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THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION ; OR, BRINGING LOST MEN HOME TO GOD.*

2 Cor. 5: 18, "And hath given unto us the ministry of reconciliation."

My brethren of the graduating class, it is to you particularly that the commencement preacher is speaking this morning, to you so soon to embark upon your active and blessed work. He earnestly desires to do you real service to-day, and hence he means to bring you, straight from the word of God, a divine message. It will be his aim not to wander one moment from his text, but to unfold and apply just what is here said in the Scriptures.

The words announced simply introduce the subject which the subsequent context develops, namely, the ministry of reconciliation.

This ministry is a service, the object of which is to effect a complete reconciliation between God and man, or, to use the imagery of the parable of the prodigal son, to bring men home to God. The rendering of this blessed service, Paul declares, is given unto us, that is, unto the whole company of believers, the church of God in this world, the body of Christ, out of whom, however, as we shall see later there are certain men chosen, who are to devote themselves more particularly to the "word of reconciliation."

It is this ministry committed to the church and particularly to the preachers of the gospel, this work of bringing lost men

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THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CHURCH'S RECOGNIZING HER DEPENDENCE UPON GOD FOR HER MINISTERS.

By REV. W. M. MCPHEETERS, D. D.

Matt. 9: 38, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he thrust forth laborers into his harvest."

For some years past the dearth of candidates for the ministry has been a matter of much concern to thoughtful persons in all branches of the church. Nothing, I am sure, could be more rational than such concern. The evangelist Matthew has given us an inspired picture of the condition of a people destitute of an adequate supply of spiritual guides. He tells us that as our Lord moved about among the cities and villages of Galilee "when he saw the multitudes he was moved with compassion for them, because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd." The language of the original here is vivid and vigorous in the extreme. The word rendered "distressed" means literally "skinned." Both in its etymology and in its usage, our English word "harried" is practically an exact equivalent of the Greek word here used by the evangelist. To be harried is, to be stripped, pillaged, harassed, agitated, with numberless and nameless alarms. And the word rendered "scattered" might with even greater propriety be translated "having flung themselves down." What the evangelist says then, is substantially this: When he saw the multitude he was moved with compassion for them; because they were harried, that is stripped, pillaged, harassed, agitated with numberless and nameless alarms, like a shepherdless flock preyed upon by wolves, until at last, distracted by a thousand fears, some of them real and some imaginary, partly in exhaustion and partly in desperation, they had flung themselves down wherever they chanced to be, to meet their fate as best they might. What a picture that of extreme, aggravated, helpless misery and peril! If it represents with even approximate accuracy the condition of those who are desti-

tute of an adequate supply of competent spiritual guides, then certainly the church does well to be deeply concerned over its dearth of candidates for the ministry. But it is not of this dearth that I purpose particularly to speak.

Nor do I intend to enter into an inquiry as to the causes of the lack of candidates; or to discuss—except indirectly—the remedy for the condition of things that has caused all of us so much of anxiety. Upon both of these topics much has been said and written—some of which certainly has been very well said, and is in every way deserving of our attention. And I am glad to be able to add that the indications seem to be that a change for the better has already set in. At least we have quite recently been cheered with the news that the number of those offering themselves for the ministry, instead of continuing to decline as was the case for a series of consecutive years, has at last begun slowly to increase.

What I wish particularly to say is, that the experience through which we have been passing, trying as it has been, will have been a blessing, if only it serves to awaken in the mind and heart of the church a vivid consciousness of her absolute dependence upon God for an adequate supply of genuine ministers: and that if the change for the better that now seems to have set in dims her consciousness of her absolute dependence upon God as the sole source of an adequate supply of ministers, then in the end it must prove a calamity to the church, and not a blessing. No doubt, in reflecting upon and discussing the experience through which the church has been passing, the fact of the church's dependence upon God for a supply of genuine ministers has been taken for granted by all of us. But the practical question is, Has it been, or has it become a fact of poignant consciousness with us? I merely raise this question: I shall not pause to attempt an answer to it. But certainly it will be worth while for us to remind ourselves that the change for the better that, as we all hope and believe, has now set in does not deprive the question of any of its practical significance. For while God is the sole source of an adequate supply of *genuine* ministers, it by no means follows that he is the only source of supply

of *actual* ministers. The Scriptures speak of prophets who run without being sent. They speak of those desiring to be put into the priest's office in order to put into their own mouths a morsel of bread. Paul, as we all know, warned the elders of the Ephesian church very pointedly that after his departure grievous wolves should enter in among them, not sparing the flock, and that from among these elders themselves, or from among those over whom the Holy Ghost had made them overseers, there should arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

But, for what purpose were these things written—these startling, these distressing, these disconcerting, these depressing things—unless it was to make us watchful and to keep us watchful? To awaken and to keep operative in our hearts a poignant consciousness of the church's dependence upon God for her supply of genuine ministers? I say again, then, that the mere fact that the number of candidates has now at length begun to increase does not deprive of any of its practical importance the question, Is the church poignantly conscious of her dependence upon God as the sole source from whom she can derive an adequate number of genuine ministers?

