

Our Contributors.

NONE MADE GOOD ENOUGH.

BY KNOXIAN.

Some interesting anecdotes are being related about the late Dr Shaw, of Rochester, a genial, honoured and much-loved minister who recently passed on to his rest and reward. On one occasion a pastor from the neighbouring city of Buffalo asked him how it was that they had such prosperous times in the Rochester churches while things in the Buffalo churches seemed very dry. Dr Shaw's reply was, "We work here with any one the Lord sends, but the Lord never made a man good enough for Buffalo."

The people afflicted with the idea that no minister has been made good enough to preach to them do not all live in Buffalo. More's the pity they don't. Some of them we fear have found their way over to Canada. The root of the trouble in many a long vacancy is that some of the people have the idea that no one has been made good enough to preach to them. All vacancies may not be afflicted in that way nor all the people in any one vacancy, but if a few so-called leading men think that no minister has been made good enough for them the congregation is likely to remain vacant for a long time. While these wise leaders are waiting to see if any better men are being made the attendance thins out, the revenue goes down, the machinery gets out of gear, and the people who remain are in great danger of being turned into little cliques of carping critics. It cannot well be otherwise. So far as we know it is nowhere said in Scripture that people will grow in grace or even in numbers if they attend church mainly to compare the points of the fiftieth candidate with the points of the forty-nine who have preceded him.

What can be done for people who think that no man has been made good enough to preach to them? Under the Presbyterian system—nothing. The Methodist Conference can send a man along whether he is good enough or not. The Anglican bishop can do the same. Presbyterians are powerless in the face of such an emergency. All they can do is just wait and see if a man good enough will be made. In fact the quarrel is not with the Church at all. It is with the higher powers. The Church cannot furnish a man if none good enough has been made. There is none in stock, so to speak. Everybody must just wait until one is made. That is the best you can do.

Sometimes you meet a minister who thinks that no congregation has been made good enough for him to preach to—at least none within his reach. There are two courses open to a man afflicted in that way. One is to stop preaching altogether and the other is to get converted. About a minister who wrote "I am throwing myself away in this shoe-town," Dr. Phelps makes the following observations:—

"Very well! he probably could not make a better throw. If he saves a shoe-town morally he lifts it up intellectually to an immense altitude. In the process of doing that he lifts his own mind to a level of culture and of power which no conservatism of refinement ever rises high enough to overlook. Do not the first ten inches of an oak from the ground measure as much in height as the last ten inches of its topmost branch. When will the ministry learn that the place where has very little concern with the intellectual character of the work done? The uplifting anywhere is essentially the same, but with the chances of success all in favour of lifting low down. To the mind of Christ the whole world is a "shoe town" intellectually. To give it a lift everywhere is the intellectual glory of the pulpit. Deliverance from the pettiness of a select ambition is essential to the power to lift it anywhere."

True and noble words but there never is any trouble with the man who has the power to give a lift anywhere. The man who thinks no congregation good enough for him, the man who won't preach if he can't get a congregation of a certain kind is always a clerical prig, a conceited weakling who can give no lift.

One of our ministers denied the other day with some warmth that he preferred retirement from the ministry to service in congregations not of a certain class. The warmth was highly credible to him. A preacher of the Gospel who would rather go idle than preach anywhere he has the opportunity gives grave reason to doubt whether he ever felt the power of the Gospel in his own heart or ever had scriptural conceptions in regard to the value of souls.

The church, however, is not the only place where you find people who think nobody has been made good enough for them.

Here is a mother who strongly believes no young woman has ever been made good enough to be a wife for her son. Perhaps he is a very ordinary specimen of a young man. Probably if he had a wife it would worry him considerably to keep a roof over her head. Possibly he might leave her often in the evenings and go out to see a man. Perhaps she may have to keep a toll-gate or run a Berlin wool store or something of that kind to get bread for the dear old mother's grandchildren if she marries the young man, but still the old lady thinks no girl is good enough for a wife for her son. Oh, dear no. Where on earth do all the wicked, cruel, drunken, dissipated husbands come from if every mother's son is far too good for any neighbour's daughter. Two or three affectionate husbands have been hanged lately for doing away with their wives. Wonder if their mothers thought their wives were not good enough for them. Any kind of a woman is good enough we should say for a man of that kind.

