

Our Contributors.

PARITY OF PRESBYTERS.

BY KNOXONIAN.

The question of parity or equality of Presbyters is coming to the front. It comes in this way. It is alleged that the business of the Supreme Court and principal committees is in the hands of a few, is transacted and controlled by a few, and that this state of things is inconsistent with that fundamental principle of Presbyterianism known as the parity or equality of Presbyters.

Let it be conceded that undue influence in the hands of a few is contrary to the genius of Presbyterianism and injurious to the best interests of the Church. Let it be conceded that cliques, rings, caucussing, wire pulling and all the malign arts of the ward politician are a disgrace to the Church and evidence of a low state of piety. Whether such things exist or not this contributor cannot say. Personally, he knows nothing of them; but he does know that people whose veracity has never been questioned affirm their existence. Well, supposing the routine business of the Supreme Court were largely in the hands of a few extra good business men, what has the parity of Presbyters to do with it? Equality of Presbyters means official equality. It means an equal right to preach, administer the ordinances, ordain, sit, deliberate and vote in the church courts. There can be no equality in business capacity. Mark well, we are not saying that the alleged few in our General Assembly have more business capacity than their neighbours. We are discussing equality in the abstract. As long as the Almighty makes men with different mental powers, and they are differently trained, there can be no equality other than official equality.

Supposing ministers were in all respects equal when they left college, how long would they remain so?

Here is a brother who likes Hebrew—no accounting for taste. He reads Hebrew for years after he leaves college. He becomes quite proficient as a Hebraist. His class-mate did not keep up his Hebrew. Perhaps there was so little of it that it could not be reasonably expected to live long. At the end of ten years he opens his Bible and the old Hebrew gentlemen look exactly like old acquaintances that one ought to be able to name but—can't. There is no parity in Hebrew.

Two students leave the Hall together. One has a taste for Greek Exegesis. The other never did like Greek particles. To him the fine distinctions and beautiful shades of meaning brought out by high class work on the original never had any charm. The one becomes a very accomplished exegete in Greek. The other reads his Greek Testament—if he can read it at all—with an amount of deliberation which does not wholly arise from reverence for the Word. There is no parity in Greek.

The Rev. Mr. A. has a taste for literature of the oratorical kind. He studies Moses and Peter and Paul and tries to find out the secret of their power. He reads Demosthenes—English translation, probably—and tries to find out why he was the world's greatest orator. He dips into Chatham, Fox, Burke, Pitt, and others of that era, and studies their characteristics. He reads modern speeches that move men. Unconsciously, perhaps, he develops a power of addressing men successfully himself. The Rev. Mr. B. looks upon all speech-making as a bore, and when he addresses his fellow men he is always signally successful in illustrating his theory. There is no parity in the matter of public speaking.

This student on leaving the Hall takes with him a taste for Homiletics. He likes to make sermons and preach them. His favourite work is to select texts; divide them, get good illustrations, and work up some telling sermons that send the people home thinking it is a good thing to go to church. When this young man strikes oil on a good text he goes into ecstasies, and feels as good as some of his brethren do when they are put on a committee. He buys every good book on preaching, reads them, learns from his successes and failures, improves his methods and goes on until he does not need to take a back seat in any company.

That other student never did take much interest in preaching. He does not believe in putting much work on sermons. He puts the work most unmercifully

on the people who have to listen to them. He says his forte is to "talk to the people just like Moody." Those who have heard Moody were never struck with the resemblance. This brother never buys anything on Homiletics. On the top shelf of his library, half covered with dust, stands poor little Claude. Little Claude is his only book on preaching. Clearly there is no parity in preaching.

Here is a good brother who likes to grapple with great questions. He soars aloft in the regions of the Infinite; he toys with the Absolute; he adjusts the relations of the Ego and the Non-Ego; he goes back some centuries behind the Adam family, and puts in some work on Supralapsarianism. Then he comes down here and fixes up Freedom and Necessity in five minutes. Several colleges offer him a D.D. While he is settling these great questions a good many of his people join the Methodists.

Here is another brother who never wrestles with the Absolute. He is satisfied to do good plain work. He builds up his congregation and works for his Church generally. There is evidently no parity between these two brethren except official parity.

Now, if there is no parity as regards ability and attainments anywhere else, why should we expect parity in everything in the General Assembly? If one man may know more Hebrew than another, may know more Greek than another, may know more literature than another, may have more speaking or preaching power than another, may not one man have more business capacity than another? Is it not notorious that some ministers have much more business capacity than others? Some ministers were in business before they became ministers. Some were partly trained for other callings. Some have had secular work to do all their lives; some have done official work in the Church for many years, and are familiar with the routine, and just so long as these inequalities of training exist some can do more work in less time and do it better than others.

