F5825.6
C3T6
SPAM
9421

The Church and the Indians.

The TROUBLE at METLAKAHTLA

(FROM THE DAILY COLONIST, VICTORIA, B. C., JULY 26th, 1882.)

Last evening at 8 o'clock an interesting meeting was held in the Reformed Episcopal Church, Humboldt street, for the purpose of hearing an account by Bishop Cridge and Senator Macdonald of their late visit to Metlakahtla, and the present condition of the missionary field there.

The meeting was largely attended, the chair being occupied by Mr. James W. Douglas.

The meeting having been opened with prayer by Bishop Cridge, the chairman briefly stated that they were met to hear an account of Mr. Duncan's labors at Metlakahtla.

Senator Macdonald on rising said:

Ladies and gentlemen—Before going on with my address I wish first of all to dispel a delusion under which many are laboring with regard to thetrade at Metlakahtla. Many say and suppose that Mr. Duncan is enriching himself and hoarding up money. It is also supposed that I am in partnership with him. The whole thing is utterly without foundation. I have nothing to do with his trade, more than helping him all I can without fee or reward. If there are profits in the trade they are all spent for the benefit of Metlakahtla, and I am of opinion that there are few poorer men in the province than Mr. Duncan. The trade was established entirely for the benefit and convenience of the village, and one great object was to keep the people at home and free from the temptations and contaminations of towns. No doubt all of you have heard something of Metlakahtla. It is a name not confined to the boundaries of British Columbia. It is well known in England and in many other parts of the world as one of the most successful missions in the world. A young man, not a priest or a bishop, but a layman like ourselves, and formerly a commercial man, went into the wilderness among a lot of heathen and barbarous savages, who had never heard the word of God—a people steeped in vice, degradation, and darkness—and he, single-handed with God's help, carved out a monument to Christianity, and a civilization most remarkable considering its age. You now find a community with hopes, and ambitions, and breathing aspirations, like yourselves.

Many of you have heard rumors about the unfortunate divisions at Metlakahtla, some of them exaggerated and some without any foundation—rumors circulated by Mr. Duncan's enemies; some of them being persons he has had to chastise for offences at some time or other. Hearing those reports, Bishop Cridge and I were induced to pay a visit to that place to hear and see for ourselves how matters really stood. We had also the hope that we might be able to strengthen the heart and hands of our dear friend Mr. Duncan, and be of some service to him. We also hoped, although a very faint one, that something might be done to bring the two parties together. Our first hope was certainly realized, Mr. Duncan and his people being delighted to see us and giving us a right hearty welcome. It had been given out that he had no friends, that he was a rotten branch cut off by the society, without influence or friends, consequently they were the more pleased to see us, knowing that we were friends. But with regard to effecting a reconciliation, we soon discovered from the tone of

the people that such a thing was impossible without an entire surrender of the principles Mr. Duncan had inculcated for the past twenty years--principles which have made him conqueror over stupendous obstacles and difficulties. We could see that there was room for one church only at Metlakahtla.

Many willing hands were ready and pleased to help us on shore, and to carry our baggage to Mr. Duncan's house. One is at once struck with the respectful and respectable appearance of the people, who form a marked contrast with Indians seen at other parts of the coast. The village presents a neat, trim appearance with its beautiful church standing in a square with streets on the four sides—the uniformly built houses, the paved streets, the trade shop, the workshops, warehouses and cannery, all show a master hand and great judgment. Near the landing place is a large building called the market house, where strange Indians can find warmth and shelter, whether they come to trade, or happen to be detained from any cause. This shows great care and forethought on Mr. Duncan's part, whilst in other places they are left like dogs on the beach. We had many visitors the evening of our arrival, and were serenaded by a brass band. The next day being Sunday, we attended divine service. When the bell rang the people could be seen flocking in from two sides into the fine large church, about double the size of this building. A more impressive scene could not be--the wrapt attention of the large congregation (about 600) was in marked contrast to that of more civilized worshippers. The men were comfortably and cleanly dressed, and the women clad in plain dresses, shawls, and handkerchiefs for head-dresses, gave one the impression that they came to worship —sedate, quiet, and earnest—not as if they came to see and be seen. The responses were repeated by all in a loud and distinct voice, as if they meant what they were saying. The organ was played by a native like a professor; the singing, heartily joined in by all, was truly grand. In the afternoon Frederick Ridley, a native, preached in an easy, fluent style, reading a chapter in English first, and preaching in Chimsean. The service is as near that of the Church of England as possible, without vestments or outward adornments, which in other communities have so much attraction for frivolous church-goers.

