

THE SYNOD OF TORONTO AND KINGSTON.

SECOND DAY EVENING SEDERUNT. *Continued.*

Rev. Principal Grant, on moving the adoption of the Report on the State of Religion, said he was sure they all sympathized with its hopes. They all felt, he was satisfied, that at the very best statistics gave a very inadequate representation of the Christian life and work, just because we could not delineate in words, or tabulate the facts of religious life. We felt that not only when we came into personal contact with Christians, but when we considered the numerous *media* through which these reports came. The facts went from the session, through the Presbytery and the Synod, to the General Assembly, and the number of the *media* equalled the number of removes from the facts of the case. The reports, too, were determined very much by the individual temperament and character. There were some who looked at the world in a very gloomy way, always thinking it was growing worse. Others, again, regarded it with sanguine feelings and hopes. Of course these two opposite elements enabled us to strike a fair balance, and from a great many reports we could form a good average. Then, there was a very great art in making up statistics. Some men could make bricks without straw, while others could not. Some men could parade everything a congregation was doing in such an attractive way that you would think it a marvellous congregation. Others limited themselves to certain lines in reporting, and the congregation did not appear so favorably. The same congregation in the hands of different men might present a very different appearance, although the facts were the same. He believed our views of what constituted Christian Character and work were often narrow and conventional, misleading, and unreal. Hence, we sometimes did not get included in our reports a great deal of what was genuine Christianity, and a great deal of what was not genuine was put down as genuine. It was a fact much to be deplored that in many of our congregations some of the strongest men intellectually, morally, and religiously, were not members of the Church, partly because these persons themselves had misleading ideas of what Christian profession meant, and partly because all had narrow and conventional notions. Still, notwithstanding all these things, it was absolutely necessary that they should have these reports and these statistics, in order that the mind of the Church might be turned to the subject of them. Christian life and work were simply what the Church existed for—not for the sake of its machinery. The meeting of a Church Court should not be wholly given to the machinery of the Church, but should be a religious stimulus to the neighborhood in which it met. In this connection he suggested that it might be advisable for them to copy their Methodist brethren in transacting matters of mere machinery in private, and reserving their public gatherings for the consideration of the broad objects of the Church. They were all pained to notice that the judicial cases before the Church Courts on the other side of the Atlantic were carried on amid scenes of tumult which could never occur in the well-regulated Presbyterian Church in Canada. He was convinced that the effect of such scenes on the outside public must be bad, and thought it would be better to discuss them in private. The Presbytery on the one hand and the General Assembly on the other might well perform the mechanical business of the Church, while it appeared to him that the Synod, which was at present little more than a forwarding body, had special qualifications for taking up the subjects relating to Christian work and character. There were three points he wished to impress in connection with the report. First, the importance of the regular and ordinary means of grace rather than special efforts. During the fifteen years of his pastorate in Halifax fifty or sixty were added yearly to his Church, and although he warmly sympathized with and encouraged every special effort, he could count on his fingers all he received by special agencies. Special efforts were very attractive, they made a great sound and noise, but he was sure they were insignificant as compared to the ordinary means of grace. The temperature of Canada would not be raised by a few magnificent bonfires in different parts of the country. There was a tendency in this age to magnify these methods, and that was the reason he called attention to the subject. It was easy for us to take up a popular cry. To him it was humiliating to see the United States almost on its knees before two men whom God had signally blessed, and he was certain that it was humiliating to them because they had never sought to take any credit to themselves, but had always given it to Him from whom alone was the might and the power. He felt sympathy with the poor man who, finding his efforts to get them to his Church unavailing, said they would be forced to go direct to the Throne of Grace because they could not get Moody and Sankey to come. Their ordinary means of grace was not confined to one place, but extended over sixty or seventy congregations. Secondly, he wished to impress the importance of multiplying agents rather than agencies. Whenever an excitement arose in a congregation the disposition was to multiply agencies, and the minister was broken down with an immense amount of red tape. He was obliged to go to this meeting and that, and instead of finding more work done he found more clattering mechanism. When the spirit of God touched the hearts of any of God's people the minister should, as far as possible, set them to work, and among persons of their own age. He believed the great gap at present in the Church all over the world was just at that time of life when boys and girls had left the Sunday School, and did not join the Church. It was then that they dropped away by the scores and hundreds. Harm was frequently done by speaking to them directly, and his experience was that the best way of getting at them was by means of those of their own age who had been brought under the influences of the Holy Spirit. Again and again such means had availed when the most eloquent sermons, and the most earnest individual appeals from a minister, were useless or did harm. Third, he would speak of the importance of work rather than feeling. He spoke of this just because he had so often heard of some mortal preacher having, after two or three months of

excitement, become fagged out and dilapidated. The attention had been extreme, both with him and the people, but after two or three months his services were not near so pleasant, and after two or three years the case was worse. They could not be too much on their guard in this matter. If there were intense feelings they should be guided into direct and definite Christian work. We were too apt to ignore the great schemes of the Church, on which the spirit of God had set His *imprimatur*, for outside and fancy methods, and it was often just through ignorance. The work of the Church was just to preach the Gospel of Christ in every district in this great Dominion, as well as to send it far hence to those lands where Christ is not known. Agents, to do their work effectively, must be prepared to make sacrifices. "No Cross, no Crown," was now just as true as ever, and ministers must lead their people, and where the minister led his people would follow.

