

Presbytery of Toronto.

MR. MACDONNELL'S CASE—REPORT OF COMMITTEE—ACTION OF THE PRESBYTERY THEREON—THE CASE GOES UP TO SYNOD.

In compliance with a resolution of the last meeting of the Presbytery of Toronto, a meeting of that body was held on Tuesday of last week, in the lecture room of Knox Church, to hear a report of the Committee to whom was referred the case of the Rev. D. J. Macdonnell. The attendance was even larger than that of the former meetings, and among the audience were prominent clergymen of the various Protestant denominations. The Rev. Dr. Topp occupied the chair, and opened the meeting with prayer.

A motion having been made inviting all members present of other Presbyteries to correspond with the meeting, The Rev. Principal Snodgrass of Kingston, and the Rev. Mr. Smellie of Fergus, declined the honor, feeling that in the present circumstances they could not assume the serious responsibilities which were involved in the honor.

After some routine business, The Rev. Prof. McLaren presented the report of the Committee, which was as follows:

"The Committee having regard to the great importance of the doctrine of the Church on future punishment, and the necessity of the Church's testimony to it being unequivocally borne, in opposition, whether to the idea of restoration or to that of the annihilation of the wicked, feels that no decision of this case can be satisfactory, in which that doctrine shall be in any way compromised. The Committee is also very desirous that no injustice shall be done to Mr. Macdonnell in imputing to him any modification of opinion, any attitude to the standards which he does not himself acknowledge as truly representing his position.

With regard to the doctrine concerned, or indeed any doctrine, the following attitudes of mind may exist, viz.: (a) that of unembarrassed acceptance; (b) that of rejection; (c) that of suspense, in which the evidence for and the evidence against seem so clearly balanced that it is felt to be impossible to decide one way or another; (d) that in which the evidence for a doctrine seems to be of such weight in connection with other truths as really to impress it as true.

The Committee having respect to certain verbal statements made by Mr. Macdonnell to the Presbytery, deemed it right, in order to remove all possibility of misapprehension, regarding his views, to endeavour to ascertain whether the position last indicated is that which he occupies towards the Church's doctrine on future punishment. In order to make this point certain, the Committee agreed to put to Mr. Macdonnell the following question, viz.: "Whatever difficulties or perplexities you have in connection with the doctrine of the eternity of future punishment, are you prepared to signify your adherence to the teaching of the Confession of Faith regarding it? This question, and the foregoing basis of this report were sent to Mr. Macdonnell with the intimation that in the event of his seeing his way to give an answer in the affirmative, the Committee would recommend to the Presbytery that the proceedings in the matter be allowed to terminate. This morning the Committee received the following amended statement from Mr. Macdonnell, in connection with which he asked leave to withdraw all previous statements:

"In regard to the doctrine of future punishment I have arrived at no conclusion at variance with the doctrine of the Church. I do not conceal that I had difficulties and perplexities on the subject, but I adhere to the Confession of Faith with regard to it, expressed as it is almost entirely in the language of Scripture."

Your Committee would be prepared to recommend the acceptance of this document were it not for the last clause, viz.: "expressed as it is, almost entirely in the language of Scripture," which is susceptible of a meaning which seriously modifies the admission declared.

With the view of having the withdrawal of the clause, the Committee requested an interview with Mr. Macdonnell, but failed to obtain it.

Your Committee feel that they can only recommend that Mr. Macdonnell be requested either to withdraw the last clause of his amended statement, or to give a direct answer to the question embodied in the foregoing portion of this report. In the event of the clause being withdrawn, or a simple affirmative answer being given to the question, the Committee recommend that the proceedings in the matter be terminated.

All of which is submitted respectively. Prof. McLaren remarked, on submitting the report, that an amendment had been moved by the Rev. David Mitchell and Mr. William Mitchell to the effect that the statement of Mr. Macdonnell should be received. These two gentlemen had entered their dissent to the adoption of the Committee's report which was otherwise unanimous.

