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I.

THE CALL TO THE MINISTRY.

THERE are some special reasons which urge this subject upon our attention.

*First.* There is an attempt in some directions to lower the choice of the Ministry to the same level with that of any other profession or avocation in life. It is claimed that men are called to the Ministry in the same way in which they are called to be Farmers, Merchants, Lawyers, or Physicians. The question would then be one simply of expediency and aptitude. The conditions of the choice would be the tastes and preferences of each individual, together with his talents and qualifications and such outward indications of Providence as seemed more favorable to the Ministry than to any other occupation.

This theory overlooks the *Divine character* of the Ministerial office. The Minister is no longer a *Mediatorial gift* to the Church.

It ignores also the immediate Headship of Jesus Christ over his Church. He no longer can say to Ministers, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you."

It sets aside also the *Divine Call* of the Spirit. It is no longer "the Holy Ghost who" makes them overseers of the flock.

A *second* reason which urges this subject upon our attention is the fact that while some go to the extreme which I have just mentioned and deny the necessity of the Spirit's call, there are others who fly to the opposite extreme, and so emphasize the internal call of the Spirit as to render appointment to office or ordination or any authentication by the Church entirely unnecessary. Upon this theory any man who can persuade himself that he is called by the

Spirit to preach the Gospel may take up the office of the Ministry and discharge its functions when and where he pleases.

This theory ignores the Church as the divinely appointed organization for the salvation of the world, and ordination or official relation to the Church as the divinely appointed means for the authentication of a true Ministry. It makes each individual Minister the sole judge of his own calling and qualifications; it sends him out in violation of the law and order of God's house to act as an adventurer upon his own authority and guidance, and to fall at last under the condemnation, "Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, that prophesy out of their own heart. I am against the prophets that steal my words. I sent them not, neither commanded them, therefore they shall not profit this people at all."

With this view of the urgency of the subject, and of the dangerous extremes which lie upon each side of our pathway, let us advance to inquire, *What is the true view, according to the Scriptures, of a call to the Ministry?*

We freely concede that it is both the privilege and the duty of every believer to preach the Gospel both with his lips and his life. If a man has found salvation for his own soul he immediately turns with a natural, gracious, and imperative instinct to seek to save the souls of others. If he has found the good word of God to be precious to his own soul, his lips are immediately opened to say, "Oh, come and taste and see that the Lord is good." It is not only the privilege, but the imperative duty of every Christian to utter the Gospel invitation, "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Nor should this privilege be restricted or hedged about by unnecessary limitations.

The idea of a Christian is that of a consecrated worker for Christ, and the idea of the Church in the New Testament is that of a self-expanding missionary organization. There is a place for every individual and the largest sphere for personal exertion.

The Church will never rise to greatness and power until we realize that nothing can absolve the individual Christian from the responsibility of doing all that he can by personal work to save the souls of men.

But this is a very different thing from assuming an official relation to the Church. It is one thing to testify for Christ and to work for the salvation of men, but it is an entirely different thing to be a Minister, to assume upon one's own motion an official relation to the Church, which implies his appointment from the Head of the Church,

which invests him with Spiritual authority, which calls him not only to preach, but to bear rule in the Church, which requires him to separate himself from all secular pursuits and to devote his whole life to this one work.

If, then, this distinction is so clear, if the position and functions of the Minister are so different from those of the private Christian, if they are so much higher, so much more sacred, and so much nearer in their spiritual relations to Christ and his people, then the question comes back, Can any man be justified in assuming this higher office without a Divine Call?

The Scriptures certainly teach the necessity of a call from the great Head of the Church to the office and work of the Ministry.

This necessity may be shown—

FIRST. From the fact that the Ministry is from its very nature an *office*. What is the Ministry? It is not simply a work, but an *office*. Thought upon this subject is often confused from failure to make this distinction. Some think only of the work, and conclude that this is something they can take up for themselves; but they fail to see the *office* to which the work belongs. What, then, is an *office*? An office under the Government is such a relation to that Government as involves authority, duties, privileges, and responsibilities. The work may be that of a clerk, a postmaster, a soldier, or Premier, but the official relation in each case is the same—it involves authority, duties, privileges. Office under a Government can only be constituted by a call, appointment, or investiture; without this the office cannot exist.