Rev. R. Lorrance then read a memorial from the Kingston Sabbath Reformation Society, setting forth the misobservance of the Sabbath throughout the country, and more especially in Kingston, where steamboats and street cars run ostensibly for the accommodation of persons attending divine worship, and asking the Synod to pass some resolution upon the matter.

Rev. R. V. Rogers, M.A., President of the Society, made a few remarks in support of the memorial, expressing the hope that the Synod would take the subject into their most serious consideration.

Rev. Prof. McLaren, in seconding the motion of Principal Grant, said that there was a close connection between Sabbath observance and the state of religion. Whatever broke in on the day of rest would tell on true religion. He agreed with Principal Grant as to the unsatisfactory nature of statistics. It was a matter of regret that they were partial, as they were. The report had one effect at any rate—it brought them face to face with the true work at which the Church should aim, viz., the salvation of souls, and the upbuilding of Christian people. He also joined with the mover in what he had said as to the superiority of the ordinary means of grace. He had no objection to revivals, but he believed in the revival that came down rather in those that were got up. If ministers and elders did their duty in the way God had appointed they would be amply blessed with results. They should always bear in mind their dependence on God's grace in work for Him, and there was not a man or woman who could not employ his or her other energies in the work for which the Church existed. He hoped the report and the discussion thereon would fit them still more for their duties in Christ's cause.

Rev. Prof. Gregg rose to propose a resolution based on the memorial with regard to Sabbath observance. The force of that document was that the desecration of the Sabbath of which it complained was done in the name of religion. He was lately startled to find the custom of running trains on Sunday at reduced rates was introduced into Canada on the occasion of the visit of a distinguished preacher to Toronto. Those interested in his preaching had induced the Great Western Railway to run a train from Hamilton to Toronto on Sabbath morning, to return in the evening. That, he believed, was a great desecration of the Sabbath, against which the Synod should protest. The interests of religion and of the whole country, politically and commercially, were bound up in a strict observance of the Sabbath. It would be dangerous both to religion and to the State to give it a loose rein. He moved that the Synod receive the memorial of the Kingston Sabbath Reformation Society, regret to find that the sanctity of the Lord's Day is interfered with by railroad, steamboat, and street car companies, and earnestly urge all officers and members of churches to use their influence in endeavoring to counteract Sabbath desecration by these companies, as well as other forms of Sabbath breaking.

On the suggestion of the Rev. Principal Grant, the report and the memorial, which were originally intended to be considered together, were taken up separately.

Rev. W. M. Roger, of Ashburn, felt forced to say something in favor of special services, because the addresses just delivered tended to diminish the valuation placed upon them, and because he believed that sufficient was not usually said in favor of such services. He had not expected such strong words against them from Principal Grant, who had written an able article recently in advocacy of and welcoming the restoration of the ancient order of the Church in having evangelists. He proceeded to speak warmly from his own experience in support of special evangelistic services, remarking that he trusted the time would soon come when they would be looked upon no longer as special, but as ordinary means of grace. God's blessing had attended these means abundantly, and he felt very sorry that words should have gone forth which would have the effect of belittling them.

Rev. Prof. McLaren expressed his regret that he had been misunderstood as being opposed to special services. On the contrary he had held special services himself, but he desired to impress the fact that the great work of the Church was the ordinary means of grace. When there were special circumstances calling for special services by all means let them be held.

The motion for the adoption of the report was then carried.

Rev. Dr. Reid seconded the motion of Prof. Gregg, which he could have wished had gone further and been broader in its terms. He was happy to say that in Toronto the street cars did not run at all on Sunday. It was needful for them to look at the whole social tendency of the present day. He thought we were running in the direction of the lax continental custom of observing the Sabbath in a way different from that to which we had been accustomed. It would be wise to impress upon the people the importance of keeping up the old practice of spending the Sabbath.

Rev. Dr. Robb suggested a means of stopping the running of street cars, to obtain the united pledge of all Christian people that if they run on Sabbath they would not patronize them on week days.

Mr. Wm. Adamsen remarked that the President of the Kingston Street Railway Company had been an earnest Sabbath School worker in Toronto, and he had no doubt if

representations were made to the Company through the President that the practice would be stopped.

The motion of Prof. Gregg was then put and carried.

The following committee on the State of Religion for the ensuing year was appointed:—W. M. Roger (convener), Prof. Mowat, John Gray, R. D. Fraser, E. D. McLaren, J. K. Smith, D. Morrison, Donald Fraser, Alex. Bell, ministers; Archibald Campbell, W. Horan, and Hon. John McMunnich, elders.