Rev. David Mitchell rose and asked leave to present a minority report, which was as follows:—

The Rev. David Mitchell and Mr. Wm. Mitchell dissent from the report, and beg to report as follows for themselves:—

1st. They do not consider that the last clause of Mr. Macdonnell's statement which he now substitutes for all previous statements made by him, necessarily modifies the admission given by that gentleman to the confession on the doctrine in question, now that it is intended to do so.

2nd. They further consider that Mr. Macdonnell, in view of the position in which he has been placed, has done everything in his power to satisfy the requirements of the Presbytery, and they therefore recommend that all further proceedings in the matter be terminated.

After some discussion, the Moderator ruled the report out of order, and the Presbytery adjourned till three o'clock.

AFTERNOON SESSION.

Pursuant to adjournment, the Presbytery resumed its sitting at three o'clock p.m.,

when the documents were submitted in printed form.

The amendment moved in committee was as follows:—

Moved by Rev. D. Mitchell, seconded by Mr. Wm. Mitchell, "That the statement from Rev. D. J. Macdonnell, herewith submitted, be considered satisfactory, inasmuch as it does not necessarily modify the admission now given, and understanding that it is not intended to do so, the Committee recommend that further proceedings in the matter be dropped."

Rev. Principal Caven moved the adoption of the recommendations contained in the Committee's report. He reviewed at some length the sentiments of the report, together with the answers made by Mr. Macdonnell, to questions put to him by the committee. With regard to Mr. Macdonnell's answer to the question respecting his adherence to the teaching of the Confession of Faith, he earnestly hoped that the rev. gentleman would see his way to drop the last clause "expressed as it is almost entirely in the language of Scripture." If Mr. Macdonnell would either strike out this clause, or give a simple "yes" for an answer, he (Rev. Mr. Caven), for one, would be perfectly satisfied.

Rev. Mr. Pringle seconded the motion. Rev. D. Mitchell explained his position with regard to the motion he had submitted. At first he had been inclined to accept Mr. Macdonnell's former statement, believing that it had expressed an honest admission to the Confession of Faith, but some expressions having come out afterwards which seemed to him to involve the integrity of the doctrine of future punishment he had found himself—so to speak—in harmony with those who had taken action against Mr. Macdonnell all along. Now, however, Mr. Macdonnell stood in a very different position, his former statement having been withdrawn and a new one substituted in which there was nothing objectionable with the exception of the last clause—a very subordinate portion of the whole. Mr. Macdonnell doubtless had reasons of his own for doubting that clause, but certainly made an appeal from every statement to the Word of God as the standard of truth. The honesty of the statement should commend itself to their admiration. He thought there was a spirit of compulsion in Principal Caven's motion that was not at all to be liked, for he did not see that it would be just to push any man to accept just the words the Presbytery might dictate. He moved an amendment "That considering all the circumstances, the matter now before the Presbytery be allowed to drop."

Mr. Wm. Mitchell, in seconding the motion, reiterated the arguments put forward by the last speaker.

Rev. Mr. King said that as to Mr. Macdonnell's so-called "Appeal to the Word of God as the standard of truth," if the clause in question meant no more than this, nothing would be easier than for him to withdraw it, and then the difficulty would be terminated. He entirely disavowed the assertion that the Presbytery was seeking to drive Mr. Macdonnell into a corner. On the contrary they had adopted a very different course to that generally pursued when a minister assailed or threw any doubt on a doctrine of the Confession. Either Mr. Macdonnell's last clause, now in question, was entirely unnecessary, or it implied a serious modification of the terms of subscription to the Confession of Faith. The object of the Committee was to find out exactly how Mr. Macdonnell stands, that they might be able to indicate to the church and the world his attitude in reference to the doctrine of eternal punishment.

Rev. Mr. Croal thought that as Mr. Macdonnell's answer had been directly to the point, as he had said he adhered to the Confession of Faith, expressed as it was almost entirely in the language of Scripture, he would certainly vote for the amendment.

