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Miscellaneous Articles.

CAUSES OF ANXIETY TO YOUNG MEN IN REFERENCE TO THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY.*

THE consideration of some of the CAUSES OF ANXIETY TO YOUNG MEN AND CANDIDATES, who think of entering upon the work of the ministry, may result in good to all who are called upon to consider the subject. The discussion must be necessarily brief, and in the nature of hints and suggestions, rather than of a full and exhaustive exhibition of the topics brought to notice.

I. THE WANT OF SUFFICIENT PIETY often painfully affects the mind and conscience of an ingenuous youth, in contemplating the Christian ministry as his vocation. Such a consideration may well lead to jealous self-examination and importunate prayer. All the aims of the ministry, its sources of strength, its duties, its consolations, its rewards, are spiritual in their nature. The highest religious qualifications are demanded in an office which concerns the souls of men and the glory of God. The Church can never be sufficiently awake to the necessity of earnest piety in her ministers. Nor can her ministers and candidates ever deplore enough their moral deficiencies, or prostrate themselves in sufficient humiliation before the throne of grace.

On the other hand, it is possible for the plea of "insufficient religion" to degenerate into morbid sensibility, or into impatience with the Divine methods in the sanctification of sinners. The conscientious student, who truly laments his low attainments of piety, may derive some relief from meditations like the following.

1. Imperfection belongs to all human instrumentality. God

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"knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." (Ps. 103 : 14.) "Who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Cor. 2 : 6.) The very nature of the ministerial office is a perpetual plea for the penitent acknowledgment of the personal unworthiness of its administrators, and for the most diligent efforts, on their part, to become more conformable to the likeness of Christ. The ministry is not supplied by the saints in light, or by angels, but by imperfect men.

2. The great requisite of piety is its sincerity. God seeks "truth in the inward parts." (Ps. 51 : 6.) A true desire to become what God would have us to be, goes far to secure higher measures of excellence. Present imperfections are thoroughly undermined by genuine love. Piety has the prospect of vigorous life, when sincerity is ever moving it forward in the ways of Christian experience.

3. Grace is promised to the believer "according to his day." (2 Cor. 12 : 9.) In the midst of trials and temptations, the Lord is ever present to strengthen his servants. He will not forsake those whom he calls to the work of the ministry. "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world" (Matt. 28 : 20), is a specific pledge of help in time of need, and to the end of time.

4. Sanctification is, in its nature, a progressive work. It implies the mortification of sin and the cultivation of holiness. The habits of the new life are developed and strengthened by exercise. The grace of God, which begins the good work in the heart, is able to carry it on unto the end. Sanctification tends to perfection, but is not perfected in the present state. Nevertheless, constant progress is the law of Divine grace, in the human soul. "We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3 : 18.)

It is deserving of remark, in this connection, that, as the mind of the student experiences the expansion of literary discipline and of knowledge, during his preparatory course of study, so his heart has the opportunity of growing into greater maturity of religion. The objection of inadequate piety may be overcome, by Divine grace, in the diligent use of Scriptural means, just as the objection of insufficient mental qualification is overcome by proper diligence in study.

5. There is danger in either extreme,—of self-distrust or of self-confidence. Humility is among the earliest and the latest fruits of piety. A low estimate of our own spiritual condition, if genuine, will lead to a greater dependence upon the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, and thus to increased spiritual vigor. Self-confidence, on the other hand, tends to hardness of heart. The best condition of piety is when lowliness of mind is connected with a firm faith, and when Christian love looks up to God for spiritual aid in the zealous and conscientious discharge of every duty. God dwells in the

hearts of his contrite ones. He "resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." (James, 4 : 6.)

Meditations like these may serve to convince the pious candidate, that notwithstanding his present imperfections, he has great encouragement to thank God and to take courage. There is hope for the gradual and permanent growth of his spiritual graces. He is not, indeed, what he ought to be ; but he may say, "By the grace of God, I am what I am." (1 Cor. 15 : 10.)

If the candidate has any doubt of his piety, he should seek to renew his first love by repentance. (Rev. 2 : 5.) The fact that he has undertaken to lead others into the paths of righteousness, increases his obligations to consecrate himself to the glory of Christ in eminent personal godliness.

II. Another source of anxiety to young men, in their views of the Christian ministry, is THE WANT OF SATISFACTORY EVIDENCES OF A DIVINE CALL TO THE WORK.

A mistake on so vital a point involves the most serious consequences.

1. Let it be distinctly understood that this subject, like others pertaining to the kingdom of grace, has its difficulties. God does not ordinarily grant to his children a degree of illumination that relieves the mind from the process of careful examination. The arduous task of solving probabilities respecting the Divine will, is one of the common conditions of the religious life. Many treatises have been written to define and illustrate the nature of a call to the Gospel ministry.* The views of others are always of use in assisting to form a right judgment. Each student, however, will be compelled to seek the evidences of a call by going directly to the throne of grace for light and guidance. No one has a right to expect exemption from the ordinary trials which encompass the path of believers.

2. The difficulty of discovering God's will is a *test of character*. Were a superficial examination all that was requisite, many might enter the ministry whose motives and qualifications would be soon discovered to be doubtful, or radically deficient. The ways of the Lord are right ways. He proves his children, and tries their hearts. (Deut. 8 : 2.) The perils of the wilderness are the pathway to Canaan. Difficulties are God's tests ; and the Christian ought to be prepared to meet them.