The Synod then adjourned.

THIRD DAY.—MORNING SEDERUNT.

The Moderator took the chair at ten o'clock.

After devotional exercises and routine, the Clerk read the report of the Committee on the Records of Presbyteries, reporting those of the following Presbyteries to have been carefully and correctly kept:—Kingston, Saugeen, Peterborough, Guelph, Toronto, Lindsay, Barrie, and Whitley. No record from the Presbytery of Owen Sound having been presented, it was agreed that that Presbytery should be ordered to send their record up to the next meeting of Synod.

The Auditors reported the accounts of the Treasurer to be correct. They showed a balance in his favor of \$76.67, and arrears due amounting to some \$28.

The report was adopted.

The Clerk read a protest and appeal from Rev. Messrs. McMillan and Moffatt against a decision of the Presbytery of Saugeen with regard to a petition from the trustees of Knox Church, Mount Forest, praying the Presbytery to instruct Mr. John Martin, an elder and former trustee of that Church, to hand over to the trustees or to the Presbytery the patent deed of the plot of ground on which the Church was built. The Presbytery's final decision was, that the case being one of civil right, they should not interfere, although they thought that Mr. Martin should hand over the deed. The appellants contended that it was one of ordinary administration of Church affairs, involving congregational and Presbyterial rights, and that the Church was competent to settle such matters independent of the civil authority. Mr. Martin, it appeared, claimed to be still a trustee, and the only one constitutionally elected, and therefore, entitled to hold the deed. He also alleged a claim on the Church property amounting to \$2,000, for money which he had advanced. The various parties interested were called to the bar of the Synod and heard.

Rev. Mr. McMillan, pastor of the church affected, first addressed the Synod, reviewing the facts of the case at length. He accused the Presbytery of having acted inconsistently and irregularly—inasmuch as they had originally agreed to request Mr. Martin to hand over the deed, and afterwards decided to the contrary effect without rescinding their original resolutions. He stated that Mr. Martin had left Knox Church, Mount Forest, altogether, and had therefore no right to hold the deed. He went on to argue that disputes of this nature should be settled within the Church.

After a few remarks by Rev. Mr. Morrison in the same strain as the last speaker,

Rev. Wm. Park, Clerk of the Presbytery of Saugeen, replied on behalf of the Presbytery. Their inconsistency had nothing to do with the case. As to the independence of the Church, it was independent in spiritual things and in spiritual things only. Our Lord had observed that principle by refusing to interfere on the occasion when one went to him and asked him to compel his brother to divide his inheritance with him. That was a matter of property quite similar to the present.

Rev. Donald Fraser, of Mount Forest, followed to the same effect. If the Church could deal with matters of this kind why did they go to the Legislature of Ontario for Acts of incorporation? Why not go to the General Assembly? The appellants really wanted the Synod to usurp the functions of the Court of Chancery.

It being one o'clock the Synod rose.

AFTERNOON SEDERUNT.

On the Synod resuming at three o'clock,

Rev. Wm. Donald, Port Hope, read an obituary of the late Rev. J. M. Roger, M.A., pastor emeritus of St. Paul's Church, Peterborough, who died on the 8th of January last at the age of seventy-one. It was adopted.

Rev. J. M. Fraser resumed the discussion on the dissent and appeal from the Presbytery of Saugeen. The Presbytery had done all they could in the matter, and even if they were competent to order Mr. Martin to return the deed they had no means of enforcing their order. He hoped the question would be settled speedily and amicably.

In the course of further discussion,

Rev. Prof. Gregg remarked that it was of no importance who held the deed so long as its duplicate was registered.

Rev. Dr. Robb moved "That the appeal be sustained, and that the Synod request Mr. Martin to give up the deed and resign his position as trustee of Knox Church, Mount Forest." He was not going to enter into the merits of the case, but he thought this was the best way to remove the difficulty.

Mr. Taylor, Toronto, in seconding Rev. Dr. Robb's motion, remarked that in a strict matter of law Mr. Martin was right, but morally he was wrong. He would have acted much more wisely if he had given up the deed at first.

Rev. D. J. Macdonnell moved, in amendment, "That the appeal be dismissed and the action of the Presbytery be sustained, but that the Synod request Mr. Martin, who has ceased to be a member of Knox Church, Mount Forest, to resign his position as trustee." Of course the giving up of the deed would naturally follow.

The motion of Rev. Dr. Robb was carried by a vote of fifteen to eight.

The Commissioners from the Presbytery of Saugeen declined to acquiesce in the decision of the Synod, but stated that they would not appeal to the General Assembly.

The reference from the General Assembly respecting the bounds of Toronto and Barrie Presbyteries was deferred till next meeting of Synod, the parties not being present.

The clerk read references from the Presbyteries of Owen Sound and Barrie respectively, asking the Synod to agree to the transference of the Parry Sound and the Collingwood Mountain missions from the former Presbytery to the latter.