On the following Monday evening we were invited to attend a meeting in the church, at which about 500 persons were present. One of the native elders opened the meeting with prayer. Then many of the most prominent men made speeches in an easy, eloquent manner, offering us a hearty welcome, and all expressing sorrow at the divisions in their once united and happy village, where a short time ago they all worshipped under one roof. I am afraid they attributed a power to us which we did not possess—that of restoring peace and harmony, and helping them to remove the cause of their troubles. The control those people exercised over their language in speaking to a question on which they feel so deeply and keenly was truly wonderful. No harsh words, no threats of violence, no inviting to a breach of the peace—affording a very marked contrast between their behavior and that of white people under similar circumstances.

We replied to their speeches, commending them for their moderation and excellent conduct, for their devotion to their friend and teacher; counseled them to go on as they had done in their faith and religion, and as law-abiding citizens, and on no account to take the law into their own hands, but to place their complaints and grievances by petition before the governor general. This they agreed to do, and we left them preparing memorials and petitions.

Indians from different parts of the country on hearing of our arrival left their hunting and fishing and came distances of from 50 to 60 miles to see us to give us a welcome and to express sympathy with Mr. Duncan. Frequent messages of sympathy came to him from the surrounding heathen tribes, all condemning Bishop Ridley for attempting "to reap where he had not sown." They say Mr. Duncan gave his life to us, toiling and laboring to break our heathen customs and bring us to the light. He ploughed the land, sowed the good seed which is growing and ripening, and now

a stranger who has not toiled or done anything wishes to step in and take all the fruit. "Let him take example by what Mr. Duncan has done and cultivate new fields for himself." One of the most marvelous things is the influence the work at Metlakahtla has had on all the surrounding nations. The word spoken there has leavened the whole coast, made Hydahs and other warlike tribes forsake many of their heathen and evil habits, and now they can visit each other in confidence and peace, instead of meeting as they used to do as deadly foes. Another great work done by Mr. Duncan has been the suppression of the whiskey traffic along the coast. Although some of the heathen Indians manage to smuggle bottles now and then in bags of flour and in other ways, yet the trade, so far as white men are concerned, is crushed out. A short time ago the managers of the canneries on the Skeena were greatly opposed to Mr. Duncan and very bitter against him simply because he insisted on the Indians being treated properly and justly and because they would not work on Sunday. Now those very men are among his warmest friends, because they see that he and the Indians acted on good and conscientious principles.

I wish you all to understand clearly and unmistakably that all the work done at Metlakrhtla has been done by Mr. Duncan, a layman, my impression being that the help given by his assstants was not of much account; and I wish it to be understood clearly that Mr. Duncan has gone on for over twenty years without change or vacation, teaching and preaching the same truth and the same gospel. He gave satisfaction to the society, to the Indians and to his friends, and they are many, who were and are justly proud of him and his work. The Church Missionary Society were proud of his success and held his work and mission up as an example to other missions, and all went well and smoothly until Bishop Bompas visited Metlakahtla a few years ago, when the question for the admission of some of the people to the Lord's Supper was brought forward. This was no new question; it had been discussed by Mr. Duncan and the elders, who saw many difficulties in the way, owing to the Indians not sufficiently understanding the meaning of that sacrament. If those who were most fit to go to the Lord's Table to partake of what the Indians would call a feast went up before the whole congregation they thought it would lead to jealousy and ill feeling, and if the non-participants left the church whilst others remained for the sacrament they would fancy that some wonderful, mysterious ceremony was going on. They therefore came to the conclusion that it would be wise to delay that rite for a time until the Indians were more fully instructed in its meaning and freedom from mystery. I do not know what the report of Bishop Bompas to the society was, but the impression seemed to take hold of its mind that Mr. Duncan had kept the Indians from coming to the Lord's Table, which is an entirely erroneous impression. It is also said that he refuses baptism to infants. It is true that he does not approve of baptising infants of heathen parents, who attach a superstitious importance to the ceremony without having any knowledge of its true meaning; but infants of baptised parents he willingly admits to that visible sign of Christianity.

