

almost identical with the parable of the tares and the wheat. "The kingdom of Heaven," says Christ, "is like unto a net that was cast into the sea." Now here there is nothing about the *world*. The net cannot be the world, for we are distinctly told it is meant to represent the Gospel of the kingdom of Heaven. This net, we are told, "*gathered of every kind*." The original word "signifies a draw net, one of the largest description, and typifies how that the kingdom of Heaven should henceforward be as a net not cast into a single stream, as under the Messianic dispensation, but unto the broad sea of the whole world, gathering or drawing together some out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." Well, when the net was full, the fishermen drew it to shore and sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. If the parable ended here, without note or comment, then indeed the Brethren might have argued that the spiritual fishers had a right to take on themselves the purification of the Church; but our Saviour's explanation of the parable gives a fearful deathblow to their theory. "So shall it be," (he says) when? "*at the end of the world* : the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire : there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Now I hold that it is impossible to get over the plain teaching of this parable. The net is plainly the visible Church of God cast into the waters of life. That net is to remain there till it is full—until the Gospel is preached to *all*—and never will it be drawn to shore till the close of the dispensation; but when it is drawn, then will that awful inquisition take place that every sinner should dread. No apology; no prayers; no tears will stay the angels' hands that must sever once and for ever between the evil and the good. The net cast and remaining in the sea for all time is a magnificent evidence of God's mercy; but the net drawn to shore and cleansed and purified is fully as awful an evidence of God's justice. But, blessed be God, it receives and takes all with a holy intention and will continue to do so till the rejection of many and the sins of many shall allow the time to be no longer in which God calls; but men will not hear.

But although, my brethren, these parables go to prove the mixture of good and evil in the Church till the end of time, let us remember that in both parables the good and bad, though mixed together, were in one sense *distinct*. The seed when sown was good, and good it remained. The tares when sown were bad, and remained bad till the hour of separation. The tare remained a tare; it was mixed, indeed, with the good seed, but it was as distinct from it at the end as it was at the beginning.

And so it should be with the servants of Jesus. We are not saved by the Church or by any system of human organization, whether composed altogether of good men, or mixed with evil. We are saved solely and alone through our connection with, and faith in, the merits of our Saviour's atonement. I would not gain the blessing of the Spirit because I might worship with none but Christians (as Mr.

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