And here is the dear old lady who is positively certain no young man is made good enough for her daughter. Now dear old soul don't be too sure. There are a great many excellent

young men in this country and some capital young women, too. Some young men are quite good enough for any young woman and some of the young women are thousands good enough for any young man. That is exactly how the land lies. Now, dear old soul, are you quite positive there is not a partner on this continent good enough for your daughter. Your neighbour over the way says just the same thing about her son. You can't both be right. Are you quite sure that charming daughter of yours could manage a household just about right? Are you absolutely sure she could keep house at all if left to her own resources? A woman who can't run a house pretty well is not too good for anybody.

Yes, there are ministers good enough for any congregation and congregations good enough for any minister; wives good enough for any husband and husbands good enough for any wife; schools good enough for any teacher and teachers good enough for any school; members good enough for any constituency and constituencies good enough for any member, and so on to the end of the chapter. There are lots of good enough people and good enough things.

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

VII.

On page 17 we read, "The order, therefore, to which we are conducted by the figurative interpretation of Rev. xx. 1-10, is precisely that foreshadowed by Christ Himself. The wicked are first separated and cast into the lake of fire, and then the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

The Doctor is strongly wedded to the figurative interpretation. He makes it synonymous with "spiritual." In so doing he falls into error. The figurative interpretation is no more "spiritual" if as much so as the literal. There is as much of the Spirit about the literal exposition of that passage as about any other, and a little more. The literal interpretation of any passage may be more spiritual than the other. Take Isaiah liii. Dr. Bushnell takes the figurative, and pours out his wrath upon the "literalizers," as he calls them. The literalizers, on the other hand, take the passage as it reads, and understand it as teaching vicarious sacrifice in the fullest sense. Bushnell denies that that passage teaches that Christ satisfied divine justice. Others hold that it is the central truth of the chapter. The men who see in that chapter vicarious atonement are the more spiritual in their faith. In like manner the literal interpreters of Revelation xx. have the more spiritual view. To hold that the figurative is the spiritual interpretation is assumption unmingled. The sooner all post-millennial men drop this part of their creed, the sooner will they become fair and just.

It is one thing to spiritualize; it is another to interpret. The pamphlet before us does the former, but omits the latter.

But the order of future events as revealed in the Word is the subject in hand. The Doctor found his order in a parable. Another parable would have taught him the reverse order. That implies no fault in the parables. A mistake was made in basing the order of events of the future on a parable not intended to throw special light on the subject. A noticeable thing just here is this, that other parts of the Word very decidedly antagonize the order that the Doctor found in the parable. And now for the proof of the statement. We turn to Jude 14, 15, "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." These two verses of Jude and the "order" which the Doctor found in the parable do not agree. According to that "order" the wicked are all disposed of first, then the righteous shine out in glory. But these verses say that the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints to convince and to judge the ungodly. It is with glorified saints that He comes to judge the world. The same is true when Paul says in Corinthians, "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?" That statement implies that the world is down in its wickedness, and the saints are delivered glorified persons. The order implied in these passages takes more hold on us than many spiritualizings from parables. On page 18 objection is taken to the literal understanding of Rev. xx. The first objection assigned is this: "It makes the promise, 'Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power,' a mere truism." The main trouble with this objection is that it is a matter of human opinion largely. The Doctor says it is not necessary to tell persons here on the earth that after they have come forth in the first resurrection there is no more danger. The Doctor should hardly take that position: he holds that they are yet to be judged; and if so they need to be assured of victory. The fact is these words are for believers now. There is much repetition in the Word of God. Line upon line and precept upon precept have all been given, and given because needed to strengthen faith while in a wicked world. Following the same line of reasoning, it might be shown that many a promise is only a truism. The saints shall be attacked after the resurrection. There is a reason for recording the promise.

According to the pamphlet before us it is principles that rise into life, not men. Let us see how this will look side by side with some of the Scripture statements. "And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." Is it principles or is it persons that reign a thousand years with Christ? It

does seem to me that both ordinary readers and others too will say it is men that so reign. Two considerations lead us to believe that persons are meant in the passage. Principles always have lived with Christ. Further, to speak of principles reigning a thousand years is unusual. "On such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years." It is principles, bear in mind, that are spoken of here. So holds the writer. The second death never touches principles, but these principles become priests of God. Has not the Doctor got this passage on the rack?