3. Difficulties concerning God's will commonly disappear by patiently *waiting upon him*. The Holy Spirit can alone designate any one to the sacred office ; and of course, the illumination, requisite to satisfy the mind and conscience of the inquirer, must be

* Among these, are treatises by the late Dr. Ezra Fisk, which was republished in the first volume of "Home, School, and the Church;" by Professor Hope, of Princeton College ; by Dr. William Neill ; and by Dr. James Wood, Associate Corresponding Secretary of the Board of Education.

sought from above. The judgment of the Church cannot be substituted for a divine call, any more than its declaration of belief in the piety of an applicant for the communion can supersede the personal conviction of the individual. Every one must be fully persuaded in his own mind. "No man taketh this honour to himself; but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." (Heb. 10 : 3.) Light is given to those who seek it. "To the upright there arises light in darkness." (Ps. 12 : 4.) Importunate prayer never had a clearer place in the private exercises of religion than in reference to our personal duty to the Lord of the harvest. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" is a question, which, if asked in the right spirit, will receive in due time the right answer.

4. The principles, that control the decision of this subject, are not in themselves mysterious, or abstruse. Gifts suitable to the discharge of the duties of the ministry are necessary in every one who seeks the office. "Every office necessarily presupposes the corresponding gift. Man may appoint men to offices for which they have not the necessary gifts; but God never does, any more than he ordains the foot to see, or the hand to hear. . . . The only evidence of a call to an office, is the possession of the requisite gifts. If a man received the gift of prophecy, he was thereby called to be a prophet; or if he received the gift of healing, he was thereby called to exercise that gift. So if any man has received ministerial gifts, he has received a call to the ministry. What those gifts are, the Bible has taught us. They are such as these: soundness in the faith, competent knowledge, ability to teach, the love of Christ and zeal for his glory, an intelligent conviction of an obligation to preach the Gospel, and in short, the qualifications which are necessary in one who is to be an example and guide of the flock of Jesus Christ. The office of the *Church* in the matter is, first to examine whether the candidate for the ministry really possesses ministerial gifts; and then, if satisfied on that point, authoritatively to declare its judgment in the appointed way."*

5. The indistinctness and uncertainty of *early impressions* are not to be regarded as proofs that God does not designate a person to the work of the ministry. There are different modes of procedure in the divine government, but it is "the same Spirit that worketh all in all." (1 Cor. 11 : 21.) An immediate and personal call was given to Andrew and Peter, to James and John. Paul received his commission in a miraculous manner. God ordinarily, at the present day, enforces the claims of the ministry in a mode analogous to the determination of other questions involving responsibility and duty. Some persons have clearer evidences than others; few possess, from the beginning, unequivocal signs of the divine will; all make progress towards clearness of conviction. The mere existence of doubt, at any stage of the inquirer's investigation, especially at its beginning, cannot be interpreted into a divine negative.

* Dr. Hodge's Commentary on 1 Corinthians, 12 : 28.

It is to be feared that many make a fatal mistake at this very point. Not obtaining at once, or readily, a satisfactory view of their duty to serve God in the ministry, they become discouraged, and turn off into secular occupations. A great loss occurs, in this way, to the individual and to the Church through a decision lacking the true elements of heavenly guidance.

Whilst the inquirer must beware of discouragement, he must not, on the other hand, be too easily persuaded to enter upon the ministerial work. Anxious deliberation is due to God, to the Church, and to his own soul. If, after sufficient investigation, he cannot obtain rational evidences of his heavenly Master's call, let him, with all humility and fidelity, go forth to serve Him in some other way. A call to the ministry is, in its nature, positive; it implies a definite and intelligent conviction that it is God's will that the individual should engage in this sacred employment. Where this conviction is absent, no one has a right to preach the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

III. Young men often find difficulties in THE WANT OF PECUNIARY MEANS.

The records of the Church prove the Divine declaration, that "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called;" and that consequently "not many," from these classes, are appointed to the work of the ministry. It is the law of grace and of providence that a large proportion of the ambassadors of Christ should be taken from the humbler walks of life. Our blessed Lord himself was born in a manger. The trials of severe poverty marked his whole Mediatorial career. Let no pious young man be cast down! "It is sufficient for the disciple that he be as his Master." (Luke 10 : 20.)

The Church comes to the aid of her pious youth in their arduous efforts to obtain an education. The systematic benevolence of the people of God can best answer the demands of the case. The Church proceeds on the principle, that it is her *duty*, as well as her *privilege*, to assist in the education of all her meritorious and indigent sons, who seem called of God to the work of the ministry. Her offers of aid are designed to encourage the deserving. Whilst the amount is not large enough to become a temptation, it is not so small as to repel hope. It is, in ordinary cases, a stimulant for the candidate to seek other means, if required, through his own personal agency; either by teaching for a season, by colportage, or by manual labour in agricultural or mechanical pursuits. This timely aid, secured through the Church, in a parental and delicate manner, has encouraged many of her sons to commence the literary preparations of their profession, and has sustained them in all the struggles incident to the life of indigent theological students. It may be remarked, that the *scholarships*, belonging to many of our seminaries and colleges, give increased facilities to those who are aiming at securing an education.

Sometimes a young man, in addition to poverty, is troubled with the embarrassment of *debt*. How shall he obtain his education under this increased pressure of outward trouble? Let him not despair! Others have succeeded, under circumstances equally gloomy and discouraging. God helps those who help themselves. Providence has a deep sympathy with the meritorious poor. Sometimes friends are raised up, in a remarkable manner, to advance the young man's cause. Many incidents are on record for the encouragement of the faith of the truly pious. Hope brightens the way. Industrious exertion finds, in various modes, a pecuniary reward. The occupations, already alluded to, not unfrequently yield ample returns. In cases of emergency, the pastor of the church, or other Christian friends, may find it in their power to secure relief in a special manner. Although the pressure of debt may be severe, the call of God to the work of the ministry can make rough places smooth. Where He has a will, He has a way.

