

## The Christian.

ST JOHN, N. B.

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## EDITORIAL.

## THE TARES OF THE FIELD. MATT. XVI.

The parable of the tares has been attracting considerable attention in late numbers of THE CHRISTIAN. For years we have carefully studied this parable, and in an editorial for April, 1888, set forth what we deemed the views least liable to objection. As the subject is now under particular consideration, we reproduce that editorial in the hope that it may have some part in leading the minds of enquirers to a satisfactory understanding of the subject. As our object is to "prove all things and hold fast that which is good," we ask the reader who may not see the consistency of these views and who hold different ones, or may wish to ask questions on them, to write as briefly as practicable to our address, *New Glasgow, P. E. I.*, and we will endeavor through THE CHRISTIAN to satisfy all. We are glad that THE CHRISTIAN can and does exhibit the proper spirit in discussing views which differ, and that the brethren understand that while the Scripture does declare "There is one faith," it nowhere says "There is one opinion." Let brethren write freely, but with "love one to another."

This parable of the Saviour is the second on record. The first is the parable of the sower, in which was but one seed and one sower. In this are two seeds and two sowers. In that the seed is the word of God; in this both seeds are men and women. Jesus kindly explains both parables to His disciples, and leaves the explanation open for our benefit.

In this parable he likens the kingdom of heaven to two seeds. The good is sown by the Son of Man; the bad or tares by the devil. Both are to grow together until the harvest, or the end of this world, and are then to be gathered and separated by the angels.

Notwithstanding Jesus' explanation, many and conflicting views are held of the meaning of this parable. Perhaps those most entitled to our consideration are the two respecting the meaning of the kingdom of heaven—one holding it to represent the world, the other the church of Christ. These two we will consider fairly; and at the start of our investigation cite every passage in the parable where the word "kingdom" occurs and place after it in brackets severally the words "the world" and "the church," because the true meaning of a word used instead of it will give the correct meaning of the passage.

Verse 24: Another parable put He forth to them saying, The kingdom of heaven [the church] or [the world] is likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field.

Verse 38: The field is the world, the good seed are the children of the kingdom [the church] or [the world].

Verse 41: The Son of Man shall send forth His angels and they shall gather out of His kingdom [the world] or [the church] all things that offend, etc., etc.

Verse 43: Then shall the righteous shine forth in the kingdom [the world] or [the church] of their Father.

We see in all these places that the "world" is not a proper substitute for the "kingdom" and that the "church" is, and hence we take the church to be its meaning, and conclude that the Church of Christ will have in it both good seed and tares until the harvest. This is taught in this parable, and it is also taught elaborately in other parables which will come under our notice.

While we feel fully confirmed in this view of the

parable, we see what appears to others strong objections to it, which it is but just to consider, as we think they can be fairly removed by the force of truth.

Objection I. Jesus tells us the field is the world, which settles that part. Now if the seed is sown in the field, or the world, and grows there until the harvest, and it grows also in the kingdom until harvest, will not that prove the kingdom and the world to be the same? Not necessarily. A man crossing from Europe to America comes on the Atlantic. He also comes on a steamship, but this does not make the Atlantic and the steamship the same, nor will the growing in the kingdom and in the world make the kingdom and the world the same. The kingdom is something in the world and not the world itself, just as the steamer is something on the Atlantic and not the Atlantic itself.

The good seed are the children of the kingdom, the true subjects of the king, placed there by his appointment and influence. The tares are the children of the wicked one, placed there by the artifice of Satan.

Objection II. It is contended that if the good and bad seed were to grow up in the church till the end of the world that there would be an end to all church discipline—that the church is not allowed to withdraw from any disorderly brother, or to put away from among them any wicked person.