In the same manner as an official relation to the Government can only be created by a call or appointment from the Government, so the Ministry, as an official relation to the Church, can only be created by a call from the Head of the Church, and authentication by the officers of the Church. A simple illustration will make this plain.

A good citizen feels bound to do what he can to uphold and enforce the civil law; but because he feels this to be his duty, shall he assume upon his own motion to execute the office of a *Magistrate*? No man can be a Magistrate until he is called and inducted into the office.

In the same manner shall a Christian, because he feels it to be his duty to speak and work for Christ, assume on his own motion to perform the functions of a Minister? As no man can be a Magistrate until he is appointed and sworn into office, so no man can be a Minister until he is called and ordained.

That the Ministry is such an official relation, and can only be con-

stituted by a Divine Call, is proved, FIRST, *by all the names and designations by which it is described in the New Testament.*

For example, a Minister is an “*ambassador of Jesus Christ,*” but an ambassador is one who is selected, called, and commissioned under special instructions from one Government to another. How absurd would it be for any man to assume to go as an ambassador to a foreign court without a call or commission !

Can, then, a man be an ambassador of Jesus Christ except by his immediate call and commission ?

Again, a Minister is “*a steward of the mysteries of God.*” But can a steward act without the authority of the Master ? A self-constituted steward is a fraud and impostor.

A Minister is also called “*a Herald.*” But a herald never goes unsent, and the very message he is to proclaim is given to him. The same idea is conveyed by every appellation given to the Ministry. Is he “*a Pastor ?*” he is called to the care of the flock by the chief Shepherd. Is he a *Watchman ?* he is sent or placed upon the walls of Zion. Is he a *Ruler ?* it is by the authority which Christ has given him. Is he a *Soldier ?* it is because he bears commission from the great Captain of Salvation.

Thus it is that the very nature of the Ministry as an official relation to the Church, and every name by which it is designated, implies the necessity of vocation from Christ as the source of all Church power and authority.

SECONDLY. The necessity of a call to the Ministry is proven from the fact that both under the Old and New Testaments every official relation to the Church required a Divine Call and investiture, and the most terrible punishments were threatened against and visited upon those who intruded uncalled into any sacred office.

I need not stay to show how true this was of Moses and all the Prophets, of Aaron and all the Priests, of Paul and all the Apostles. So minute and extensive was the application of this principle, that God would not permit the mechanical work of the Tabernacle to be done until he had called Bezaleel and “*filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom and in understanding and in all manner of workmanship.*” But does any one say these were all miraculous calls, and are therefore no precedent now as to the call of an ordinary Minister ? True, they were all miraculous and extraordinary, and as to the manner of the call are no precedent ; but as to the principle, it is the same now as then. All these cases embody most expressly the principle that all official relation to the Church must be authenticated by a Divine Call.

The Apostle Paul teaches this clearly in Hebrews v. 4, when he

says, speaking of the Priesthood, "No man taketh this honor upon himself, but he that was called of God, as was Aaron." In other words, he assumes it as a general principle that official relation to the Church implies an appointment or call as opposed to an unauthorized assumption of the office. If this is not admitted, then it must be proved upon the other side that something has supervened to stay the operation of a principle that has hitherto been universal and imperative. If this cannot be done, then the Divine woe is as operative against an uncalled Ministry now as it ever was. "Woe unto these Prophets. . . . I have not sent them, neither commanded them."

So unvarying and imperative is this connection between a Divine Call and a sacred office that the Lord Jesus Christ himself was no exception; he came not upon self-constituted, but upon delegated authority. "He glorified not himself to be made a High Priest, but was called of God, as was Aaron." If a Divine Call was necessary for Aaron and all the Priests, and the Lord Jesus as the great High Priest, then it is much more necessary in all inferior cases.

THIRDLY. The necessity of a Divine Call to the Ministry is proven still more distinctly by the fact that the Scriptures teach most expressly that the call and mission of the ordinary Ministry comes from God.

The pervading implication of the Scriptures is that Christ dwells now in the midst of his Church, influencing by his Spirit and controlling by his Providence all its operations; that he is the immediate Author of all Church power and Church blessings, bestowing and authenticating ministerial gifts and ministerial authority according to his own will. It is his prerogative to call whom he will into his Church, to give them gifts generally as he wills, and to call them from sources and to positions according to his own pleasure.

