Toronto Prosbytery. rev. Mr. Magdonnell's case.

DISCUSSIO...-DECISION OF

On Thursday 4th inst., a pro ro nata or pecial mooting of the Presbytery of To into was hold in the Lecture-room, oz Church. There was a large attend Muoz Church. There was a sun, among since of ministers and elders, and among many were inauty adies; who manifested much interest in the receedings. The members of the Pres-tylery present were the following:-Rev. or. Topp, Modorator, the Revs. Dr. founings, W. Reid, Jas. Dick, Robt. Sallace, Prof. Gregg, Jas. Pringle, Joseph herander, Inc. Smith, Principal Cavon, Prof. Mofiaren, Jas. Ring, J. G. Robb, Parid Mitchell, Jas. Carmichael (of King), Beo. Haigh, W. Aitken, D. J. Macdonnell, Theo. Haigh, Y. Altsen, D. J. Blacdonnell, C. Burnheld, Brackenridge, H. M. Camton, Rich, Pettigrow, T. Mackintosh, E. J. McLaren, R. T. Fraser, Alex. Carrick, R. H. Grov, Peter Nichol, Alex. Cilray, Macolm McGilvray; and elders, Hon. J. McGilvray, Adon Poll Mills, Johnson, James McGilvray, Alex B. Mills, Johnson, James J. Mills, Physics, Spanse Brown, Adam Bell, Miller, Hunter, Spence, JoChure, McEachren, Bruce, Gempiel, Olarke, MoMurchy. Rev. Mr. Monteith was appointed Clerk of the Court.

After devotional exercises, The Moderator stated that the meeting and by on called in tanswor to a requisition which had been prosented to him as Hoderator of the Presbytery of Toronto. The requisition was in the following terms: "Toronto, 22nd Oct., 1875.
Rev. Dr. Topp, Moderator of the Presbylery of Toronto:

"DEAR Siz,—the undersigned beg re pectfully to request you as bloderator of he Presbytery of Toronto, to call a mesting of the Presbytory to take into consider-stion the dootrine of a sermon said to have been proached by the Rev. D. J. Macdonnell in St. Androw's Church on the 26th ult., and what action may be necessary there

(Signed) William Roid; William Caven, ohn M. King, Wm. McLaren, J. Gardner Robb, J. M. Cameron, Dunald McIntosh, John Smith, R. D. Frazer, Wm. Gregg, Max. Gilcáy."

In response to that requisition (the Moders for continued) he issued a circular conening a meeting of Presbytery in the folwing torms:

"Toronto, 23rd October, 1875.
"Dear Sir,—Having received a requisi-ion from members of the Presbytery of oronto, requesting me, as Moderator of the Presbytery, to call a meeting of Presylery, to take into consideration the documents. bytery, to take into consideration the doctrine of a sermon said to have been preached by the Rev. D. J. Macdonnell, in St. Andrew's Church, on the 26th ult., and what action may be necessary there anent, I accordingly call a pro re nata meeting of Prosbytery for that purpose, to be held in the usual place, the lecture room of Knox Church, Toronto, on Thursday the 4th day of November. ensuing at day the 4th day of November, ensuing, at

day the am.

11 o'clock, a.m.

"I am, yours sincerely,

"ALEXANDER TOPP,

"ALEXANDER TOPP, "Moderator of Presbytery.

Having thus brisfly explained the ebject for which the meeting had been called, it remained with the Presbytery to take such action as might be deemed explained the desirable.

