

SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW.

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ARTICLE I.

THE DIVINE APPOINTMENT AND OBLIGATION OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.*

1. *The Rights of War and Peace, including the Law of Nature and of Nations.* By HUGO GROTIUS. 3 vols. 8vo.
2. *The Relations of Christianity to War.* By the Rev. THOMAS SMYTH, D. D. Charleston. 1847.
3. *The Punishment of Death for the Crime of Murder, Rational, Scriptural and Salutary.* By WALTER SCOTT, President and Theological Tutor in Airedale College. Bradford: Yorkshire.
4. *Capital Punishment, the Importance of its Abolition: A Prize Essay.* By the Rev. JAMES BEGGS, Late Missionary to India. London. 1839.
5. *An Essay on the Ground and Reason of Punishment, with special reference to the Penalty of Death.* By TAYLOR LEWIS, Esq. And a Defence of Capital Punishment. By Rev. GEORGE B. CHEEVER, D. D. With an Appendix, containing a Review of Burleigh on the Death Penalty. New York: Wiley & Putnam. 1846: pp. 365.

* With its bearing on the recent execution of colored persons, and their religious instruction.

must consider this declaration as made by Christ. Viewed in this light, it exhibited a perfect agreement with the language of the apostle. The 120 years of respite which was promised to the antediluvian transgressors is the period during which the long suffering of God waited for them while Noah was preparing the ark, and the preaching of Christ by the Spirit is identical with the strivings of the Spirit, which he threatened to withdraw when this period of respite was ended.

The operations of the Spirit, however, are usually carried on by external means, and the chief means employed to reclaim the sinners of the old world was the ministry of Noah. It was by his ministry, therefore, that Christ preached to the spirits in prison.

This conclusion is confirmed by the following verse, *Ἀσπόμενοι ἑστέ, ἃς ποτε*, which sometime or FORMERLY were disobedient. Sometime, or LONG AGO, is intended to characterize the whole of the intervening statement, or to show that the preaching referred to had occurred many ages previously, when the long suffering of God waited for the repentance of sinners.

ARTICLE VI.

THE CHRISTIAN PASTOR.

The Christian Pastor, one of the Ascension Gifts of Christ.
By ROBERT J. BRECKENRIDGE, D. D. To which are added, by way of Appendix, *Presbyterian Government, not a Hierarchy, but a Commonwealth; and Presbyterian Ordination, not a Charm, but an act of Government.* By the same Author. Baltimore, 1845.

The pamphlet whose title has been given at the head of this article, consists of three separate tracts— all bearing directly upon questions which have been recently agitated, in reference to the polity of the Presbyterian Church. The first is a sermon, preached at the installation of the Rev.

Robt. W. Dunlap, as pastor of the Presbyterian congregation worshipping in Aisquith street, Baltimore, and was intended, as we learn from its title page, "to vindicate the Divine calling of the Pastors of the Christian Church, to illustrate the Divinely appointed evidence thereof; and to lift up a warning voice against prevailing errors." The second is a speech, or rather the "substance of an argument on the composition of the Quorum of a Presbytery, delivered in the Synod of Philadelphia, met at Baltimore, on the 20th of October, 1843." And the third is "The substance of an argument," delivered in the same Synod, "on the right of ruling elders, when members of Presbytery, to impose hands in the ordination of ministers of the Word."

To say that these subjects are discussed with ability is only the statement, in another form, that they are discussed by Dr. Breckenridge. Malice itself has never ventured to deny to him the distinction of extraordinary endowments; and though he is sometimes terrible in the derision and scorn which he inflicts upon fraudulent seducers, driving the burning chariot of his zeal over the heads of impostors, hypocrites and formalists,* yet the history of his life is the history of a man "for dignity composed and high exploit" —instinct with the spirit of noble deeds—of calm and settled confidence in truth—lofty in his aims, intrepid in his purposes, and immeasurably superior to the tricks of sophistry and the arts of concealment. When his voice is for war, it is *open* war that he proclaims—and whether in behalf of his church or his country, at home or abroad—he exhibits the same unshaken magnanimity—the contempt of danger and stability of mind which fit a man, as exigencies may require, to be a hero or a martyr. We confess that we love him—love him for his own, and love him for Christ's sake. Our children will remember, though we may forget, the author of that memorable document, the Act and Testimony—a document which deserves to be placed, side by side, with the immortal covenants of Scotland; and although the gratitude of his own generation may be denied, the praises of posterity will not be wanting to the man, who, in times of amazing defection and apos-

*The reader will recollect the exquisite passage on zeal, in Milton's apology for Smectymnus.

tasy; when the profession of the truth was a badge either of weakness or ignorance, was found, like Abdiel among the conspirators of Heaven, "faithful among the faithless."

"Among innumerable false, unmoved,
Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal."

Our object, however, is not to discuss the merits of Dr. Breckinridge as a man, but to lay before our readers, as briefly as the nature of the subjects will admit, the great principles for which he has contended in the pamphlet before us. In the present number we shall confine ourselves to the sermon.

The text is taken from Ephesians, iv : 8— "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men," and the Christian Pastor is accordingly treated as one of the ascension gifts of the Redeemer. The nature of Dr. Breckinridge's design precluded him from bestowing any "labour in establishing the distinction received by nearly all Protestants, and expressly asserted in our ecclesiastical standards, between the extraordinary and the ordinary offices constituted by Christ in his church; or in showing precisely which are permanent and which are not—or in pointing out the precise nature and boundaries of such as are perpetual." We have long felt the want of some brief, clear, and learned discussion of these points—and we know of no greater service which, in these days of ecclesiastical extravagance, could be rendered to the church, than to furnish such a treatise. Many valuable hints are suggested in the First Part of Warburton's Doctrine of Grace—and if the passages which he adduces and the general course of reasoning which he adopts be not conclusive, there is no text of scripture, so far as we know, which *directly* teaches that *any* of the offices instituted by Christ were temporary and occasional, nor is there any method by which it can be satisfactorily demonstrated. The principle upon which our standards themselves seem to justify their doctrine is, that when the gifts, which are essential to an office, are withdrawn, the office itself is necessarily revoked. Miraculous gifts are indispensable to prophets and apostles—and they having ceased, prophets and apostles have ceased with them. But the question

