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Contributors and Correspondents. STATUS OF MINISTERS WITHOUT CHARGE.

DEAR SIR,—In my former letter I endeavored to show that it is not "according to the constitutional practice of Presbyterianism" to drop from the roll of Presbyteries the names of retired ministers, and since the remit on this subject by the last assembly is, in point of fact, incorrect. All the ministers of the word within the bounds are, in constitution and practice of most Presbyterian churches, regarded and enrolled as members of Presbytery and Synod. I now propose to show that this remit is scriptural and un Presbyterian in point of principle.

This appears to me to follow conclusively from the nature, functions, and perpetuity of the office of the Gospel Ministry. While this office has been given by their exalted head to the universal Church and for their edification, yet its existence depends not on the will of the people or on the pastoral relation. As Dr. Smyth says, in speaking of ministers in an article in the Princeton Review, "the people can neither give nor take away their office, their call, their commission, their authority, their power of blessing and binding, their gifts and graces, their status as representatives, heralds and ambassadors of Christ." Again, "neither Elders nor Deacons, nor people, nor all combined, can, in the ordinary organized condition of the church, call or ordain to the office of the Ministry. They may call a man to become their minister and labor as their pastor among them. But he may be and often is already a minister in the office, and if he is not, then other ministers must ordain him and install him with imposition of their hands." "Ministers," says Dr. Hodge, "derive their authority from Christ, and not from the people. Christ has not only ordained that there shall be such officers in the Church, he has not only specified their duties and prerogatives, but he gives the requisite qualifications, and calls those thus qualified, and by that call gives them their official authority. The functions of the Church in the premises is not to confer the office, but to sit in judgment on the question whether the candidate is called of God; and, if satisfied on that point, to express its judgment in the public and solemn manner proscribed in Scripture.

That ministers do thus derive their authority from Christ follows not merely from the theoretical character of the church, and the relation which Christ, its King, sustains to it, as the source of all authority and power, but

(a) From the fact that it is expressly asserted that Christ gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the edifying of the Saints and for the work of the ministry. He, and not the people, constituted or appointed the apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers.

(b) Ministers are, therefore, called the servants, the messengers, the ambassadors of Christ. They speak in Christ's name, and by His authority. They are sent by Christ to the church, to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. They are indeed the servants of the church, as laboring in her service, and as subject to her authority—servants as opposed to lords—but not in the sense of deriving their commission and powers from the Church.

(c) Paul exhorts the Presbyters of Ephesus, "To take heed to the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers." To Archippus he says, "Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord." It was then the Holy Ghost that appointed these presbyters and made them overseers.

(d) This is involved in the whole doctrine of the Church as the body of Christ, in which He dwells by His spirit, giving to each member his gifts, qualifications, and functions, dividing to everyone severally as he wills; and by those gifts making one an apostle, another a prophet, and another a worker of miracles. It is thus that the apostle reconciles the doctrine that ministers derive their authority and power from Christ, and not from the people, with the doctrine that Church powers vest ultimately in the Church as a whole. He refers to the analogy between the human body and the Church as the body of Christ. As in the human body the soul resides not in any one part to the exclusion of the rest; and as life and power belong to it as a whole, though one part is an eye, another an ear, and another a hand; so Christ, by his spirit, dwells in the Church, and all power belongs to the Church, though the indwelling spirit gives to each member his function and office. So that ministers are no more

appointed by the Church than the eye by the hands and feet. This is the representation that pervades the New Testament, and necessarily supposes that the ministers of the Church are the servants of Christ, selected and appointed by Him through the Holy Ghost."

Does it not then follow, from these views of the office of the ministry, that ministers are not the representatives of the people, and their office as ministers does not depend on their relation as pastor to any particular congregation? And if so, his office as a minister of Christ is in no wise affected by his being without a particular congregation as his stated sphere of labor. He may still discharge the duties of the ministry to the full extent of his ability. Why then should he not have his name enrolled among the other ministers of the Presbytery and meet with them and take part with them as he may be able in their deliberations. "Every ordained minister," as Dr. Smyth says, "is, *ex officio*, a member of Presbytery, which consists of all the ministers and one ruling elder from every congregation within a certain district."

