

GENERAL ASSEMBLY. PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA.

MORNING SEDERUNT, JUNE 20th.

The Moderator took the chair this morning at ten o'clock. The Assembly was constituted with prayer.

THE MACDONNELL CASE.

The Rev. Dr. Bayne, the Convener of the Committee on this case, wished to make a personal explanation. He was not present at the meeting of the Committee at which the report was adopted, and all the way through the debate on this question he was in favor of Mr. Strait's resolution, and was still. He expressed the hope that they might come to a peaceful and unanimous decision at once.

The Rev. Messrs. Smith, of Galt, and McMillan, made similar explanations.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE.

The Rev. Mr. McVicar moved that the Assembly go into the Committee of the Whole to consider this report. They knew the dissentients had withdrawn from the Committee which had somewhat embarrassed the Committee, and he thought that they should go into Committee in order that there might be the fullest opportunity for discussing the report.

The motion was carried, and the Rev. Mr. Frazer was called to the chair.

The Rev. Mr. Smith, of Galt, thought a brief season of prayer would be very appropriate before commencing business.

The Chairman, therefore, called on Mr. Smith, who offered prayer.

The Rev. Mr. McMullen requested that the reference of the Presbytery of Toronto to be read, which being done, he said it appeared to him, as it did when the vote was taken on Thursday night, that the Assembly, in coming to the decision to which they had arrived, had not dealt so much with the reference of the Presbytery as with the statements of Mr. Macdonnell.

It was held to be out of order to bring up that question, as only the report of the committee was under consideration.

The Rev. Dr. Ure said he thought the recommendation of the committee was one which the Assembly might unanimously agree to adopt. While the Church should utter no uncertain sound on the doctrine involved, he thought that, as Mr. Macdonnell's position was not that of clearly defined heresy, the Assembly should imitate the example of other church courts in this matter, by dealing with the accused as leniently as possible. He thought that they should let the matter virtually drop. He could accept the report if the clause requiring Mr. Macdonnell to report to the next Assembly were left out, as he thought that would hamper Mr. Macdonnell's conscience.

The Rev. Professor Bryce, of Winnipeg, agreed with Dr. Ure as to the deletion of the clause referred to. He felt that Mr. Macdonnell would be in honour bound to report at the next Assembly, though they should not compel him to do so. He thought Principal McVicar's motion, which had been adopted by the Assembly, was as good a one as they could have adopted, as it stated very clearly the Churches views on this matter, and at the same time dealt fairly with Mr. Macdonnell.

The Rev. Mr. Smith, of Galt, thought Mr. Macdonnell's views were shown by his speech the other night to be nearer to those of the church than were generally supposed, and he hoped unlimited time would be given to Mr. Macdonnell to consider the matter.

Mr. Smith (an elder) thought Mr. Macdonnell had not contravened any doctrine of the church, but had merely held a doubt. He said that when John the Baptist sent word to Jesus asking Him, "Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" Jesus did not tell the messengers to avoid John the Baptist, as if he was a heretic or not sound. (Laughter.) They should imitate Christ in dealing with this case of mere doubt. (Applause.)

The Rev. Mr. Donald, of Port Hope, thought the attitude of Mr. Macdonnell's mind was one of partial or imperfect belief in this doctrine. When a minister left a theological hall his education was not concluded, and it was assumed that in the course of his study he would meet with difficulties. It was a position in which he himself was ten years ago, and not only young men had such difficulties. Richard Baxter, than whom perhaps no man in the Presbyterian Church in England had been the means of more good, wrote in his autobiography that, even in his old age, he was perplexed with doubts on some of the most fundamental doctrines of Christianity. He thought Mr. Macdonnell's face was towards the light, and that he would yet be in full accord with them. He felt assured that good would result from their being brought face to face with this momentous truth of the eternity of the perdition of the wicked, and if it would lead them to labour with more earnestness to save men from so awful a fate, he would not regret it.

The Rev. Dr. McGregor, of Halifax, moved that the deliverance of the Committee be adopted without the limitation of time. He pointed out that this would not preclude the Assembly from taking up the matter at any time they saw fit.