here arises, what is the scriptural evidence that these miraculous gifts should cease? The Papists contend that they are still to be found in the church—and though we may safely join issue with them as to the fact, how shall we show from the word of God, that it was never *intended* to perpetuate them? How shall we prove from the scriptures, that the present withdrawal of these gifts is not in anger, not a rebuke to the church's unfaithfulness and want of prayer, but an integral part of the present dispensation of the Gospel? We may say that the *end* of all these extraordinary offices has been accomplished, and that they have consequently become useless. From the accomplishment of the end to the cessation of the means, the argument may be admitted to be sound—but where is the scriptural proof of what was the end in the present case? How do we know what precise purpose God intended to effect? It may be that this purpose is now adequately met in the written rule of faith with which we are furnished, but it is certainly easier to make the statement, than to prove it from the scriptures. If our limits allowed, we would gladly enter upon this subject here, but must content ourselves with a general reference to the Second Book of the Doctrine of Grace.* It deserves to be remarked, that according to the American standards, all extraordinary offices are not necessarily temporary. The evangelist is an extraordinary officer, and yet is to be continued in the world as long as there are frontier and destitute settlements, in which churches are to be planted and the Gospel established.

This peculiarity is essential to the perfection of the Presbyterian system and makes it, what it strikes us no other system of church government is, an adequate institute for *gathering* as well as *governing* churches which are already gathered. Episcopacy, whether Diocesan or Parochial, supposes a church already formed—Congregationalism implies the previous existence of the brethren—Pastors have relation to a fixed charge, and the Evangelist is the only officer who is set apart for the express purpose of making aggressive

* We are not to be understood as endorsing Warburton's doctrine in regard to the operations of the Spirit in the calling and sanctification of men. We have an absolute horror of his low and grovelling views upon everything connected with the essence of the Gospel. But his argument in favour of the cessation of miraculous gifts is very able and ingenious.

attacks on the world. He goes where there cannot be Bishops and Pastors — he prepares the way for these messengers of Christ by making ready a people called of the Lord. It is this feature in our system which makes ours so pre-eminently a missionary church.

The general relation in which all officers, whether ordinary or extraordinary, perpetual or temporary, stand to the church is that of *ministry*. “They are all ordained, not in a way of honor, but for arduous labour; the work required is, in a proper sense, a service of the church, not a dominion over it — the great object of it is to perfect the saints and to edify the body of Christ, and they were all amongst his ascension gifts.”* This ministry, in its permanent arrangements, embraces the dispensation of the word and sacraments, the exercise of government and the distribution of alms, and is accordingly composed, as its ordinary elements, of Teachers, Rulers and Deacons. “It is not only incredible but absurd to suppose,” — as Dr. Breckinridge very properly remarks, — “that our church should first define that a ministry is divinely appointed, and then define that it consists ordinarily and permanently of Pastors, Elders and Deacons; and yet that it should mean that the word *ministry* can signify nothing but Preachers of the Gospel.”† The truth is all ecclesiastical officers are equally *ministers*, — equally servants of the church — equally appointed by Christ — equally called to be “abundant in labours” — none are to be idle — there is work for every hand — employment for every mind. Indeed “the word rendered ministry is not only used throughout the New Testament in reference to every kind of office-bearer mentioned in it, but is applied to many sorts of functions in the way of service which even private persons can perform.”‡ But if its officers are only a *ministry*, the church is not created by them nor dependent upon them. They were given to the church, but the church has never been given to them. They are servants, not lords — creatures and not creators. This point is strikingly presented in the following paragraph of the sermon.

“Christ had a church in the world before there were

* Sermon, p. 8.

† *Ibid.*

‡ See foot-note on p. 8, Sermon.

either Apostle, or Prophet, or Evangelist, or Pastor, or Teacher, and He will have His church around Him through eternal ages, after all His saints are gathered and perfected, and when oracles, ordinances and ministry shall have fulfilled their work. His bride was equally His undefiled, His only one, before any ordinance was established, or any oracle given, or any ministry constituted, as she is now that we enjoy all these proofs of His care and love; and if there had never been an office-bearer of the race of Adam given as a servant to minister unto her — if angels had been her only ministers forever, or the Divine Spirit had disdained all secondary agencies, or were now to reject the whole body of sinful men who are nothing but as he enables them; still that spotless bride would be the Lamb's wife, by a covenant reaching from the depths of eternity, steadfast as the oath of God can make it, and sacred by the blood of Jesus with which it is sealed. No! no! there is no lordship, no headship in Christ's church, but that of Christ Himself — these are but servants in the church for Christ's sake, and their Master's rule is this — "Whosoever would be chief among you, let him be your servant." (Matt. xx: 27, xxiii: 11.) And if we will but keep steadily before our minds this solitary truth, that Christ's people, his church are before, above, independent of all office-bearers ever given to them — far more than any commonwealth is distinct from and superior to the authorities which may, at any time, exist in it, or the form of administration which may, at any period, prevail in it, it will bear us clearly and firmly onward through all the snares which ignorance, superstition, fanaticism, the lust of power, and the pride of caste have set to entrap God's people into abominable will-worship, or hateful, though perverse men choose to call it, voluntary, humility." — p. 9.

The pregnant truth, presented in this passage, is fatal to the pretensions of Popery, Puseyism and every other system which makes the being of a church and the covenant mercies of God dependent upon any form of outward administration or external order. The distinction is broad and clear between the church in its essence as the mystical body of Christ, and the form in which it is rendered visible to men; and while there can be no doubt, at least among Presbyterians, who have always contended for their government as a matter of Divine appointment, that the polity by which it

ought to be distinguished is accurately and minutely described in the scriptures, that polity is so far from being indispensable to its existence, that its existence is actually presupposed as essential to the polity. Union with Christ through the effectual working of the Holy Ghost, this makes a Christian man — and whoever is joined to the Head possesses communion with all the members. He is an element of the true church, a member of the vast congregation chosen by the Father, redeemed by the Son, and renewed by the Spirit. He is in favor with God and is saved, not upon the vague principle of an undefined mercy, but through the blood of that everlasting covenant which extends only to the church. All that possess the spirit of Christ possess Christ, and all who possess Christ possess all things essential to salvation. They are complete in Him.