This same conclusion follows from the functions of the office. Ministers, as such, not as pastors merely, are not only charged with the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments, but they are rulers in the house of God. They are invested with the power of the keys, opening and shutting the door of the church; and they are clothed with all these powers in virtue of their office. "If sent," says Dr. Hodge, "where the Church does not already exist, they exercise them in gathering and founding churches. If they labor in the midst of churches already established they exercise these powers in concert with other Presbyteries and with representatives of the people. It is important to notice this distinction. The functions above mentioned belong to the Ministerial office, and therefore to every minister. When alone he of necessity exercises his functions alone, in gathering and organizing churches; but when they are gathered he is associated with other ministers and with the representatives of the people, and, therefore, can no longer act alone in matters of government and discipline. We see this illustrated in the Apostolic age. The Apostles, and those ordained by them, acted in virtue of their ministerial office, singly in founding churches, but afterwards always in connection with other ministers and elders. This is in point of fact the theory of the whole system of Presbyterianism." This is further illustrated by the first Synod ever held, for it does not appear that all or any of the Presbyters who were present at that council in Jerusalem were pastors of particular congregations. They met there and took part in the deliberations by virtue of their office, and not as representatives of congregations or as pastors of congregations. Nor does it appear that the Presbyters whom Paul addressed at Miletus were in settled charges; for the flock over which they were made overseers could not mean a single congregation in Ephesus, but included the whole of those who professed faith in and obedience to Christ, of whom there must have been at that time a very large number. In India, if not in China also, there existed, if they do not exist to this day, whole Presbyteries without a single pastor. Ought not the ministers of the Word, possessed of all the functions of the ministry, to be reckoned among other ministers who may be related to particular congregations as their stated field of labor? Why should they not, and why should they not be allowed to exercise some or all the functions of the ministry as far as they are able, in conjunction with the other and their co-presbyters of the bounds.

Their office, too, is a permanent one. They can be deprived of it only on the ground either of heresy or immorality. Their resignation of a particular charge does not affect their office. They are still Ministers of the Gospel, Presbyters of the New Testament, as much so as those who have particular spheres of labor. And are they not still bound to conduct themselves as Ministers of Christ, and exercise their gifts privately and publicly, as they may be able and as they have opportunity in their Master's service? And ought not the Church to avail herself of such services as they may be able to render? Are they not also as ministers still under the jurisdiction of the church courts? But if they who have retired from charges, and from the more active discharge of the duties of their office, and others who are not in charges, yet laboring in the Gospel vineyard, are subject to their brethren, ought not their brethren in the same way and to the same extent be subject to them? And this subordination and subjection to one another in the Lord implies that all Pres-

byteries within the bounds should be members of the Presbytery.

Besides, if a minister filling some particular position in what may be regarded as in some respects the work of the Church, or occupying a nominal relation to some particular work of the church, as theological education, ought to have his name retained on the roll of the Presbytery in which he resides, how much more that minister who is engaged directly and constantly in the great work of the church, preaching the Gospel and dispensing sacraments; and, also, retired servants of Christ who are still the ministers of the Church under her jurisdiction, as ministers, and still it may be exercising their gifts to some extent in the grand work of the Church.

The remit is based on wrong principles, which cannot be fairly and impartially carried out. And hence it provides for exceptions among those who are equal, as to office, and among whom there should be no exception as to ministerial status. All that is required is a simple and Scriptural definition of whom a Presbytery consists, namely, the Presbyters of the bounds and a representative of each congregation therein. And then let there be a rule that no minister retire from the ministry or engage in any other calling, or accept of any other situation without leave first obtained from the Supreme Court, and there will not be any necessity to fear the results or to adopt a poor expediency, such as this remit indicates, which may be twisted in more ways than one and used with great partiality. Let the Church see that all her ministers are employed so far as they are able in the Lord's vineyard, and that they are sustained in the field. Let her send them forth in the full status of ministers of the Gospel, with all the rights and privileges pertaining thereto, whether they are called to particular charges or not, to do the work of ministers of the Gospel, and not lace herself up in a straight jacket, such as that proposed by this remit, in which she may strain herself to retain some in their proper status, as the last General Assembly seemed to do in relation to more than one esteemed minister; and labourers will the more readily and cheerfully enter the more difficult fields, and the land will be more quickly overtaken and evangelized.

This remit and proposed law, Mr. Editor, is untrue in point of fact; unsound in point of principle; un Presbyterian, as it ignores some Presbyteries within the bounds of Presbyteries; inconsistent with Ministerial purity; and will, in my humble opinion, if passed into law, open the door to great partiality and unfairness, as it provides for exceptions among those of whom, so far as ministerial status is concerned, no exception should be made. Wherefore, instead of being approved by any, it ought to be rejected by all the Presbyteries.