The Clerk stated that he had forwarded pies of the circular to every member of he Presbytery with two exceptious, and in those cases the members were, respectively, in England and British Columbia, and could

not therefore attend. Rev. Wm. Reid moved "That the Presbytery approve of the action of the Moderator in calling this meeting;" and expressed regret that on account of seniority his name appeared at the head of the requisi-tion. He had not had the pleasure of knowing Mr. Macdonnell so long and so intimately as some members of the Pres bytery had, but from their first acquaintsace he had learned to respect that brothor's talent, to admire his energy, devotedness and activity as a Christian worker and to love him for his genial and amiable disposition. When a few months ago they found themselves all standing on a common platform at Montreal, when the union of the Presbyterian Churches was accomplished, he rejoiced in the prospect of being brought into closer relations with Mr. Macdonnell, and he hoped that anticipation would still be realized. He trusted the result of the conference to day would be that confidence would be restored again, and they would be able to keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace. Ho was confident he expressed not only the opinion of those who had signed the requisition, but of every member of the Presbytery, when he said that towards Mr. Macdonnell personally they entertained the most friendly and kindly feelings. Of course they were all bound to hold to what they believed to be the truth, and to vindicate it, and to secure the unity, good, and peace of the Church with which it was their privilege to be connected.

Mr. Dick seconded the motion, which was

The Clerk announced that he had received two commissions of elders, but ander the rules their reception was not in

The Moderator concurred in this opinion. Rev. Mr. Robb submitted that the Con-sitution of the Court was always in order. and if the commissions were rejected, some other reason must be assigned than that

Ray. Mr. Reid agreed with this view. The constitution of the Court was a question that could properly be considered at a prore is shall go away into overlasting punished meeting. It was not business to be mont; but the rightsous into life eternal, transacted after the Court was constituted. The interest of the country of the c that could properly be considered at a pro re but it was an act connected with its son-me, one it off; it is better for thee to en-

The Clork remarked that if the commis sions were received their reception was recorded as part of the business per-formed. He had arked the opinion of several Clerks of Prosbytories, and they unanimously agreed that such commissions could not be recoived at a provio nata or

Professor Gregg said that after an experience of twenty years as Presinctory lark, his opinion was in unisan with that f Mr. Robb. He moved that the com missions be read.

Mr. Dick seconded the motion, which

was agreed to.
The Moderator observed that he strongly held the opinion that commissions could not be reed at a pro re nata meeting. They did not constitute the court at that meeting, he cause it had been done at a previous meet ing, and indeed could not be done at a regu

The commissions, which were in farour of ciders W. Hunter and J. McCraken, were then read and susteined, and those gentle-men took their sea's in Presbytery. Rev. Dr. Prondfoot of London, and Messrs, Fletcher and Smith, of Hamilton,

were admitted to sit as corresponding

the attention of the Presbytery to the doc trine of the sermon said to have been

Rev. Principal Caven then rose to call

preached by Mr. Macdonnell in St Andrew's Churon in September last, as 'set forth in the requisition. He said he would be especially careful in any remarks he offered not to assume that the report published of the serm in was a correct report of the ser-mon preached, for he had no right to assumo that such was the in t. moreover, be distinctly understood that Mr. Macdonnell was not under process at that meeting of Presbytery, and they had no right to put him under process just now. That meeting was entirely of a proliminary character, and if Mr. Macdonnell, as they carnestly trusted he would see his way to do, should disclaim that report, and state that it was not a correct report of the sermon he preached, then, of course, he must be held as absolved altogether from any responsibility in the matter. At the same