Recognizing the distinction between the *church* in its essential elements, and the mode of its external manifestation, the Presbyterian standards avoid the narrow and exclusive spirit which would limit God's covenant to their own little household — they can find members of Christ's church beyond their own doors. By contending, at the same time, that Christ has prescribed the model in conformity with which His people should be governed, they avoid the licentiousness which would give to man the same power and discretion in fixing ecclesiastical, which may be lawfully claimed in settling civil, constitutions. They are consequently neither bigots on the one hand, nor libertines on the other. They embrace in charity all who love Christ, and they testify, in faithfulness, against all who pervert the order of His house. "The present Reformed Churches," — says Dr. Breckinridge in the first speech contained in this pamphlet, — "the present Reformed Churches and especially those standards from which ours have been chiefly taken, are clear and positive in asserting the *jus divinum* of Presbyterian Government — a *jus divinum* of the same character as that asserted for our system of doctrine; requiring in both cases a simple and faithful adherence on our part, and requiring in neither, harshness or intolerance towards those who differ from us — asserting in both cases the duty of God's people; but denying in neither, that his people may be gathered into true churches, though their doctrine nor their order may not seem to us scriptural in all respects." It

seems to us self-evident that "we have no more warrant" — to use the language of Dr. Breckinridge near the close of his sermon,— "we have no more warrant from God to make a church government for Him, and in His name, than to make any other part of His religion. It is idle to talk about church government being *jure divino* in its great principles and not in its details; or, as they say, in *the abstract* and not in the *concrete*. The truth is, it is both; for not only are the great principles laid down for us, but the officers and courts are named; the nature and duties of the one, the qualifications, vocation and powers of the other, are set forth; the relation of all the parts to each other and to the whole are precisely set forth. A government in general, the kind of government in particular, the officers and courts in special, their duties and powers in detail; this is what God has set before us, by revelation, for the Christian Church." These views, we insist upon it, are just; but whether just or false, they are views which have always characterized the Presbyterian church, and which are distinctly and, in different forms of statement, inculcated in our standards. We have undertaken in our Formularies to make nothing, to create nothing — we have simply *declared* what the word of the Lord reveals. We have given the result of our interpretations of scripture, both in reference to order and doctrine — and our Presbyterian Polity is placed upon the same foundation with our system of evangelical truth. We might as well say that no scheme of doctrine is plainly revealed in the scripture, because learned and good men differ in their views of what is enjoined, as to say that no plan of government is commended, because there is a diversity of opinions upon this point also. Socinians cannot find the Sonship of Christ in the Bible — but what Presbyterian doubts it is there. Arminians cannot find the sovereignty of God in election and reprobation, but what Calvinist hesitates to affirm that it is not only there, but plainly there — and so Prelatists and Congregationalists may be unable to detect the elements of Presbytery, but yet they may be there, obscure to nothing but the eye of prejudice.

We have dwelt, at disproportionate length, upon this point, because we are apprehensive that a disposition prevails in some quarters to relinquish the ground which our church has heretofore uniformly held. We dread the con-

sequences of surrendering the *jus divinum Presbyterii*. The power of our system has never been effectually tried — and its full strength can never be developed until our people shall be brought to feel that it is an institute of God. As long as we hesitate to trust it, or rather to trust in the Almighty Saviour who appointed it, we shall not be permitted to do valiantly for our Master and His cause. “Obedience is better than sacrifice.”

Having defined the general relation of the pastoral and all other offices to the people of God, and deduced the inference which obviously follows from the true statement of the case, Dr. Breckinridge proceeds to the immediate subject of his sermon — the nature and evidence of a call to the ministry of the Word. He first exposes the futility of the three prominent theories to which almost every form of error upon this great subject may be ultimately reduced. All pretensions which are not founded upon a real call of God, properly authenticated according to the provisions of His word, must either claim to be extraordinary — and then extraordinary evidence should be produced — or they rest upon a perpetual succession which has transmitted the rights and properties of the office from Christ the head, through an unbroken line of office-bearers to the present incumbent — and then the succession becomes a question of fact to be proved by testimony, and the validity of the title founded upon it, a doctrine to be established by scripture — or they rest upon the conviction and belief of the individual himself, unsupported by any proof but his own extravagance or enthusiasm. These false pretensions to official authority are briefly but ably discussed. The argument against the theory of succession is neatly and conclusively presented, and, if our limits allowed, we would cheerfully extract it here.

The true ground upon which the vocation of a Christian Pastor rests are next discussed. “They have relation” — we are told, — “1. To God Himself. 2. To the man’s own conscience. 3. To the Christian people. And 4. To those who bear office in the church.”

It is the prerogative of God and of God alone to select the men who shall be invested with authority in His church, and the validity of this Divine call is evinced to others and rendered satisfactory to ourselves by the testimony of our own consciences, — the approbation of

God's people, and the concurrence of God's earthly courts. Conscience, the Church, the Presbytery — these do not call into the ministry, but only *declare* God's call — they are the forms in which the Divine designation is indicated — the scriptural evidences that he who possesses them is no intruder into the sacred ministry. Dr. Breckinridge shows that "at every period and under every dispensation God has been pleased to reserve to Himself a great and a direct agency in designating those who should minister to His people in holy things." Under the Levitical economy none could be invested with the Priesthood without the appointment of God, and under the Christian economy, the sanction of Christ the Lord is equally indispensable to any who would become stewards of His mysteries. "The analogy between the methods by which persons were admitted into the visible church and called of God to the service of religious functions, as compared with each other, under the Old Testament Dispensation, and the methods adopted for the same ends, as compared with each other, under the New Testament Dispensation," is very strikingly exhibited on the fifteenth page of the sermon.