The Rev. Professor Bryce seconded Dr. McGregor's motion.

The Rev. Mr. McTavish moved the adoption of the report as it stood. He said that if it had not been for the kindly feeling of the Assembly towards Mr. Macdonnell, he (Mr. McTavish) would have been unfavourable to giving any time at all. He contended that the allowing of an evil in the Church—even though an infinitesimal one—would open the flood-gates for following others. If they made the time unlimited it would be admitting an unqualified subscription to the Confession of Faith. He confessed that he had consented to a year being given with great hesitancy. The amount of it was that they should allow of doubts in all cases, or else in no case.

The Rev. Mr. McQuarry, of Princeton, defended the report as it stood, which he thought was very moderate in its demands. He did not think Mr. Macdonnell's views were satisfactory, for he could not possibly see how Mr. Macdonnell could maintain

and defend the doctrine of the Church. If they made the time unlimited, the impression on the whole Church would be that they had practically dismissed the case.

Mr. James Croil wished to make a suggestion that would put an end to speaking. They had spoken for a week, and there were some gentlemen quite ready to speak for another week. He suggested that a conference of the dissentients should be had with the Committee.

The Rev. Principal Caven moved (1) that the report be adopted, except the clause about the time limited, (2) that no decision can be satisfactory which contemplates the state of Mr. Macdonnell's opinion as one which can be permanently allowed as a minister of this church, (3) appoint a committee to consider under what conditions time can properly be granted to Mr. Macdonnell, so as to make it evident that the Assembly is particularly careful to protect the truth in question, while showing all consideration for Mr. Macdonnell in his present state of mental perplexity. He objected to the comparison of Mr. Macdonnell's doubts with those of such men as Richard Baxter, who attributed his to the temptation of evil.

The Committee rose and reported, and the Assembly adjourned for recess.

AFTERNOON SEDERUNT.

The Assembly resumed at three o'clock, and went into Committee of the Whole.

The Rev. G. M. Grant submitted a motion to send the report of the Committee and the various motions to a committee, which he named, with a hope that they might bring in a deliverance which would be acceptable. He expressed dissatisfaction with the finding of the Committee, which he thought had exaggerated Mr. Macdonnell's difficulties, and had not sufficiently regarded his explanations of Thursday night.

The Rev. Drs. Prindfoot and Waters, and the Rev. Mr. MacPherson and the Rev. Principal MacVicar spoke in support of the Committee's report as it stood, and the Rev. David Mitchell supported Mr. Grant's amendment.

The Assembly then adjourned till the evening.

EVENING SEDERUNT.

The Assembly met again at 7.30, and again went into Committee of the Whole.

Rev. Robt. Campbell (Montreal) said it had been conceded in the afternoon that some of the doctrines in the Confession of Faith were not of as much importance as others, and that while divergence might be allowed with regard to some points of it, there must be no uncertainty about this one. He could not accept this position. He thought that when they subscribed to the Confession of Faith they subscribed to all alike. Mr. Macdonnell held that the Confession of Faith should be binding so far as it was in accordance with Scripture, and that was his (Mr. Campbell's) view. It had been said that the standards of the Church could be revised on overture. But how did overtures come before the Assembly? They came from Synods and Presbyteries; but before they came to Presbyteries they must have originated with individuals, and if an individual proposed an overture with reference to the revision of the standards it would be because he had doubts as to their wisdom.

Rev. Dr. Patterson, with a view to overcome the difficulties of those who objected to the time limit, moved an amendment to provide "that Mr. Macdonnell should report his state of mind on this doctrine when called upon by the Supreme Court of the Church," and including all the rest of the resolution proposed by the Committee except the paragraph fixing the time at one year.

Rev. Mr. Sinclair seconded the amendment with reference to the objection to acceptance of Mr. Macdonnell's statement on Thursday night that it would admit a qualified subscription to the Confession of Faith, he read; that if that meant that he (Mr. Macdonnell) would not subscribe to every jot and tittle in it, then they all gave qualified subscription to it. For instance, some might have doubts with regard to the doctrine of the Confession as to the extent of territory covered by the flood, the time occupied in the creation of the world, and marriage with a deceased wife's sister.

