

THE CASE OF DR. FERRIER, AND THE
CALEDONIA CONGREGATION

Toronto, Aug. 21, 1850

MR. EDITOR,—

In name of the Commission appointed by last Synod, in the case of Caledonia, I beg your insertion of the minutes and finding of the Commission as duly certified. But before the insertion of these, I request insertion of the minute of the Presbytery of Hamilton, referring the case to the Synod; and then, the minute of Synod appointing the Commissioners.

Yours truly,

ROBT BRASS

"At Hamilton, the 8th day of May, 1850, the which day, the Presbytery of Hamilton being met and constituted, *inter alia*, the case of protest and appeal, against a decision of the Kirk Session of Caledonia and vicinities, was taken up.

Parties having been called, there appeared for the Appellants, Ronald McKinnon, member, Mungo Thorburn, elder, and William Moore, deacon, and there appeared for the Session, Dr Ferrier, Moderator, and Mr John Stark, elder.

The documents on both sides having been read, the parties were heard, the Appellants for themselves, and Dr Ferrier and Mr John Stark for the Session.

Parties were then removed from the bar, when, after deliberation, it was moved by Mr. Bayne, seconded by Mr. Robb, that the Presbytery sustain the protest and appeal, reverse the decision of the Kirk Session, appealed from, but inasmuch as the documents and pleadings which have come before them in the consideration of the case have revealed the existence of evils in the congregation, urgently calling for investigation, with a view to remedy, and inasmuch also, as those evils appear, in a great measure, to have originated in the result of the Presbytery's long dealings with Dr. Ferrier, on the subject of his views on the Headship of Christ, and that the carrying out of the investigations and dealings necessary, would be better conducted by parties who have not been directly involved in the proceedings referred to, the Presbytery submit the case of the congregation to the Synod, with a recommendation that they would appoint a commission of Synod for the purpose specified, and further, the Presbytery appoint the Moderator and the Rev. J. Bayne, to state the reasons of this recommendation to the Synod. The motion was agreed to.

Mr. McKinnon and the Rev. Dr. Ferrier craved extracts and took instruments in the Clerk's hands.

Extracted from the Records of the Presbytery of Hamilton, by M. Y. Stark, *Presbytery Clerk*."

Minutes of Synod appointing the Commission.

On Tuesday, the 11th June, 1850, the Synod took up the reference from the Presbytery of Hamilton, respecting the Congregation of Caledonia, when after discussion, it was agreed "that the Moderator, Dr. Burns, Mr. Harris, Mr. Ball, Mr. McMurray, Mr. McLeod, Mr. McKenzie, ministers; Mr. Osborne, Mr. McLellan and Mr. Blain, elders, be appointed as a Commission of Synod, to visit the Congregation of Caledonia, and they are authorised to meet with the minister, session, and congregation there; to inquire into the evils alleged to be existing there to the hindrance of unity, mutual confidence, and edification; authorise them to act with the usual powers of a Synodical Court of review; and if they fail in their endeavours to establish harmony in consistency with the finding of the recent commission, as authenticated by this Synod, power is hereby granted to proceed to final judgment according to the laws of the Church, notwithstanding any appeals that may be attempted to be taken from their finding. If they see cause for libel, they shall commit the procedure into the hands of the Presbytery of Hamilton, who are

empowered, assisted by the Commission, or any three of their number, to proceed to a judgment in the case, staying, nevertheless, a final sentence in the case of appeals"—(*Minutes of Synod, 1850, p. 22*)

Minute of first meeting of Commission.

CALEDONIA, 9th July, 1850.

This day the Commission of Synod on the case of the congregation of Caledonia, met—present, Dr Burns of Toronto, and Mr. McLeod of Cobourg, ministers; and Messrs. James Osborne and Donald MacLellan, elders.

There met with the Commissioners, Dr. Ferrier, and Messrs. James Stewart and Mungo Thorburn, elders, in Caledonia, with Messrs. Lewis, Samuel Moore and Wm. Moore, deacons there; and Messrs. Ronald Mackinnon, Treasurer to the building fund, and O. C. Buck, a member of the building committee and superintendent of the Sabbath-school. Also, Messrs. James Douglass, elder, from Ancaster, and James Stark, elder, from Oneida. There were present besides, a large number of members and adherents from all the stations.

The meeting was constituted by prayer, and Dr. Burns chosen Chairman, and Mr. Osborne, Clerk.

The minute of Synod appointing the Commission, was read, together with minutes of the Presbytery of Hamilton regarding the case of Mr. Mackinnon and others, and minutes of last Synod and of the Commission in October last, regarding the case of Dr. Ferrier.