Accordingly we find the Apostles laying such significant stress upon their own vocation; they were not self-appointed ministers, but called to be Apostles by the will of God.

Paul constantly announces himself as "an Apostle of Jesus Christ," "an Apostle not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead."

But if you make a distinction between the vocation of the Apostles and that of ordinary ministers, then it is still more striking to notice that when these Apostles come to speak of the calling and mission of ordinary ministers, they use precisely the same language which they had employed as descriptive of their own. Paul, sending a message to Archippus, says, "Take heed unto the ministry which

thou hast received of the Lord Jesus, that thou fulfil it." Here was an ordinary Minister, but he had received his Ministry of the Lord Jesus, just as Paul had received his.

When the Elders or Presbyters of Ephesus met Paul at Miletus he charged them to "feed the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers." No language can be constructed to convey more clearly the idea of a Divine Call than this. They were Elders, Presbyters, Overseers, Pastors of the flocks, but they had been made so by the Holy Ghost.

The New Testament idea of a Minister is one who has received the "Ministry of reconciliation," and who "in Christ's stead entreats men to be reconciled to God." Surely he who stands in Christ's stead must have a call and mission from him whom he represents. The office of Timothy, whom Paul speaks of as an Evangelist, is expressly stated to have been "the gift of God." The work of Barnabas when he was sent forth as an Evangelist is styled a work to which "the Holy Ghost had called him." Paul's teaching upon this point in Ephesians iv. 11 is so clear that there can be no mistake. When our Lord "ascended up on high he gave gifts unto men." What were these gifts? Church officers—men set apart and qualified for various works. "He gave some Apostles, some Prophets, some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers." Here, then, are Christ's "ascension gifts." They are not simply offices, but officers for the Church. Some of these are ordinary and some extraordinary, but they all alike have a call and mission from the ascended Redeemer.

But as if to leave no question about the Divine vocation of the Ministry, Paul gives us a whole chapter on this subject. In the twelfth chapter of First Corinthians the Apostle shows that God has set officers in his Church, just as he has set the members in the body. In other words, the constitution and officers of the Church are just as much a Divine work as the organism of the human body. After developing the figure of the human body, with all its different members, and showing how God has given to each member its peculiar office, he says, "Now, ye are the body of Christ and members in particular. And God hath set some in the Church, first, Apostles; secondly, Prophets; thirdly, Teachers; after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." Here, then, is the enumeration of the officers of the Church; each is a gift of God, and each qualified and placed in position by the Lord's hand, just as he has placed the members in the body. "The design of the whole chapter," says Dr. Charles Hodge, "is to show that Christ through his Spirit gives these gifts

and offices, ordinary and extraordinary, to each one as he wills, and that to him alone they are to be referred."

But the teaching of our Lord himself upon this subject is so plain as to foreclose the argument.

In that beautiful parable in the tenth chapter of John, in which he represents the Church as a sheepfold, and himself as the Good Shepherd, and Ministers or Pastors as the under Shepherds, he says, "I am the door"—namely, the door of ministerial entrance to the care of the flock. "He who enters in by the door"—viz., he who enters in by his Divine commission—"is the Shepherd of the Sheep," while those who "climb up some other way"—viz., those who enter without his call and authority—"are thieves and robbers."

Again, on another occasion he points our attention to the harvest perishing for want of laborers, and says, "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he send forth more laborers into the harvest." The harvest is the millions of perishing souls in the world; he himself is the Lord of the harvest; Ministers are the laborers who are to enter and reap. But how are these Ministers to be secured? He does not say to the Church, "Go ye into the market-place and hire as many as ye find, and send them into the field." Nor does he say to men to look at the perishing harvest and then go in of their own accord and labor, but he does say, "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest to *send* laborers into the harvest." The men who are to reap the harvest are to be men whom Christ himself sends.

In the Book of Revelation the expression of this idea is very striking. The churches are represented as "golden candlesticks;" in the midst of these churches Christ, as the risen and living Head, lives and walks with eyes "as of a flame of fire," making a most minute inspection of their condition and exercising a most direct supervision over them. The Ministers of the churches are represented as stars which Christ holds in his right hand. By this representation he expresses more forcibly than he could do by words his own sovereignty in the vocation and control of his Ministers. He holds them in his right hand, he fills them with light, he elevates them to their position, and revolves them in the orbit of ministerial duty.

