

MISCELLANEOUS.

The Christian Minister.

To ascertain how the ministers of Christ are to be received, what kind of deference is due to them in their official character, and what weight is to be given to their instructions, we must resort to the New Testament. The Old Testament throws but little light on the subject. The analogies between the Jewish and Christian dispensations, on which so much reliance is placed by some, do not seem to us strong enough to bear their own weight. The names and titles which were given to the ministers of religion under the former, are not retained under the latter; and in some important respects, their duties and prerogatives are quite different. I know you will sometimes hear our Presbyterian and Congregational ministers called *priests*—priest A., and priest B.; but this does not make them so. They wear no ephod—they offer no sacrifices. And, really, since we can find no authority for retaining the *title*, under the Gospel dispensation, it is quite time for us to hand it over to those who think they can. To Puritan ears, where the blood has been left to flow on in its own proper channels, it is a misnomer. *Priest Baxter, priest Flavel, priest Howe, priest Owen!* What would the old non-Conformists have said to this? Neither have we any *Parsons* in our Congregational and Presbyterian churches—not one. You and I have sometimes heard it as a nick-name; but I believe it has nearly died out. If it still lingers any where, it is in the vulgar tongue. How churches and congregations are to regard and speak of their ministers, may be learned in the first place, from

THE NAMES AND TITLES,

which are given them in the New Testament. They are sometimes called *Elder*, as in the 20th chapter of Acts. "And from Miletus he (Paul) sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church;" and, among other things, charged them, "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers." Again, "When they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord on whom they believed."

The ministers of Christ are sometimes called *Presbyters*, as in the first of Timothy. "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy and the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery."

In several passages of the New Testament, they are called *Bishops*, as in I Tim. 3d chapter. "This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." Phil. 1st chap. "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, is all the saints in Christ Jesus which are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons. Acts 20th, 28th, as already quoted—"Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers"—*bishops*, it is, in the original.

The ministers of Christ are also called *Pastors*—as in Eph. 4th, 11th: "And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."—Here are several titles brought together in a single verse, among which that of *Pastor* is included, as is also that of *Evangelist*, upon which I shall have occasion to remark hereafter.

Christ's ministers are also, in II Cor. 5th chap., called *Ambassadors*. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

Apostles and Prophets, there have been none in the Church since the primitive age of the Christian dispensation; and it does not fall in my way in these letters to show, that the apostles left no successors, as a superior order in the ministry. This has been often and unanswerably done, as it appears to us; and if we were debating the matter with our Episcopal friends, it would be extremely easy, we think, to prove that the titles, *Bishop, Elder, Presbyter* and *Pastor*, were not intended to give, and do not indicate, any superiority of one over another. They are different names for the same office. Every Elder, every Presbyter, every Pastor is a *Bishop*, and every Bishop is an Elder and Presbyter. There is no pre-eminence in office, in authority to preach, to baptise, to ordain, to administer the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, or to exercise any other ministerial function. All

this we think is exceedingly clear, and I know that you, brethren, are quite satisfied with your own church organization. Your minister is a pastor, an elder, a presbyter, a *bishop*, and in speaking of him, you may with the strictest propriety use either of these titles, at your pleasure.

But to return from this digression, if it be one. My object now is to show, that these names, these titles, which Christ has given to his ministers, are not unmeaning terms; but they denote *official distinctions*, of high and solemn import. There is something in a title, and still more in an office of divine appointment. In natural endowments, and in education, a minister may be quite inferior to some members of his church and congregation. He may be a young man, while many of his hearers are enriched with all the garnered wisdom of age and experience. In his ordinary social intercourse, he may be regarded and treated like any other man of equal intelligence and moral worth; and in some places it is proper that he should take his seat below those, over whom he is set as a spiritual watchman. This he will most cheerfully do in the Senate chamber, in the hall of justice, and wherever official titles, and the discharge of public duties make it proper.—But if the titles, by which the sacred office is designated, mean any thing, as soon as man is regularly invested with it—as soon as he becomes a pastor, a bishop, an overseer of the flock of God—he must be entitled, in the place which the Great Head of the Church has assigned him, to exercise whatever powers are necessary for the proper discharge of his ministerial and pastoral duties. The very titles of his office show, that in religious matters, he occupies a higher station than any man in the church and society; that as he is by divine appointment an Overseer or Elder, he is in some sense a ruler in the church, not to "lord it over God's heritage, but for the edification of the body of Christ."—*Dr. Humphrey's Pastoral Letters.*

A much neglected duty.