I wish you to understand that in any remarks I shall find necessary to make about Bishop Ridley, there is no ill feeling or animosity. So far as I know him, he is agreeable and entertaining, and might be useful in other parts of the country where there are no missionaries; but at Metlakahtla I consider him useless. I do think, and say in the most emphatic manner that it has been a great and serious mistake sending a bishop to a diocese like Caledonia where there are very few whites and very few missionaries to oversee; church dignitaries being generally fonder of power and authority than of performing simple missionary work. What are required in this country are hardworking, self-denying Christian men, and not bishops with elevated ideas of church ceremonies. On the arrival of Bishop Ridley at Metlakahtla, he made a speech to the people in which he stated that he had not come to interfere with Mr. Duncan, but would willingly work with him; that was just as it ought to be had it been acted up to. Soon the bishop began to show that he

wlshed to be master. Not being allowed to build a house on the public park at Metlakahtla, he took a jump of 17 miles to Fort Simpson where he built a house at a cost of between $2,000 and $3,000, in which he does not live, and whether paid for by him or the society, it may be looked upon as an entire waste of money, having no adherents, school or church there, the whole thing showing a lack of judgment and a desire to act without the advice of practical and experienced men who have a knowledge of the country and the Indians. The bishop also finds fault with Mr. Duncan's translation of the prayers, and revives the question of admitting some of the Indians to the Lord's Table. The elders and Mr. Duncan holding the same opinions and giving the same reasons they gave Bishop Bompas for not participating.

Mr. Duncan could see that the full ritual and ecclesiastical accompaniments of the Church of England were not suited to a primitive people—(and here I will mention how noticeable is the hold Christianity takes of a primitive people, and the confidence and faith they have in God's word; and the love with which they treasure their bibles is beautiful to behold)—and that what they required was the most simple form of gospel preaching. Those ideas he communicated to the Society, with the request that Metlakahtla should be allowed to manage its own affairs. In reply they requested Mr. Duncan to come to London to talk matters over. That he could not do owing to pressure of business. A conference of the missionaries, clerical and lay, in the northern part of the country was held last year, to which Mr. Duncan submitted the question, "Whether they would recommend the Society to allow Metlakahtla to become a free mission?" This they declined to do; but resolved to recommend that it should be kept as it always had been, a lay mission. The bishop was strongly opposed to such a recommendation, and wished it rescinded; but the conference adhered to its opinion and forwarded the resolution to the Society; and probably the bishop sent a report and a different recommendation, and it is now self-evident that about this time the Society entertained the idea of dispensing with Mr. Duncan's services on the ground that he would not allow some of his people to partake of the Lord's supper, and that he did not approve of infant baptism, and that he had declined at their request to visit England—none of those charges being in accordance with facts. Last November the bishop came into Mr. Duncan's room, and after some conversation handed him a letter of dismissal from the society, and giving expression to words to the effect that he was master now, and would take charge of the society's property.

Mr. Duncan at once prepared to leave the mission house, and when what had just transpired became known in the village a house was placed at his disposal by one of the Indians, and hundreds of loving hands carried his furniture and books to his new quarters. There was great excitement; but, to the credit of the Indians be it said, there was no breach of the peace. A meeting was held that night, at which resolutions were passed requesting Mr. Duncan to continue with them, to be their minister and teacher. He said he would not give them an answer then, as they were excited and many of the people were away. Shortly after this another meeting was held, and the same resolution come to; but Mr. Duncan would not even then give them an answer, wishing first of all to be certain that all the people were with him.

Just about last Christmas a large meeting was held in the church, the first time it had been opened since Mr. Duncan's dismissal last November. A deputation waited on Mr. Duncan, requesting him to come to the church. He did so, and found 600 or 700 persons there, and a seat placed for him at the head of the centre aisle. One of the elders then approached, carrying a bible in his hands, and, facing the congregation, said: "You are now asked to confirm with your own voices your action at the different meetings, and to say whether you wish Mr. Duncan to continue as your teacher and minister." With one voice they said: "We desire him to be our teacher and minister." The elder then turned to Mr. Duncan, placing the bible in his hands and saying: "Continue to be our minister, and go on teaching the Word of God

as you have done for the last twenty years." Mr. Duncan, seeing that they were all of one mind, consented to continue with them. Such was his ordination, and in my opinion a very complete one.