Rev. Mr. Carmichael (Markham), asked was it well, after Principal Caven had stated his belief in Mr. Macdonnell's mind, there was no reservation that they should send forth to the world that this body of intelligent men would not receive his statement because of the phrase "expressed as it is almost entirely in the language of Scripture?" He thought they should manfully accept the very manly statement put forward by Mr. Macdonnell, which was true to himself and true to the position in which he had found himself. (Applause.)

Rev. Mr. Meikle moved in amendment to the amendment, "That the Committee be reappointed to meet again with Mr. Macdonnell and report to the Presbytery."

Rev. Prof. McLaren thought they would place the Committee in a somewhat unpleasant position if this amendment was passed, as Mr. Macdonnell had already stated his unwillingness to meet the Committee.

Rev. Mr. Meikle, after this explanation, withdrew his amendment.

Rev. Mr. McGillivray expressed his sympathy with Mr. Macdonnell—whom he desired to retain in the Presbyterian Church—although he had no sympathy with his hope, for which he could see no ground. The fact that Mr. Macdonnell had made a declaration that he had come to no conclusion at variance with the teachings of the church, ought to be a sufficient guarantee that he was in line with those teachings.

Rev. Prof. McLaren insisted that Mr. Macdonnell's last clause must mean something, as he (Mr. Macdonnell) would not have held that language merely for the sake of having the last word with the Presbytery. If it meant nothing, why not eliminate it? If it meant what they thought it meant, it swept away the Confession of Faith so far as the article on this question was concerned. It was not reasonable that they should be asked to accept such an ambiguous document.

Rev. Principal Caven said it was not without alarm that he had heard some of the views enunciated by members of the Presbytery. If as members of the Presbyterian Church they were drifting into a condition of uncertainty in regard to doctrine, their position was an exceedingly dangerous one.

The roll was then called with the following result:—

For the motion—Revs. Reid, Dick, Wal-

lace, Pringle, Alexander, Smith, Adams, Caven, McLaren, King, Robb, Eadie, Ewing, Breckenridge, Beattie, Cameron, Pottigraw, Macintosh, Fraser, Gray, Nichol, Gilray, Elders—McMurrich, Harvey, McClure, Fraser, Bain, Wilson, Spence, McCracken, Bruce, Hunter, Brown, and Miller—34.

For the amendment—Rev. Meikle, McMull, Mitchell, Carmichael (King), Hay, Aitkin, Croal, Carmichael (Markham), McLaren (Cheltenham), McGillivray, Elders—Gemmell, Johnson, Bell, and Mitchell—14.

The Rev. Mr. Macdonnell declined to vote.

The result having been announced, Rev. D. Mitchell expressed his dissent from the decision, and protested for leave to complain to the Synod and Assembly.

Mr. W. Mitchell expressed his adherence to the protest, and

Rev. Mr. Macdonnell announced his adherence to the dissent.

The Presbytery then adjourned till nine o'clock Wednesday morning.

WEDNESDAY MORNING'S SESSION.

The Presbytery resumed at nine o'clock. Considerable time was spent in discussing the way in which the decision of the Presbytery yesterday was entered in the minutes, and how it would affect the case before the General Assembly. It was contended that the appeal to the Assembly was only against the resolution which was carried, and would not bring the whole case on its merits before the higher court. The Moderator decided, and it was agreed, that the nature of the appeal did not prevent the Assembly from dealing with the case on its merits.

In answer to the Moderator, Rev. David Mitchell said the appeal was made to the Synod.

After some discussion, Rev. David Mitchell stated the reasons of dissent and appeal as follows:—

1. That the Rev. D. J. Macdonnell, by withdrawing his former statement and substituting the present one in its place, has complied with the Committee's express desire, which was either to answer their proposed question by a simple affirmative or to give a written statement of his own.

2. That Mr. Macdonnell's new statement does contain a desirable admission to the Confession of Faith on the doctrine of future punishment.

3. That the last clause of the statement, as expressed, cannot on a fair interpretation of its meaning be said to modify the admission which Mr. Macdonnell gives to the doctrine in question.

4. That Mr. Macdonnell in the peculiar position in which he has been placed has done everything within reason to meet the requirements of the Presbytery on the points at issue.