Such being the case, therefore, it will not be amiss for us at this time to dwell briefly upon some considerations that by God's blessing may serve to impress upon our hearts THE PROPRIETY AND IMPORTANCE OF THE CHURCH'S CULTIVATING A CONSTANT SENSE OF HER DEPENDENCE UPON GOD AS HER SOLE SOURCE OF SUPPLY OF GENUINE MINISTERS.

PROPRIETY OF CHURCH'S RECOGNIZING HER DEPENDENCE.

I. And first a few words as to the *propriety* of the church's recognizing her dependence upon God in this matter.

1. We have recently witnessed two great political parties choose their respective standard-bearers as candidates for the presidency. No sooner was this done, than we find the committees of these parties waiting upon their respective candidates to ascertain to whom the latter wish to have committed the conducting of the campaign on behalf of each of them. The reason

is obvious. No other persons are so directly and vitally interested in the outcome of the campaign as are these two candidates themselves. Farther, whichever of these gentlemen is elected to the presidency will claim the right to select the men who, as his cabinet, are to become his agents in giving effect to his policies. And here again the reason is obvious. It lies in the fact that he, as President, is responsible for those policies, and also for their effect. Manifestly under such circumstances it is only proper that he should have the selection of the agents through whom they are to be effected. And now let us note the language of our Lord. "But," says the evangelist, "when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion for them, because they were harried, and had flung themselves down, as sheep not having a shepherd. Then said he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he thrust forth laborers into his harvest." How pregnant with suggestion are these phrases—"The *Lord of the harvest*," "that *he thrust forth*," and "into *his harvest*." They speak of the magnitude of this enterprise in which the ministry are engaged. They speak of God's responsibility for the outcome of the enterprise. They speak of the intimate relation that it sustains to God's interests and honor. This harvest that the ministry is appointed to garner is God's harvest. Clearly then it belongs to God to select his own agents for the accomplishment of this great work. And any intermeddling here, however well meant, is simply intolerable officiousness. How marked, how impressive, how significant is the absence from our Lord's words of any hint of doing anything else except to refer the need of laborers to "the Lord of the harvest." And in view of the fact that there are other things that need to be done in connection with securing a supply of suitable ministers, our Lord's silence is only the more impressive and significant. Her absolute dependence upon God for a supply of genuine ministers does not absolve the church from any of her own responsibilities in the premises. But whatever these may be, our Lord here for the time utterly ignores them. And by ignoring them he fastens attention upon the fact

that, when all is said, the church's main responsibility in the matter is, that she recognize her dependence upon God for her ministry, and that she do so by referring to Him not only the need of laborers, but also the selection of the laborers. "Pray ye therefore," says our Lord, "the Lord of the harvest that *he thrust forth* laborers." Whatever may be God's ways of making known whom he has called to this office—and His ways are various—the main thing is that the church should formally, consciously, and solemnly refer her needs to him, and recognize her dependence upon him for the supply of those needs. If words can settle anything, then our Lord's words put beyond question the propriety of the church's thus recognizing her dependence upon God.

2. But impressive and clear as are our Lord's words, we are not left to these alone. For His words in this instance are reinforced, as well as interpreted for us, by His example and by that of His apostles. Doubtless, if anybody, our Lord and His apostles were the persons above all others who might with propriety have acted solely upon their own initiative and judgment in calling men into the work of the ministry. The account of our Lord's action in the choosing of the Twelve, therefore, is peculiarly significant and instructive for the matter in hand. It reads as follows: "And it came to pass in these days that He went up into the mountain to pray; and He continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples, and He chose from them twelve, whom also He named apostles." (Luke 6: 12-13.) The connection here speaks for itself. No one I think with this record before him can reasonably doubt that one at least of the matters that was the subject of this night-long prayer was the choosing of the men who, under Christ, were to be the founders and propagators of the church. Here then we have our Lord himself praying to the Lord of the harvest that He would thrust forth laborers into His harvest. But if He felt that it was proper for Him to refer to His Father the choice of the men who were to be His agents in the establishment and spread of His kingdom, how much more does it become His church to formally and solemnly recognize her de-