In addition to poverty and debt, it may happen that a young man is the *support of his widowed mother* and sisters, or stands in such a relation to the family that his absence cannot be readily supplied. Still, let him not despair! If his course seem dark for the present, he can wait for future developments. Prayer is a mighty instrumentality before God. And, in connection with prayer, the efforts of persevering industry have many promises. Who can tell how soon a change of outward affairs, however trivial at first, may result in bringing the required aid? Where a whole family are united in the laudable and pious design of promoting the education of a son or brother, it is impossible to calculate the contingencies which may crown, under God, their united exertions. Not unfrequently a widowed mother has moved her family to the place where her son was about to pursue his studies, with a view to sustain the household more readily by taking boarders, or by washing and sewing. A young man may, indeed, feel a reluctance to tax a beloved mother or sister, on his own account. But a change of residence might often be for their own benefit, too. And if he should fear that the proposal for himself to study for the ministry (involving as it might, temporarily, some additional self-denial to his mother and sisters), may be unwelcome, he will probably find, on opening to them his whole heart, that many a prayer had been offered to "the Lord of the harvest" to send him into the ministry, and that they were willing cheerfully to do anything to promote that end. Besides, an educated minister, after he has entered upon his profession, often secures a higher ability to aid his mother, and sisters, and younger brothers, and to advance in many ways their temporal welfare. There is, in reality, a bright side to the most gloomy cases.

It may be affirmed that no young man of true piety and of the requisite talents need be discouraged from looking forward to the ministry, simply because he is destitute of this world's goods. The

manner in which God has provided for the education of indigent candidates, by the contributions of the Church, by individual benevolence, and by the blessing of his providence upon the exertions of the candidates themselves, furnishes a grand volume of encouragement to all who are called to preach the riches of his grace.

IV. **ADVANCED AGE** causes anxiety to some, who might otherwise contemplate the work of the ministry with great interest and delight.

The period most suitable for entering upon this work, is not easily ascertained. Doubtless, the general rule, as determined by Providence, fixes the period at the age of about twenty-five or thirty years. Extreme cases must be settled by their own peculiar circumstances. Many a young man has commenced his classical studies at the age of twenty; and, allowing six or seven years for the completion of his course, has entered the ministry at the age of twenty-six or seven.

The question is not so much of age as of character, of mental and moral acquisition, and of prospective usefulness. If there are some disadvantages, in beginning later in life, there are also some compensations; such as stability of character, a better knowledge of human nature, prudence, an appreciation of the necessity and advantages of diligence, a more practical readiness to enter upon the duties of the profession, &c. Many, who graduate early from colleges, are tempted to commence their ministry too soon. Being novices, they are exposed to peculiar temptations; and not unfrequently their character receives an injury from which it never recovers.

It deserves to be remembered that our blessed Lord commenced his ministry in the maturity of life. The sacred record says: "And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age." Luke, 3: 23. This fact may, at least, serve to encourage the heart of a devoted Christian, whose chief embarrassment, in examining the question of duty, arises from his being advanced in years, beyond the ordinary period of commencing the preparatory studies.

The Presbyterian Church presents many examples of useful and distinguished ministers, who were licensed and ordained comparatively late in life. William Tennent, Sen., the founder of the famous Log College, entered the ministry at the age of thirty-one. Charles Beatty, another of the fathers, at the age of twenty-seven. Samuel Porter, one of the pioneers of Western Pennsylvania, was licensed at the age of twenty-nine; James Turner, one of the most distinguished preachers of Virginia in his day, at the age of thirty-two; the great pioneer of Kentucky, David Rice, at the age of twenty-nine; Thaddeus Dod, another pioneer of Western Pennsylvania, at the age of thirty-five; Stephen B. Balch, of Maryland, at the age of thirty-two; Moses Hoge, of Virginia, at the age of twenty-nine; John Matthews, of Indiana, at the age of twenty-

nine. Multitudes of examples might be added of the present generation of ministers; but these are sufficient. No one should be prevented from entering the ministry, because his age at that interesting period is thirty years, or a little upwards.

Other elements sometimes enter into the question, which make it comparatively of less difficult solution. For example, when a person has already graduated at a college, and acquired the requisite intellectual discipline, he is free from many of the embarrassments which perplex the decision of a person who has never received an education. On the other hand, there are cases where so much maturity of mind and of character has been acquired, without the discipline of the collegiate course, that the Presbytery has dispensed with the usual classical examination, and admitted the candidate to licensure after a term of theological study. These suggestions are made, not in a spirit of disparagement towards the wise and more natural system of procedure prevalent in our Church, but simply with a view to relieve the minds of otherwise competent persons, whose chief anxieties and difficulties centre upon their more advanced years.

V. *ILL HEALTH* often interposes serious obstacles to a young man, whose heart is moved to devote himself to the work of the ministry.

The frail tabernacle of the body presents many real impediments, as well as temptations, to the soul throughout this mortal life. Diseases are providential allotments which demand consideration in the determination of a profession. To a young man, who is troubled with thoughts of bodily health, as an obstacle to his entering the ministry, a few questions, like the following, may be of service.

(1.) As to the nature of your disease, is it chronic or otherwise?

(2.) May your ill health be traced to causes that can, with the blessing of God, be removed? Such as imprudent habits of diet, want of exercise, undue exposure, a vicious indulgence, &c. A physician once told one of our eminent ministers, that he might enjoy excellent health, if he would discontinue the use of tobacco.

(3.) Is your bodily trouble of such a kind as to interfere, in a special manner, with preparation for the ministry, and with the discharge of its duties; or does it present impediments to usefulness in the other learned professions?

(4.) Do you ever detect, in the examination of your heart, a readiness to lay more stress upon the plea of ill health than circumstances really justify?

(5.) Have you consulted a physician on the subject?

Questions like these, and the application of other serious and searching tests, may perhaps lead to the extenuation of the evil complained of, so far as to allow, at least, an experiment in favour of the ministry. A few other considerations are here added.

1. Ill health, being an inheritance of our fallen nature, may overtake us at any period. No man is secure against the encroach-

ments of disease and death. Providence may bring bodily afflictions at any time, and in any profession. There is too great a tendency to overlook the care of God over our health and lives. If we had more faith, we would be less timid, and would find that we could perform more labour.