This obviously closes the argument. How can it be possible for any one, without blinding his eyes to the teaching of the Word of God, to assume the duties of the Ministry without a Divine Call from Christ himself as the Head of the Church?

This point being settled, the question arises,

*How is this Divine Call to be so authenticated to the individual himself as to induce him to obey it?*

Upon this point the thought of young men seeking the Ministry is sometimes confused and anxious. They are disposed to say, "I do not understand this idea of a call to the Ministry; there seems to be something mysterious, supernatural, miraculous about it." To this we answer that it is not miraculous; the days of immediate revelation have ended. We are not, therefore, to expect to be called by a special messenger, or to be summoned by an audible voice to preach the Gospel, or be constrained by the spirit of inspiration to testify of Jesus.

God's method of dispensation to the Church has changed. This is the Dispensation of the Spirit, and a call to the Ministry is now a call from the Lord Jesus Christ as the Head of the Church by his Spirit. But this, you say, is mysterious and supernatural and difficult to understand.

To this we answer, Yes, everything in religion is supernatural, and to that extent it carries with it the element of the mysterious. If you are a Christian you have experienced a supernatural change, the Divine Spirit has wrought a new birth in your soul, and abides in you in the power of a supernatural life. And yet all this is a *reality* to you, and something that you comprehend as an experience. There is nothing more mysterious or supernatural in a call to the Ministry than this. Your conversion is a calling; the old writers styled it "effectual calling." The general call of the Gospel goes out to all men; some close their ears and disregard it, others hear and obey it; in them it is effectual, in the others it is not. Now, why is it effectual in some? Because the Divine Spirit carries it home to their hearts, and disposes and enables them to hear and obey. Hence our "effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the Gospel." This call you have heard and obeyed; it has been effectual in you; you have been so convinced that you are called of God that you have confessed Christ before men, and taken your place at the Sacramental table. This is your *calling* as a Christian. Now, is there anything more mysterious, more difficult to understand in a call to the Ministry than in this call to be a Christian?

They are both Divine, both immediate and personal. The effectual call is authenticated to the individual by the operation of the Spirit in his heart, and is recognized first in the sphere of his own consciousness, and then in the life by the fruits of faith, hope, and charity.

And may not a call to the Ministry be authenticated to the indi-

vidual in the same way, by the working of God's Spirit in his heart, giving him such views of truth, such an experience of the preciousness of Christ, and such love for the souls of men, as will enkindle a burning desire in his heart to go out and preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. Hence, following the suggestion of the Catechism definition of Effectual Calling, we may formulate in general a description of what a call to the Ministry is.

A call to the Ministry is the inward operation of the Spirit, enlightening the mind to apprehend truth and duty, imparting right views and motives, and influencing us to desire and seek to be employed by Christ in the discharge of ministerial functions. A definition comprehending the whole subject is given by Dr. Charles Hodge: "A call to the Ministry is such an expression of God's will to an individual through his grace, through his Providence, and through his constituted authorities as empower him to exercise the functions of the Ministry, without which he is no Minister, and with which he is a Minister." The late Bishop Simpson, of the Methodist Church, said, "The first evidence of a Divine Call is in the consciousness of the individual, and is a persuasion which, slight as it may be at first, deepens into an intense conviction that he is called of God to preach the Gospel. In its slightest form this call is a persuasion that he who receives it ought to preach the Gospel. In its strongest form, that God requires him to do this work upon the peril of his soul. It is God's voice to the human conscience saying, 'You ought to preach.'"

From this general view we are able to point out some indications which should accompany and authenticate this Divine Call.

Generally, we may say that these evidences are connected with an inward operation of the Divine Spirit upon the heart, leading a man to seek the office of the Ministry from right motives; and as all right affections come from God, we may infer that an intelligent desire to preach the Gospel from Scriptural motives comes from the Holy Spirit. But to make this more tangible and practical, we may particularize and mention some of the more obvious indications of a Divine Call.