pendence upon the Lord of the harvest for those who are to garner His harvest. Note, too, that this was no perfunctory matter with our Lord. The record is that, "He went up into the mountain to pray; and"—the evangelist adds—"and He continued all night in prayer to God." The inference seems to be clear, and it is this: As our Lord began to open up before His Father the matter of the choice of those who were to become His apostles the gravity of the business in which He was engaged grew upon Him, possessed Him, and absorbed Him until one after another of the long hours of the night had slipped by and the day was upon Him. Doubtless we have presented to us here in the acutest possible form the whole mystery of prayer both in its subjective and in its objective aspects. But, my brethren, we can well afford to pass by the mystery of prayer, and fix our attention upon the fact of our Lord's sense of the propriety and importance of His recognizing His dependence upon His Father as His source of supply of suitable ministers.

If now we turn from our Lord to His apostles, we shall find them also making recognition in a very practical way, of their dependence upon God in this matter of ministerial supply. They were called upon to select someone to fill the vacancy created by the apostasy of Judas. In doing this the first step that they took was carefully to canvass the qualifications that must be found in any one who was to fill the office. Having done this, the record says that "they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, "Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show of these two the one whom Thou hast chosen, to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas fell away, that he might go to his own place." (Acts 1: 23-25.) This language calls for no comment. But what a flood of light the words "Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men" throw upon the reasons why it is proper and important that the church should recognize her dependence upon God for her ministers.

Surely no more need be said to establish the propriety of the church's recognizing her dependence upon God for a sufficient supply of competent ministers.

IMPORTANCE OF CHURCH'S RECOGNIZING HER DEPENDENCE.

II. Let us now consider how *important* it is that the church should habitually recognize her dependence upon God in this matter. My whole argument here may be summarized in this proposition, namely: It is a fact that the church is absolutely dependent upon God for a supply of genuine ministers. Of course, if this statement be correct, then it is obvious that it is important for the church to recognize this fact as a fact. We always disregard facts at our own peril. This fact of the church's dependence upon God for a supply of genuine ministers can no more be disregarded with impunity than any other fact. Is it a fact, then, that the church is absolutely dependent upon God for all of her genuine ministers? In seeking an answer to this question, we should note:

1. First, that everywhere in Scripture, and in a great variety of different forms God claims to be the source from whom the church has her real ministers. I can only give specimens of these claims. In Ps. 105: 26, for instance, speaking of the blessings that He, God, had conferred upon Israel, the psalmist says, "He sent Moses His servant, and Aaron whom He had chosen." And Moses when he was remonstrating with the company of Korah uses this significant language, "Hear now, ye sons of Levi: seemeth it but a small thing unto you that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself; to do the service of the tabernacle of Jehovah, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them; and that He hath brought thee near, and all thy brethren, the sons of Levi with thee? and seek ye the priesthood also?" (Num. 16: 8-10.) Note also this language of God by the mouth of the prophet Amos, "And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith Jehovah." (Amos 2: 11.) And so Moses when he is announcing the coming of the prophetic order, and of its crown and consummation, Christ, announces it in these words, "A prophet like unto me shall Jehovah your God raise up unto you from among your brethren." Indeed, what

was a false prophet, but one who had not been raised up by Jehovah, one who had no commission from Jehovah, and accordingly had no message from Him, nor any right to speak in His name? So much by way of a mere glance at the Old Testament. And when we turn to the New Testament we find there no new doctrine on this point. "And *He gave* some," says Paul, "to be apostles; and some, prophets and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers." (Eph. 4: 11.) And again he says, "And *God hath set* some in the church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, divers kinds of tongues." (1 Cor. 12: 28.)

Now, without citing farther, I ask attention not only to the express terms of the language cited, but to what is perhaps of even more significance, I refer to the implications that lie behind the words used. Do I overstate the case when I say that the Scriptures quoted not only assert that God is the source from which the church has her ministry, but assume that He is the sole source from which the church can have any true ministers? My brethren, unless I totally misconceive the teaching of Scripture upon this subject, it is as true of the office of the ministry to-day as it was of the priesthood of old that no man rightfully taketh this honor unto himself, except when he is called of God. I shall not stop here to consider the form of this call. What I wish to do is rather to emphasize the naked fact that, if the church is to have any true ministers, those who enter the office must have a call from God, a real call, a differentiating call, an authenticated call from God to the office. But if this be true, then it is clear beyond dispute that God is the sole source from whom the church can have any true ministers. And if this be the fact, surely there can be no question as to the importance of the church's formally, consciously, solemnly recognizing it as a fact.