If this great truth be admitted, and we do not see how it can be questioned, that it is God, and God alone, who can either call or qualify for the sacred office, the consequences which flow from it are absolutely incompatible with many prevailing principles and practices. The doctrine of the American Education Society, a doctrine, we are sorry to say, which has found favour in quarters where it ought to have been rebuked, that every young man of talents and attainments should devote himself to the ministry without some special reason to the contrary is exactly reversed, and the true doctrine is that no man, whether young or old, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, should presume to dispense the mysteries of Christ without the strongest of all possible reasons for doing so — the imperative, invincible call of God. No one is to show cause why he ought *not* to be a minister, he is to show cause why he *should* be a minister — his call to the sacred Profession is not the absence of a call to any other pursuit — it is direct, immediate, powerful to this very department of labour. He is not here because he *can* be no where else, but he is no where else, because he *must* be here.

The doctrine of a Divine call, it seems to us, is set aside—certainly the doctrine of an *immediate* call is set aside, by all who make the ministry a means to any other ends but those with which Christ has connected it. In the case which recently happened at Yale College, it is clear that the call to the ministry was the call to the Presidency of that Institution. Doctor Woolsey was made a minister that he might govern a college, and the evidence that satisfied his mind that God had called him to the work was the simple fact that he had been chosen by the Fellows to succeed Dr. Day. Now the vocation to the ministry is either direct or indirect—if it be direct, Dr. Woolsey could make no pretensions to it, as the intercourse between God and his conscience seems to have been conducted through the corporation of Yale College—if it be indirect, the channel through which it comes must be ascertained to us from the scriptures—and as they say nothing about human institutions for the education of the young in the elements of science, it is certain that connection with such institutions cannot be the method of vouching a title to the ministry. So that whether the vocation be direct or indirect, Dr. Woolsey, so far as appears, can make no pretensions to it on scriptural grounds. His ordination, we solemnly believe, was a mockery—an awful prostitution of the sacred office. The whole series of transactions connected with it, was an open denial that a Divine call was absolutely necessary to a legitimate discharge of ministerial functions. We do not say that the agents intended to insult God or to trample on his Word—but we verily believe that, in ignorance or superstition, they have done both. We are slow to believe that, under any circumstances, a minister of the Gospel ought to be the *President* of a College—but whether he be a President or not, his connection with it, if he has no other sphere of labour, should be as a *minister*. He should be in it to preach the Gospel. This is his direct work—and where he has not scope and opportunity to perform it, he is not called to labour. The indirect influence of religion, in the various departments of instruction, is to be sought in the selection of godly laymen, and not in the degradation of able and efficient preachers. No preacher, who has solemnly vowed to be faithful in the *public* duties of his office, ought to be content with devoting his life

to mathematics, chemistry, or Greek, while he only *insinuates* the Gospel by hints and scraps, as occasional opportunities may be furnished. How, under such circumstances, is he or can he be faithful in the public *duties* of his office? The truth is, he is fulfilling *none* of the *peculiar* duties of his office—he is only doing what any good man might do and ought to do. Every college should unquestionably be supplied with the means of grace—there should be religious instruction—there should be the regular and stated ministrations of the Word—there should be a permanent chaplaincy—the chaplain, or pastor, for the name is nothing, is the only *preacher* that any institution demands—the secular departments of instruction can be filled, and in our view ought to be filled, by men who are not under vows which such positions compel them to violate. Of course these remarks have no application to those who teach, either in schools or colleges, in order that they may support themselves in preaching the Gospel. For such laborious servants of God we entertain no other feelings but those of profound respect—they are entitled to all praise. They make secular pursuits subordinate to the ministry—they teach as Paul wrought at his trade—and if the sneers which have too often been directed at them were directed against those who merge the ministry in earthly avocations, as there would be justice in the censure, there would be more hope that good might result from it.

It is a popular error, proceeding from defective views of a call to the ministry, and indicated in our prayers and our whole theory of ministerial training, that we must look principally to *young* men, as the persons whom God shall select to become the pastors and rulers of his people. These novices, thus early ascertained of their vocation, are to be trained and educated for the profession of a preacher, as other young men are trained and educated for the bar or the forum. We expect them to be called *early*, that they may go through the discipline which we conceive to be necessary, and hence we limit our prayers to this class of persons. But if the call be Divine, it must be sovereign—and it must impart a peculiar fitness, an unction of the Holy Ghost, which alone can adequately qualify for the duties of the office. If it be sovereign, it may extend to all classes and ages—to young and old—to rich and

poor—to all professions and pursuits—to publicans at the receipt of custom—lawyers at the bar—merchants at the desk, and physicians in their shops. We are not authorized to limit God's Spirit in this more than in any other department of his operation. He can call whom he pleases—and we should pray for an increase of labourers, without respect to the classes from which they are to spring. Then again, as to their training, the old adage is certainly true—“Whom God appoints he annoints.” The characteristic qualification for the ministry—the unction from on high—is the immediate gift of the Holy Ghost, and cannot be imparted by any agency of man. Human learning is necessary—the more, the better, but human learning cannot, of itself, make a preacher. Discipline is necessary—but discipline is not Divine power—and is only an incidental help. The whole routine of theological education supposes a previous fitness in the subject, which it may aid but cannot impart.

Hence this training becomes necessary only among novices—among those whose faculties have not been developed and expanded by previous pursuits and previous studies. But in cases in which men of cultivated minds are called from other walks of life, it is absurd to suppose that they cannot be efficient preachers, unless they have been graduated in a Theological Seminary. There is no charm in such institutions—they only burnish the weapons which the minister is to use—but they do not supply him with his armour. Men may be able ministers of the New Testament, without being trained to it as a mere profession—and although human learning is indispensable, yet human learning is not of the essence of a call. He who is called must acquire it, if he does not previously possess it—but he may possess it, and want that fitness which alone can render him successful. This fitness is not simply piety—for men may be both Godly and learned, and yet utterly unqualified for the sacred functions of the ministry—It is a Divine, a heavenly gift, which can be stirred by diligence, study, prayer, meditation, and discipline—but which God alone can communicate.

