

MINISTERS AS INTERPRETERS.

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Very early in the history of the Church the impression gained ground that New Testament ministers are the successors of Old Testament priests, and that, consequently, ideas and arrangements with reference to priests in the Old Testament may, as a matter of course, be transferred to ministers of the Gospel. In this notion there may, at the first, have been some light and leading; but, on the whole, it has proved noxious, introducing into the Christian Church institutions and practices totally alien to the New Testament dispensation. Far better would it have been if another order of sacred persons found in the Old Testament had been adopted as models for the New Testament ministry, namely, the prophets. There were few good priests; at least there are very few who stand out on the sacred page as shining examples of goodness; but of the prophets who, both as men and as saints, exhibited the finest qualities of character the name is legion. On a memorable occasion Moses gave utterance to the sentiment, "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets;" and no better wish for the country or the world could be uttered than, "Would that, at least, all the ministers of the Gospel were prophets."

In Scripture there are many names and titles applied to the prophets from which their qualities and functions can be inferred; but at present I desire to draw attention to only one of these, which, though rarely used, seems to me specially significant, namely, "interpreters."

An interpreter is one who translates into people's own language a message which has reached them in a tongue they do not understand. God is incessantly speaking to mankind in a language which the majority either do not understand at all or understand very imperfectly. This is the language of Providence; it is the voice of events of prosperity and adversity, of joy and sorrow, of mercy and of judgment. God spoke in a peculiarly distinct and impressive voice to the Hebrews; but to the majority of them this language was only faintly if at all intelligible; and the prophets were the inter-