

Our Contributors.

COMPARISONS THAT ARE RATHER STUPID.

BY KNOXIAN.

The voice of the political orator is heard in the land, and this question sometimes comes along with it: Why can't ministers draw crowds and address them as effectively as do the principal campaign speakers. As a sort of offset to this question ministers sometimes ask, Why don't people go in crowds to church and to prayer meeting as they go to political meetings.

A little reflection might convince anybody that both of these questions are senseless if not particularly stupid.

The highly intelligent citizen, who wonders why an average minister cannot draw and control a crowd as the chief platform speakers can, wants you to draw the general conclusion that ministers of the Gospel are woefully deficient in the matter of public speaking when compared with politicians. Before we draw any such sweeping conclusion let us examine the comparison and see whether it is a fair one.

There are about ninety members in the local parliament and we may take them as representatives of the political oratory of Ontario. Let us say nothing in the meantime about members of the House of Commons or such terrific hitters as are some of the distinguished speakers not in any parliament. Let the Ontario Legislature as it was be compared with the clergy of Ontario.

Now are the leading debaters in the last Ontario Legislature fair samples of the debating and oratorical talent of the House? Is it not notorious that they were among the very best of the ninety? Now is it fair to take an average specimen from one class and compare him with the very best specimens in the other? To give the comparison even the appearance of fairness you must select three of the very best platform speakers that can be found among the clergy of Ontario and then probably the cloth would not suffer much by the comparison.

It is scarcely possible to make an intelligent and fair comparison between a great political meeting such as these gentlemen are addressing every day and any kind of a meeting that a clergyman is ever called upon to address. The occasion is made for them by the local party managers; they are advertised in every newspaper and placarded on every fence. The interest is always keen and sometimes rises to excitement. There is everything in the surroundings to call out of a man all there is in him and that alone is worth a great deal to a public speaker.

And then, too, it should be remembered that an election takes place only once in four or five years. There is a great difference between addressing people once in four years and addressing them two or three times a week. A clergyman who preaches twice each Sabbath to the same congregation addresses many of them a hundred times a year. Count in prayer meeting and other addresses and the number comes up to about one hundred and fifty a year. In five years he speaks to the same audience seven hundred and fifty times. In ten years, fifteen hundred times. Is there a political orator in Ontario who can keep an audience of four or five hundred together while he addresses them on political topics one hundred and fifty times at the rate of three addresses per week? There is not one. The subject would wear out, and the orator would wear out and the people would scatter before he came to his fiftieth speech. It is doubtful if even Gladstone could deliver fifty political speeches in succession to the same audience.

It ought to be remembered, too, that stump speaking is a distinct business just as certainly as making boots or coats is a distinct business. A clergyman is no more to be blamed because he cannot hold a crowd for two hours than a shoemaker is to be blamed because he cannot make trousers. Professor MacLaren would make a better appearance on the stump than one of the Ontario cabinet would in the pulpit or in the Chair of Systematic Theology. Every man to his business.

It would be easy to name three or four superior court judges who could not stand up before the Ontario political leaders on the stump for ten minutes. They are learned men, able men, at least one of them is a brilliant man, but they never were on the stump and don't understand the business.

The comparisons some clergymen make about the people are just as stupid as the comparisons people make about them. It is all nonsense to say men are wicked because they go to a political meeting in great numbers or on a wet evening. These meetings come only once in four or five years and the men, or at least some of them, go to church nearly a hundred times a year. It is provoking to see people run away from prayer meeting to hear political speeches, but if a man goes to prayer meeting forty or fifty times a year and goes to his political meeting only once in four or five years it is hardly fair to call him hard names. Evidences of human depravity are not so scarce that a minister need make an ass of himself hunting for them. In anything like a fair comparison it will be found that religious meetings draw and hold people better than any other, and that a preacher is the only man who can induce people to pay him for telling them disagreeable things.

AVR Presbytery agreed to transmit Dr. Dyke's overture to the Assembly proposing a uniform system of vote by ballot at the election of ministers. The Clerk and several other members, however, did not see any good in the recommendation respecting the making up of the rolls.

THE REV. DR. MACLAREN AND THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER OF REVELATION.

VI.