Directly after Mr. Duncan's dismissal the bishop went to England, and evidently he and the Society came to the conclusion that they had acted too hastily, for on his return we find him writing a letter to Mr. Duncan asking him to come back; and that same letter contains one of the most insulting proposals which could be made to a man like Mr. Duncan, viz., that he could retain the monopoly of the trade. Such a bait, and to a man like Mr. Duncan, who has given his whole life to the spiritual instruction of the Indians, and who cares nothing for the trade excepting so far as it harmonizes with the spiritual work, and continues to be a marked benefit to his people!

If Mr. Duncan was wrong in his teaching, or in any of his acts, how is it that the bishop seeks to enter into a compact with him to return—a high and mighty bishop offering a bait of that kind to a man whose spiritual work he evidently despises? What is the meaning of it all? It is clearly this, that the bishop and the Society find that they are in the wrong; that they have acted on unfounded accusations hastily and without judgment, and that they would like to have Mr. Duncan's services again.

How could he, whose work is so great and so manifest, and who has labored so unceasingly for the last 25 years, allow any one to take the spiritual work of Metlakahtla, and he retain only the temporal? It would be an acknowledgment that he was in the wrong, and had been wrong all those years, and that now he had to surrender to a stranger, who so far had done nothing, and whose only claim to spirituality seemed to be that he wore different clothing to that worn by Duncan. No! no! He could not hand over his people or his work for any such childish reasons. I ask again, if Mr. Duncan has done no good work, why does the bishop ask him to return?

This same letter which the bishop wrote to Mr. Duncan he parades and holds up as an evidence of his wish for peace and harmony, and whilst holding that olive branch in one hand he undermines Mr. Duncan with the other—seducing his school teachers, his organist and others by offering pecuniary advantages, and trying to tempt the people with cheap goods; but they are not to be bought and sold like children. Where is the Christian consistency of such acts? I am credibly informed that the bishop despises the spiritual work at Metlakahtla. If so, why does he wish the people to come to the Lord's table? Where is the consistency?

I hope you all understand that there is no change in Mr. Duncan's manner of teaching; he is going on as he has done for the last 25 years, and that whatever may happen at Metlakahtla he is not to blame. All went smoothly and well until ecclesiasticism stepped in. Those unfortunate divisions are doing great injury to the spiritual and temporal work and destroy all discipline, which Mr. Duncan found so beneficial formerly in dealing with the young men and young women. Now, if they are chastised or corrected they will find a refuge with the opposition party, and the uncertainty hanging over affairs retards the improvement of the village.

To sum up, the present condition of affairs stands thus: That the Society have dismissed Mr. Duncan on groundless accusations, and they would like very much to have him back again; but he prefers to be free and untrammeled by any society. That a church has been established called the "Christian Church of Metlakahtla." That the whole village, excepting about 40 adults and some children, are with Mr. Duncan, and that nearly all those who have left him are persons or friends of persons he had to punish for offences at some time or other. That he has services in the church three times on Sunday; Sunday school; service on Wednesday evenings; day school each day.

Attending to the sick of the village is the most arduous work of all, giving him no rest from 6 o'clock in the morning till 12 at night—not even time for his meals; yet he never speaks a harsh word or sends an Indian away, but listens patiently to all they have to say. There can be no

doubt that God created and raised him up specially for the work he is now doing so well.

The cannery established to furnish employment for the people of the village he has to superintend, owing to the sickness and inefficiency of his manager. The cannery is a sight worth seeing. Men, women and children, clad in the cleanest cotton clothing and aprons, going about their work in a quiet, business-like way; no harsh language, no swearing, no confusion or noise; all showing admirable training and management, and a great contrast to many other places where a different class of laborers is employed. My hope is, that with all these burdens on his mind and shoulders he may continue in good health, and I have to ask you to give him your prayers and sympathy.