The second head under No. 4 deals with the statement in Revelation xv that the risen saints shall reign a thousand years with Christ. "The limitation of the reign of the saints with Christ to a thousand years is unaccountable." The reason assigned by the Doctor for his difficulty is that the reign of Christ is everlasting. It is quite true that the reign of Christ with His people shall know no end. There is abundance of evidence of that. There is a point here that is lost sight of when this difficulty is put forward. It is this: The reign of our Lord is continued a thousand years only in these circumstances, in these surroundings. Satan is bound during this period. The generations of men go on as of old. Preaching goes on, and life goes on as of old, only better. God has planned that this reign goes on the thousand years or the time that these years symbolize, under particular conditions. There is no end to the reign, but there is an end to these conditions. Here lies the reason for the limitation.

We come to the third point under the fourth head. It reads thus: "The opening of the book of life clearly indicates that those whose names are written in it are there to be made known, but what can be the meaning of this if a large portion of them have been reigning visibly with Christ for more than a thousand years?"

The Doctor's difficulty here can be readily answered. What is the book of life brought forward for if not to show who the righteous are? That is what the writer wants answered. That book may be produced for another purpose, and is by the showing of the apostle. Here are his words, "And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire." There is a sufficient reason for producing the book. The last verse of the chapter settles this point beyond a doubt.

We come to the fourth point under the fourth head. "The language in verse 4 is not, as we have seen, sufficiently comprehensive to include all the dead that are in Christ. 1 Thess. iv. 16; and the language of verses 11 and 12 is altogether too comprehensive to refer to the resurrection of only one class of men."

This quotation compels us to return to points already raised before. The Doctor told us in a former place that Revelation xx. 4 is a martyr scene, and that alone. And let me here say again that a mistake has been made. Revelation xx. 4 is a martyr scene but it is more. It speaks of those that "had not received the mark of the beast on their foreheads or in their hands." All such persons were not slain by the enemy. Many of them were, but all were not. If these saints had been put to the test, they would no doubt have been martyrs. But many were not. They died a natural death. That verse includes multitudes upon multitudes that were not martyrs, and may be fairly taken to mean "the dead in Christ." "These are they which have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." As well might it be said that that language is not sufficiently comprehensive to include all the believing dead.

Further, it is argued that the language of verses 11 and 12 (of chapter xx.) is too comprehensive to be limited to any portion of the human family. The language is this, "I saw the dead, small and great." There is nothing in these terms to compel the belief that any but the unbelieving dead of past ages are there. Even take that language out of the context in which it stands, and it fails to bear out the meaning that is put upon it. In 2 Kings xxiii. 2, we read that all the people, both great and small, went up into the house of the Lord. Then a limit must be put upon the phrase "small and great." If limited in kings, why must it be so comprehensive in Revelation? We readily grant that as used by John it meant all the wicked dead of all ages of the world's history. That it included the righteous we have no proof.

In the close of his pamphlet the writer meets, or endeavours to meet, an objection put forth by pre-millennialists against his position. The objection is the following: It is a clear case that the literal resurrection of the dead is brought forward in verses 12 and 13 of this chapter. It is admitted on all hands that the literal rising from the grave is taught. That being so, it is reasonable to believe that a literal rising takes place in verse 4 of the same chapter. In that position there is sound reasoning. It is not consistent to teach that verse 4 speaks of revival only, and then to understand that verse 12 points to a literal resurrection of the dead. But the Doctor sees nothing to disturb anybody in this objection. He censured Dr. Moses Stuart for teaching a figurative resurrection of the witnesses in Chapter xi., and then holding to a literal resurrection in Revelation xx. 4. But here he falls into the same thing himself when he says that verse 4 is figurative and verse 12 is literal. The pre-millennial position in regard to these two resurrections is both clear and strong. In verse 4 the righteous, all the righteous dead, rise to reign with Christ. In verse 12 the wicked dead rise to come to judgment. In such interpretation there is no glossing over, no spiritualizing, no putting unnatural meaning