5. That further proceedings in the matter will only tend to aggravate the unforeseen consequences which have resulted from the sermon preached by Mr. Macdonnell. This document was signed by several of the members who voted yesterday for the amendment of the Rev. David Mitchell.

Rev. D. J. Macdonnell also dissented for the following reasons:—"It is unreasonable to demand that assent to a doctrine should be stated in the words of others, when those words do not so exactly express the attitude of the mind towards a grave and difficult question such as that under consideration."

Rev. Principal Caven moved that the reasons be received, and that Prof. McLaren, the Rev. J. M. King and the Rev. J. G. Robb be appointed a Committee to answer the reasons of dissent.

The motion was carried with the addition of the name of Principal Caven.

Rev. Mr. Pringle moved that Principal Caven, Professor McLaren, and the Rev. J. M. King be appointed to represent the Presbytery before the Synod.

Professor Caven remarked that he wished to take no further part in this matter. He had already been prominently in connection with it, and with very painful feelings.

Rev. Mr. Pringle urged that this was not a matter in which we should be ruled by feeling. He had made his motion deliberately and he pressed it.

After some discussion the motion was carried.

Rev. J. M. King moved that after the Synod has given its decision on the protest and appeal, it is requested that the superior court issue the whole matter as in a case of simple reference.

Rev. Mr. Macdonnell said he did not wish to stand on a mere technicality, but the motion appeared to pre-judge that the appeal would be dismissed.

Rev. Professor McLaren thought the view of the motion was a quite natural one to take, and the object of it was to have the case settled as speedily as possible.

Rev. Mr. Macdonnell said that if the Presbytery was competent to pass the motion, he did not object.

The motion was about to be put, when Rev. Mr. Macdonnell asked what was the whole case mentioned in the motion. Did it mean the sermon itself, and all the documents which had come before them?

Prof. McLaren thought they would, in submitting the case to the Assembly, send up all the documents which had at any time come before them, and all the minutes of the Presbytery's proceedings in the matter.

The motion was ultimately carried, and the Presbytery proceeded to transact minor business.

THURSDAY MORNING'S SESSION.

The Presbytery met at nine o'clock to receive the report of the Committee appointed to answer the various reasons for dissent and appeal in the case of Mr. Macdonnell. About one hour was spent in the transaction of minor business, after which

Rev. Professor McLaren presented the following report:

ANSWERS TO REASONS OF DISSENT.

1st Reason.—That the Rev. D. J. Macdonnell, by withdrawing his former statement and substituting the present one in its place has complied with the Committee's express desire, which was either to answer their proposed question by a simple affirmative or to give a written document of his own.

Answer.—The Presbytery regrets to find

in the first reason of dissent a misstatement of fact. The Committee did not request Mr. Macdonnell to give as alternative "a written statement of his own," but a statement equivalent to a simple affirmative to the question.

2nd Reason.—That Mr. Macdonnell's new statement does contain a desirable admission to the Confession of Faith on the doctrine of future punishment.

Answer.—In as much as the form of admission given to the Confession of Faith may very seriously modify its meaning as will be shown in answer to the following reason of dissent, it cannot be said to be "a desirable admission to the Confession of Faith."

3rd Reason.—That the last clause of the statement, as expressed, cannot on a fair interpretation of its meaning be said to modify the admission which Mr. Macdonnell gives to the doctrine in question.

Answer.—That the clause referred to in this reason, viz.: "expressed as it is almost entirely in the language of Scripture," is in the case of simple admission entirely unnecessary, and it can be fairly interpreted only in the light (1) of Mr. Macdonnell's declination to give an affirmative answer to the question as proposed by the Committee; (2) of his persistent adherence to this form of expression in his statements; and (3), of his interpretation of Scripture phraseology, as given in his sermon and his first statement to the Presbytery, with its accompanying notes, interpretations which have never been avowed. It is but necessary to refer to the expressed preference for "everlasting punishment" over the phrase "eternal torments," as found in the Confession of Faith, sustained by an assumed meaning of the Greek word *aiōnion*, which, as stated in Presbytery, he holds to signify "for ages of ages, possibly endless, possible not," an interpretation which is more fully explained in the notes to his first statement.