time, that report of his sermon had been published, first in a Montreal paper, and afterwards in a Torento and other journals. While it would be quite illicit to assume that that was teally the sermon Mr. Macdonnell prenoted, and he was responsible for the details of the report, the publication of it brought the matter so prominently before the Presbytery that it was bound to take cognizance of it. Before off ring any further remarks, he desired to say how entirely Mr. Reid had expressed his lieved the sentiments of the whole Presby tery, in regard to Mr. Macdonnell, He would like to say with white regret he took any part in the present proceedings, and with what esteem his regarded Mr. Macdonuell, the considence he had in his integrity and thorough uprightness, as well as the great record he anterior of the shifts. respect he entertained for his abilities, and love for him as a man; and nothing would give him more regret than to eay a word that would pain Mr. Macdonnell or any of his friends. He trusted he would use no such word. The Presbytery had to consider carefully what was the doctrine of the server in anadian classes. mon in question, always remembering that they did not hold the published report as Mr. Macdonnell's unless he admitted its accuracy. The first point in regard to winel the Presbytery should satisfy itself, was is to what the sormon was really intended to teach or to prove, or what might be its dift or scope. He had carefully read the sublished report, and from it he though the hishod report, and from it he though the object of the discourse was this—to prove that in the matter of the duration of plushment in a future life, the Church, oring to the uncertainty as to the teaching & Serpture, ought not to define anything a regard to it and not to creat any profession of to it, and not to exact any prossion of faith on the part of its ministers and elders. Itshould be carefully borne in mid that the discourse did not preach Universitient that it was not aplea for Universalisms that docwas not a plea for Universalisms that doctrine was usually understood It did not affirm, as Universalism unifically did, that God simply on the ground offils character, upon the ground of His jusée, or even His mercy, apart from Christwould certainly saveall men, and noneworf be punished in the future life. The discuss certainly did not affirm that are a certai lournal had denot mure me. The discusse certainly did not affirm that, as a certai journal had declared it did. Still furth, it did not affirm what was called the decrine of restoration—the doctrine, imely, that all man at some future periods might be a period way remade mentals brought to the at some future periods might be a period very remote, would be brought to the Father in Christ id would be saved through Him. Hesed not explain to the Court the distinct between ordinary Universalism and is doctrine of restore. Universalism and it doctrine of restore. Universalism and it doctrine of restore. It is saring id not teach dogmatically the latter atrine, but the drift and scope appeared be this: In the present state of the evisco regarding the subject, owing to the if that a great many that state of the evidence of that a great many pas-owing to the t that a great many pas-sages of Soripio seem to affirm the ond-sages of prohimout, and that another

sages of Scrips seem to speak as if there class of passes seem to speak as if there class of passes seem to speak as if there class of passes seem to speak as if there class of passes seem to speak as if there would be relation, and that it was difficult to really for those passages, it was the proposition of round in the proposition of faith on the part exact any ofession of faith on the part exact any ofession of faith on the part of its might of its might be reported by the passages which in the roundy to affirm the endlessness in the frongly to affirm the endlessness seem thment, such as the following:—
of pill. 32—"And whoseever speaketh
Mat. against the Son of Man, it shall be an him; but whospever speakethe for the Holy Ghost, it shall not be Sen him, neither in this world, neither []e world to come." Matt. xxv. 46—And