Rev. Dr. Cochrane had no sympathy with men who said that the Confession contained small and little things, and they accepted its teaching with regard to the great things, but not with reference to the smaller ones. In subscribing to the Confession of Faith he had subscribed to it as a whole. He agreed in one respect with the statement which had been made that a man should not be supposed to have finished his theological training when he left college. He admitted that he should continue to progress, but when a man left college he should have made up his mind with regard to those fundamental doctrines. He had dissented from the adoption of Prof. McVicar's motion, because he thought it useless to appoint a Committee to confer with Mr. Macdonnell and ascertain his views when they had his views so fully expressed. A Committee was appointed to obtain Mr. Macdonnell's views, however, and not being able to bring into the Assembly anything they had already, that Committee had exceeded their instructions; and, therefore, he (Dr. Cochrane) held; he had been justified in dissenting. It had been said they might, by their course in regard to Mr. Macdonnell, lead other persons to depart from the teaching of the Confession of Faith. To that he replied, "Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof;" let each case be dealt with as it arose. He hoped the resolution proposed by the Committee would not be carried, because he was opposed to forcing a man to make up his mind within a year, and it would be quite competent to take the case up again at the next Assembly.

Rev. Dr. Bell said that in some of the motions it appeared to be assumed that Mr. Macdonnell had denied a doctrine of the Church, which was not a fact. The Assembly therefore stood before the world in the position of men who were fighting about that doctrine; and they ought to avoid that.

After some further discussion a division being about to be taken,

Rev. Mr. Grant said that to save time he would withdraw his motion, because

one side of the House refused to meet with those of the other side; and as compromise must be accepted he withdrew in favour of Dr. McGregor's motion.

Rev. Mr. Robb, thought it scarcely fair for Mr. Grant to state that the representatives of one side of the House had refused to meet with those on the other side. He held that the former had been meeting with the latter in Committee of the Whole all day; and for Mr. Grant to say under those circumstances that those on one side of the House had refused to meet with the representatives on the other side, was something like a misstatement of fact.

The motions were then put and disposed of by the following votes:—

Rev. Principal Caven's, 57; Rev. Dr. Patterson's, 104; Rev. Dr. Patterson's 81; Rev. Mr. McTavish's, 122; Rev. Dr. McGregor's, 71; Rev. Mr. McTavish's, 127. The Committee then rose and reported Mr. McTavish's motion adopted.

Upon the question for the adoption of the report of the Committee of the Whole, Rev. Dr. Patterson again moved his amendment.

Mr. James Croil asked if it were competent at that stage to move that the report be considered clause by clause.

The Moderator said it was not. The amendment was lost by a vote of 77 to 122.

The main motion was then put and carried by 127 yeas against 64 nays.

Rev. D. J. Macdonnell said he supposed he had the liberty to express his regret that the Assembly had not granted the request which he respectfully made the other night that it would instruct the Presbytery of Toronto to proceed regularly by libel, and let him know what the charge was that was formulated against him, so that he might know how he was to defend himself against it.

This speech was greeted by the galleries with ringing cheers and loud applause, which was continued for upwards of a minute. A member of the Presbytery, as soon as he could make himself heard, rose and said that after that exhibition he was not ashamed to stand up and ask that the galleries be cleared. Another member said he seconded the motion. The proposition was received by the galleries with hisses.

Rev. Mr. Grant remarked that the people in the galleries had kept very good order, and he thought that under the circumstances a little expression of feeling from them was excusable.

The Moderator did not put the motion.

Rev. Principal Snodgrass came forward and said—in my own name and in the name of all who choose to join with me, I dissent from the finding of the House, for the following reasons:—

1. That the Committee, in considering the position of Mr. Macdonnell, do not appear to have attached due weight to the full statement of his views submitted by him to the Assembly on Thursday evening last.

2. That the report gives an exaggerated representation of Mr. Macdonnell's attitude towards the doctrine in question.

3. That the deliverance of the Assembly is not fitted, except by undue constraint, to result in the removal of Mr. Macdonnell's difficulties.