FIRST, we mention a strong conviction that it is our duty to preach the Gospel. This seems to be indicated by the analogy which I have before alluded to between a call to the Ministry and our effectual calling. In our call to be Christians the first thing is conviction—a conviction of sin as something to be repented of and abandoned—and this is followed with a conviction of duty to embrace Christ and serve him. From this analogy may we not infer that in a call to the Ministry the Divine Spirit sends in upon our

hearts a conviction of duty, a sense of obligation from which it would be sinful to withdraw? If Christ has done so much for me, what shall I do for him? This is that sense of *oughtness* to which Bishop Simpson refers in his account of a call to the Ministry. This sense of duty is prominent in all the Divine calls recorded in the Scriptures. In each case obedience to the call was rendered under the pressure of a Divine command. Moses seemed to be lacking at first in this sense of duty, and he displayed when first called upon to stand before Pharaoh an unworthy hesitancy, because he was slow of speech; and his brother Aaron was advanced to the position of chief speaker.

When Jeremiah was called he showed reluctance and said, "Ah, Lord God, behold I cannot speak, for I am a child;" but God said, "Say not I am a child, for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak." Isaiah had a vision of the glory of the Lord, "high and lifted up in the Temple," and when the call came, "Whom shall I send?" he answered, "Here am I, send me." The very first utterance of Paul's new life sprang from this conviction of duty—"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" As he grew in experience this sense of oughtness deepened, and he said, "A necessity is laid upon me. Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel." Vinet, writing upon this point, says, "When conscience commands and obliges us to perform a certain task, we have that which next to a miracle best merits the name of a call. And it must be *nothing less*. To exercise legitimately the Ministry, we must have a call to it."

The SECOND indication of a call to the Ministry is a strong and abiding desire for the work springing from love to Christ.

This intense desire to accomplish his work was one of the striking characteristics of our Lord's Ministry. Dr. Bridges, in his book on the Christian Ministry, noticing this point, says, "While he was in the bosom of the Father and in anticipation of his work, his delights were with the sons of men." When he came into the world for the accomplishment of his mission, the same earnest desire distinguished him. His delight in his Father's work was greater than in his necessary food. He said to his disciples, "I have food to eat that ye know not of. My meat is to do the will of him that sent me." Some such earnest desire must certainly characterize our experience as Ministers. Paul's desire amounted to a painful agony. He "labored and travailed in birth for souls." It was said of Dr. Alline that "he was infinitely and insatiably greedy for the conversion of souls."

Vinet, in his Pastoral Theology, says, "When fitness for the Min-

istry exists, will not this supply the place of desire and be sufficient evidence of a call?" "Fitness," we reply, "does not exist where the desire does not. Where the desire is wanting there is not that harmony of the man with his duties which is so essential to the success of the work. We do not say that the Christian will do no good who engages in the work without a taste or desire for it—we only say that he has no call and ought to leave this office to others."

But Vinet presses this point further. He says, "While desire is the first sign of vocation, it is an equivocal sign. It is necessary to ascertain what is the object of this desire, whether it be the Ministry itself, or something in the Ministry that suits our tastes. The taste, the inclination we feel for the Ministry may be superficial, carnal, or erroneous as to its object. It may be that what we like in the Ministry is a respectable, honored profession, or the sphere and occasions which it offers for the exercise of talents with which we may think ourselves endowed; or a vague religious sentimentalism; or an unreflecting enthusiasm; an ideal image; the poetry of the thing. The imagination in these cases is apt to take the place of the conscience and the heart."

In order to be fully assured that we have a true call, our desire for the Ministry must in some degree at least spring from love for the glory of God. Nothing is more foreign to the natural heart than this desire for the glory of God, nothing marks more decisively our birth to a new life.

"When one perceives unfolding in himself this strange desire, so chimerical to the natural man, this desire that God be honored and glorified in the world, then he may think himself called to the Ministry."

A THIRD indication of a call to the Ministry is the possession or the opportunity to acquire the proper gifts and qualifications.

Dr. Bridges says, "A desire for the Ministry does not of itself attest a Divine vocation. We cannot suppose that the Lord would send unqualified laborers, however willing, into the vineyard, and none but he can qualify them."