There were given in to the Commission three documents on opposite sides of the matter at issue; one, an address to Dr. Ferrier, signed by a large number of members and adherents of the different congregations within the bounds of his pastoral charge, pledging approval of and adherence to Dr. Ferrier as their pastor; and the other two, from members, adherents, and Sabbath-school teachers, declaring their disapproval of the sentiments of Dr. Ferrier, as published, and of his manner of acting in reference to those sentiments. All these papers were read, and ordered to be kept *in retentis* by the Chairman and Clerk.

The minutes and relative papers, in the case lately before the Presbytery of Hamilton, having been read and considered, the Commission found that they had nothing whatever to do with that matter, in regard to its merits, as the decision of Presbytery had been acquiesced in by all parties, and the Synod had given to the Commission no authority to review it. The only thing with which the Commissioners felt they had to do was, the obligation and duty of the Session of Caledonia to give effect to the finding of the Presbytery in regard to the individuals who had been suspended from privileges, and who by the Presbytery had been substantially reponed. Whereupon Dr. Ferrier was asked whether he and the Session of Caledonia had held any procedure on the sentence of the Presbytery of Hamilton, in the case of Mr. Mackinnon and others, to the effect of giving to these persons the benefit of the decision then come to, and from which no appeal had been taken by any party. Dr. Ferrier stated in reply, that no proceedings whatever had been held since the meeting of Presbytery; that he had not considered any thing of the kind as necessary; but that he was willing to read the sentence of Presbytery at the first meeting of the congregation; stating, at the same time, that whatever he might do at the instance of the Commissioners, he could not give the persons concerned a place in his affections.

The Commissioners agreed to record their regret at finding that no steps had been taken, with the view of restoring the suspended members to their status, in conformity with the sentence of Presbytery, as this necessarily interposed a serious obstacle in the way of a harmonious adjustment of differences betwixt Dr. Ferrier and a portion of his people.

The Commissioners having heard various state-

ments on both sides, in regard to the present unhappy condition of things in the congregation of Caledonia, were of opinion that the main cause of differences in the congregation, was to be found in the publication of certain views of doctrine by Dr. Ferrier, and in his consequent actions thereunto; all of which matters had been judiciously considered and decided on either by the Synod or by the Presbytery of the bounds—all which sentences or decisions have become final. In order, therefore, to find out to what extent this main or only cause of difference may have been removed, or its influence lessened, Dr. Ferrier's attention was directed by the Commissioners to the different points at issue.

In compliance with the spirit of the instructions of the Synod, at its late meeting on the review of the Commission record, it was agreed to ask Dr. Ferrier what may have been his sense of the import of the pledge given in his letter to the Commission in October last, as referred to in the minute of Commission of that date. This having been done by the Chairman, Dr. Ferrier declared it to be his meaning, that if the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Canada would let him alone in holding and asserting his views, he would also let them alone; but would not remain silent if the principles held by the Secession Church, on the power of the civil magistrate, were attacked.

Dr. Ferrier also declared that, in reference to his views, as published in his pamphlet entitled "*The Tower of Babel*," he still adheres to these, and farther, that he held to the principles of the Free Presbyterian Church of Canada only in so far as they are in unison with those of the Secession Church.

The Chairman having referred to a report current, that Dr. Ferrier had not obtempered the appointment of the Moderator of Synod, and of the Governor General, in regard to the duty of public thanksgiving for the removal of cholera from the land, acknowledged that the report was correct, and assigned as his reason, the pledge he had given to the Commission in October, not to agitate such questions among his people. With this explanation the Commissioners felt themselves much dissatisfied.

Dr. Ferrier was heard at length on all the bearings of the case, as were all the parties concerned. Liberty was also given to various members of the congregation and adherents present, to declare their sentiments freely.

Two hours were spent in communings more private betwixt the Commissioners and Dr. Ferrier, along with the parties above named; and four hours more in public discussion of the whole subject, in the usual place of worship. The topics on both occasions were substantially the same.

Each of the Commissioners having deliberately stated his sentiments, it was resolved to adjourn the meeting for a few weeks, in order to take time for serious deliberation in regard to the whole matter, before coming to any decision, in terms of the Synod's minute.

In every part of the proceedings of this day, the Commissioners were all of one mind on every point.

It was left to the Chairman and Clerk to convene the next meeting, where and when they might think proper; and the meeting was thereafter closed with prayer.

Minute of second Meeting.

At Hamilton, and within the Vestry of Knox's Church there, August 13, 1850,

This day the Commissioners on the case of Caledonia again met, pursuant to notice in the *Ecclesiastical and Missionary Record*.—There were present, Dr. Burns, Mr. McLeod, and Mr. McMurray, of Brockville, ministers, with Messrs. Osborne and McLellan, elders.

The meeting was opened with prayer by the Rev. Mr. McLeod. Dr. Burns was chosen as chairman, and Mr. Osborne, clerk.