The fifth and last division under "the sequence of thought" commences thus: "There follows in another vision, verses 11-15, the general resurrection, when all the dead, great and small, stand before God, and the general judgment, when all mankind are judged according to their works." Concerning the quotation above, many and vital points have to be raised. It teaches a literal resurrection. When the first part of the chapter speaks about resurrection, and holds out such a hope to the saints, the Doctor observes nothing but a promise of revival. When the latter part of the chapter speaks about rising, he understands it as meaning just what it says. He is more influenced by what he finds in the eleventh chapter, than by what he finds nearer at hand. Wherein is an inconsistency. There is a stronger "sequence of thought" between the two parts of the twentieth chapter, than there is between the first part of the twentieth chapter and the first part of the eleventh chapter. In Rev. xx. 5, it is said "the rest of the dead lived not till the thousand years were finished." Then we look down to xx. 12, and read "and I saw the dead, small and great, standing before the throne." These are the two verses that need to be connected. The dead spoken of in the fifth verse slumber on for a thousand years. In the 12th and following verse, they rise and come to judgment. So that xx. 11-15 deals exclusively with the wicked dead. When the Doctor affirms that "all mankind" are there for judgment, he misunderstands the passage. So pre-millennial men hold, and with all their souls. There then are the two views of that solemn passage. The one side holds that it treats of all men, good and bad, of all ages. The other side holds that it deals with the bad of all ages. The question is who is in the right? The Professor holds that the language of verses 12-13 is "too comprehensive" to be taken to mean only the unbelieving dead. May that not be a matter of opinion? The most "comprehensive" phrase in these verses is "the dead, small and great." Now is it a matter of fact that the terms "small and great" necessitate us to believe that all the human family are there? It is not a fact. That same language is to be found elsewhere in the Word, where its application is by no means universal. In 2nd Kings, xxiii. 2, it is said that "all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, . . . were there both small and great," when we know that only the elders of the people were present. This clause, on which the Doctor relies to prove universality, will not bear out the meaning put upon it. There is nothing said in these verses to show that the believing world is there. They were raised a thousand years before. If this passage described the judgment of "all mankind," there would be something said about both classes, the good and the bad. But there is nothing said about the saints or the rewards that come to them: therefore the judgment of all mankind is not being dealt with. It is a singular thing, the power that some men have to read into parts of the Word. Here five or six verses are held as describing a general universal judgment, and yet they say nothing, good or bad, about the saints. All that has to be read into it. Then again 1 Thes. iv. 13-20, sets forth the resurrection of believers. Then that passage describes the judgment, and there is nothing about the wicked, all about that class has to be supplied as extra. That is not a fair way of dealing with the Word. The Doctor meets this point, or tries to do so, by pointing us on to the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, in a following chapter. The question arises, is that an answer at all? The sentence on the wicked is given in the passage, they are cast into the lake of fire. Were the other class there, beyond a doubt the sentence of acquittal would be pronounced upon them. It is a vain reply to point us on to the new heavens and earth that are coming afterward.

This earth has to be burned up before the new one arises. We do not ask "where the righteous were sent to enjoy their portion," but we do ask for the sentence of the Judge touching their character, if they be there at all. The absence of this is strong evidence that they are not on the stand being judged. There is another point to be looked at, as arising out of the above quotation. It is one of deep importance, and one in which we all have an interest. Is it true that, on the great day, all mankind shall be judged according to their works? According to this teaching all men are before God, and according to their works they enter into life or into death. That works are the test and decide a man's hereafter, is true according to the passage before us. It is according to the things that are written in the books, that a man is judged. It is not a part of that gathering that is so dealt with—all are thus treated. Then what becomes of the doctrine of grace? "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves," said Paul. What about grace if all the human family are judged according to the things that are in the books? Is it not clean gone and that forever? Do Christians enter into life through the works written in the books? Does not the Shorter Catechism tell us time and again that it is by God's free grace that men are foreordained, and ultimately glorified? It does. If works be the balance in which even the best of men are to be weighed, then they may bid farewell to the old hopes of an inheritance to come, for like Belshazzar they shall be found wanting. In that case the question of sin must come up in their cases, on the great day. But did not God say "far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." On the judgment day they find that sins