he cast into hell, into the five that never chall be quenched. I John v. 16-If any man see his brother, sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give thin life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he chall pray for it. 2 Thess. i. 9—Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. and from the glory of His power." These were passages brought forward as scenning to affirm the ordinary doctrine upon that subject, and there was no attempt made in explain away those passages, or to distort them and make them appear to favor the other doctrine. There was almost no criticism brought to bear on those passages, according to the report of the sermon. Then there followed a list of passages that night scom to look in another direction, that might soom to hint at a restoration at some future time; for instance, the following —I Cor xv, 22 - "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." 25th verse—"For he must reign till He hath put all enemics under his feet; the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." 28th verse—"And when all things shall be sub jued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subjected unto Him that put all things under Eim, that God may be allin all." Phil. ii. 9. 10—"Where fore God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should how, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the carth." Ephesians i 10-"That in the dispensation of the fullness of things, He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in hearen, and which are in earth; even in Him." And in the similar passage in Colossians i. 19, 20—"For it pleased the Father that in Him shall fullness dwell; and, naving made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven." And here (said Principal Caven) was the manner in which they were treated, for in order that no injustice might be done it was well to quote the words as reputted. "I have read," said Mr. Macdennell, "links adozen assages on one side, and half-a-dozen on the other, and I repeat that the teaching of the Scripture is not so clear on this matter as the majority of good men and matter as the majority of good men and good women have thought, and as it is stated to be by the Confession of Faith of our own Church. I do not say that the Confessions of Faith of any othe Church are wrong or not; but I do say that this ought not to be made a matter of faith on the new factor of the north of the north of the left an open question for further investigation. For if you ask and is accept these statements about the fire and the worm, I must ask you to accept the other, which says that 'as in the old Adam all died, so in the new Adam shall all be made alive." After a longthy extract from Tenayson there was this sentence, which, if it was a there was this sentence, which, if it was a genuine expression, he would more regret than almost anything he had read:—"I think the Christian Church, instead of putting into its Confessions of Faith that there is to be eternal punishment for the asjority of the human race, would be wiser to sit down in a devout posture and study Romans, and Ephesians, and Colos-sians." A plea was put in for liberty in regard to the doctrine of the eternity of punishment. While the doctrine of restoration was not plainly onunciated, the general tone and toudency of the discourse was an argument for that doctrine. was only honest to say that, in his opinion, while restoration was not, affirmed, the manner in which the subject was handled is clined the mind very considerably in favor of that view. The text was the 5th chapter of Romans, from 12th verse to the end, and after putting torward very well the theories held as to the exposition of the whole passage, Mr. Macdonnell said: -" I state the question boldly, for this is the question we have to face; and I in t simply didn't preach on these verses two or three Sundays ago, because I didn't know exactly what to say on the point. Plain men reading these words without any theology in their heads, and without any preconceived notions, will say that it means that all men who became sinners through Adam, are to be made hely through Christ; candidly, that is what it does mean " The Presbytery (Principal Caven proceeded) needed to be reminded that Mr. Macdonnell could not be hold bound by the report, b t if his words were correctly represented, the passage was in-consistent with the general position taken throughout the discourse. Further on in the sermon the question of the salvation of infante was raised, and then there was the following passage:-" Here is the question :- Can God, through all eternity, I ok complacently upon not only the misery but the sin of the lost? I heard a good man say not long ago-speaking of this very matter-of how it would affect the redeemed in heaven to Luow that there are thousands of mon suffering in hell-that we, who are going about our ordinary occupations in this city, do not have our happiness interfered with because we know that there is a certain number of persons in pri on No! and why not? Because we have not enough of the love of God in our hearts. But how about God? may forget, and eat, and drink, and be merry, while there are souls there pining in wretchedness. But how about God? You talk about prison walls . are there any prison walls that will shut to mon's spirits from the Father of Spirits? Ah, no, and there is a kind father whose son is lan-guishing in the Central Prison! He does

not forget-while we are all forgetful--that his boy will lave to be there fo.

mouths and years betwee he will get into the sunshine again. Can the Father of

Spirits, think you, forgot His poor last, brought before them; it was, indeed thoust