A very simple and obvious duty it is, but one, we are certain, which many Christians overlook in this bustling age. They read, they pray, they act, they give, but they do not think! They do not take time to sit down quietly, in solitude, and meditate on heavenly and divine things. Some do, and love the hour of retirement which thus makes them conversant with God and their own souls. But many do not, and to those we are speaking

No Christian, with a good conscience, suffers a day to pass without prayer. And we do not mean to urge that the duty of *meditation* is as plain and stringent as that of prayer. Rather would we speak of it as a *privilege* so sweet and so fruitful of comfort and profit to him who indulges in its luxury, that argument to enforce it will not be required. It is one of the highest privileges to be enjoyed on earth—that of sitting down alone to think of God and heaven and holiness.

Some have found great assistance in giving direction to their thoughts, in the use of Jay, Mason, Bogatzky and others, whose "meditations" are full of profitable and delightful counsel. But this is not the thing. Such helps should not be made a substitute. It will be of comparatively little use to read a chapter in one of these books and then go to sleep, or rush into the world. It is better to take one of the pages of these books, and as from a starting point, after closing the volume, go on and upward in the contemplation of divine truth.

"This should be *habitual* with every Christian—a daily duty—performed at such an hour as the world may most readily be excluded, for the moment that we cease from reading or speaking or listening to another, the mind turns toward those things that lie nearest the heart. So we often find that thoughts of business intrude upon our most sacred hours. We should therefore select for meditation a season when we may be the least tempted with the cares of the world; and by the word of God and by prayer, seek to be led into near and undisturbed communion with Him who knows the softest aspiration of our souls.

Then from the constellation of glories that surround the throne of God, choose one attribute, and dwell upon it; contemplate its intrinsic beauty and excellence; or trace its developments in the works of Him whose works are but the revelation of himself.

Think of the justice of God; think of the mercy of God; think of the purity of God; and then think of the angels of God, of the spirits of the just; think of heaven; of the joys set before us, and the way by which they become ours.

Or turn to another theme, and think of sin, its nature and fruits; its agents and sources; look at the heart, and contemplate its present and prospective state, and from the view thus obtained, derive lessons of instruction, many and strong.

In this hour of retirement, survey the world, and think of the condition of those lying in sin around; of the church and her desolations; and the heart may be touched with the view which is thus spread before it.

Then there are other subjects for religious meditation which we need not name; every Christian will find them for himself, and those most suited to his soul's state; congenial themes, which he will dwell upon with ever increasing animation and delight. Our object is now nothing more than to urge the duty and the privilege upon our Christian friends. In this day of "action" it is well to pause and think, and action that is the result of such thinking is the most wise and efficient.—*N. Y. Obs.*

Abuse of the Tongue.

An abuse of the tongue is destructive of an individual's own happiness. That heart alone can be happy, that looks with kindness upon the world, and delights in promoting its enjoyment. God has so constituted us, that when we breathe good will toward our fellow men, ardently desire their happiness, and never injure them in word or deed, we promote our own happiness in a most successful manner. But that individual who indulges unkind feelings toward any of his fellow creatures, and employs harsh, bitter remarks against them, whilst he makes others unhappy, makes himself the most wretched.

All the moral sensibilities suffer when the throat becomes an open sepulchre, sending forth its pestilential effluvia through a community. Whilst poisoning others, the individual himself is sadly contaminated. All that is lovely in the heart will droop and die when bitterness and wrath is continually vented against others. Some seem to delight only in dwelling upon the faults of others, and in seeking to cast their virtues into the shade. Nothing pains them more than the praise of others.

We need no better evidence that happiness is a stranger in their bosoms, and that base passions are destroying all moral excellence, than the exhibition of such a spirit. Such fountains, we may rest assured, are impure, where deadly exhalations are ever issuing forth. A contemplation of goodness communicates goodness to the heart; whilst a consideration of what is base, leaves a pernicious influence upon the mind, unless it be viewed solely with a benevolent desire to remove it. The abuse of the tongue is awfully offensive in the sight of Heaven, and cannot fail to accumulate a fearful amount of guilt. Some, from malignity of heart, indulge in abuse toward their fellow men. Such individuals are exceedingly sinful in the sight of Heaven, and exert a baleful influence around.—Others, for the sake of amusement, are prone to abuse their fellow men. They delight to take up a character, and show their dexterity in dissecting it, and exposing its faults and defects to the ridicule and laughter of others. Although such persons may show no unkindness of feeling toward those they thus treat, yet they often do them serious injury. It is difficult for us to respect those we often hear ridiculed. The use of such a weapon, where no good is to be accomplished, and much injury may result, is exceedingly wicked, and cannot fail to exert a depraving influence upon the heart. The odium of a community will sooner or later, settle heavily upon one who thus trifles with the character of others. God will show how guilty such conduct is in his sight, by suffering him to feel severely the dislike of others. Jehovah has said, speak evil of no one, and a disobedience to this command, cannot fail to meet his disapprobation.