The following gentlemen also dissented, some with reasons, and some without:—Revs. J. W. Mitchell, A. Campbell, Wilkins, W. Merkle, Donald, M. W. McLean, Professor Harpe, T. G. Smith, A. H. Cameron, W. W. Ross, Yeomans Sedgwick, Sinclair, and Dr. Williamson, James Peterson, Dr. Ure, D. M. Gordon, Professor Mowat, Donald McDonald, Professor McKerris, J. C. Burgess, W. P. Begg, J. A. Murray, Kenneth McLennan, D. J. Macdonnell, G. M. Grant, Daniel McGillivray, J. C. Smith, Dr. Bell, C. A. Tanner, W. Masson, Waites, Alex. Campbell, James Watson, Malcolm McGillivray, E. D. McLaughlin, Park, Charles Campbell, D. P. Nixon, David Mitchell, Alex. Dawson, Barton, Eakins, Smellie, Dr. Bain, and James Herald, James Croil, H. B. Webster, James Wilson, Alex. Duff, Murray (Halifax), Wm. Mitchell, and George Smith—54, including Principal Snodgrass.

The dissentients also came in for some cheers from the galleries.

Rev. Prof. McLaren moved that a committee be appointed to answer the reasons of dissent, which was agreed to, and the Moderator appointed the Rev. Messrs. Robb, McTavish, and Professor McLaren, for the purpose.

The Assembly then adjourned.

MORNING SEDERUNT, JUNE 21.

The Assembly met again this morning at ten o'clock.

THE MACDONNELL CASE.

Rev. Principal Snodgrass asked if it was competent to give in additional reasons of dissent now.

The Moderator said reasons of dissent could either be given at the time the vote was taken, or at the next sederunt; but reasons had been given in already and it would be for the Assembly to say whether they would allow further reasons to be given in.

Rev. Mr. McTavish remarked that the Assembly had appointed a Committee to answer the reasons already.

Rev. Dr. Ure thought that if reasons could be given in at a future sederunt, it followed as a matter of course that additional reasons could then be given in. The Moderator—Yes, but they can only be kept in *retentis*, not put upon the record.

Rev. Dr. Waters thought that in the circumstances of the case every facility should be given to the gentlemen dissenting to give in additional reasons if they thought fit. Rev. Principal Caven moved that leave be granted to give in additional reasons.

Rev. Principal Snodgrass then read and handed in the following additional reasons:

1. That the deliverance of the Assembly in affirming "that the doctrine of the eternity or endless duration of the future punishment of the wicked as taught in the Confession of Faith is a doctrine of Scripture, which every minister of this Church must hold and teach," prescribes *as to form* a new term of ministerial communion, and is to that extent an addition to the Basis of Union, and an unequalled exercise of authority as if the ministers of this

Church generally were unfaithful in the teaching of this doctrine.

2. That while the report which the General Assembly has adopted, does in one place affirm "that the doctrine of the eternity or endless duration of the future punishment of the wicked, as taught in the Confession of Faith, is a doctrine of Scripture, which every minister of this Church must hold and teach," and in another place declares "that Mr. Macdonnell's mind is in an undecided state as regards the doctrine in question," and while in the last clause of the last paragraph of the report but one, it is implied that Mr. Macdonnell does not accept the teaching of the Church on the subject, and the deliverance of the Assembly does, nevertheless, allow him to continue his public ministry—the effect of the deliverance, is to reduce Mr. Macdonnell's view to "one of those minor deviations from the truth," which has stated in the report of a Committee of the Presbytery of Toronto, received by that Presbytery in the course of the proceedings in this cause, "the Presbytery is at liberty to overlook in one of its ministers."

Principal Snodgrass remarked with reference to the first reason that he felt he did not desire to be told that he must hold and teach that doctrine.

Rev. Principal Caven said there was a matter of fact touched upon in the last reason which he supposed he had liberty to refer to. That part of the report referred to therein was not voted upon in the Presbytery; and he thought therefore that the last reason left a wrong impression.