2. Ministers, as well as persons in other professions, can, to some extent, adapt their labours to their infirmities. There is so much room for prudence, and with prudence so much can be accomplished, that even invalids may derive encouragement in the work of the ministry. The great thing is to take care of our health as well as we can, and do our duty.

3. It is possible, in regard to health, to be too careful, and thus overdo good general rules. Dr. Alexander used to say, "Young gentlemen, be careful of your health, but not too careful." Some men are proverbially hypochondriacs, and take an exaggerated view of every bodily ailment. Others, who have no disease, are prone to an excessive watchfulness over their health and lives. Men of the world, of feeble frames, often submit to great privations in their plans of aggrandizement and worldly enterprise. Let not the plea of bodily infirmity too easily terrify the Christian from the discharge of active duty, in the work of saving souls from death.

4. The ministry has been successfully prosecuted, in many instances, under circumstances of great bodily infirmity. *Calvin* was a man of delicate constitution, often confined to his bed, and harassed with pain; and yet his labours exceeded those of most men, both in number and extent. *Philip Doddridge*, the smallest and weakest of babes, was all his lifetime subject to the bondage of disease, but never to that of idleness, despondency, or unemployed time. *Richard Baxter* lived in an emaciated body, and, to use his own expression, with "one foot in the grave;" but he lived a long life, preaching with energy and fire, and writing tomes of ponderous size, as though his hands and nerves were of iron. *Jonathan Edwards* possessed a feeble constitution, and was troubled with disease during the greater part of his life; but who, in this country, preached more, or wrote more, or did more, than he? These are, indeed, illustrious instances of the triumph of the soul over an infirm body; but every one can probably find, within the circle of his own observation, examples of ministerial usefulness under the pressure of much bodily infirmity.

One of the most remarkable cases that has perhaps occurred in our own generation, is that of the Rev. *D. J. Auld*, M.D., of Florida, who departed this life during the present ecclesiastical year. He was frequently afflicted with bronchitis; he was subject to attacks of rheumatism, so as often to be compelled to use crutches; he was a confirmed dyspeptic; his eyesight would sometimes fail him, so as to prevent the discernment of objects; he was scarcely ever free from pain; and was, for a period, liable to attacks of sudden prostration, in which he would fall down in the pulpit and

remain unconscious for several minutes. Although a diseased man during the whole of his ministerial life, he was always at his work. In summer, it was his custom to preach three times on the Sabbath, besides lecturing on Thursday evening. When he took missionary tours, he would send out his appointments for every night. At Tallahassee, which was the last place of his settlement in the ministry, he preached in the morning and at night, and frequently rode ten miles to conduct an afternoon service. The last time he preached the death-chill was upon him. He was a godly, eloquent, useful man; and, if he had been permitted to enjoy good health, it is affirmed that he would have equalled, in popular impression and effective pulpit powers, the most distinguished ministers in the Church.

Here, again, a disclaimer must be interposed. These remarks are by no means intended to deny that ill health may not be a just ground for abandoning all thoughts of entering the ministry. Such cases undoubtedly exist. The object is simply to prevent a too discouraging view of physical infirmity, and to enter a plea for caution against a too precipitate decision.

Perhaps it is more necessary to warn students who are in good health, than to encourage those who are in feeble health. Many fall victims to careless habits, and recklessly impair their constitution. Hard mental labour does not necessarily weaken the body. With proper attention to diet, sleep, cleanliness, exercise, interchange of studies, &c., a diligent student may even increase his physical vigour. This whole subject demands the serious consideration of all candidates for the ministry, and of ministers.

VI. DEFECTIVENESS OF EARLY EDUCATION causes much anxiety among a class of persons, who feel moved to consider their duty in reference to the ministry.

The Presbyterian Church has always insisted upon a high standard of literary acquirement preparatory to entering upon the duties of the sacred office. The literary qualifications, which have been stigmatized with the epithet of "book learning," are of the highest use in the discharge of the duties of the ministry. Their true value and power consist in resources of mental cultivation; in "thoroughly furnishing the man of God unto every good work," in making him wise in winning souls; and in causing him to approximate to the qualifications of the great model Teacher.

A defective early education is a serious impediment. If all the candidates for the ministry in the Presbyterian Church had pursued their education, through its various stages, at the regular period, an immense gain would have accrued to their capacity of influence and usefulness. No full compensation can ever be made for early neglect.

This very sense of deficiency, however, is a stimulant to exertion which often results in satisfactory and even eminent attainments.

Lateness in the time of commencing classical and other studies, although disadvantageous in comparison with an earlier period, ought not to discourage any one, who, in other respects, possesses the scriptural gifts for the ministerial office. Perseverance can do great things in study. If there be first, a determined purpose, and then a steady industry in its pursuit, great progress may be reasonably and certainly expected in the acquisition of knowledge. "What men want is not talent, it is purpose; in other words, not the power to achieve, but the will to labour." The mind, under such circumstances, sometimes develops itself with remarkable rapidity, and makes, in a short time, surprising attainments. As an ordinary result, the individual will find difficulties disappearing in his course; a foundation laid for future progress; and the way gradually opened for the mental cultivation and discipline, so important in this great profession.

If the appeal be made to facts, it will be found that, in the Providence of God, the defects of early education have often been superseded by high mental acquisitions. The annals of our Church furnish numerous examples of useful and even eminent ministers, who commenced their studies late in life. Joseph Smith, who established one of the first classical academies west of the Alleghanies, graduated from college at the age of twenty-eight. Thaddeus Dod, his fellow-labourer in the ministry and in classical education, did not enter college until he was thirty-one years old. Dr. Robert Cooper graduated at the age of thirty-one; and Dr. John King, the fourth Moderator of the General Assembly, entered college at the age of twenty-five. Dr. Jonas Coe graduated when he was thirty years of age. The celebrated William Graham, of Liberty Hall, Va., graduated at the age of twenty-eight. Dr. James Hall, of N. C., was twenty-six years old, when he commenced the study of the classics, and graduated at the age of thirty-one. James Dunlap, the first President of Jefferson College, graduated at the age of twenty-nine. Are not these instances sufficient to give encouragement to a mind, troubled with the thought of early neglect, and yet moved with the high purpose of preaching the Gospel of Christ?