Another evil consequence of overlooking or improperly conceiving God's exclusive prerogative to call into the ministry, is the institution of plans “whose radical notion,” in

the language of Dr. Breckinridge, "seems to be that in some such way God's action in raising up, and sending forth preachers, may be stimulated, or its frequency increased. Such schemes, to say the very least, seem not so much directed to enquiries for such as God has called, as to experiments which may ascertain if he has not called a multitude besides. And it surely increases the danger greatly, that youths in the first stages of religious experience—of tender years—of circumstances in which a gratuitous education is itself, very often, a powerful temptation, and the station of a minister of the Gospel, a seduction nearly irresistible—are, to a great extent, the objects of these experiments. Suppose them to succeed perfectly—and the result is almost inevitably a class-ministry; and what is worse still—an eleemosynary class-ministry.

"I readily concede that it is not only a clear duty, but a high privilege, to aid such as need it, of those whom God calls to be Pastors to his people; and that there is every way, a great reward in so doing. But I greatly doubt if it is the best way to accomplish this important end, either to throw the door wide open, and invite all to enter, that those we need may come in with them; or to cultivate the idea, as is constantly done, that God calls a very great majority of his ministers from this class, and to talk as if he called few or none from any other; or to proceed as if it were not an immense evil for men to find entrance, who are not called of God—or as if it were not a fearful calamity to weaken, in such poor youths as are called of him, the spirit which leads them to struggle for self-support; or to set aside, virtually, the tribunals of God's house, in any part of the work of training and settling ministers of the word; or to train them, because they are of this class, in any respect differently from other candidates. It is easy for us to multiply ministers of the Gospel; but it is impossible for us to multiply such as are called of God. This is the great truth which men are ready to neglect—to deride. And the results of every attempt which we can make, in disregard of it, must always be disastrous. We may supplant a ministry called of God from all classes, by a ministry raised up by ourselves from a single class; but have we thereby added anything but a principle of disorder, an element of disease?"

These views have a terrible sweep, and we ask our readers to ponder them well. It is unnecessary to state that Dr. Bæckinridge could have designed no reflection upon poor young men. His Master had not where to lay His head, and it is to the poor, rich in faith, that the most precious consolations of the Gospel are directed. But no one will venture to affirm that none others are called into the ministry, or that temptations should be multiplied to these to deceive their own hearts. His remarks are directed against a system which aims mainly at the poor, and which he believes to be full of mischief. The practical lesson is that instead of sounding a trumpet and hunting in the high-ways and hedges for those whom God has called — instead of pressing upon the consciences of boys to examine themselves with a view to be ascertained whether or not God has chosen them for the ministry, we should wait till God sends them to us, and then thoroughly scrutinize their claims. We are to be earnest in prayer for an increase of labourers, and when God answers us He will make the answer plain to those who are sent and to us who pray. None have a right, in the first instance, to deal with the consciences of others upon this subject but God Himself. We may devote our children to the Lord as Hannah devoted the son of her prayers; but this should be a solemn, secret transaction between our own souls and the Almighty. The call to our children is not to come through us — it is the Eternal Spirit who impresses it on the heart, and He knows all who are His.

We are satisfied that the whole system of urging, as it is called, the claims of the ministry upon the minds of the young is inconsistent with just and scriptural views of its nature and duties. To preach the Gospel is a privilege, a distinction, and it has consequently claims upon no one until he possesses satisfactory evidence that he is entitled to the honour. It is the *call* which makes it his duty — and until the call is made known, there can be no pressure of conscience about it. We might just as much inculcate upon the untitled young men of England that they should prepare to assume the prerogatives of Peers and Knights, before the crown has intimated any intention to promote them, as to press upon any one the claims of the ministry before God has intimated His purpose to call. The effect of just views

would be to make us pray more and contrive less, depend upon God, and trust nothing in machinery. We should look to the Lord and not to societies — and we might consequently expect a ministry of power and not of caste. What we want is faith in God, and it is simply because we *are afraid* to confide in the Lord that we resort to manifold expedients of our own devising to supply the waste places of Zion. We apprehend that the ministry will die out, lest we recruit it — and in our blindness and weakness and fear, we take God's work into our own hands.

The direction of our Saviour was plain and pointed. "PRAY ye therefore the Lord of the Harvest," — it is not to seek ministers here and there, to persuade this man, that man or the other to take the subject into serious consideration — not to offer bribes to enter the sacred office — it was not in any wise to look to ourselves or to depend upon man — but "PRAY ye the LORD of the harvest." It is His privilege to provide labourers, your duty is to ask for them; it is His prerogative to give them.

Dr. Breckinridge complains of the Seminaries that they do not correct the evils inherent in the system by which they are replenished; but it strikes us that the remedy should be sought in the church courts. A proper vigilance on the part of Pastors, Sessions and Presbyteries, the prevalence of sound principles upon the whole subject of the ministry, and a persevering refusal in any case to ordain sine titulo those who are not to be truly evangelists, would prevent much of the mischief which he so justly deploras. The Seminaries are nothing and can be nothing but what the church courts may choose to make them, if these courts are faithful to themselves and faithful to God. It ought not to be a matter of course, that a young man who has completed the curriculum of study prescribed in the Seminary is licensed by the Presbytery—his call and gifts should be as thoroughly scrutinized as if they had undergone no scrutiny before. To take the endorsement of the theological Professors as a sufficient proof of his fitness for the office is a criminal neglect of its own duties.

In justice to Dr. Breckinridge we feel bound to insert the closing paragraph in the discussion of the first point in his sermon, the exclusive prerogative of God to call into the ministry:

“Having thus spoken, I ought to add, that while I solemnly believe that the methods now in use touching beneficiary education for the Gospel ministry are not without great danger, and that the general system of ministerial education is both defective and hazardous; and while I dare not say, that, by these and other means, persons who ought never to have turned their attention to the office of public teachers of religion, may not have been introduced into it,—and that some who may have been truly called of God are not tolerated in systematic covenant breaking, for which they ought to be subjected to discipline; and while there appears to me to be a state of opinion upon the whole subject of a call of God to the Pastor’s office, and the proper modes of ascertaining this and training the person for the work to which he is called, by no means satisfactory: still, it is also my deep and joyful conviction, that through the rich grace of Christ the great body of our ministers are men evidently called of God — and that they would have been a rich blessing to any age of the Christian church. I pray God, and I thus labour, that it may never be otherwise; and I beseech my brethren to bear with a plainness of speech, whose only object is the common good.”