Principal Snodgrass said he had been careful not to say anything that was not in accordance with fact. The paragraph of the report in question struck him as being one of the most remarkable things ever received by a Presbytery. The report was received, and that was all he said; he did not say it was voted upon.

Principal Caven submitted that the effect of that reason was a reflection on the Presbytery of Toronto, which was not before this Court in any way; and that it was therefore incompetent to receive that reason.

Rev. Mr. Smellie asked if additional reasons could not be answered.

Rev. Dr. Reid said there was no case in which reasons could not be answered.

Rev. Mr. King felt just as Principal Caven did in regard to the reference to the action of the Presbytery of Toronto. He (Mr. King) thought the statement in the reason was technically accurate, but they must have regard to the effect that it would have on those who were not so intimately acquainted with the proceedings of the Presbytery of Toronto as Principal Caven and Dr. Snodgrass. He (Mr. King) thought it was misleading; and it seemed to him that unless it was meant to reflect upon the Presbytery of Toronto the reason would be complete without that statement. He moved that the reasons be referred to the Committee already appointed to answer them, and that the answers be read in the Court just as the reasons had been. He understood that Dr. Snodgrass voted for the adoption of the report to which reference was made, with the exception of a certain clause in it; and it surprised him (Mr. King) to find the use made of that report in the first reason, as well as in the reasons given on the previous night, by one who endorsed the report by successive votes in the Assembly.

Principal Snodgrass was rather pleased Mr. King had referred to that matter, because it gave him an opportunity to make an explanation. He certainly had voted for one motion in preference to another; but the vote was not an absolute one—it was a relative vote. In voting as he had done he had thought that when the Committee of the Whole reported to the Assembly it would be a fair thing to move in amendment to the original motion—which he had not voted for—that the report be considered paragraph by paragraph; and members might recollect that he had distinctly asked the Moderator whether such a thing was competent. The Moderator ruled that it was incompetent, and he (Principal Snodgrass) had nothing further to say.

Rev. Dr. Waters seconded Mr. King's motion.

Rev. Prof. McVicar said his difficulty with regard to the last reason was that it seemed to pronounce the judgment that after their four days' work in this case, the result was that they had actually exonerated Mr. Macdonnell altogether.

Mr. King's motion was carried, and the Moderator added Principal Caven, Prof. McVicar, and Mr. King to the Committee he appointed on the previous night to answer the reasons of dissent.

HOME MISSIONS.

Rev. Robert Campbell presented the report of the Committee to which was referred the report of the Home Mission Committee. The report acknowledged the services rendered the Committee by the Rev. Dr. Cochrane, the Rev. Dr. McGregor, and the Rev. Mr. Warden, and among other things recommended that the thanks of the Assembly be tendered to the Free Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Church in Ireland for their liberal contributions towards this branch of the work of the important services rendered to the Church by the Students' Missionary Association; that while preferring that all missionary work in British Columbia be conducted principally in connection with the Presbyterian Church in Canada, should not merely express its appreciation of the liberal provision made by the Church of Scotland for carrying on mission work there, but also permit the missionaries of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, employed in British Columbia, to work under the direction of the Church of Scotland.

Considerable discussion took place on the last recommendation, the majority approving of adopting it on the ground of expediency, but several strongly opposing the putting of the work now carried on by the Church in the hands of another Church. The recommendation was finally adopted. It being one o'clock, the Assembly adjourned.

AFTERNOON SEDERUNT.

The Assembly resumed at three o'clock.

OBITUARY NOTICES.

Rev. Mr. Fraser (Bond Head) presented the report of the Committee appointed to prepare obituary notices of ministers who died during last year.

DELEGATE FROM SCOTLAND.

Rev. Archibald Henderson, of Crisf, Scotland, delegate from the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and from the Colonial Committee of the Free Church, being about to leave the city, was introduced and briefly addressed the Assembly in graceful and felicitous terms. He was warmly applauded.

SUPPLY OF HOME MISSION STATIONS.