ones who are grashing their tooth in hell? Is an stronger than God? Is the Devil stronger than God? Is evil co exstronger than God? Is evil co existent and conternal with the good? These ere the questions. I don't say No to them, and I won't say Yes, because if that is the case you see you have two Gods." Principal Caven, resuming, said that the import could not be thought to be correct, for the preacher should have said distinctly "no" to those questions. "Was sin stronger than God?" To such a question they would naswer, "No." The preacher here came under the shadow of that great fact that no human intelligence could deal with—the meetery of the origin of syil and its existence in the world. It was the great thought in those passages, and he (Principal Caven) sympathised intensely with his brother. Who had not, who did not, feel their spirits often chafe and even rebel against God in connection with that question? And yet they had nothing to d but humbly to sub-mit. There seemed to be a confusion of two things here that should be carefully kept apart, that was, the physical power with the morel attributes of God. The wition sin exists, but the fact that it exists at all. That was what he (Principal Cavea) could not reconcile with the character of God; but the subject was far above him, and he bowed in submission to the fact that it absolutely exists, and is according to the toaching of Scripture. It was unfortunate that the preacher had thus confounded the physical power with the moral attributes of God. The last soutence of the sermon also went strongly in that direction, it is as follows—" May God parify our hearts, and make us honest, and keep us from turning the Script we simply to meet our own views, but let us patiently, thoughtfully read these wonderful passages that I have read. And it seems to me that if Paul could say with such a triumphant zest that where sin abounder grace did much more abound, so it seems to me there are more astonishing passages, and passages more full of glorious truth, that declare that at some time or other the death, spiritual and carnel, shall be etc. bow, and every tougue confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father, and G d shall be all in all." Those passages, Principal Caven thought, bore out the statement made that there was no cate ortoal affirmation of the restoration doctrine at the same time the general tone and drift of the discourse was in favour of it, inclining the mind rather to believe it than the reject it. That certainly was not the doctrine which was hold by the Church to which they belonged. It was quite unnecessary that he should quote the subordinate standards upon that subject, beonuse to one disputed what the destrine of the standards was; at the same time it would be well to show how decided the standards were upon that subject. In the 33rd Chapter of the Confession of Fath, under the head "The Last Judgment," was the following passage:—"The end of Grd's appointing this day is for the manifestation of the glory of His mercy in the storing subject of the sleet and of His oternal salvation of the elect, and of His justice in the damnation of the reprobate, who are wickedly disobedient. For then shall the righteous go into evariasting life and receive that fulness of joy and re-freshing which shall come from the Lord; but the wicked, who know not God, and obey not the Gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast into eternal torments and be pun-ished with overlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." In another chapter it was stated that the punishment for Adam's sin wesdeath temporal, spiritual and eternal. The belief of that dectrine ran through the whole development of the scheme of grace as set forth in the standards. The Presby tory would not allow its if through outside influence the had no reference to Mr. Macdonnell to be drifted into a general discussion on the question of standards, and the relation of standards to the Bible and the Church. That question was quite foreign to the subject before the Presbytery. But they never called their Confession of Faith anything else than their subordinate standard. (Applause.) They accepted heartily what the Confession said as embodying the truths of the Word of God in all matters of doctrine in the Church. Their relation to the Confession seemed to be this: The Church was agreed as a whole that certain statements in the Confession really represent what Scripture taught on certain doctrines, and the ministers and olders of the Church have put their hands to that document, so that they might have mutual confidence in each other, in regard to the interpretation of Scripture. doctrine of eternal punishment found in the Westminster Confession of Faith was no peculiarity of the Presbyteran Church in Canada, it was the doctrine of all the Presbyterian Churches in the world—It was the dictrine of all sections of the Church, excepting one branch in England. But more than that, it was the dectrine of the Church of Christ at large; it was the ductrine held by the Church of Christ during all c-nturies and in all lands; and without having any sympathy with Ro-manist views, he held that it was a most serious act, in regard to a plain, simple, primary doctrine of Scripture, to stop out i the has of the whole Churca of Christ. He trusted it would not be thought by any member of the Presbytery, or by brothren whose names did not appear on the requisition, and who had not had an opportunity of subscribing to it, or by prothren outside the Presbytery, that they had been auxious to take up a matter which was exceedingly painful to them all. Gross injustice would be due to hunself and the other brothren if any one

should suppose that for a man, it But they could not avoid taking it up. It was

gard to Hr. Madonnell, but in regard to the action of the public press. A report of the sermon in question was scattered over the land. At the time of ordination every minister placed himself under an obligation, equivalent to an oath, to maintain and defend the truth—that which they behaved to be truth—anbodied as it was in the subordinate standards of the Church. Therefore, however much pain it might cost them, they could not avoid look mg at the matter now before the Presby-tory. He would feel extremely glad if his dear brother, Mr. Macdonnell, could see his way to repudiate the discourse, and declare that the doctrines there set forth were not the doctrines lie held. (Applanse.) Presbytery had no wish to unduly press Mr. Macdonnell, they had every considera-uon for the difficulties he might have. They had all difficulties occasionally in regard to passages, and doubts would visit their minds at tunes even regarding cortain dectrines of Scripture. But if those difficulties and doubts did occur, a minister should not go to the public with them, and say that he did not know what was the truth upon this or that matter. The right course to pur-sue was carnestly to study the Bible; to seek light from God in prayer. If those methods failed, the minister should consult with his brothren. Principal Caven concluded by again assuring the Presbytery that the question of the doctrine contained in the sermon under consideration had been forced upon them in such a manner that they were bound to take cognizance of it. REV. MR. REID expressed the hope that

no demonstrations of approval or dissent would take place during the proceedings, which were of a solemn character.