What I have farther to say will in reality be but specifications under the general proposition that God is the church's sole source of supply of genuine ministers. But they are specifications that may well engage our attention as exhibiting and emphasiz-

ing the importance of the church's recognizing her dependence upon God in this matter.

QUALIFICATIONS OF MINISTERS GOD-GIVEN.

2. Let us note then, that God alone can confer upon men the qualifications that will fit them for efficiency in the ministry, or rather the qualifications that are indispensable in order to their being genuine ministers.

Suppose that we were asked to name the qualifications that must meet in a man to constitute him an ideal minister of the glorious gospel of the blessed God. Some at least would be likely to draw a picture something like this: He should be a man of commanding presence, a man of the magnificent build, let us say, of a Phillips Brooks, who could not rise before an audience without immediately centering all eyes upon himself. He should be a man possessed of that subtle power given to some which for lack of a better term—if, indeed, a better could be found—we call personal magnetism: a power which attracts men to its possessor, and causes them to lend a willing attention to his message whatever that message may be. He should be a man of mental breadth and balance, one capable of taking a comprehensive and a sane view of men and things, capable of seeing things in their true relations and proportions. He should be a man not only with a wide sweep of mental vision, but a man possessed also of a mind characterized by discrimination, penetration, and grasp, and so one capable of dealing effectively with great and perplexing problems. The ideal minister, many would add, ought farther to be a man whose native gifts have been developed and perfected by discipline; and withal one who has at his command rich and varied stores of learning. Nor would his equipment be complete without the gifts of speech and of leadership. He ought to be a Chrysostom for lofty, persuasive, compelling eloquence, and a Napoleon in his ability to organize and effectively to direct the activities of his fellows. Such in a way at least would be the portrait that some would draw of the ideal minister. Now, my brethren, far be it from me to despise any of these gifts or in any way to depreciate their value.

The possession in a marked degree of almost any one of them, accompanied by even a very modest measure of certain of the others, constitutes a splendid equipment for service. And I would to God that a larger number among us possessed a larger measure of such gifts.

NATURAL GIFTS FROM GOD.

But if these be the gifts needed by ministers, then, who, I ask, is the source of such gifts, their sole source? We speak of them as "natural gifts," and misleading as that phrase may be, it is at least a confession that the gifts we have been considering cannot be conferred by men upon their fellows. Not all the schools ever established can make a single scholar. And it is not more true of poets than it is of orators, thinkers, and leaders among men, that they are born not made. When, therefore, we speak of the gifts that I have mentioned as "natural gifts," we mean that they are gifts that none of us can either win for himself or impart to his fellows. But, my brethren, it would be an inexcusable blunder to let the fact that we call these splendid endowments "natural gifts" hide from our eyes the fact that they are true "*gifts*", and that like every other good and perfect gift they come down from above, from the Father of lights. Nay, God's ancient challenge to Moses still stands. When the latter, trying to plead off from his mission exclaimed, "O Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: for I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue," you will remember that "Jehovah said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth, or who maketh a man dumb or deaf, or seeing or blind? is it not I, Jehovah?" If then ministers with the gifts that I have enumerated are needed among us to-day—and who that looks around him can have any doubt that they are needed?—then God can bestow these gifts upon the sons of his people for the work of the ministry. God's gifts of leadership were not exhausted when he gave a Moses and a David to his ancient people. His gifts of seraphic eloquence were not drained in the production of an Isaiah. Nor have these and similar endowments been exhausted

subsequently by bringing forward that splendid array of the sons of the mighty who in age after age have inspired the sacramental hosts with hope and courage, and under the Great Captain of our salvation have led them forward from victory to victory. But remember it, my brethren, God is the sole source from whom his church can receive for her service sons so endowed.

But illustrious and truly valuable as are the gifts that we have been considering, to suppose that they are either indispensable or even relatively the most important gifts for genuine and effective ministers would be a mistake, a grave, a disastrous mistake. Nay, there is no reason to doubt that God still chooses the foolish things of the world that he may put to shame them that are wise, and the weak things of the world that he may put to shame them that are strong. What, then, are the indispensable qualifications of a genuine minister of Christ? Obviously the nature of his office and of his message must determine our answer.