The next point which Dr. Breckinridge discusses is the proofs of a call. “The grand and ultimate fact is, the call of God, and everything else, should be directed merely to the satisfactory ascertainment of this fact, to the best preparation of the person for the work, and to his official investiture upon scriptural grounds.” He states the “first, and indispensable proof of this call of God to be the inward testimony of the man’s own conscience.”

That a supernatural conviction of duty, wrought by the immediate agency of the Holy Ghost is an essential element in the evidence of a true vocation to the ministry seems to us to be the clear and authoritative doctrine of the Scriptures. Men are not led to the Pastoral office, as they are induced to select other professions in life—they are drawn, as a sinner is drawn to Christ, by a mighty, invincible work of the Spirit. The call of God never fails to be convincing. Men are made to feel that a woe is upon them if they preach not the Gospel. It is not that they *love* the work, for often, like Moses, they are reluctant to engage in it — and love, at best, can only render its duties pleasant — it is not that they *de-*

sire the office, though in indulging this desire, they seek a good thing — it is not that they are zealous for the glory of God and burn for the salvation of souls, for this is characteristic of every true believer — nor is it that upon a due estimate of their talents and acquirements they promise themselves more extended usefulness in this department of labour than in any other — for no man is anything in the kingdom of Heaven except as God makes him so — but it is that the word of the Lord is like fire in their bones — they *must* preach it or die — they cannot escape from the awful impression which haunts them night and day, and banishes all peace from the soul until the will is bowed, that God has laid this work upon them at the hazard of their lives.

No man ought to enter the ministry upon mere conjectural grounds. He that doubteth is damned. If there be a calling, in which, at every step in the progress of our labours, we need the conviction that God is with us, that we are in the line of duty prescribed by His own Eternal Spirit, that calling is the ministry of the word. A man ought to have assurance that he is no intruder, before he should dare to assume responsibilities at which an angel might tremble. He should have a commission certified to his own mind from the King of Heaven, before he should venture to announce himself as God's ambassador or Christ's herald. We do not say that his assurance will never be disturbed, or that his mind will never be tossed with doubts — but we will say that he can never preach in peace and comfort and hope, as long as he is troubled about his authority to preach at all. The assurance of a call to the ministry, is like the assurance of our pardon and acceptance — subject to many fluctuations — preserved by faithfulness — dependent on humility and singleness of heart — a source of joy when clear — of agony, when darkened or disturbed. We cannot persuade ourselves that a man who has never had this assurance at all has ever been called of God. We see not how such a man can have the testimony of a good conscience. Conscience supposes light, but in this case, according to the very terms of the supposition, there is no light.

These have long been our fixed and deliberate convictions upon the subject — and we have often lamented that vague calculations of expediency have been, in too many instances, substituted in the place of a divine call. “My

object," says one of the profoundest thinkers of modern times, "my object shall be through life the *greatest good*, and I hold myself, and will ever hold myself, at liberty to seek it in *any line* that appears most promising; and so to change one line for another, when another more advantageous presents itself." A vaguer rule of conduct could not be prescribed—and if this was the secret of Foster's call to the ministry, we can readily understand why his labours, notwithstanding his brilliant talents, were so little blessed of God. Duty must ever be the measure of expediency—and a man can only know in what line he can promote the greatest good, by knowing in what line God has called him to labour. A man may have the zeal of Paul, the eloquence of Apollos, the boldness of Peter, and the meekness of John—he may be adorned with all human gifts and enriched with all human attractions, and yet, if the Lord withhold his blessing, he may preach in vain and prophesy in vain. All the deductions of a cold, utilitarian philosophy will absolutely come to nought. The grand question then is, will God bless? and that question can be satisfactorily answered only by answering another, "has God called." Here conscience, under the guidance of the Spirit, must *first* answer, and until it is prepared to answer in the affirmative, the first step should not be taken in seeking the ministry.

"In every act we can perform on earth, we are entitled to expect before we can be required to perform it, and we are bound to have, before we venture to perform it,—the testimony of a good conscience; and the clearness and force of our conscientious convictions should be analogous to the magnitude, the perplexity, the difficulty, of the contemplated duty. For a man then to presume to be an ambassador for Almighty God, and that touching questions no less awful than the glory of his throne, and the endless states of his rebellious subjects, without a settled conviction in his own soul that this fearful trust is laid on him by the King Eternal—is insane audacity. I say not, he must be convinced he ought to be sent; Moses plead hard against his mission: the conviction must be that he is sent. I say not, he must judge that he is fit to be sent, for no man is fit. I say not that this or the other motive—as many will assert—or any motive at all, beside the simple one of obe-

dience to the voice of the heavenly monitor—should mingle with the inward fixed conviction; nor that this proof, or the other proof—as many will contend—or any proof at all, beside the testimony of consciousness itself, should beget within us this strong assurance that it is God's Spirit which has wrought us for this self same thing. I say not there may not be doubts and perplexities, trials very sore, and temptations of the adversary,—fightings without and fears within, and troubles on every side; for if these things be not, it is either that grace is overwhelmingly abundant, or that Satan judges us to be workmen that he need not fear. Nor do I deny, that like as the kingdom of heaven itself is but as a grain of mustard planted in the broken heart, which must be watered by many a tear, and watched amid long and anxious vigils, as its roots strike down and its branches spread strongly and widely abroad; so this inward testimony of a divine vocation may be a whisper to the soul, almost inaudible in the profoundest stillness of the spirit of man,—lost—restored again—strengthened—repeated—struggling amidst the passions that toss us to and fro, and fighting against the sins that would quench it—following us, if need be, as God followed Jonah, till out of the belly of hell the right of the Almighty Disposer is confessed.”

The testimony of conscience, however, is not final and conclusive. We may deceive ourselves as well as be deceived by others, and to fortify our hearts and diminish the dangers of deception, God has appointed the approbation of his own people and the concurrence of the courts of his house, as additional links in the chain of evidence, which in all ordinary cases, is to authenticate a call from him.