The Moderator expressed a similaride sire, and called upon Mr. Macdonnell to make any explanation in regard to the sermon in question, if he desired to do so.

REV. MR. MACDONNELL then addressed the Presbytory. He said .- I need hardly say that the matter which brings us here to-day has caused me much and anxious thought. I wish to say at the outset, that whatever the result of your deliberations may be, I have no fear that these deliberations will be carried on in any other than a spirit of brotherly kindness. I shall be the last to raise the cry of unreasonable interference; the readiest to admit that the claims of truth are vastly more important than any personal considerations. I have no desire to deviate needlessly from the current teaching of the Church; nor do I wish to have any deviation exaggerated or intensified. I feel it to be necessary to guard against being drawn by the sympathey of those who approve of my utterances, or driven by the opposition of those who denounce them, to take a position which I would not otherwise have taken. Mose-over, while willing to stand or fall by my real opinions, I do not wish to be held respousible for more than I have actually advanced. I trust I can honestly say that I am willing to be guided by "the Spirit of Truth. who has been promised to guidous into all truth; and, further, that I am ready to listen to the counsels of truth-loving men who are older and wiser than myself. While the report which appeared in the Witness and the Mail is, in the main, correct, it is only fair to myself to state that there are some omissions and some alterations—unintentional, no doubt—the general effect of which is to lead to the supposition that I declared my acceptance of the dectrine of the final restoration of all, and denied the eternity of future pun-ishment, whereas I simply stated the difficulty I had in arriving at any conclusion, maximuch as the teaching of Scripture appeared to be conflicting. It is difficult to make verbal corrections, inasmuch as the latter portion of the discourse was not written. On two or three points I can speak with cortainty; though a who speaks rapidly and extemporaneously must always be ready to admit that he may not have said precisely what he intended to say, E. q., one of the strongest statements I made was after quoting Matthew xxv., 46, to the effect that I could hardly see how this passage could be reconciled with any view limiting the eternity of punishment; that these words of Jesus seemed to me the Again in the Scattenee, "Who could read these words \* without thinking that by-and-by the time will come (as the Scriptures plainly teach there will be such a times when all things shall be put under Jesus Christ, etc., the pare thetical clause ought to read thus: "As the Scriptures seen plainly to teach." Again, in referring to the Confession of Faith, I used the following words, which do not appear in the report "I do not say that the teaching of the Confession of Faith on this subject unscriptural." I do not think that the following sentence in the report represents at all fairly the spirit of what was actually said. "I think the Christian Church, insaid. "I think the Christian Churcu, mestend of putting it into its Confessions of Faith that there is to be eternal punishment for the majority of the human race, would be wiser to sit down in a devent nose ture, and study Romans, and Ephesians, and Colossiaus." If I did use such lanand Colossians." If I did use such language I regret it. And I more and there are And I may add that there are a few other expressions—especially one regarding my relation to the Confession of Faith—which I acknowledge to have been unwise and improper, and which but for the excitement of the moment, would have been uttered, if at all, in a different tone. I have the greater confidonce in making the above corrections and explanations, juasmuch as zeveral persons who heard the sermon, and who did not at all sympathize with my difficulties, have volunteered statements which confirm my

nay solf against the positive assertion of the innerestality of saleation.) While I do not (Continue ton fairth page.)!

own recollection. Of this I am muito sure

that again and again I was careful to guard