

Pastor and People.

A CHAMBER OF HELP.

I opened my guest chamber, and furnished with care,
For I had news of a coming guest, of kingly ways and rare.
And tapestry well wrought and fine was on its walls displayed.
Then I sat me down well satisfied with the chamber I had made.
But days and weeks merged into months, and still there came no guest,
A gloomy sadness filled my soul, and ever a wild unrest.
I longed for a glance of that royal eye, a word of wisdom rare;
"If all the world should pass me by, with this grief 'twould not compare."
The night was rainy, dark and chill; upon my wicket gate
A light tap fell; 'tis he, my guest has come at last, tho' late:
"Enter thou in, most welcome one," but, alas for kingly grace!
His raiment was old and sadly worn, and alas for his care-worn face!
As I stood in doubt, with gate in hand, sweet thoughts within me stirred,
Like aspen leaves before a storm or chirp of nestling bird.
And softly as a silver chime across a summer sea,
Came, "As ye do to the least of these, ye do it unto me."
Doubting no care, I drew my guest to my chamber garnished fair,
Then laid me down on my peaceful cot, freed from my weight of care.
No more in unbelief I walk, for the light of his face I see.
And his voice still sounds in my listening ear, "Thou didst it unto me."
So I keep it swept and garnished, a chamber of peace and rest,
For weary, worn and troubled souls, by fears and doubts distressed.
This inner chamber of pity and help shall ever to them be free,
For always I hear the voice of my King: "Thou didst it unto me."

—Mrs. C. Scoville, in *Herald and Presbyterian*.

PRESBYTERIANISM TOLERANT.

BY REV. S. M. GLENN.

In the religious world there has always existed much confusion of thought and beliefs. Hence denominations, sects, and parties have risen to divide the great catholic body, the church. This diversity comes from the imperfection of man's knowledge, his peculiar mental characteristics, and the bias of association and education. Uniformity of belief, by some most devoutly wished for and urged, does not seem to be attainable nor practicable.

Identity of belief is not consistent with the law of progress. The Great Creator has shown no tendency to preserve uniformity in His works. All around us we observe infinite variety and diversity. No two things are identical in every feature and outline. No two leaves of the same tree, no two flowers of the same plant are just alike in every part. Even the innumerable grains of sand on the seashore, under the microscope present a variety of outline, as great as the mountains and hills around us.

If such diversity indicates the wisdom of the Divine Creator, may we not expect the same in mental characteristics, modes of thought, and forms of expression?

A distinctive principle of Presbyterianism is the right of the individual to think and speak after his own way. With the Bible as his guide, he must follow the dictates of his own conscience and reason, and the light within him, as he must answer to God. That conviction of personal responsibility to the Great Judge over all, made him capable of the highest endurance and self-denial, yea, even a martyr's death. For this liberty he was willing to sacrifice comfort, position and all earthly reward. Such was the spirit of the Reformers, the Puritans of England, and the Pilgrim Fathers of Holland. Plymouth Rock stands to-day as the symbol of this personal right and liberty Divinely accorded to every man.

When the Christian comes into a larger freedom of the truth, his heart extends a greater charity towards brethren who may not agree with him. He loves the truth, but he loves his brother more, and sympathizes with him, even while their thoughts and convictions

may differ. The liberty which he claims for himself, in all justice and reason, he accords to his brethren of other views and conclusions.

The well-equipped Presbyterian Christian has a clearly defined Creed. He finds great help from it. But he rests on the solid cord of Bible truth. The standards of his church are to his mind the best expression, so far as he knows, of the substance of Christian doctrine. But his final appeal is to the Bible. Creeds are fallible and subject to revision, but the Bible is as unchangeable as the Author Himself. But thus equipped and settled in his convictions of truth, he is qualified then to embrace, in all due regard and charity, his brethren whose creed and modes of thought do not harmonise with his own.

Such tolerance, however, is not indifference. It does not extend to the enemies of evangelical truth—to the caviller and the destroyer of truth and morality, nor to the man who sees in all religions equal merit, and therefore pronounces all good in their place. To none of these is there a claim for such charity. But to the earnest, reverent seeker of truth from the great source and fountain of truth—the Word of God, to the great evangelical body of Christians, is our plea for all forbearance and charity towards views different from our own, and yet not essential to the Christian system.