SPIRITUAL QUALIFICATIONS FROM GOD.

Is it his business, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear, to preach the startling, the tremendous doctrine of the necessity of regeneration? Then surely he ought himself to be a regenerated man, a man born from above. How shall one whose own heart is not subject to the holy, just, and good law of God, nay one whose heart is enmity against that law preach its condemning claims to his fellow sinners? What folly, what effrontery against man as well as against God for an impenitent sinner to say to his fellow impenitents, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish"; for one, himself an unbeliever, to direct it into the ears of the perishing with ceaseless and fervid reiteration, "and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him"! How shall men whose own righteousness, like that of the Pharisees, is either external and formal, or else servile and selfish, urge upon others a righteousness, the mainspring of which is filial love, born of a personal experience of redeeming grace? how shall one whose

own soul has never come under the powers of a world to come, speak to others either of the glories of heaven—its real glories, or of the terrors of hell—its real terrors? I tell you, my brethren, they cannot do it. Nay, they will not do it. Such messages would blister their lips, if they did not promptly spue them out of their mouths as fit only for fools and fanatics. As soon expect Beelzebub himself to take his place among the heavenly choir and strike a harp in unison with the harps of those who adore Him that sitteth upon the throne and the Lamb, as to expect such men to dwell upon such themes. When men of this type find themselves behind the sacred desk, there is nothing for them to do but to leave the weightier matters of the gospel and turn aside to tithe the mint and anise, and cummin of ethics, literature and philosophy, or to preach what they are pleased to call a “social gospel”. Christless ambassadors for Christ beseeching men in Christ’s stead to be reconciled to God in Christ—that would be a solecism indeed! Nay, farther, while I would bring no indictment against my brethren of the ministry that does not include myself, is it not but too true that the poverty of much of our preaching is traceable directly to the poverty of our personal experience? We lack Paul’s zeal for Christ, because we lack Paul’s insight into and his personal sense of the guilt, the bondage, and the pollution of sin; because we lack his insight into and his personal sense of the marvelousness and preciousness of the love and grace of the redeeming Christ. We lack Paul’s pained and tender concern for the salvation of souls, because we lack Paul’s insight into the value of souls, and the relation that their salvation sustains to the glory of God in Christ.

What then are the qualifications essential to a genuine minister of Christ? What are the things the possession of which are the best, the sure guarantee of a ministry that God will reckon to be a successful ministry? I answer, a regenerated heart, true repentance and a living faith that energizes love, and through love, the spirit of adoption, growth in grace, the love of God in Christ shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit, spiritual insight; these, and such as these, are the qualifications that are in-

dispensable. But these, one and all, are graces of the Spirit of God. And by the word "graces" I mean not merely the ornaments with which the Spirit of God adorns the genuine minister, but the *gifts* of the Spirit of God without which one cannot be a genuine minister. But if these be gifts which God alone can bestow, then clearly God must, from the nature of the case, be the church's sole dependence for a supply of ministers. And this being the fact, it behooves the church to recognize and to reckon with it as a fact.

GOD ALONE COMPETENT TO DO THE SELECTING.

3. And now, without dwelling upon it at any length, I ask your attention to still another consideration that ought to lead the church to actually look to God for her ministers—for that is the only practical way for her to recognize her dependence upon God.

I refer here to the fact that God alone knows who will be the efficient laborers in His harvest; He alone knows where they are to be found; and He alone knows how they are best to be fitted for their work. The history of His church has no more remarkable incidents upon its pages than those that relate to some of the men whom, contrary to all expectation, not only upon the part of others, but upon the part of the men themselves, God has brought into the ministry; the surroundings from which they have been brought, and the processes by which they have been fitted for efficiency in God's service. When Pharaoh's daughter took the weeping Moses from his ark of bulrushes and adopted him as her own son, who could have forecast the future that God had in store for that puling little son of a Hebrew serf? And as the babe developed into a lad, the lad into a youth, and the youth into a man, who in all Israel was looking for the deliverer from Pharaoh's yoke to come forth to them out of Pharaoh's court? And as for Moses himself, when he had slain that Egyptian and had been first scorned and then tattled upon by his own brethren, it is perfectly clear that when he took to his heels to save his skin, he left behind him whatever ambitions and expectations he may previously have cherished of being