This requires careful consideration. The church are the people whom Jesus redeems with His own blood and calls out from the world to keep His laws and uphold His government on earth. They are new creatures born from above—born of God. All such are children of the kingdom. But among these the enemy has succeeded in sowing the children of the devil. These are not born again—their hearts are unchanged. In some cases their conduct makes it apparent to all that they are unregenerate. In other cases they manage to get along as if they were children of the kingdom, and have a strong influence with at least a part of the real children. Some of the good seed, again, are so weak and imperfect as to strongly resemble tares. Men, then, are not the proper judges to decide in all cases who are the good seed and who the tares, and that must be left to the judgment of Christ.

It is generally observed that it is by no means the purest members who are the readiest to have others cut off from the church, so that if those who volunteered their services had their own way they would often present the pitiable spectacle of the tares rooting out the wheat rather than the wheat the tares.

It may be asked, What, then, of church discipline? We answer, It is an appointment of Christ and most essential to the prosperity of the church. Jesus has directed the church how to deal with an erring brother. The rule is to restore and save such a one; the exception is to withdraw from him. He tells the steps the church is to take with him. If these prove successful there is joy over the one that went astray; but if he still persists in wrongdoing the church is to withdraw from him. Jesus is so well pleased when His law is carried out that He ratifies and binds in heaven what they do on earth. Matt., xviii. 15-18.

Let it be borne in mind that church discipline has to deal with the actions of men, and not with their hearts or motives. "For man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." (1 Sam. xvi. 7). We are to examine our hearts, but not to examine the hearts or motives of others. If our hearts condemn us, we may expect to be condemned by Him who is greater than our hearts and knows all things. Others are not to examine our hearts or motives. When, however, these motives go out from us into actions, these actions are seen by others and affect others, and are the legitimate subjects for others to judge.

The wholesome loving discipline of the church is

as different from the coveted labors of those servants who desired to root out the tares, as day is from night. The church moves in obedience to Christ; those were ready to rush into a work for which they were unfitted. The church desires to save men; they to destroy them. The church judges the actions of men; they judged their hearts.

As men cannot judge the hearts, both the tares and wheat must grow together until angels hands shall separate them at the end of the world.

In the 47th verse Jesus likens the kingdom of heaven to a net cast into the sea, which gathered in of every kind. When it was full it was drawn to shore, the good gathered into vessels and the bad thrown away. So shall it be at the end of the world; the angels shall come and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire, there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. This agrees exactly with the parable of the tares.

In the 22nd of Matthew, Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a king who made a marriage for his son. After describing the different invitations which the Jews had received and rejected, and the fate of these murderers, he said to his servants at the eighth verse, "The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy, go ye therefore, into the highways and as many as ye shall find bid to the marriage." So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good, and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment. When asked by the king why he came in there without a wedding garment he was speechless, and the servants bound him hand and foot, and cast him into utter darkness, where was weeping and gnashing of teeth. This description of the kingdom is in perfect accord with the parable of the tares of the field.

Jesus told Nicodemus in the third of John how a man must enter His kingdom, and confirmed the same when He sent out His apostles to gather into His kingdom all who love and obey Him, as recorded in Matt. xxviii. 19, 20, and Mark xvi. 15, 16. After He gave them the great commission, He ascended and sat down at the right hand of God, according to the prediction of David, "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." (Ps. x. 1). He must reign till every enemy be put under His feet. And after He shall have sent forth His angels to gather out of His kingdom all things that offend and them that do iniquity, and shall present unto Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing (Ep. v. 27), it seems the proper time to deliver up the kingdom, or that glorious church, to God, even the Father. (1 Cor. xv. 24). So He here declares, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

## Original Contributions.

## MAJORITIES RULING IN THE CHURCH

Having seen several articles in THE CHRISTIAN on majorities and ruling by majorities, I have been led to wonder if the question is not one outside of and contrary to the teaching of the New Testament. If I read 1 Tim. v. 15 aright, the elders of the church are to rule, and that rule is to be (1 Pet. v. 15) "not as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."

In Titus i. 6-16 we find the qualification of elders and their duties; also in 1 Tim. iii. 2-7. Is these epistles are given us for our instruction, how can we properly discuss the question of majorities ruling in church matters. If we do it means we have