Bishop Cridge referred to his first visit to Metlakahtla fifteen years ago. A great work had been done. Four years previously about fifty of the converts had been removed from Fort Simpson to separate them from old associations. The store—an absolute necessity—had already yielded over $3,000 profit, the whole of which, together with grants of materials from Governor Douglas, had been spent in rebuilding the village and other improvements. Two things especially struck the speaker: Mr. Duncan's care in spiritual matters, especially in admitting converts to baptism; and his entire self-sacrifice. The mission house was open from early rising to late taking rest; none were denied access; none cut short in their business, however trivial it might be. On revisiting Metlakahtla last month, after the lapse of fifteen years, Mr. Duncan was found doing the same work on the same combined plan of industry and religion, with the same self-sacrifice and toil, and with no change but that of progress along all the lines of his work. On Saturday, the day of the visitors' arrival, the elders met to arrange the services for the following day, and requested Bishop Cridge to preach in the morning. Native preachers in turn occupied the pulpit once on each of the four Sundays the visitors were there, and their earnest scriptural exhortations were listened to with every sign of devout attention by their native brethren. Mr. Duncan preaches twice each Sunday, and on Wednesday evenings. Bible classes and Sunday schools are conducted in part by Mr. Duncan and in part by native men and women. The church, built entirely by native hands, will hold eleven hundred worshipers. Its noble proportions and majestic simplicity, Mr. Duncan's own design, strike the eye on entering; but when you hear the hymn sung by the whole congregation with remarkable sweetness and fervency, and the responses like low thunder rolling through the aisles, and reflect what this people once were, it is impossible not to feel deeply moved. The service is liturgical, quiet, and deeply solemn. At the request of the natives and Mr. Duncan Bishop C. baptized thirty-three adults, after careful examination and inquiry, and twenty-three infants. Referring to the troubles at Metlakahtla, while avoiding acrimony, it would be necessary to speak plainly. It was common to regard troubles of this kind as often little more than personal quarrels. Nothing could be further from the truth. The battle at Metlakahtla, if the term could be used of a strife where one party stood wholly on the defensive, was one of principles not of men; and, the names being changed, the incidents are much the same all through the Christian world. He would let the natives speak for themselves rather than use his own words; and he thought it would appear that they were capable of judging their own affairs—in fact took a common-sense view of the situation unobscured by theological mystification. He would first give a brief outline of the crisis through which Metlakahtla had recently passed, and then fill up the picture from the native speeches. On the news of Mr. Duncan's dismissal (Nov. 28th) flying through the village, the natives were overwhelmed with amazement and surprise. They prepared a house for his reception, and straightway, without asking his leave, transferred his effects from the mission-house with wonderful celerity. The elders next called a meeting of all the people. Mr. Duncan, having at their request stated the facts, and having charged the natives not to consider him, but only their own welfare, withdrew from the

meeting. With every demonstration of feeling, and after the delivery of many fervent addresses, the people, without a dissentient voice, resolved, first, that Mr. Duncan should not leave them; and secondly, that they would belong to no denomination, but be a free native church though on brotherly terms with all. At length, on Christmas day, the elders conducted Mr. Duncan into the church, where a large congregation was assembled, and having placed him in a chair in front of the Lord's table, another elder advanced up the middle aisle bearing a bible. He paused and addressed the congregation, and then turning to Mr. Duncan placed the bible in his hands and with great solemnity requested him, in the name of the congregation, to minister to them the word of God as heretofore. This may not be an ordination, viewed from the ecclesiastical stand-point, but who will question the propriety, validity, and justice of this commission? It would be difficult to give an exhaustive account of the causes which led to these demonstrations. It must suffice to observe the important fact that the natives had for many years been intelligently noting the evils of religious divisions both *within and without* the Church of England. They had been forced upon their attention in both those aspects by special circumstances. The non-administration of the Lord's Supper has been prominently put forward as an objection against the work at Metlakahtla. He could emphatically state that it was not the divine memorial itself that the natives refused. There were things connected with it which they could not understand in the light of God's word—their only rule of faith. The presence of the Lord's table in the church is a proof that they were only waiting till those difficulties should be removed. He would observe, also, that the refusal of the Episcopal administration of this ordinance was the act of the *natives themselves*. Passing to the speeches of the natives, Bishop Cridge would observe that they were delivered in his presence and that of Senator Macdonald, that "the chiefs" might know their mind. Twenty-nine of the elders and chief men of the village spoke on two evenings. One chord of sorrow at their being divided was touched by each speaker. They are not yet inured, as we are, to this kind of strife. One testimony to Mr. Duncan's unchanging love, devotion and blameless course was borne by all. They had known his work, but not the work of those who were dividing them. He "had gone through the fire for the Tsimsheans;" he had "walked through blood and the smoke of guns, following his Master." Each expressed decided disapprobation of the course pursued by the church party, and almost every speaker made some scriptural quotation or allusion in support of his remarks; but each address also contained some distinctive feature. One spoke of their migration to Metlakahtla from their old homes to avoid divisions, and now they were incurring divisions again. Another said that there was work enough for the churchmen to do in preaching to the surrounding tribes, without trying to divide the Metlakahtlans. Several spoke of the evil effects of their divisions on tribes, in that some were beginning to "blame the work of God," which hitherto they had thought good; others spoke of the evil effects on their own body. "Their children were beginning to quarrel over the name of God;" "Brethren were beginning to hate one another;" "They were afraid to speak to their children and their brothers." The work which did all this harm could not be of God, they said. While it continued "there could be no progress as heretofore." One asked Mr. Macdonald to represent their case to the governor-general. His Excellency (Earl Dufferin) when at Metlakahtla some years ago had told them "to apply to him when in any trouble, whether from white men or Indians, and he would help them." Another alluded to the church party opening a store, though they had blamed Mr. Duncan for doing so. This, he said, was to tempt them; it was like "holding up a flower to catch a humming bird." God did not so deceive them. The church party, said another, had told them that they were only children; "but they, too, were children, for they were crying to get something which belonged to their fellow-children." The same party, said another, had told them that the "Society" had right and power over Metla-