himself he by whom God would save His people out of Egypt. Indeed, God had, as it were, to collar him and drag him out of the desert and back to Pharaoh's court. What has been said of Moses will apply to David, at whom his own mother's sons turned up their noses. How much of real importance did he attach to the anointing oil of Jehovah, when despairing of his life, he betook himself to the court of the Philistine Achish? But the time would fail me to tell of the simple fishermen of the sea of Galilee, "ignorant and unlearned" men one and all; of Saul, the persecutor and blasphemer: of Augustine, wallowing in the sty of Epicurus; of Luther driven into the cloister by a flash of lightning, and driven out of it by a pilgrimage to Rome; of Whitefield, the scullion; Bunyan, the tinker; John Newton, the obscene, blaspheming, sottish sailor; Adam Clarke, the dullard, and a host of others, some of them much nearer home. I must pass them all by without comment, to call attention for a moment to the fact that it was an Israelite indeed in whom there was no guile, who, when invited to come to Jesus, the Minister of the true sanctuary which the Lord pitched and not man, was on the very point of turning away with the remark, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" So incompetent are the best of God's people to tell from whence He will call his most distinguished ministers.

And so to-day, God not only knows far better than any of us what are the needs of his church, her special needs, her most urgent needs, but He also knows who are the men that would best meet those needs, where they are to be found, and what discipline will develop their highest efficiency. And no one but God possesses this knowledge. And so by another road we are brought face to face with the fact of the church's absolute dependence upon God for a supply of competent ministers, and also, I think, face to face with the importance of the church's recognizing this fact as a fact.

4. Once more, if the church really needs ministers, and really desires to have them, it will be her wisdom to look to God for them, because God alone can utter an effectual call in the hearts and consciences of the church's sons, and because He can deliver:

a call that will be irresistibly effectual. Believe me, my brethren, the voice that caused Peter and Andrew straightway to leave their nets and follow Him, who had said to them, "Come after me and I will make you to be fishers of men"; the voice whose subtle charm reached the hearts of James and John, and caused them as soon as its accents smote their ears straightway to leave the boat and their father and follow Him from whom it proceeded; the voice that drew Matthew from the receipt of custom, and that in the face of all his prejudices and his preferences was potent enough to drive Paul far from every prospect of worldly preferment—I say, believe me, my brethren, that voice has lost none of its compelling charm, nor any of its persuasive potency. It can still make its way into the hearts of men and win them away from all the allurements of wealth, of pleasure or of power. It can still incline men to choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy their own ease and comfort in their own way. It can still cause men not even to count their lives dear unto themselves, so that they may—like the apostle—accomplish their course with joy, and the ministry which they have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. We may exert our utmost powers to convince our young men of the sterility of a selfish, self-centered life, and of the blessed fruitfulness of a life of self-sacrifice, and after all we may fail. But He who with Gethsemane and Golgotha just before Him nerved His soul for its ordeal with the words, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone, but if it die, it beareth much fruit," will not only convince them by the splendor of His own example, but by the power of His Spirit will call forth in their hearts a like heroic resolve.

GOD WILL HAVE CHURCH RECOGNIZE HER DEPENDENCE.

5. Finally, how do the words, "For this moreover I will be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them," cause the importance of the church's recognizing her dependence upon God for her supply of ministers to stand forth as under the glare of some mighty searchlight. And all the more so because these are

the words with which God concludes and, so to speak, rounds off a series of the most gracious and the most unqualified promises to be found in His Word. To cavil at God's demand here is not only idle, not only impious, but it is the height of folly. Need I say that there is nothing arbitrary in His requiring His church to recognize her dependence upon Him by coming to Him and laying her needs before Him. If we were dumb, irrational cattle, God would make no such demand of us. Nay, in this, as in all things else, in consulting His own glory, He has made it a part of that glory to consult our good. For, my brethren, it is only as we do actually recognize our dependence that we can come to know the blessedness—I will not say of dependence nakedly and in itself alone, for all dependence is not blessed—but the blessedness of dependence upon God. He leaves us to learn our insufficiency in ourselves, and then He holds forth the great and precious gifts of His grace, that by them He may tempt us to come to Him, and to teach us to see in Himself the source of all our good, until at last, forgetting even His gifts, we come to think of Himself as our portion, and to say over and over to ourselves in wondering joy, "This God is our God, He will be our guide even unto death, and our portion forever and ever." But while there is nothing hard, or arbitrary or foolish in the condition upon which God had made the bestowal of His gifts to hinge, let us not forget, my brethren, that the condition itself is there. Oh! that God may Himself incline us to turn to Him as the Lord of the harvest, and in good earnest to pray to Him that He thrust forth laborers into His harvest.

Columbia, S. C.