More than this there is such a thing as natural aptitude for church business or public business of any kind. This aptitude consists not only in being able to do business, but in being able to do it *on the spot*. One man can put his business machinery at work in two minutes. Another needs a day to fire up his mental engine. Clearly, the man who can fire up in two minutes is the man for public business. The man who can prepare a statement, or draw up a report, or frame a resolution, if you give him until next day to do it, may be a very good man—in some respects a much better man, perhaps, than one who can do it on the spur of the moment—but he never can be so useful as his more active neighbours in doing some kinds of business. To be able to see a thing, or say a thing, or do a thing next day is not what is often required in a deliberative assembly of any kind. Whether the most active men in any given body are the best qualified is not the point. The point is that some men by natural ability and acquired habits are much more capable of doing business than others, and instead of nibbling at such men we should be thankful we have them.

THE SECOND COMING FOR AND WITH THE SAINTS.

MR. EDITOR, Since writing the last paper on the so-called "Imminence" of the coming, or the opinion held by some that Christ may come at any moment, which we saw is so far true as that no one knows when He will come, I have read the account of a lecture on the Dispensations, given in MacNab Street Church, Hamilton, by an earnest advocate of the doctrine. Among other statements it was then said that the Christian dispensation began with the Day of Pentecost, and is to end when the Lord comes for His saints. Also it was confidently asserted that in round numbers this dispensation would extend over two thousand years. Now the Day of Pentecost occurred A.D. 34. The end of the dispensation, or the coming of the Lord, should, therefore, be expected in round numbers A.D. 2,034, or 149 years from the present time. But we are told that Christians in the apostolic age were looking for the coming in their day. Again, in the eleventh century the opinion became somewhat generally diffused. Of course it did not occur then, and those who looked for Him were mistaken, for if the dispensation theory is correct Christ would not come for at least a thousand years from A.D. 1,000. Can we, then, believe that these good men

were correct in their interpretation of Scripture, or were taught by the Holy Ghost in expecting what, had they understood the mind of the Holy Ghost as enunciated by the lecturer, they might have known that it could not occur for a thousand years? Impossible, I say, the Holy Ghost could not teach the two things or raise such false expectations; that a system of interpretation cannot be correct which encouraged such hopes. But still more, I cannot understand how any intelligent and honest man can hold (1) this dispensation shall last for 2,000 years, from A.D. 34; (2) shall end with the coming of Christ for His saints, somewhere about A.D. 2,034; (3) and that the Holy Ghost teaches me to expect Him every hour. I know good, earnest men who think they have above others received spiritual enlightenment do hold and teach these seemingly incompatible opinions; but the reconciliation of them is, to say the least, a difficult task. And it is beyond my power to believe that men who refuse to hold this view of the Imminence are less taught of God than its advocates, or, to quote from the book (pp. 52, 53, 54), are misguided, blinded, and exhibit a density of "darkness, and a profundity of error, that is truly marvellous." Oh for charity and humility!

But I would like H. M. P. or any other brother to tell me on what passages of Scripture it is held that Christ is to come for His saints; then after an interval, during which the world shall pass through the great tribulation, shall come again with the saints to reign personally over the Jews. It is a very easy matter to make a selection from the 318 passages of the New Testament in which Dr. Brookes thinks he finds "the coming" spoken of; and so arrange them and connect them with comments and deductions of what "must be," that is, in the opinion of the theorizer, as to teach almost anything on the subject. But what one desiderates is a clear statement of the passage or passages which speak of the Lord coming for His saints. On pp. 51 and 52 we have a number of passages, some of which speak of "the appearing"—the epiphany or apocalypse of Jesus Christ. But these must refer (2 Thess. chapter ii.) to the coming with the saints when the "man of sin" has been developed, after the Church and Holy Ghost have been withdrawn from earth, or "caught up into the air"; and when He comes with the saints to reign on earth. So of other passages such as 2 Thess. i. 7-10, and Matt. xiii. 40-41, Rev. i. 7. There may be more than one passage, but 1 Thess. iv. 15 is the passage upon which must rest the peculiar idea of "the rapture of the saints," the resurrection of dead saints, the change of living saints, their being caught up into the air, their ascent into heaven, and the marriage of the saints to the Lamb before Christ returns with the saints. But let any one examine the passage carefully, and see if any such doctrine can be found there. Verse 16. "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord." On p. 74 I find that the proper way to ascertain the mind of the Spirit is "to compare Scripture with Scripture, praying for light, and not quoting first the opinions of men or giving our own." This I wish to do. If H. M. P. will give me the Scriptures to compare, without giving his own opinions or comments, or thoughts which have "flashed into his mind," or have, as he thinks, been "fastened in his mind by the Holy Spirit" (pp. 74, 75), I promise carefully to examine them and see if there is any authority in the Word of God for supposing that Christ is to come for His saints some years before He comes with them, to reign over men in the flesh in Jerusalem, or over it. To the Word and to the testimony, not to men's opinions or fancies, I appeal. If God's Word says Christ is to come visibly or invisibly to catch up the saints to heaven, I wish to see the passages where it is so said. I read Matt. xiii. 40, after speaking of the sons of the kingdom and the sons of the evil one being together in the present age: "As therefore the tares are gathered up and burned with fire; so shall it be in the end of the world (R. V., the consummation of the age). The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of