The following judicious hints are given as a means, by which the tongue may be controlled:

1. Repress an inquisitive curiosity respecting the private matters of others.
2. Let every one think of his own numerous defects.
3. Endeavour to be divested of all unkindness of feelings toward others.
4. Fervent supplications to God for his blessing upon our enemies, will materially assist in bridling the tongue.
5. A strict watchfulness over the tongue will assist us in bridling it.
6. Caution should be used in repeating the remarks of others, from which any injurious effect might result.

Circulation of the Scriptures.

The only sure and permanent foundation for missionary success, among any people, is the general diffusion of the word of God. Without it missionaries may be sent, and may toil and die, and their works will follow them to the grave. Unless a constant succession of missionary effort be maintained, superstition will soon mingle itself with the faith of converts, and when a generation or two have passed, naught will be left of Christianity but its shadow.

The Romanist never translates the Bible for the heathen; and therefore confines his conquests to the surface of society. It is not then wonderful that, when he is not sustained by successive immigrations of his own sect, his conquests soon disappear and are forgotten. Let the real Christian take warning and avoid his miscarriage.

If, then, we do not wish the praiseworthy efforts put forth by the churches of Christ in this country, and the immense sacrifice of valuable lives sustained by them, with the large sums of money annually contributed for the evangelization of the heathen, to be comparatively lost, every exertion should be made to secure the translation and general dissemination of the Holy Scriptures in nations in which missionaries labor. Then may we, if we sustain such enterprises by our cordial sympathies and earnest supplications at the throne of the heavenly grace, reasonably hope that the labor of the toil-worn, self-denying missionary will not be in vain in the Lord.

On this subject, no stronger testimony can be adduced than that furnished by Bro. Amos Sutton, one of the oldest, most experienced, and most judicious missionaries in India.

He thus writes to the Corresponding Secretary from Cuttack, his station in Orissa, under date of March 29th, 1847.

TESTIMONY TO THE BENEFITS RESULTING FROM BIBLE DISTRIBUTION.

"The work of Bible distribution affords comparatively few of those interesting incidents, and instances of immediate or striking good which seem to rise spontaneously from some other departments of evangelical labor; and to estimate the importance of the work by such results would be, I imagine, to rate it immeasurably below its proper standard. All other means of doing good may be compared to stars and moons which derive all their light and power from this. The real value of it can be only properly appreciated by supposing this sun of the system to be obscured, and then contemplating the unavoidable results. Our native preachers and students are especially Bible men. They know the Bible, study it unweariedly, reverence its dictates and base all their preachings on its teachings. It is to them their fort, their armory, and store-house; and so, whatever of success may attend our efforts, has an inseparable connexion with the Bible. Bible societies should live on the great fact that they are thus essentially contributing to the efficiency of all the varied instrumentalities employed in converting the world—schools, tracts, preachers, &c. &c.—nor should they be a jot moved from their purpose, though a new star now and then attracts more attention than the glorious sun. The Pope and Satan hate the Bible more than any thing else.

Still we can even now and then trace good directly to Bible distribution. Our sub-station at Rhunditta, from which three persons, while I write, are asking for baptism, and which has furnished three native preachers, received its first holy light from the gospel of Mark. Such facts are interesting, but they do not, as I before remarked, constitute the strength of the Bible cause."

The following is an extract of a speech by Rev. Mr. Abbot, taken as the above from a periodical paper of the American and Foreign Bible Society.

The Rev. Mr. A. by a most simple but graphic description, led his audience in imagination to a Karen village, as it was when he first visited it. He cautioned them to be on their guard as they threaded the crooked, mazy path through the jungle, and to take care where they stepped as they attempted to pass among the rude huts. The squalid filth and wild disorder of the place, found their counterpart in the beastly conduct, the drunken carousals, the poverty and wretchedness of the inhabitants:

"But let us visit the spot once more. Eight years have passed since we first saw it. Do