“The grand object of the work of the ministry,” we quote from the sermon, “the grand object of “the work of the Ministry,” divinely announced in the very context before us,—is “the perfecting of the saints”—“the edifying of the body of Christ.” (verse 12.) He who cannot—in his ministry—build up the saints—cannot have from God any part of “the work of the ministry,”—least of all that part to which the preaching of the Gospel appertains. But, beyond all controversy, the saints are the best of all judges whether the ministrations on which they wait fructify them or not. Their call

and their rejection, are therefore alike decisive, so far as the case depends on their testimony. Again, he who cannot, in the work of the ministry, edify the body of Christ, cannot be called of God to that ministry. But, surely, the church must decide for itself whether or not it is edified by the ministrations offered to it. Its decision, therefore, is conclusive, so far as the case depends on its call. It is impossible to escape from this direct testimony of the word of life. It does not follow that every man who could edify the church and build up the saints, is therefore called of God to some public ministry: for to labour after both these precious objects, is in some form or other, the duty of every member of the household of faith. The *positive* testimony of the Christian people, is not therefore conclusive, as I have before shown that two previous testimonies are indispensable. But it is otherwise of its *negative* testimony. Many may have neglected, through ignorance, to seek this trial of their call—who might have obtained its testimony; and it is doubtless this conviction, which justifies us in acting as if their call of God could not be questioned. Many may have obtained it after their ordination; a course, dangerous and irregular, but not therefore fatal. But he who cannot obtain it, seems to me to be shut out of the ministry, by the direct prescriptions of the word of God. Nor am I able to conceive it possible, that any character or amount of proof, can sufficiently attest the divine call of any human being to be a Christian Pastor, if he is unable to obtain this attestation of the Christian people. For how is it possible for us to believe that he has been appointed of God, expressly to perform a particular work, for which nothing but divine grace can fit him; of whom it is made certain that God has not given him the grace needful to the accomplishment of the work?"

The ordinary form, in which the approbation of the Christian people is to be manifested, is through the call of some particular congregation. Our church, in conformity with the example of other Presbyterian churches, has adopted the plan of subjecting candidates for the ministry of the word, to a probationary exercise of their talents and their gifts, in order that "the churches may have an opportunity to form a better judgment respecting the talents of those by whom they are to be instructed and governed"—and no

such probationer can be ordained at all, except upon the call of some particular congregation, or upon the solemn pledge to discharge the functions of an Evangelist in "deserted and frontier settlements." The approbation of God's people is an element in the proof of God's call, which no conscientious man should be willing to relinquish. He should know that he is able to edify the saints, before he undertakes the solemn task. In the case of Evangelists, this proof cannot be directly had—but that office is confessedly extraordinary, and in its privations and sacrifices presents fewer temptations to self-deception than the ordinary work of a Bishop. But, where men are not to become scriptural Evangelists, we do not believe that any court on earth, has a right to ordain them without a reference to some special charge—or that, being ordained, they themselves have a right to act, deliberate and vote in any ecclesiastical judicatory. The thing is contrary to the whole spirit of Presbyterianism—utterly unsupported by the word of God—and directly subversive of a free, representative government. It was unknown to the purest ages of the church—was expressly rebuked and forbidden when it began to be practised—and has wrought nothing but mischief wherever it has prevailed. That such men, ordained without reference to a cure, are not true ministers, we will not venture to assert—but that *they* want, and that the *church* wants, a very important element of the proof, that they are true ministers—that their credentials, in other words, are only partially authenticated, we have no hesitation in affirming. But it may be said, that the church is not a single congregation as the independents represent it to be—but embraces the entire body of believers—that the ministry was given to the church as a whole, and that, therefore, the voice of the whole church, and not of an insulated fragment, is necessary to vouch a divine call—that the action, consequently, of any single congregation, is of no further importance than as giving a minister a right to teach and govern in it. Dr. Breckinridge, in presenting what we conceive to be the scriptural doctrine, concerning the unity of the church and the relation in which the parts stand to the whole, has supplied a complete refutation of this plausible cavil.

"But our received faith is, that into how many parts so-

ever our church may be divided, for convenience sake, or from necessity, either as congregations, or as larger portions; still the whole of these parts constitute but one church. It follows, that all the office bearers who may be more particularly attached to any one portion of this church, are in the same sense, office bearers of the whole body, as the particular part is one portion of the whole; and therefore, the action of any particular portion—as a single congregation—in virtue of which any particular office bearer is set apart, is necessarily taken as decisive of the entire question concerning his vocation, as completely as if the whole body had acted upon every case—which is physically impossible. And this is the more evident, when it is considered, that in the nature of the case, the same principle is applied to every conceivable state of the church, however small it may be, or however great; for each particular congregation is supposed to have every thing which the whole church has; the same officers, the same ordinances, the same kind of powers, derived from the same divine source; every one in all respects like all the rest, and like the whole united into one;—so that if it was possible for the whole church to be met in one place on one occasion, there would be absolutely nothing except a vast increase of what every single congregation should possess. Thus contemplated, we see, not only the evil, but the folly and uselessness of divisions amongst Christians; since the Lord Jesus has erected his church upon such a model as to provide perfectly for its indefinite extension, and at the same time to secure its perfect unity. And when it is considered that the seal which each particular congregation gives by its call, to the vocation of any office bearer in the church, bears with it the highest and the most impressive evidence which can be given of human sincerity—in this—that they take the person to be their teacher, or ruler, or distributor—that they commit their own highest interests into his hands; it is plain that no greater security is possible.”

In regard to the sanction of the Christian people, three theories are conceivable in regard to the form in which it may be expressed. The first may be denominated prelatial—not that it is proposed in so many words by the advocates of prelacy—but it assumes a fundamental principle of that system, touching the relation in which the

rulers stand to the ruled. The Bishop is potentially the church—the voice of the Bishop is consequently its voice—and the act of the Bishop, its act. Any theory which makes the approbation of the ordaining power the putative approbation of God's people—whether that power be a Prelate or a Presbytery, is essentially the same; and any hypothesis which maintains that ministers can be created at large, sustaining an official relation to the whole church, independently of the cure and oversight of any part of it, which makes a call, not an important element in settling the preliminary question, whether the office shall be conferred—but simply the ground of a right to exercise its functions in a particular place—which entitles a man to become a Pastor because he is a minister of the entire church, instead of making him a minister of the entire church because he is a Pastor—any such hypothesis is utterly destructive of a free government. It leads necessarily to monarchy or aristocracy—it makes the people *as such*—as distinct from their rulers, and as putatively represented by them—absolute cyphers, as well in the choice of their masters, as in the administration of the government.