In the light of the above considerations, the reference to the Scripture in this connection, if allowed, would obviously be held to secure for Mr. Macdonnell the same liberty in interpreting the language of the Confession of Faith as he claims in interpreting the same language when used in the Holy Scriptures. This admission, therefore, to the Confession of Faith declares clearly nothing more than a modified admission.

4th Reason.—That Mr. Macdonnell, in the peculiar position in which he had been placed, has done everything within reason to meet the requirements of the Presbytery on the points at issue.

Answer.—The Presbytery must disclaim all responsibility for the peculiarity of Mr. Macdonnell's position, referred to in his reason of dissent, nor have they been wanting in sympathy for Mr. Macdonnell under his perplexities, having so directed their proceedings as to allow him every opportunity of having his views brought into harmony with the doctrine of the Church. They have, moreover, done everything in their power consistent with their obligations, to maintain the truth, to give Mr. Macdonnell relief by making provision in the finding appealed against for all such difficulties and perplexities as do not imply new belief of the doctrine. The Presbytery are willing to believe that Mr. Macdonnell has been anxious to meet their requirements; they have to note, however, that Mr. Macdonnell has repeatedly declined to meet with the committee appointed to confer with him, when they were not without hope that interviews with him might have been useful in the solution of the case. The Presbytery would add that in their judgment Mr. Macdonnell's position, in his last statement, as must indeed be evident from the answer to the foregoing reason for dissent, remains essentially unchanged.

5th Reason.—That further proceeding in the matter will only tend to aggravate the unforeseen consequences which have resulted from the sermon preached by Mr. Macdonnell. This document was signed by several of the members who voted yesterday for the amendment of the Rev. David Mitchell.

Answer.—The Presbytery have only to say that in their whole proceedings in this matter, they have endeavoured to walk in the path of duty leaving consequences to Him in whose hand all issues are.

Mr. Macdonnell's reason.—It is unreasonable to demand that assent to a doctrine should be stated in the words of others, when those words do not exactly express the attitude of the mind towards a grave and difficult question such as that under consideration.

Answer.—If the attitude of Mr. Macdonnell's mind towards the doctrine of the Church were such as the Presbytery could allow, Mr. Macdonnell would have been able to give a categorical affirmative to the question formulated by the Committee, or a statement equivalent thereto. And that, so far as expressing assent to a doctrine in the words of others is concerned, the difficulty is not greater than in giving a categorical assent to the questions proposed by the Church at ordination.

Rev. Mr. Macdonnell rose to call attention to the clause in the report which stated that he had declined to meet the Committee. It was quite true, so far as personal interviews were concerned, but he thought it only fair to state that he had repeated communications with the Committee by writing. There existed an impression that he had refused to have anything to do with the Committee, which was entirely incorrect, for he had again and again handed in written statements, and had done all in his power to bring his views, so far as he could consistently with himself, in accord with those of the Church.

After a brief discussion, the report was amended, on motion of Principal Caven, by the insertion, after the words "confers with him," the answer to the fourth reason, of the following parenthesis:—"Although corresponding with the Committee by written communications."

The report, as amended, was then adopted, and the entire case was carried to the Synod.

Every person complains of the badness of his memory, but none of their defective judgment.

[For the Presbyterian] Songs in the House of My Pilgrimage.

VIII.

"LORD, TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?"

A feeble, poor and helpless race,
In faith we clove to Thee, O Lord,
Our help—Thy never failing grace,
Our hope—Thy ever faithful word.

As Moab's daughter left her home,
Her friends, her gods, for Israel's God,
So have we left our all to come
With Thee and Thine to Thy abode.

Homeless in all the world beside
With Thee our lot must ever be;
Where Thou abidest we abide,
And where Thou goest follow Thee.

Thy love has won us to Thy side,
Our wills to Thee Thou madest bow,
For life or death what'er betide,
O Lord, we cannot leave Thee now.

The world is dark without Thy smile,
Its dearest treasures worthless seem.
Even duty is but heartless toil,
And life's best aim an empty dream.