It is to the honor of the church that on all the vital truths of Christianity she stands a unit. The Bible is the common platform. And now, as never before, her various branches are coming to recognise this unity in all the essentials in one another. The acrimony of controversy has passed away. More emphasis is placed upon the character of the work being done in building up Christ's kingdom and saving men. There is, likewise, a growing spirit of co-operation in Christian work, union services and united efforts are the order of the day. The great army is closing ranks and keeping step. They together give origin to the "Blended strain which issues the perfect music, which utters the perfect truth."

In the Presbyterian fold there is observed a growing tolerance toward inquiry and criticism. Less than a score of years ago, no minister in the church would dare question the truth of any article of her Creed. To-day the most conservative challenge certain alleged defects and shortcomings of that Confession.

More liberty is given to inquire and test human formulas of doctrine by the teachings of the Bible. That means progress, and is the only true attitude of mind to receive greater truth. Nor can this spirit of inquiry be arrested by any voice or decree of a church court. To the devout inquirer, seeking the truth in love, and with reverence for the services of it, we may safely trust the issues.

Upon private members the Presbyterian system lays no formulated Creed. He is not supposed to know or understand so condensed a system of doctrine as our Confession of Faith. He is only asked to receive such truths as are regarded by the Evangelical Church as essential to Christian experience and Christian living.

This trend towards a broader charity is demonstrated in our church, in her large undenominational spirit in certain lines of Christian work. Denominationalism is necessary for organization, co-operation and efficiency in the work. But the Presbyterian Church has always lent a willing hand in support of the undenominational enterprise of the American Bible Society, the Tract Society, and Sunday School Union. Through these and other channels, large streams of benevolence have flowed, showing devotion to the great common cause of building up the kingdom of our common Lord. The spirit of *comity* and Christian union has always received the hearty support of the Presbyterian Church. She pleads for Christian union and co-operation in the great common cause—she asks a halt in the unseemly rivalry of churches that crowd in upon one another, in the new and sparse districts of our country, to their injury, if not to their destruction.

So the spirit of Christian union and fellowship is working out itself in this closer coming together of brethren of different branches of Christ's Church. In this growing unity the Saviour's prayer is being answered. All hail the day of its fulfilment!—*Philadelphia Presbyterian*.

THE CONDUCT OF PUBLIC WORSHIP.

I venture to throw out some hints to ministers, especially young ministers, with regard to the mode of conducting public worship. My points may be called trivial, and in a sense they are. But I have noticed that the beauty and dignity of the service are often marred by a want of due attention to them. We have made real progress in recent years in our whole conception of what the "service" is as distinct from the "preaching," but nothing can be unimportant which tends to yet greater progress even in small matters.

1. I have observed, though not often, that the usual formula, "Let us begin the public worship of God by singing to His praise and glory," is omitted, the first psalm being given out like any other. This is decidedly a retrograde step.

2. It seems unnecessary each time a psalm, paraphrase, or hymn is given out (except the first, as above) to preface it with the words, "Let us sing," etc., or "Let us again sing," etc. Enough to give the numbers.

3. The reading of the whole passage to be sung, be it psalm, paraphrase, or hymn, is irritating in the extreme. Happily, this practice, probably introduced when few comparatively could read, has generally been abandoned, but it still survives in some quarters.

4. Certain stereotyped phrases are still used quite needlessly in giving out the text—"You will find the words from which I propose," etc., or "The subject of the following remarks," etc. Far better refer at once to the passage without any circumlocution.

5. The Anglican "Here endeth the first lesson," occasionally heard from our pulpits or lecterns, is a childish innovation. What more appropriate words could be conceived than "The Lord bless to us the reading of His Holy Word, and to His Name be the glory and the praise. Amen"—only they should be repeated more solemnly and distinctly than is common. They are often "muttered" in a way which is unbecoming.

6. When will ministers learn to repeat the Apostolic Benediction correctly? In nine cases out of ten it is mangled by changes and additions which are often most extraordinary. Rarely, indeed, does one hear it given with absolute correctness.

7. The Lord's Prayer is too often introduced at the end of a long prayer. Is it not preferable that it should stand alone in its divine simplicity and majesty?

A CHURCHMAN.

SLANG, SACRED AND SECULAR.