are not so far away. Understand that passage, Rev. xx. 11-15, to be the judgment of all the wicked dead, and all is clear. Bring the saints up then, about whom the Holy Ghost says nothing in the verses, and all is confusion. Every mortal of the human race must stand before Jesus Christ the Judge of all the earth. Believers were in Him on Calvary. "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is so are we in the world." The Bridegroom judges the Bride on the day of judgment! Let those believe it that will. The works of believers shall be judged, but not with a view to deciding whether they shall enter into life or not. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life." John v. 24. It is a sad mistake to hold that the saints are brought into judgment. That believers shall be judged with a view of deciding whether they shall enter into life or not, through the works they have done, is not Scripture. If such process be entered upon, banishment follows, and the shelter of the blood, we tremble to say it, was insufficient.

On page sixteen, we come to the order of events as they shall come at the close of the world's history, as the Doctor sees them presented in the Word. In the parable of the wheat and the tares, he finds this order most clearly laid down. Many a time did the late Principal Willis warn his students against the use of the parables for the establishment of doctrines, and especially of disputed doctrines. And just as unwise would it be to turn to a parable to establish the order of coming events. The statement in the parable on which he lays stress is this: "Gather first the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them." When the Doctor relies on that command as teaching that the wicked are sentenced and cast away before the righteous are acquitted and gathered home, he falls into error. There is no good reason why those words should have so "commanding" an influence. If he had looked at the parable of the net, he might have found cause for modifying the statement if not for omitting it. It is said the good were gathered into vessels, and the bad were cast away. The good gathered out first and the bad cast away—that might be taken for the order as well as the other statement. In Matt. xxv, the righteous are dealt with first. When the writer turned to that parable to decide the order of coming events, he was hard pushed. These parables do not decide this matter one way or the other. In that of the wheat and the tares, the central idea is the mixed nature of the Kingdom of God, in the meantime. That the parable was intended to settle the point which party should be dealt with first, we have no evidence. The likelihood is that the Doctor is doing what he has warned his students against, many a time, viz., do not make the minute statements of the parables teach dogmas. Before accepting this order of events, we want a little more proof that the Scriptures teach it. Especially do we hold to this position, while we believe that the Word plainly teaches a different order of events elsewhere. The Word abundantly declares that believers shall be associated with the Lord in the judgment of the world. Hence the glorification of the saints precedes the judgment.

There is a statement in this parable to which I call attention before leaving it for a moment. We read verse thirty-nine (Matt. xiii.) that "the harvest is the end of the world," and "world" literally rendered is "age." Then the Gospel harvest comes at the end of the age, and that is a different thing from the end of the world. The age as far as we know may end anytime. That being so, the gathering home and the crowning of the Lord's people takes place before the judgment of the wicked.

Matt. xxv. 31-46 is dealt with at the close of page sixteen. The passage is confessedly a difficult one, no matter in whose hands it may be. The Doctor says that pre-millennial men make a sad exhibition of themselves in expounding it. There is no doubt he honestly thinks so. And yet that does not make it so. On the other hand, many hold that the post-millennial interpretation of that passage violates known Scriptural doctrine. In dealing with it, the Doctor in one place manifestly catches at a straw. He finds in the closing verse that the wicked are said to go away into everlasting punishment before the righteous enter into life eternal. This fact he holds to be a sure indication of the order of procedure on the great day. It is unfortunate for this argument that the body of the passage looks the other way. That is, the righteous are dealt with first.

Here let me point out some difficulties in the way of the ordinary interpretation. "Before Him shall stand all nations." The Greek phrase here used, *panlu ta ethna*, means living nations, for the plain reason that no other nations exist. Nations as such have no future existence. Many a time Dr. Stuart Robinson preached that, and with convincing force. The phrase does not point to the dead at all. "All nations" are the people upon the earth, at the time spoken of. There is nothing said here about a resurrection, and yet the Doctor assumes that there has been one. Here we recall the fact that he dealt out some sound advice to the other side for holding that the reign of Christ and his people shall be on the earth, seeing the words on the earth do not occur in Rev. xx. Here he quietly takes for granted that all the dead rise, while nothing is said about such an event. It is good to be consistent.

Then the test that is here applied to men to decide whether they are worthy of privileges or not must be noted. Works are the test of entering into the life, so says the writer. Works are never applied to believers to decide whether they