

of the property be applied to a public purpose superior education. Other denominations do not talk, but act. The Episcopal Church has its college, nay, a Saskatchewan university. Four English speaking nuns, with no Roman Catholic children in the place, have already begun what they call a first class seminary. Unless immediate action is taken the Presbyterian Church, which for years maintained a school not for Indians only, who were always a small percentage of the attendance, but for the whole community—a school which had the highest rank in the territory—will one day wake up with the lamentation that the most promising of its youth have drifted into other communions. In the meantime, it is a matter of thankfulness that the muddle in which Presbyterian Church matters remained for years is now dissipated, and that, with the removal of obstructions that hindered all real progress, the pathway of the Church is open for the quiet, vigorous pursuit of its real work.

JAMES SIEVERIGHT.

Prince Albert, August 1, 1883.

"BELIEVERS' MEETING" AT NIAGARA.

MR. EDITOR, Along with other friends I spent Tuesday, the 31st of July, at Niagara, attending "the Conference of Believers," a report of whose daily proceedings appeared in the Toronto papers. I do not propose to give your readers any general criticism of the addresses I heard, though I must candidly say that, with the exception of one by Dr. Moorhead, of Ohio, they were exceedingly disappointing to me. My purpose in writing you is to call the attention of your readers to a so-called Bible reading, given by Mr. Parlane, of Collingwood, on the parables in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, as he seemed to give expression to the views of his conferees, and to speak as one having authority. Mr. Parlane and his friends assume infallibility in the interpretation of Scripture with regard to the Lord's Coming, and tell us plainly that it is a truth that can only be acquired by special revelation. As a matter of course, therefore, they treat with pity, which is wonderfully like contempt, all who are not ready to accept their teaching, and are very impatient of contradiction. It would have been amusing, if it had not been painful, to witness Dr. Brooks' anger and uncharitableness in his references to those who differed from him, after a preface in which he told us how tender he felt, and how unwilling to wound the brethren by any word he might utter, and as for Dr. West I would only say it would be a serious matter, indeed, if his idiosyncracies could be shown to have any connection with the doctrine he holds with such assurance. If a man tells you that he knows he is right, because the Lord has revealed the truth to him, what can you say, unless, indeed, you should be as presumptuous, and declare that the Lord has made a revelation of an opposite character to you. But this is the ground these brethren take, and it is by such statements they seek to establish their most ridiculous assumptions. Mr. Parlane distinctly took the position that the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, as brought out in the parables, had thus been made clear to him, and led his hearers to suppose that the interpretation he gave was not man's but God's. I fear some of his hearers may have been awed by these statements, and I would like to relieve their minds by stating that there was nothing new in Mr. Parlane's address; the interpretation given being the common Plymouthist and pre-millenarian one presented, with the disadvantages that attach to the production of such views at second hand, by one not accustomed to the critical examination of the Scriptures. In order then that I may put myself in the way of receiving further light, if I am in the darkness, I wish to put some questions to Mr. Parlane and Mr. Parsons, which I would like to have answered. A venerable minister of the Conference asked Mr. Parlane how he accounted for the term, "kingdom of heaven" being applied to an organization which at length should become Babylon the great, the mother of harlots? The question is an important one, and I wish to press it further that it may be fully met. Are there any passages *outside* of the thirteenth chapter of Matthew which warrant the assumption that the term "kingdom of heaven," or "kingdom of God" is ever applied to a visible organization which will become the synagogue of Satan? Is there any warrant for giving a different meaning to the expression "kingdom of heaven" in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew than is given to it elsewhere in the Gospels? The

words occur one hundred and nine times in the Gospels outside of the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, and I ask, can it be possible to import a meaning into the expression there which is contradictory to its clear meaning in all these one hundred and nine passages? Once more I ask your readers to turn to Mark iv. 26 to 33, while I point out that there is a parable here that Mr. Parlane overlooked, that of the seed growing, we know not how. (I may remark by the way that Mr. Parlane is not singular in the tendency to overlook this parable; it is a common fault of his school.) Now, I ask, on what principles of exegesis it can be possible to give a different meaning to the kingdom in verse 26 than is given to it in verse 30; to say that in the one case you have an account of the growth of the kingdom, and in the other, of the decline and fall of what was thought to be the kingdom, but turned out to be Babylon, the mother of harlots?