Yours, &c., &c.,
T. B. P.

April 26th, 1873.

THE END IS NOT YET.

EDITOR BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN

SIR,—I came casually, the other day, upon a somewhat pretentious pamphlet, entitled "The Coming Battle," published some twelve years ago, but which has long ere this had its day and its destiny too, wherein is given a graphic outline of "the appalling convulsions" that will precede and usher in the millennial reign of the Messiah, as well as pointing out the times and the countries in which these events will transpire, according to the opinions of the Rev. Messrs. Bickersteth, Birks, Elliot, Cooper, and many others; with Drs. Cumming, Keeth, Grol, Duffell, and Lowth; besides Knights, Lords and Dukes. In glancing over its pages I was not a little amused as well as amazed to find so much so confidently, so minutely foretold by it that has not come to pass, and so much that has come to pass which has not been by it foretold. And not only so, but many of those prognosticators have gratuitously given themselves, with self-assumed arrogance, to school, if not to scold, the world into their opinions, and hesitate not to denounce them for being so slow to believe all that such would-be prophets have written.

In glancing from the pamphlet I gather that although the years 1867-8 are clearly pointed out as the beginning of the millennium, the cleansing of the sanctuary, the end of the Jewish "seven times" chastisement, and the destruction of Anti-Christ; yet the coming of Christ in its first stage will most probably be about 1861-4, while in its second stage it will possibly not take place till 1867-8. At the first appearance of Christ his people will be removed from the earth and live with their Lord in the air, where the Prince

of the power of the air will be conquered and cast down, and there are good reasons for believing that this will take place about 1864. His second appearance will be upon Mount Olivet at the battle of Armageddon, for the final overthrow of all his earthly enemies. All the wicked will not, however, be destroyed; a few will be spared and converted and constitute the nucleus of the new population that will speedily refill the entire globe; and as the general conflagration will not take place until the end of the thousand years, most of the works of man's hands, such as buildings, manufactories, libraries, railways, vessels, &c., will remain for the use of the millennial population, who will thus commence the new dispensation under circumstances eminently favorable to prosperity.

Having satisfactorily shown that Louis Napoleon is the infidel Anti-Christ, and the Pope the "beast," the writer goes on to say that the extent to which Napoleon is likely to carry his conquests is worthy of careful inquiry. He is to make, says this compiler, the nearest approach to obtaining a universal empire that the world has ever yet witnessed, for "power shall be given him over all kingdoms and tongues and nations." Upon the breaking up of the American Union by the secession of the Southern States, the diminished exports of cotton will cause riots and insurrections in England. In the midst of these Napoleon would find a good opportunity of invading England; yet, amid such attempts, which will most surely be made, it plainly appears that England will preserve her power and independence, up at least till 1864, if not to 1867. It is possible, too, that unforeseen political complications may arise, such as to bring across the ocean some of Napoleon's 600,000 French soldiers, and give them a foothold on American soil. When Napoleon, through the influence and aid of the Papal Beast, shall have gotten the throne of universal empire, and shall have marshalled under his leading the confederate armies of the world to the battle of Armageddon, mutual jealousies will arise and mutual slaughter will follow. Fire and brimstone will be rained down from heaven, while the earth will engulf thousands, so that few of that mighty multitude will be left to tell the tale. Meanwhile Napoleon, the infidel Anti-Christ, and the Pope, the false prophet, are cast alive into the lake of fire. This peculiar distinction is allotted to these two confederates in inquiry a thousand years sooner than to any other transgressors, or even than to Satan himself, who, with the rest of the wicked, would not be cast there until the end of the millennium. As Enoch and Elijah ascended in their bodies many centuries before the resurrection of the righteous, so the Infidel and Papal Anti-Christ will be cast into the place of torment in their bodies many centuries before the resurrection of the wicked. This will take place about the period 1867-8.

Without gathering any more of this unripe fruit, which is neither pleasant to the taste nor fitted for preserving, I would merely add that the writer, supported by an array of some thirty names of more or less eminent men in Europe and America, shows how, from nine distinct biblical data, calculations have been made and conclusions drawn which severally and conjointly fix the period of the consummation of the present dispensation at 1867-8. In short, the substance of the whole scheme and its issues may be summed up as follows:

1. That the first stage in Christ's coming to translate the first ingathering of His church, the 144,000, the first fruits, and to remove it before the great tribulation, will be about 1863-4.

2. That the second stage in Christ's coming to translate the second ingathering of His church, the harvest, and then to slay the wicked at the battle of Armageddon, will be about 1867-8.