kahtla. In this, said the speaker, they surpass our forefathers: our ancestors sold individual slaves, but these "are not afraid to buy a whole village." He would give an extract from his notes of the peaceful effects of Mr. Duncan's work and of its appreciation by the natives all around. At a tea given by Senator Macdonald about four hundred sat down, including a party of Hydahs who had come to trade, and who were also invited. The band played during the repast. After tea, according to custom, several speakers, both Tsimsheans and Hydahs, addressed the meeting. "Before Mr. Duncan came," said one, "the Tsimsheans and Hydahs were always at war. We were always in mortal fear, and could never meet without bloodshed. Now all that is changed. We meet as brethren and are not afraid. It is the Word of God which Mr. Duncan brought us that has done this." About thirty years ago a party of Hydahs lay in ambush on the site of the present village of Metlakahtla and rushed on a party of Tsimsheans passing by. After a bloody fight the Hydahs carried off a Tsimshean boy and girl. Some years afterwards the Tsimsheans bought back the boy. He is now a Christian, and was the interpreter for the Hydahs at this feast. The girl became the slave-wife of the Hydah chief, and bore a son, who, according to custom, was also a slave. At the request of the Tsimsheans Mr. Duncan sent to the Hydahs to deliver up the boy. After some negotiation he was sent back. He is now a Christian, and one of the fishermen. Instead of receiving a ransom for the boy the Hydahs themselves had to make compensation for the original outrage. "We know Mr. Duncan," said one of the Hydahs at this meeting, "and will do what he says. He has punished us, but it has been for our good. Who are they that want to send Mr. Duncan away? We do not understand it."

It was was moved by Mr. B. W. Pearse and seconded by the Rev. J. B. Chantrell,

That in view of the successful working of Mr. Duncan's plan of combining industry with religion in his labors at Metlakatla, this congregation strongly deprecates the commencement of a rival trade-store in that village, as tending to weaken and divide the natives in their prosperous advance under that plan in civilization, order, and temporal well-being. Carried.

It was then moved by Mr. A. A. Green, seconded by Mr. W. Wilson,

That while passing no opinion on the respective merits of church organizations, this meeting is strongly of opinion that the endeavor to establish a rival church at Metlakahtla, contrary to the expressed will of a large majority of the natives is not only inimical to the peace and harmony of the village, but also to the spread of the gospel among the surrounding tribes. Carried.

Senator Macdonald moved a vote of thanks to the chairman, Jas. Douglas, Esq., which being seconded was carried unanimously.

Similar votes of thanks were moved to Bishop Cridge and Senator Macdonald for their excellent addresses.

The meeting was then closed with a benediction.