VII. Young men are sometimes troubled with the thought, that they HAVE ALREADY SELECTED, OR ENTERED UPON, THEIR PROFESSION IN LIFE, and thus feel that they are precluded from the office of the ministry. It is unwise either to exaggerate, or depreciate, a difficulty. Let it have its full force. Is the difficulty in question an insurmountable one?

When Christ gives the call, obstacles disappear. Were not Peter and Andrew engaged in their selected worldly occupation when Christ called them into his service? Did not James and John, in like manner, cease to catch fish in order that they might become fishers of men? Did not Levi, the publican, rise up from the receipt of custom to become a preacher of righteousness? The mere

antecedent choice of another manner of life, by no means settles, as a matter of course, the question of continuing in it.

God does not call men into the ministry because they cannot be successful in other business. A man may, on the contrary, be highly successful as a lawyer, a merchant, a physician, a farmer, or a mechanic, and yet it may please God to bring him into the ministry. The opprobrious idea that a young man may study for the sacred office because he is unfit for anything else, has scarcely any favour, at the present time, even among the profane. The very talents that constitute an eminent divine, or a useful pastor, would, if exercised in a secular profession, lead to riches and honour. On the other hand, a person who is successful in business, shows a tact and aptitude, which may become available, in providence, in the Christian ministry.

Habits of business do, in fact, yield important helps to those who afterwards pursue the ministerial profession. It is a common remark that theological students are in danger of becoming too recluse. From early life shut up in the walls of an institution of learning, they acquire scholastic tastes and habits, which often impede their usefulness. The engagements of secular life bring men into contact with the world; they necessitate the cultivation of social intercourse; they tend to the acquisition of self-discipline and energy; they stimulate to thoughtful plans and enterprises; and in many ways assist in the development of excellent mental and moral traits. It is, therefore, no disadvantage to the future minister that he has, for a few years, practised medicine, or been engaged at the bar, or been brought by some other occupation, into contact with the world.

A considerable number of the most useful ministers of the Presbyterian Church have been led, under God, to abandon their previously chosen professions. *Dr. James P. Wilson*, of Philadelphia, practised law with a high degree of success. *Dr. Nelson*, of Missouri, was an eminent physician. *Dr. Nevins*, of Baltimore, and *Dr. Winchester*, of Natchez, gave up the prospect of worldly aggrandizement in secular life, for the purpose of preaching the Gospel of Christ. Scores of the living, as well as of departed ministers have changed their once favourite professions for the higher opportunities of serving God in the ministry of reconciliation. It has always been a matter of common experience with those who have entered the ministry under these circumstances, that their former course of life contributed materially to their future usefulness in their new profession.

The idea that a person may never change his profession implies, to some extent at least, that he made no mistake in his original choice. But man is liable to be deceived in his motives and his conscience. Infallibility is one of the last attributes to be claimed by human nature. Besides, circumstances may alter cases. Especially (and without which change the ministry is out of the question),

the Spirit of the Lord may have renewed the heart and brought salvation through the blood of Christ. New responsibilities, new relations, new qualifications, are thus produced, which render dutiful the reconsideration of the question, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

If a religious person, who has already selected a secular profession, should ask why God should have allowed him to enter upon it, and afterwards to change it for the sacred profession, several answers may be given, of which, one or more may find a personal application.

1. One of the objects of Providence may have been to *punish* the individual, for not examining the question more fully at the proper time; or, perhaps, for never asking God at all for light on the profession He would have him follow; or, perhaps, for not yielding to the call of the Spirit, when the conscience was aroused to obedience, but refused. Surely these new anxieties, which now give so much pain and inconvenience, are not to be excluded altogether from the category of retribution for some offence against God.

2. Another design of Providence may have been to give an expression of *love* in better preparing the individual for the work of the ministry. Can no tendencies of this nature be discerned in the retrospect of the past? The previous knowledge, for example, acquired in secular pursuits, is often of as much practical value as scholarship.

3. Another object may have been to render *more clear the evidences of a call*. The individual might otherwise have often been troubled with doubts and perplexities on this point. But, now, God has led him in a way that he knew not of; and the very strangeness of the Divine dealings may have a power of impression, a distinctness of urgency, a revelation of light, which produce a very clear conviction of the path of duty.

4. A deeper test of *sincerity* may have been a design of Providence. In his former circumstances of life, the individual may have had comparatively little to test his devotion to God in entering the ministry. But, after a profession has been chosen, a comfortable home provided for one's family, and a lucrative and useful professional career been entered upon, a new and severer test of sincerity is established, which may secure the highest moral purposes.

5. Moreover, Providence may have had in view the *conferring of some outward good* of great value in the new calling. Perhaps health has been secured; or the possession of a suitable partner in life been brought about in the wonderful methods of Providence; or sufficient pecuniary means been realized, to render a course of study free from care.

In short, God may have the wisest reasons, although utterly unknown, and never to be disclosed in this life, for bringing before

many of his servants, already engaged in secular pursuits, the solemn question, whether it is not their duty to enter the ministry.

Persons whose consciences are aroused to consider a change in their profession, may bring their inward convictions to tests like the following: *First*. Have these convictions existed at previous intervals? If so, there is a greater probability that God has a gracious design in sending them again. *Secondly*. If these convictions are strongest during the most religious frames of mind, their testimony claims the greater weight. *Thirdly*. Are these convictions growing convictions, continued and not transient, increasing in power so as to produce dissatisfaction with the profession already chosen, and to burden the mind with trouble and anxieties? Then the evidence becomes still more decisive.