It is a dictate both of reason and Scripture that God does not call a man to the discharge of any duty without furnishing him with the requisite qualifications. God, in his Providence, does not call the blind to be artists nor the deaf to be musicians. So neither in his Church does he call the ignorant to be the guides and instructors of his people, nor the feeble-minded to be the expositors of his will. These qualifications are,

*First*, physical. If God forbade a sickly or puny animal to be offered to him in sacrifice, how will he regard those who present a

feeble or diseased body as a living sacrifice in the work of the Ministry? If men are chosen for military service who have strength and vigor of body, shall there be less care in the selection of those who are to "endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ"?

The Ministry has doubtless often been injured by the strange mistake of parents who give their strong and healthy sons to the plough and the business of the world, while they educate the feeble or invalid boy for the service of God.

Dr. Crosby, in his Yale lecture, says, "For a weak-bodied man to undertake the onerous duties of a Preacher seems to me to be a tempting of Providence. When there is organic difficulty of lungs, heart, or nerves, the work of God is to be done in some other way than in the Ministry."

Upon these physical conditions we need not particularize except to say that voice is one of the first conditions of our work. It is essential to a Minister as sight is to an Alpine guide. A man who has a feeble vocal utterance has certainly reason to inquire whether he is called to the Ministry. This weakness may sometimes be remedied by careful culture, and the student who neglects it is doing great injustice to himself and to his Master's work. A Preacher cannot command attention or produce an impression on his audience without clearness of voice and distinctness of articulation.

These qualifications are,

*Second*, mental. If the physical qualifications are important, the mental are still more so. Mind is the one factor with the Minister. In everything that he does he brings his mind to bear upon other minds. Hence Vinet pronounces the Ministry as "the art par excellence," because it is that of governing minds.

The one instrument with which he works is mind. Whether he preaches or prays or visits or talks, he looks for results by the action of his mind upon other minds; and not only so, his mind is the medium through which the Divine mind operates upon the souls of men. He is mentally a co-worker with God. The aim of his whole work is "to awaken and strengthen in men thoughts which must determine and control their lives." It is his work "to govern by purely moral means a multitude of very different minds and dispositions." He must subjugate the acts and thoughts of others, and this by persuasion. "The Minister has to conduct men where they do not wish to go. He has to induce them to receive unlooked-for ideas which they are not disposed to receive, and which they regard as foolishness." Hence it is plain that a Minister must not be a feeble-minded man; he ought to have mental faculties stronger,

keener, and better cultivated than the men whom he is expected to influence.

As mind is the one implement with which he works, it should be of the best quality, and much of his success will depend upon his natural force and ability. Paul laid stress upon this qualification when directing Timothy to whom the Gospel should be committed; he says to faithful men, "who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. ii. 2). Still more expressly describing a Minister, he says he must be "apt to teach"—viz., not only capable of learning, but also of impressing others by the force of his teaching.

To this end he should have acuteness of perception to see the truth, a well-balanced mind to judge of truth in its connections and relations, a good memory to retain what is acquired; but, above all, a sound judgment to protect him against prejudices and one-sided views of truth.

The qualifications which indicate a call to the Ministry are, *Third*, spiritual. The physical and intellectual qualifications are important, but spiritual qualifications are absolutely essential.

John Newton said, "None but he who made the world can make a Minister of the Gospel. If a young man has capacity, culture, and application he may make a scholar, or a philosopher, or an orator; but the true Minister must have certain motives, principles, feelings, and aims which no industry or endeavors of men can either acquire or communicate. They must be given from above or they cannot be received."

Erasmus said with fine point, "He who wishes to be apt to teach must first be taught of God." Where there is no Divine teaching, there certainly is no Divine calling. He who has not the unction from the Holy One cannot understand the truths of the Gospel. He may receive them into his intellect and preach them, but he is like a blind man talking about colors, or like a deaf man discoursing about music. All the great truths of Theology may be learned by the mind, but if we have not an experience of religion they will remain in the intellect as dead dogmas, as cold and inoperative as a theorem of Geometry. It is when these doctrines are studied in a devotional spirit and fused into our own experience by prayer and meditation that they become living forces in our own hearts, and it is only when we are warmed and quickened and fired by these truths ourselves that we can send them out in our preaching as blazing arrows or burning forces to kindle and fire the hearts of others. Here, then, is the one qualification without which all other qualifications are useless—an experience of the power of religion in our own hearts.