There is no song to charm the ear,
There is no love to fill the heart,
There is no hope to banish fear,
And peace and joy and strength to impart.

But, in Thy presence, Lord, is light,
The sunshine of an endless day;
Terror and darkness take their flight,
And love and peace prepare the way.

Even labor then is sweet employ,
And hope mounts gladness on the wing,
The heart's waste places sing for joy,
And winter wears the smile of spring.

O Jesus, this is heaven to know
Thy boundless love and taste Thy grace,
No higher seek we here below,
Nor henceforth, but to see Thy face.
New Edinburgh, Ont. C. I. C.

The Brave Christian General.

One of Frederick the Great's best generals was Hans Joachim von Zieten. He was never ashamed of his faith. Once he declined an invitation to come to his royal master's table, because it was sacramental day. The next time he appeared at the palace, the king made use of some profane expressions about the holy communion; and the other guests laughed. Zieten shook his grey head solemnly, stood up, saluted the king, and then said with a firm voice, "Your majesty knows well that, in war, I have never feared any danger, and everywhere have boldly risked my life for you and my country. But there is One above us who is greater than you or me,—greater than all men; he is the Saviour and Redeemer, who has died also for your majesty, and has dearly bought us all with His own blood. This Holy One I can never allow to be mocked or insulted; for on him repose my faith, my comfort, and my hope in life and death. In the power of this faith your brave army has courageously fought and conquered. If your majesty undermine this faith, you undermine, at the same time, the welfare of the State. I salute your majesty." This open confession of his Saviour by Zieten made a powerful impression on the king. He felt he had been wrong in his attack on the faith of his general, and he was not ashamed to acknowledge it. He gave his hand to Zieten—his right hand, placing the left on the old man's shoulder, and said with emotion, "O happy Zieten! How I wish I could also believe it! I have the greatest respect for you. This shall never happen again." The king then rose from table, dismissed his other guests, but said to Zieten, "Come with me into my cabinet." What passed in that conference, with closed doors, between the great king and his greater general, no one has ever learned; but this we know, that the Lord's own words are now verified to Zieten: "Whoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven."—British Workman.

HUMILITY is the guardian of all virtues. St. Bernard.

The Duke of Wellington used often to remark that the secret of success lay in embracing every opportunity of being useful; and that he never forgot the golden rule which he learned in the church catechism, "of doing your duty in that station of life to which it shall please God to call you." This was the secret of David's success.

We need faith to sleep sweetly. Worry is the parent of restlessness; but he that believeth enters into rest. "The just live by faith;" they work, wait, toil, rest, eat, and sleep well when they believe firmly. Pillow the soul on the assurance that the Lord cares for us, and works all things for our good, and the pillowed head rests in comfort. Refreshing sleep prolongs life; the physical thus profits by the spiritual. Many believe that Christ will save at last, but doubt his care in little things; they trust him for the greater, but distrust in small concerns, and hence worry and chafe. The Lord is our keeper in the little, everyday trifles of life, the affairs of the shop, farm, office, kitchen, nursery, parlor, temporal and spiritual, individual and social, and invites us to cast all our cares on him; and, when we do it, "he giveth his beloved sleep," and that enables them to work and prosper.—N. Y. Baptist Union.

The following instructive anecdote, relating to President Finney, is characteristic: A brother, who had fallen into darkness and discouragement, was staying at the same house with Dr. Finney over night. He was lamenting his condition, and Dr. Finney, after listening to his narrative, turned to him with his peculiar, earnest look, and with a voice that sent a thrill through his soul, said, "You don't pray! that is what's the matter with you. Pray—pray four times as much as you ever did in your life, and you will come out." He immediately went down to the parlor, and taking the Bible, he made a serious business of it, stirring up his soul to seek God as he did Daniel, and thus he spent the night. It was not in vain. As the morning dawned he felt the light of the Sun of Righteousness shine upon his soul. His captivity was broken, and ever since he has felt that the greatest difficulty in the way of men being emancipated from their bondage is, that they "don't pray."