The present great revival of religion has brought into the Church, by the mercy of God, a large number of professional and other men, to whom the question of entering the ministry is fairly presented for serious consideration. May the Spirit graciously lead all such to adopt right views of duty!

VIII. THE SCANTY SALARIES OF MINISTERS may sometimes discourage a young man, in thinking of the office.

Unfortunately, alas! the Church does not set a sufficient value upon ministerial services, and often fails to offer a full pecuniary support to the minister and his family. But, after all, the question of preaching Jesus Christ is to be *decided by high motives*. "Have I a call from the Spirit?" and not "whether my temporal support will be precarious?" is the proper view before the mind. "Am I qualified for this great work?" and not "whether my salary is likely to be small?" is the grand inquiry of an anxious heart. The office of the ministry must be accepted or rejected, by the highest motives which move a new-born soul.

Let it be remembered that *the purer the motives, the clearer are the evidences of a call*. The man who looks away from the things of time into the face of his divine Master, will be more likely to receive light, than one who often turns away to the elements of the world. Suppose that a person had the certainty of obtaining a large salary; might not the temptation arising from this assurance, interpose great trouble, in the way of the conscientious examination of duty? The engagements of the ministry must be assumed upon grounds that do not leave sincerity in doubt. Clear evidences of a call are less likely to be obtained, where mixed or secular motives are allowed too great freedom of range, or power of impression.

Besides, God has *absolutely promised to take care of his faithful servants*. He has made provisions for the support of the ministry, which rarely fail of their object. They who preach the Gospel, shall live of the Gospel: 1 Cor. 9:14. Absolute want rarely overtakes the faithful preacher of the Lord Jesus Christ. The

Divine arrangements for the ministerial office imply temporal, as well as spiritual care. There is surely encouragement for the exercise of faith, in regard to the things of this life, as well as the things of the life to come. Can a young man put his trust in God for the inward supply of needed grace through the Spirit, and distrust his heavenly Father concerning inferior things?

The people of God must walk by faith. Their heavenly Father will not leave them to perish with hunger or want, in the path of duty. Ministers with even small salaries are, moreover, better supported than the mass of mankind. Thirty thousand volunteers went into the Mexican war, at eight dollars a month and a quarter of section of land; and shall the soldiers of the Cross fear to enlist on low wages? Was there ever a minister, to whom God did not give as much as, in His infinite wisdom, He saw to be enough?

IX. THE OPPOSITION OF RELATIVES AND FRIENDS occasionally presents obstacles to a young man in his endeavours to enter the ministry.

Great deference is always to be paid to the opinions of parents and guardians. They who are set over us in the Lord, possess a natural authority, which, within proper limits, claims obedience, and always respectful consideration. A conflict with the supreme power in a family usually presents an undutiful appearance, and ought, if possible, to be avoided.

A little *patience and delay* will, in most cases, remove obstacles. Nothing is more winning and conciliatory than a meek and quiet spirit. Few parents, or friends, are so unreasonable as to persist in opposing a young man's conscientious convictions of duty in the choice of his profession. This is more especially the case, in regard to the Christian ministry. There is a power in God's claims upon the heart which, when urged by the consistent example of a holy life, rarely fails to disarm opposition, and to gain for conscience the liberty of following its dictates. Right and truth commonly secure victory in the end.

Trials of this nature lead to *fervent and persevering* prayer. The obstacles, which God places at the entrance of the Christian ministry, are designed to mature and to discipline the character. Parental opposition should lead to searching self-examination. Perhaps the opposition has its rise in pure but mistaken motives; but, even if it be of an unreasonable kind, and spring from enmity to the office and the work of the ministry, still it should arouse our spiritual activity in appeals to God for its removal, and in earnest efforts for its sanctification to our own growth in grace.

Finally, if the conflict be a direct one, between obedience to God and obedience to man, the safety is *in coming out on the Lord's side*. However painful the struggle, whatever temporal losses may be incurred, and however severe the self-denial and humiliation, it is best not to "confer with flesh and blood," but meekly and firmly

to follow the convictions of the Spirit in preparing for the sacred office. If "a man's foes are those of his own household," the consolations of Christ will more than compensate for every trial. "Verily, I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come, life everlasting."

X. THE WANT OF NATURAL ABILITY is sometimes presented as a reason against studying for the ministry. Perhaps it would be well, were this plea of disqualification more frequently entertained. The misfortune is that those who do not possess the mental ability requisite for the office, rarely feel their own deficiency.

A modest man, anxious under a sense of moderate mental capacity, may justly be encouraged by the remark, that his *mind may possess more strength* than the estimate, formed of it by himself, might imply. The judgment of friends is often more reliable than our own. Where their judgment concurs with an individual's own sense of deficiency, it ought to be regarded as final. The office undoubtedly demands, in itself, the highest mental resources that can be obtained; but it condescends to accept the offer of moderate intellectual powers, especially when there is the counterbalancing element of common sense and good judgment.

It is deserving of remark, that *ability often develops itself*, by a course of study, in quite an unexpected manner. A dull youth often makes good progress, and even surpasses in attainment those who were brighter at the beginning. "Slow but sure" is no unpromising sign in a scholar. Sir William Jones, when a youth, was chid for dulness by his teacher. Nothing daunted, but on the contrary, stimulated, the young boy soon became the pride of Harrow, and at length the greatest oriental scholar of his age. Education often develops the faculties in a manner far beyond their original mental promise.