A *fourth* qualification involved in a call to the Ministry is soundness in the Faith. We cannot suppose that God calls errorists to be the teachers of his truth. This is expressly enjoined as one of the qualifications of a Minister. "He is to speak the things that become sound doctrine," "he is to hold fast the faithful word as he hath been taught that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers." Having laid down this qualification, God would not surely call a man to the Ministry who does not possess it.

If there is any doubt upon this subject, a man should stand in awe before obtruding himself into the Ministry, for the Apostle, as if to utter a warning that cannot be mistaken, declares that no matter what evidence a man or an angel may give of a Divine call, if he has not this he is to be regarded as accursed.

"Though we or an angel from Heaven preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you let him be accursed."

This may suffice upon the point of qualifications.

A *FOURTH* indication of a call to the Ministry is the manifest blessing of God upon your efforts to do his work. If the Spirit of God attends the words which we speak to others, this may be taken as a token of his approval.

It sometimes happens that young men after their conversion are filled with a most earnest desire to bring other souls to Christ; they talk with them in private, or address them in prayer-meetings, or teach them in a Bible-class, and a manifest blessing attends these efforts to convert others. In such cases the inquiry very properly starts up in the young man's mind, "May it not be that God by these tokens of success is calling me to the Ministry?" Such experiences are so encouraging that I feel reluctant to break their force by a single precaution. If this experience of success leads the young man to a deeper humility and self-distrust, and to a more profound dependence upon God, it is surely a call to take this great question into serious consideration. \*

But occasionally it happens that apparent success fills a man with pride and inflates him with a conceit of his superior piety; he is flattered by injudicious friends, who predict that the "young man is the making of a wonderful preacher."

When this occurs it is far more probable that the young man has fallen into what the Apostle calls the "snare of the Devil" than that he has found the leading of the Spirit. The most dangerous men that I know anything of are men who are filled with the conceit of their own piety. It leads them to a spirit of crimination, they

reflect upon others, their piety puts on the aspect of arrogance, and they seem to think themselves inspired ; hence whatever they think is right, and they can brook no opposition. It is certainly a most unfortunate thing when such a man gets it into his head that he is called to the Ministry.

But while all this is true, it should not be permitted to detract from the force of the indication which I have just mentioned.

Where God grants a man success, and at the same time maintains his humility and self-distrust, he should certainly be encouraged to feel that God is calling him to higher spheres of usefulness. Paul, you remember, appeals to the Divine blessing that attended his labor as the proof of his Divine mission. Thus to the Corinthians he says, "The seals of mine Apostleship are ye in the Lord." And again he says, "Need we epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men." When God uses a man to turn others to righteousness, it is certainly a strong proof that he is called to the work.

The FIFTH and last indication of a call to the Ministry consists of such Providential leadings as remove obstacles and open up the way for a man to enter the Ministry. Some writers upon this subject speak of a call to the Ministry as having two aspects—External and Internal. The internal call consists of such indications as I have already mentioned, and the external of such Providential directions as open up the way to a preparation for and an entrance upon the work. This distinction does not seem to me to be necessary. The call is one, and a division of the subject seems to be artificial and tends to confuse thought. Divine Providence and Divine Grace work in a beautiful harmony. Whenever God puts a strong desire into the heart of a man to preach, he opens the way to the work.

If the secret history of Ministers could be written there would be some marvellous chapters upon this subject. I have known instances in which difficulties have been removed and the way opened up as clearly as if an angel had come and said, "This is the way, walk ye in it."

Sometimes this opening is at the beginning. A young man is filled with a desire to preach, but he has no means to pursue his education, and possibly others are dependent on him for support ; his way seems hedged up by difficulties, which he can only interpret as a prohibition. But unexpectedly these difficulties are removed, the hedge is opened, and the crooked path becomes straight.

Sometimes the orderings of Providence are such as to try a young man's patience and trust in God and his spirit of submission to

what seems to be adverse Providence. He is filled with a great desire to preach, and a burning zeal to do something for the salvation of men ; but the way is not open. Under such circumstances it is difficult to restrain a feeling of impatience or discouragement, but perseverance and trust often have their reward, and the young student is led forward in a plain path.

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