Mr. Bruce suggested that it should be provided that students and licentiate should be required to serve for a certain period at home mission stations before being ordained as settled ministers. He thought that if this were done there would be no difficulty in supplying the stations. He moved that this matter be referred to the Home Mission Committee to consider and report upon at next Assembly.

Rev. Andrew Wilson suggested that each minister should be required after ordination, and before being settled in a pastorate, to serve one or two years at a home mission station.

The motion was carried.

ANSWERS TO REASONS FOR DISSENT.

Rev. J. G. Robb presented the report of the Committee appointed to prepare answers to the reasons for dissent against the finding in the Macdonnell case, which were as follows—the "reasons" preceding the answers respectively, except the two last, which may be referred to above:—

1. That the Committee, in considering the position of Mr. Macdonnell, do not appear to have attached due weight to the full statement of his views submitted by him to the Assembly on Thursday evening last.

In answer to the first reason, your Committee reply that a due consideration of the statement made by Mr. Macdonnell, on Thursday evening last, shows that the more favourable expressions therein implied are neutralized by others indicative of his inability to assent to the views of the Church, and especially by his direct definition of the attitude of his mind towards the doctrine in question as one of doubt, as distinguished from belief on the one hand, and denial on the other; and your Committee are of opinion that so long as the Church demands belief of this important Scriptural doctrine, and Mr. Macdonnell fails to give it, his position will deserve all the animadversion which has fallen upon him; and your Committee add that they fail to discover evidence of any substantial change of opinion from that held by Mr. Macdonnell when he was before the Presbytery of Toronto, or when he addressed the Assembly on Monday night.

2. That the report gives an exaggerated representation of Mr. Macdonnell's attitude towards the doctrine in question.

In answer to the second reason, your Committee reply that they are wholly at a loss to discover the foundation on which it rests. The only statement contained in the report respecting Mr. Macdonnell's attitude towards the doctrine is that he "has intimated that his mind is at present in an undecided state as regards the doctrine in question," which surely cannot be viewed as an exaggerated representation; and your Committee further observe that inasmuch as all the motions submitted to the Assembly approved of that portion of the report which contained the alleged misrepresentation of Mr. Macdonnell's attitude, the dissentients, voting as they did for all those motions which they did, cannot have had any very deep conviction of the reality of the exaggeration.

3. That the deliverance of the Assembly is not fitted, except by undue constraint, to result in the removal of Mr. Macdonnell's difficulties.

If your Committee understand this reason it is based on the idea that the fixing of a time limit within which Mr. Macdonnell is to report, tends to hinder his mind from acting freely and fairly. In answer to this reason your Committee reply:—(1) That the absence of such a time limit would leave it open for a minister to remain permanently in the Church whose avowed mental attitude towards an important doctrine of God's word is not such as the Church demands in her accredited teachers. (2) That God, who knows what is requisite for the right action of the human mind, deals with men upon a time limit. This is apparent, first, from the fact that in His Providence He constantly calls upon men to decide important questions of truth and duty within very definite time limits; and secondly, from the fact that He deals with those to whom the Gospel comes also upon a time limit, calling on them within the term of the present life to accept His salvation, under the penalty of everlasting misery. [First additional reason.]

In answer to the first of these reasons, your Committee reply:—(1) That the deliverance of the Assembly dissenting from, prescribes neither as to form nor to substance a new form of ministerial communion, but is simply declarative of the well-understood meaning in which the Presbyterian Churches from which this Church has sprung have ever held the teaching of the Confession of Faith respecting future punishment, and of the relation thereto which ministers are required to hold. And further, it implies no imputation on the ministers of this Church, but lays down a principle in which the Assembly deemed itself bound to deal with such a case as the one before it. (2) Whatever force this deliverance may be supposed to have, whether in declaring the doctrine of the Confession of Faith or defining the relation of the ministers thereto, it is gratifying to record that in all the four motions submitted to the court, for several of which the dissentient voted, that part of the Committee's report, on which the reason of dissent is founded, was explicitly approved. And your Committee further add, that to found a reason of dissent on a part of a report which by vote a dissentient had endorsed, seems to your Committee of questionable competency. [Second additional reason.]

In answer to this second additional reason...