3. That during all, or especially the latter part of the seven years preceding 1868, an unparalleled storm of Divine wrath is predicted to sweep over the whole world, hurrying thousands suddenly to an untimely grave, who for this reason should now (in 1861) be specially warned of the impending danger and admonished of the necessity of immediate preparation.

4. That those who reject the views propounded in this pamphlet "preach only half a Gospel and half a Christ. They preach just as much as falls in with human arrogance, just as much as serves the interest of man, without a proper regard for the glory of Christ. It is very doubtful if they shall have any part in the first rapture of 1863-4. These may be compelled to pass the fires of the great tribulation that they may learn to estimate the value of that which they have despised."

Now what are we to infer, Mr. Editor, from the fact that, within the century, and

especially within the past thirty years, from the days of the Millerite delusion down to the voluminous propoundings of our own Dr. Cummings, such an array of names have gone forth to certify that such and so are the predictions of God, while they have proved themselves to be only the speculations of man. Are, then, the prophecies untrue and their predictions untrustworthy? Nay, verily. Still such conclusions have been come to, not simply in regard to the prophecies, but, in consequence, to the whole word of God, many looking on it as a book that speaks just as man bids it, or like a musical instrument playing whatever tune the performer may prefer. The true inference, however, is that while the prophecies are true, and their predictions trustworthy, such interpretations are simply the reverse, teaching even the wisest one of the hardest yet the most useful of all lessons, that mind can be mastered, that intellect is not omnipotent, and that the greatest wisdom may oftentimes be the knowing and acknowledging our own ignorance; besides, it forcibly illustrates the fact that men, either wittingly or unwittingly, may and do oftentimes bring their own opinions to the Bible in order to get for them its sanction, instead of drawing their opinions therefrom, and when we consider the doom of the false prophet in days of old, men should be very cautious in courting such a condemnation. Prophecy is evidently not intended to enable men to predict events, else it has ever been a lasting and lamentable failure; and it is very noteworthy that amid all the accusations, oft and severe, which our Lord brought against the teachers of his times, these were not, in a single instance, if we remember aright, because they did not through prophecy foresee and foretell future events. But because they did not, and would not, see in the events the fulfilment of the prophecy. It is over a commendable canon of Scripture interpretation to interpret what is obscure by what is clear, so that when an interpretation of prophecy opposes on the one hand, or exceeds on the other, the plain preceptive parts of God's word, we may warrantably conclude that it is not God but man who speaks; for correct interpretations of the obscurities of God's word never change, but ever confirm its more plainly revealed principles; in short, prophecy ever presents its own, if not its only interpreter, and that is, its fulfilment in the predicted event. In prophecy God makes a revelation so clear that all can see it to be a prediction, yet so obscure as, on the one hand, to prevent man proudly planning for the Almighty, or, on the other, to prevent him presumptuously endeavoring to frustrate God's design. The two-fold design of prophecy is to excite expectation before the predicted event, and then to confirm the truth of the prediction by a striking and unmistakable fulfilment. The chief use of prophecy then is not to foster human pride in predicting future events, but after the predicted events have taken place, thereby to assure men of the universal providence of God, and convince them of that wisdom which foresees all future events, and that power which brings them to pass when the appointed period arrives. As miracles were proofs of revelation to those before whom they were wrought, so prophecies were proofs, not to those who heard them delivered, but to those who see them fulfilled; the former served this purpose in the first ages of the church, and the latter no less clearly in the last ages. Whenever, therefore, the all-seeing God has been disposed to lift, in some degree, the veil which conceals futurity, he has only done it so far as to excite a general and indefinite expectation of the event, by exhibiting its general character and features, but by no means so disclosing such circumstances of time, place, and instrumentality as would interfere in the least degree with the free agency and moral responsibility of man. Thus, Mr. Editor, while "the end is not yet," all goes to show that the lesson evidently is yet. "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power;" showing clearly that the line of man's duty is not to be learned either from the unfulfilled purposes or prophecies of God.

D.

Glennorris.

When a man lives with God his voice shall be as sweet as the murmur of the brook and the rustle of the corn.—Emerson.

Let young men wear old gloves, hat and coat till they can honestly afford the new. It requires uncommon courage; but it will have good results. Men schooled to such deeds of heroism will refuse to endorse bad bills, will not vote for scamps, nor kneel in the mud to scoundrels who give lavishly that they have gained lawlessly, nor take wild pride in the hand of a villain, however exalted.—Dr. John Hall.