In the work of the ministry, *holiness of heart* compensates for the want of shining talents. In fact, no gift has the lustre of a grace. Many a young man, of fervent spirit and devoted piety, accomplishes far more in his Master's cause, than one whose superior literary qualifications are unaccompanied by the same religious zeal. John Flavel has said, "No gifts, no duties, no natural endowments, will evidence a right in heaven; but the least measure of true holiness will secure heaven to the soul. As holiness is the soul's best evidence for heaven, so it is a continued spring of comfort and of well-doing in the way thither. The purest and the sweetest pleasures in this world are the results of holiness. Till we come to live holily, we never live comfortably. Heaven is epitomized in holiness. And, to say no more, it is the peculiar mark by which God hath visibly distinguished his own from other men. Ps. 4: 3, 'The Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself.'

As if he had said, This is the man, and that the woman, to whom I intend to be good forever : this is a man for me. O holiness, how surpassingly glorious art thou !”

There can be no doubt that an eminent degree of holiness goes far to render acceptable the services of a minister of comparatively moderate intellectual endowments. One of its great advantages is that it is connected with *mental illumination in spiritual things*. The discernment of piety surpasses that of genius. A minister, who is earnestly devoted to God in his work, and is “mighty in the Scriptures,” possesses a capacity for dealing with the souls of men which one of inferior spiritual illumination can never equal by superior learning. And besides this, as all success comes from God, the man of devoted piety and of fervent prayer is in the way of securing greater blessings upon his labours. Dr. Alexander once remarked that he never knew of an earnest, devoted minister, with good common sense, who failed to do well in the ministry, even though his talents were of a moderate order.

God provides, in his providence, a place for every one whom he calls to the work of the ministry. The field varies as much as the mental character of ministers. Where the highest grade of service cannot be obtained, the people learn to appreciate that which is comparatively inferior. How many destitute settlements, and feeble churches, would remain for years without the preaching of the Word, if God did not send to them men, well adapted to this self-denying work, although incompetent to occupy more responsible stations. “Depend upon it, if the minister be truly called, and faithful to his calling, the Spirit will make the most of him. Whether as a natural orator he be a good or bad specimen, musical or harsh, graceful or awkward, brilliant or dim, deep or superficial, ideal or unideal, pathetic or not, he will be sure to be good and useful ; and whether the world will hear him or not, the true Church, the spiritually discerning Church, will always regard it as a privilege and blessing to sit under his ministry ; and even the world shall be constrained to confess that there is something about him which art can neither imitate nor equal.”

Whilst the standard of ministerial qualification needs to be raised higher and higher, Providence does not exclude from the service those who are not eminent in mental endowments.

XI. Young men, BORN IN AN OBSCURE AND LOW CONDITION, are sometimes discouraged from looking forward to the work of the ministry.

The ministry, as has been already stated, has never sought its distinctions in high genealogies. Our blessed Lord was lowly born ; and his apostles were called—many of them—from the most ordinary occupations and positions in life. In all ages of the Church, the supply of the ministry has been chiefly from the middle and poorer classes of society. “Pauperism is a very different thing

from poverty—which in itself is neither dishonourable nor demoralizing. A poor man is by no means of necessity a pauper. An honest, hard-working mechanic or labourer, may be as truly independent and as worthy of respect as the man of wealth. His straitened means may serve only to call out all the latent energy and strength of his nature; and thus often one who is poor becomes more truly a MAN than if he were rich. There is a poverty which invigorates both body and mind, which teaches the virtues of frugality and economy, and which leads to hardy industry."

The true dignity is in being *born again*. There is a spiritual genealogy which traces ancestry up to the King of heaven, and ennobles character with the wealth and titles of worth. The graces of religion, more than the adventitious circumstances of this life, give true position to a man whom Providence destines to usefulness.

Education comes to the aid of the lowly. It not only trains the mind to an equality of ability and privilege, but it polishes the manners, refines the language, purifies the taste, and qualifies to take rank in the most prominent spheres of employment.

All professions find, in the children of the obscure, some of their brightest ornaments. A hundred years ago, there lived a poor boy in the city of Oxford, whose business was to clean the boots of the students in the University. This lad became, in the providence of God, the eloquent *George Whitefield*, who preached salvation to thousands on two continents. *Nathaniel Bowditch* was born of obscure parents, and in low circumstances. On account of poverty he wore his summer clothes to school one winter, and became the laughing stock of the scholars. When only eleven or twelve years of age he was apprenticed to a shoemaker, who allowed him a slate and pencil on his bench, and he rose, in the appointed time and way, to be the renowned mathematician. *Benjamin Franklin* was the son of a tallow-chandler, born to penury, but destined to be a philosopher, and to stand before kings. *Sir John Copley*, a Lord Chancellor of England, was the son of a Boston portrait-painter. *Hugh Miller* worked for several years as a stone-mason. *Virgil's* father was a potter. *Luther* was the son of a poor miner, and *Zwinglius* of a shepherd. *Bunyan* was a tinker. *Columbus* was the son of a weaver, and *Milton* of a scrivener. *Bloomfield*, *Gibbon*, *Gifford*, *Linnaeus*, *Dr. Carey*, and *Roger Sherman*, were shoemakers. *Cowley* was the son of a grocer, *Pope* of a linen-draper, *Collins* of a hatter, *Beattie* and *Butler* of farmers, and *Akenside* and *Henry Kirke White* of butchers. *Jeremy Taylor* was the son of a barber, *John Hunter* a carpenter, and *Scott*, the commentator, was a shepherd.

A lawful and honest occupation brings honour to any man. According to an ancient custom in Prussia, which obliges all the princes of the royal family to learn a trade, the *Prince Frederic William*, recently married to the Princess Royal of England,

learned the trade of a compositor in the printing office of Mr. Haul, at Berlin. Was there anything disparaging in this?

"Honour and shame from no condition rise;
Act well your part: there all the honour lies."

No man's outward condition keeps him from the work of saving souls. If God has put it in his heart to enter the ministry, the Church bids him a welcome to the office, whether high or low, rich or poor, polished or uncouth. Providence will take care of him, and give him the qualifications, internal and external, to fulfil the duties of his calling.