It is generally secular, very secular. The only approach it ever makes to sacredness is when it stalks into the pulpit and perpetrates itself upon outraged but defenceless worshippers; and then it is only the pulpit that is sacred—the slang is still a sinner; nor is he who persists in thus using it likely to be a very great saint. Without trying to severely characterize the pulpit use of street-corner slang, it may be remarked that we have no divine example for it, and that a passage of such slang as sometimes desecrates the pulpits of our day would have ruined the Sermon on the Mount, and paralyzed the power of the Decalogue. One sentence of dirty slang would have taken all the heroism out of Paul's bold self-defence, all the sweetness out of David's songs, all the poetry out of Isaiah's prophecies, and all the sacredness out of the whole story of the cross. But there is no slang there, and there ought to be none when men come to preach about these things.

But there is no better reason for slang out of the pulpit than in it, and there is not the suspicion of an excuse for it either out or in. It is not strong language, it is neither polite nor elegant, and often it is not clean. It is a base slander upon our blessed mother tongue, the most vigorous and powerful language on earth, to excuse the use of slang, as one noted preacher of the day does, by claiming that it is stronger than pure English. Any adult American, who is not a mate, can find suitable clothing in the English language for the healthiest, most robust

idea he is able to bring into being. Slang, like gaudy garments, is always evidence of bad taste, if not also of habits. Well-dressed ideas, like well-dressed people, are always given respectful consideration. The noblest thought, like the noblest man, is likely to be despised if clothed in filth.

The best thing a man can do with slang habit is to quit it. Let him watch language and cleanse it. A word cannot be properly used anywhere ought to be used nowhere. But who would think using common slang at a funeral? A son bending above his dying mother to express his grief in the slang he so lavishly scatters in the street? What young woman standing at the altar of wedlock, would respond to the officiating minister's solemn queries with any one of the popular affirmative slang phrases? Imagine a dying man spending his last breath in uttering any of the low expressions which in the vernacular of slang mean death? Horrible! I sibly, but if it is horrible to use such language in these situations there is something radically wrong with the language; therefore, let us not use it.

PERSONAL WORK.

On a cold winter evening I made my call on a rich merchant in New York. A left his door, and the piercing gale swept in said, "What an awful night for the poor!"

He went back, and bringing to me a roll bank-bills he said: "Please do me a favor. Hand these bills to the poorest people you know."

After a few days I wrote to him the grateful thanks of the poor whom his bounty had relieved, and added: "How is it that a man kind to his fellow-creatures has always been so unkind to his Saviour as to refuse Him a heart?"

The sentence touched him to the core. I sent for me to come and talk with him, and speedily gave himself to Christ. He has been a most useful Christian ever since. But I told me I was the first person who had talked to him about his soul in nearly twenty years. One hour of pastoral work did more for him than the pulpit effort of a life time.—*D. T. L. Cuyler*.

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS.

Was written in poetry, and contains about 1,000 of the 3,000 proverbs of Solomon. The whole book abounds in allusions, now found for the first time and precisely applicable, to the age of Solomon; to gold and silver and precious stones; to the duties and powers of kings; to commerce. The Book of Proverbs is now on a level with the Prophets and Psalms. It approaches human things and things divine from quite another side. It is the philosophy of practical life. It is the sign to us that the Bible does not despise common sense and discretion. It impresses upon us in the most forcible manner the value of intelligence, prudence of a good education. Above all, it insists over and over again upon the doctrine that goodness is wisdom, and that wickedness and vice are folly.—*Dean Stanley*.

A PASSAGE IN THE BIBLE EXPLAINED.

The Arabic name of the Star of Bethlehem signifies "dove's dung" (for which the generic name *Ornithogalum*, "bird's milk," is a Greek euphemism), and was given apparently because of the streets of white blossoms with which it covers the hillsides of Palestine. It must have occurred to many people, when reading of a cab of dove's dung being sold for a shekel during the siege of Jericho, that even in the last stages of starvation that was an exorbitant price to pay for a substance as devoid of nutritious or palatable properties as sawdust. Howbeit, the reference is really to the edible roots of the *Ornithogalum*; the early translators were over-literal in their rendering, and, strange to say, the authors of the Revised Edition have endorsed the blunder.

Oh, only those whose souls have felt the one idolatry can tell how precious is the slightest thing affection gives and hallows.—*L. E. Landon*.