But now, coming to the parables themselves, I wish to ask on what principles of interpretation it is said that only one-fourth of the sower's seed proved productive? Certainly not from the narrative, for the scene is drawn from a familiar proceeding on the part of husbandmen on the fertile slopes of the lake of Galilee, and which probably our Lord was looking upon when he spoke. Think you, that any man in his senses, and in a fertile country, would sow a field which had one fourth of its surface taken up by a pathway, another fourth by stones, and another by thorns? Think you, that any farmer reading this parable would so understand it? The division between the fields was a pathway, and, of course, some seed would fall there. There were rocky spots jutting out from the fertile soil here and there, and they would also receive a share of the scattered seed; and there were thorns around the field in little clumps which would also intercept the seed. But to say there was only one fourth of the field fruitful is a gratuitous and ridiculous assumption. If this view were correct, the lesson of the parable would be that God's word *does* return to Him void, that, in fact, the good seed is for the most part altogether lost. But, coming to the "wheat and tares," I ask for a more minute interpretation than Mr. Parlane gave. He was content with pointing out that there could be no millennium possible, because there were to be tares among the wheat until the end of the age. First, does Mr. Parlane think that during his millennium every soul in the world will be a true child of God, and on what Scripture does he base his belief? If he does not hold that opinion, why should he suppose that we hold it? Is it not one thing to say that there shall be the prevalence of the Gospel over all the earth, and that the limits of the visible Church shall be the limits of the globe, and quite another thing to say that there shall be no more professors in that day—that every soul shall be truly converted to God? Second, I ask, would not Mr. Parlane need to show by his method of interpretation that the tares not only remained in the field, but that they mastered it and overspread it, and that the work of the angels would be picking out from the corrupt mass the few good grains of wheat that still remained? Third, would it not be more difficult for Mr. Parlane to find a place for the personal reign of Christ on earth after the harvest scene here described than for us to show that there is room for a period of great prosperity through the prevalence of the Gospel before the harvest comes? Now we come to the mustard seed, and here, I think, the position of Mr. Parlane will require his careful consideration. Let me ask on what authority it is stated that the growth of the mustard seed into the tree is unnatural and abnormal? Dr. Thompson in "The Land and the Book" says he has seen a mustard tree which was "as high as a horse and its rider," and it would surely require strong evidence to show that was an abnormal growth. Again what authority has Mr. Parlane for holding that trees always represent the secular power, and that this mustard tree has that meaning? Has Mr. Parlane ever looked into the Psalm I, or Psalm civ. 16, or Ezek. xvii. 24, or Isaiah lxiii. 1? Surely if he had done so he would not have made the assertion he did as to trees always meaning earthly power, and surely he will admit that in this instance at least he has been proved not to be infallible. Again, I ask what authority has Mr. Parlane for saying the birds in this parable are the same as in the parable of the sower? There they devour the good seed, here they simply seek the shelter of the tree and neither hinder its growth nor mar its beauty. Is it to be supposed

that here an evil power is spoken of when the birds are in their natural dwelling place fulfilling God's appointment, and could we expect our Lord to use an illustration so unnatural and so inept to represent the enemies of His Church. Let me call attention here to Ezekiel xvii. 23, and to the beautiful reference to the birds in the eighty-fourth psalm, in which cases they have no such evil reputation as Mr. Parlane would give them. I cannot pass this parable without noticing some of the illustrations given by Mr. Parlane in which he expressed very decided opinions about the character of ministers of the Gospel. Telling how one man had assured him he entered the ministry because he could find nothing else to do, and of a young man, who, but for his instruction would have become a minister without knowing what to teach the people. I need not point out to your readers that such statements are quite common from the lips of Plymouth Brethren, and are as justifiable as if Mr. Parlane had met the quack lady doctor who not long ago visited Toronto and gave her case as an illustration of the condition of the medical profession. I am happy to say that while I have no doubt there must be some wolves in sheep's clothing among the ministers of the Gospel in this country, there never was a time when there was more earnest, self-denying, devoted servants of the Master than are now to be found among us, and let me say the difference between a gentleman of means and leisure stalling it at conferences and the men upon whom he looks with suspicion is of a kind little dreamt of in his imagination, but which will appear when the reckoning time comes.

But now we come to the parable of the leaven and know Mr. Parlane and Dr. Brooks are jubilant, for they consider their position here impregnable. Leaven, say they, always means corruption. I ask that this be proved in the light of the following passages, Lev. vii. 13, xlii. 17. But they say that in these cases it was used to signify that sin mingles with our offerings to God. Again I ask proof of that statement, and ask that the passages just mentioned may be compared with Deut. xvi. 3, when it will be evident that the unleavened is the bread of affliction and penitence but leavened is the bread of thanksgiving and praise. Our Lord was describing the daily task of the Jewish housewife who prepared the dough each morning for the baking by the introduction of the leaven and according to Mr. Parlane and his friends, in describing that household duty, he was showing how the pure meal could be corrupted and destroyed. But the woman in the parable according to our friends is the mother of harlots and her work is to corrupt. They say in the parables wherever good is done a man is represented as doing it. What then can they make of the parable of the lost piece of money? They further declare that while evil can penetrate and assimilate the good, the good cannot influence the evil. A drop of poison can render noxious a glass of water, but a drop of water will have no effect upon a glass of poison, or, as Mr. Parsons puts it, one rotten apple will corrupt a barrel full of good apples but one good apple will not affect a barrel of rotten ones. The fallacy in these illustrations is transparent. The water is dead and so are the apples, they have only negative qualities, and so can be acted upon as the meal was an inert mass until touched by the leaven. Water that is running can cleanse and can penetrate and assimilate, and apples growing on the tree are not only able to resist the power of the bad ones, but will shake them off the limb, and they will be found under the tree. Do these friends know what they are saying when they speak of the power of evil and its ability to overcome the good? Have they heard of the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints? do they ever read "be not overcome of evil but overcome evil with good?" Here let me give you Mr. Parlane's version of the parable of the leaven. The kingdom of heaven is corruption which the mother of harlots and abominations hid in or among the saints of God or the Church until the whole of the saints or the whole of the Church was corrupted. I venture to say that such an interpretation of our Lord's words is utterly repulsive to an unprejudiced mind, and quite sufficient to destroy any doctrine that may require its support. I hope in a future letter to advert to Mr. Parlane's interpretation of the four other parables of this series, but as you are aware the view we take of the first four really settles the controversy, and, until these friends have answered the questions put before them here I will go no further.

PRESBYTER.