XII. Another thought, calculated to repress and discourage an ingenuous youth in his meditations about the ministry is, that IT IS TOO VAST A PROFESSION.

Certainly the ministry is a profession of immense magnitude, of fearful responsibility. Even Paul could not contemplate it without bemoaning his insufficiency. Angels could not fill it in their own strength. To preach salvation by Jesus Christ, is the greatest work in the universe. Well may a sinner of a mortal race feel that it is a vast profession! May the Lord, in his mercy, impart unto all ministers and candidates a more serious impression of its functions and obligations than has ever yet been realized!

There are three considerations to commend the office in the midst of the fearful discouragements of its greatness. FIRST. God has ordained the ministry as an office to be filled by *men*, not angels: "that the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of us." (2 Cor. 4: 7.) SECONDLY. It is an office to be filled by men whom *He calls*; not by men who enter upon it by their own independent selection. "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." (Heb. 5: 4.) THIRDLY. It is an office to be filled by men whom *He helps*; not by men who engage in it in their own strength. "Our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament." (2 Cor. 3: 5, 6.)

CONCLUSION.

The class of topics, specified as causes of anxiety to young men who have the ministry in view, invites careful consideration and importunate prayer. The present discussion was designed to assist in removing some of the perplexities of candid and inquiring minds. It is a sort of general commentary on popular objections. From the nature of the case, a more copious discussion of all the topics, in a single paper, was impracticable. Notwithstanding the cautions frequently interposed throughout this paper, it is quite possible that some minds may take undue advantage of the prevalent spirit of encouragement which pervades it. Throughout the whole discussion, the Board *assume*, and regard as *fundamental*, the following

propositions: 1. The individual possesses, in other respects, the qualifications requisite for making a useful minister. 2. The Holy Spirit can alone give a call to the work of the ministry. 3. The standard of mental and moral requirement, prevalent in the Presbyterian Church, is not intended to be lowered by the arguments and incidents herein stated, but on the contrary, the age demands higher qualifications than any preceding one.

There are exceptions to all rules; and some rules allow more exceptions than others. In all cases, however, a candidate must exhibit such evidences of a call to the ministry, in his spiritual, mental, literary, and outward qualifications, as satisfy the Church that God has appointed him to edify the body of Christ.

A GEM FROM AN OLD CASKET.

THAT familiarity begets indifference, has passed into a proverb. Such is the law to which all things are more or less subject. The old must give place to the new. This is eminently true with regard to literary style. The intense, never-ending demand of our times is for something new, and to meet this, everything must be said and done in some new way. Many have no patience with the logical method and severely simple diction of former times. The colloquial and rambling style is the fashion now,—and fashion much sways in the world of letters as in the world of pleasure. Even the Gospel message must be set off in new style and pointed with wit and anecdote, or smothered with flowers of rhetoric; for men, they say, will have it so!

But let there be reason in all things. Extremes are to be shunned. A thing is neither better nor worse for being old or new, and it is not wise or just to pass indiscriminate censure or praise in either direction; to disparage or overprize the past or the present. Since we are so made that novelty charms, let us wisely note this law of our nature. But let us take care not to abuse it; which we do, when, to entertain a succession of novelties, we neglect those better things, that have won the suffrage of the wise and good, and stood the test of criticism for centuries. The treasures of past ages should be had in everlasting remembrance. There are books the world could not afford to do without. What a blank would be left were it possible to erase from the world's literature Butler's *Analogy*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and works of kindred excellence!

What, then, is to be done when old works of surpassing merit are in danger of being eclipsed by a multitude of new-born productions of subordinate value? There is danger of this. In fact we see the actual result every day. Books of great intrinsic worth are virtually postponed for others of very questionable value and ephemeral

“What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?”

4. Is it because I am afraid that I shall not be accepted?

“Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

5. Is it because I fear that I am too great a sinner?

“The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.”

6. Is it because I am afraid that I shall not “hold out?”

“He that hath begun a good work in you, he will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

7. Is it because I am thinking that I will do as well as I can, and that God ought to be satisfied with that?

“Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, *he is guilty of all.*”

8. Is it because I am postponing the matter without any definite reason?

“Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.”

9. Is it because I am trying to save myself by morality, or in any other way of *my own*?

“There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

10. Is it because I do not clearly see the way to be saved?

“Repent ye, and believe the Gospel. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16.—*Am. Messenger.*

A FIRST STEP.

DR. DUTTON, of New Haven, in his discourse commemorative of Dr. Taylor, narrates the following incident:

It was at some time during his college life, in his senior year, I think, that he became decidedly a servant of Christ. Respecting that event, I have heard him make a statement which is very instructive and monitory. There was a classmate and particular friend of his, who, at the same time, by the working of the Divine Spirit, was concerned for his eternal interests. The two friends communicated their feelings to each other. And one day, while walking together, they raised the question whether they should then call on President Dwight, who had invited all persons thoughtful upon religion, to call and converse with him. At length, while still talking and doubting on that question, they came to President Dwight's gate. There they stopped and hesitated. At length Taylor said, “Well, I shall go in.” “Well,” said his companion, “I think I will not, to-day.” Taylor went in; and the result of his conversation with that eminent Christian guide was that he gave himself to Christ in a covenant never to be broken, and became “a burning and shining light” in his kingdom. His companion from that time thought less and less on the subject; and though he lived for many years afterwards a respectable man, he died without giving any evidence of a saving interest in Christ. Such are the crises in the history of immortal souls. Thus it is that companions travel together till they come to where they see plainly the open path to Christ. They consider, they decide, the one taking the way to everlasting life, the other pursuing the way to everlasting death. O, let all see to it that in these crises of eternal destiny they act aright. Regard the Divine warning, and heed the Divine entreaty, “Quench not the Spirit.”