The second theory is that of Independents, who virtually deny a Catholic Church, and limit all offices to single congregations.

The third is the one which we conceive to be developed in our own standards, and which Dr. Breckinridge has so happily illustrated in the preceding extract. In it the unity of the whole and the integrity and perfection of each part are beautifully preserved. Upon this hypothesis the visible church is one body, consisting of many members—and as the motions of the hand, the head, the foot, are the motions of the man, so the healthful and regular action of any single congregation is the action of the universal church. The voice of a part, properly expressed, is the voice of the whole. He who is called by a single congregation, is called by the entire church—he who is supported by a single congregation is supported by the entire church, and he who can edify no congregation, can, under no circumstances, become a shepherd of the Lord's flock. Every pastor is a minister of the whole—his call gives him at once a general office and a special field of labour.

We shall conclude this branch of the subject with the

following note, which occurs on the 29th and 30th pages of the sermon :

“I presume it will hardly be questioned, that it has always been the common doctrine of all foreign Presbyterian churches, that ministers of the word, when they are ordained, ought to be assigned to some particular ecclesiastical charge: nor that it is the received theory of church order amongst them generally, that the moment such a minister is without an ecclesiastical charge, he is without the least right or power to sit in any church court, or exercise any rule in the church, as a minister of the word. A recent and memorable instance illustrates this, in the Church of Scotland. The Rev. Dr. Welsh, who was Moderator of the Scottish Assembly of 1843, and a member of the Free Assembly of 1844, and constituted that body as its presiding officer, at its first meeting; sat in both those Assemblies as a Ruling Elder, by delegation as such; and this, notwithstanding he was one of the Theological Professors in the University of Edinburgh. It is well known that the original Secession under Ebenezer Erskine, and the subsequent one, under Thomas Gillespie, in Scotland, had both, but especially the latter, direct relation to the question of ordaining and inducting Pastors without a real call. Witherspoon, throughout his *Characteristics*, and the *Apology* for that work, every where holds this proceeding as monstrous in itself, and one cause of the corruption of the Church of Scotland; and this same Witherspoon was, more than any other man, the author of our church constitution, under which his name is used to justify what he not only abhorred, but had like to have been deposed for ridiculing and denouncing. In the year 1768 the Secession Church of Scotland decided this question point blank, that McAra, minister at Burntshield, having demitted his charge, and having no charge of any congregation, ought not to sit and judge in any ecclesiastical judicatory, and that his name should be dropped. And in 1773 this decision, upon full consideration, was affirmed upon general grounds, as unquestionable Presbyterian doctrine. (*See McKerrow's History of the Secession Church, p. 546—51, Glasgow, 1841.*) The conclusions and grounds of the Synod are given at large by McKerrow; and I must say, that it affords a singular gratification to me, to find every general principle therein set-

tled, precisely in accordance with all I have contended for, in this country, in regard to the nature of scriptural Presbyterian order; and the offices of Ruling Elder and minister of the word: although I did not know of the existence of McKerrow's book, nor of this important decision of this question, until after my opinions had been several years published."

The last point which Dr. Breckinridge discusses is, "the relation which the question of any man's call to the Pastoral office bears to those who already hold office, of whatever kind, in the church of Christ." He contends that "the final testimony which we want to the fact that we have been Divinely called to preach the everlasting Gospel is that of a Divinely constituted spiritual court, met in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and acting by his authority." Dr. Breckinridge differs from many of his brethren, though not, as we believe, from the word of God, in regard to the essential elements of such a court, and the rights and privileges which pertain to each class of its members in the business of ordination. These points, however, we shall reserve for a future occasion, when we propose to review his speeches before the Synod of Philadelphia.

We hope that our readers will not be satisfied with the rapid and meagre sketch which we have given of this masterly discourse upon a subject of vital interest. We hope that they will procure it, and read it for themselves. The warnings of Dr. Breckinridge are wise and seasonable—and if the principles which he defends are not the doctrines of our standards, we have altogether mistaken their true, and, as it seems to us, obvious import. There are some subordinate matters, not at all affecting the merits of the sermon, in which we cannot concur with the author—such, for example, as the statement on the 22d page, in reference to an extraordinary incident in the experience and ministry of the great Apostle to the Gentiles. It seems to us, that the vision recorded in Acts, xxii: 17—22, took place upon Paul's visit to Jerusalem, immediately after his conversion, and not upon the visit which he made after his return from Arabia. So, again, we doubt whether there is any provision in our constitution, similar to that contemplated in the recent overture to the General Assembly, for the demission of the ministerial office on the part of preach-

ers. But the doctrine of a Divine, supernatural call to the ministry, by the immediate agency of the Holy Ghost—evinced by the testimony of conscience, the approbation of God's people, and the sanction of God's judicatories—we hold to be alike the doctrine of our standards and of the sacred scriptures. Ordinations, *sine titulo*, except in the case of real evangelists, we hold to be irregular, unscriptural, and dangerous—and the right of ministers without charge, to rule God's heritage, we hold to be contradicted by every distinctive principle of Presbyterianism. In these great principles, we express our full and hearty concurrence with the author of the sermon, and we bid him a cordial God-speed in his efforts to spread them.

ARTICLE VII.

CRITICAL NOTICES.

1. *Notes on the Parables of our Lord.* By RICHARD CHENEVIX TRENCH, M. A., *Vicar of Ilchen Stoke, Hants; Professor of Divinity King's College, London; and Examining Chaplain to the Lord Bishop of Oxford.* First American, from the third English edition. New York: D. Appleton and Company. 1847. 8vo., pp. 409.

This truly valuable work on the Parables of the New Testament deserves a more ample notice than our time and limits allow us now to give. In the introductory remarks the learned author first defines the Parable, pointing out the distinction between it and the Æsopic fable, the Mythus, the Proverb, and the Allegory; he next points out the design of our Lord in teaching by parables; then he discusses the true method of interpreting them; and then speaks of the parables not found in the