2. That the Synod direct each Presbytery to appoint one of its members to receive the reports on the state of religion from sessions, and prepare a report based on them for submission to Presbytery, and that he be *ex officio* a member of the Synod's committee.

3. That the Presbyteries be enjoined to forward their reports to the convener of the Synod's committee at least two weeks before the meeting of Synod.

The committee on the state of religion for next year was appointed as follows: Mr. J. W. Mitchell, M.A., convener, and Messrs. McKinnon, Waits, D. D. McLeod, Hamilton, Goldsmith, Anderson of Tiverton, ministers; and Messrs. J. Henderson, Barr, Gordon, G. Black, Mundell and Ballantyne, elders.

Thursday, April 11.

CHURCH PROPERTY IN ZORRA.

The Synod proceeded to consider a reference from the Presbytery of London anent church property at Brooksdale. Minutes of the Presbytery of London and Stratford were read, and Messrs. Cuthbertson and Murray heard for the London Presbytery, and Messrs. Macpherson, Mitchell and Robb on behalf of the Stratford Presbytery.

After prolonged deliberation the following, on motion of Rev. John Scott, seconded by Rev. Dr. James, was agreed to: Sustain the reference and find in accordance with the acts of the General Assembly, defining the bounds of Presbyteries, that the property being in the county of Oxford, is within the bounds of the Presbytery of London, but as certain persons claiming to belong to the Presbyterian Church of West Zorra, in connection with the Church of Scotland, desire to be associated with the Presbytery of Stratford, instruct these parties to apply to the General Assembly to be placed within the bounds of the Presbytery of Stratford.

NEXT MEETING OF SYNOD.

It was agreed to hold the next meeting of Synod, at St. Andrew's Church, London, on the second Tuesday of April, 1879, at 7.30 o'clock, p.m.

The Synod then resumed consideration of Mr. McLellan's protest against the Hamilton Presbytery. It was moved by Rev. Mr. Cuthbertson, seconded by Mr. McCallum, elder, that "having read papers and heard parties, the Synod, while in certain circumstances they might have refrained from strict adherence to the letter of terms of union of the churches in 1861, yet for the conservation of the rights and interests of the appellant, and for the purpose of checking a growing disposition in congregations to anticipate the action of superior courts in matters not yet legislated upon, sustain the protest and appeal, express regret that dissension has to any extent been aroused within McNab street congregation, Hamilton, and counsel them to consider one another, and seek for those things that make for peace."

It was moved in amendment by Rev. Jno. Thompson, seconded by Rev. W. T. McMullen, that "papers having been read and parties heard anent the protest and appeal of Mr. D. McLellan against the finding of the Presbytery of Hamilton, sustaining the session of McNab Street, the Synod now dismiss said appeal, and sustain the finding of the Presbytery in the matter."