

HOME,
THE SCHOOL,
AND
THE CHURCH;
OR THE
PRESBYTERIAN EDUCATION REPOSITORY.

EDITED BY
C. VAN RENSSELAER,
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P R E F A C E.

THE Sixth Volume of "HOME, THE SCHOOL, AND THE CHURCH," is sent forth with the hope that its various discussions will be found useful and edifying.

The Editor made an attempt to secure an original article from one of the Professors in each of our Theological Seminaries, for the present volume. On account of the shortness of the time, the attempt was not as successful as it is hoped it may be another year. The veteran DR. ELLIOTT, of Alleghany Seminary, responded to the appeal with an interesting and valuable article.

The objects of the Board of Education are of the *utmost importance to the welfare of the Church*. The aim of this Education Repository is to promote the great cause of Christian Education, in the nurture and sending forth of well-qualified Candidates for the Ministry, and in establishing and sustaining Schools, Academies, and Colleges, under the care of the Church.

C. V. R.

PHILADELPHIA, January, 1856.

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soul, and your high destiny as an immortal being. Remember the agonies which the Son of God endured for the salvation of a lost world. Let nothing prevent you from seeking an interest in his blood which "cleanseth from all sin." No extent of literary attainments, no elevation in the temple of popular fame will ever compensate for the want of a part in the salvation of the Son of God. The highest attainment on earth is to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus, and the greatest glory in eternity will be to occupy a place before his throne, and dwell forever in his blessed presence. That you may attain this glory, as it should be the leading object of your pursuit, so it is my first and highest wish on your behalf.

In parting with you, I would remind you that the period of the world in which you are about to enter the field of action is one of great and growing interest. It is becoming every day more strongly marked by the moral and intellectual power which is accumulating and asserting its legitimate claims to universal dominion. It will be expected of you, as one who has enjoyed the benefits of a liberal education, that you add to this power, which, under God, is destined to govern the world. To those who have assisted in giving direction and impulse to your minds in the acquisition of the necessary principles of action, it will be no mean gratification to find you among the foremost in sustaining all the great movements which tend to the enlargement of human happiness and the glory of God. In the hope of this, we now bid you our affectionate adieu, with our prayers to Heaven, that while, by the accuracy of your science, the integrity of your character, and the correctness of your habits, you honour the institution whose approving testimonial you have this day received, you may, by the purity and elevation of your piety, in a still higher degree, honour your God and Redeemer.

ARTICLE X.

ON A CALL TO THE GOSPEL MINISTRY.

BY THE REV. JAMES WOOD, D.D., OF PHILADELPHIA.

As a call to the sacred office is a personal matter, it should be considered with a serious and prayerful spirit. To run uncalled may bring upon us the doom of Uzzah for his unhallowed touching of the ark; and to excuse ourselves from engaging in this work when divinely called to it, is a great sin, like that of which Matthew, Peter, or Paul would have been guilty, if they had declined the service when Christ called them to the apostleship.

A call to the ministry is either extraordinary or ordinary. Of the former was that of the Apostles, whose call being peculiar is not applicable in all respects to ministers of the present day. It involved, however, some of the elements belonging to an *ordinary*

call, and hence its consideration will not be irrelevant to the subject of the present essay. There was also a similarity between the call of the apostles and that of the Old Testament prophets, and accordingly the latter may be noticed as well as the former. From the several examples which might be adduced, we will select only one from each class, viz., Paul and Isaiah. Their call resembled each other.

1. In its being preceded by an extraordinary vision of the Messiah. In Paul's speech before Agrippa, he says, "At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me, and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Isaiah says, "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried." The evangelist John, alluding to this vision, says, "These things said Esaias when he saw his [Christ's] glory and spake of him."

2. An extraordinary impression was produced upon them by those visions. Paul "fell to the earth," and "trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" "And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink." Isaiah exclaimed, "Woe is me! for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

3. They received encouragement and comfort from on high. Ananias was sent to Saul with a special message, in obedience to which he "entered into the house, and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord (even Jesus that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest) hath sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." Isaiah says, "Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar; and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is purged."

4. A divine unction was communicated to them for their official work. The Lord said to Paul, "Rise and stand upon thy feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose to make thee a minister," &c. And Paul declares of himself, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." Isaiah speaks thus: "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I, send me."

5. Following their divine unction for the work, was a distinct call to engage in it. Said Christ to Paul, "Unto whom," *i. e.* to the Gentiles, "now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light," &c. To Isaiah, he said, "Go tell this people," &c. The several antecedents we have mentioned were preparatory to this call, but did not of themselves without this constitute them an apostle and prophet. Their official authority to enter upon their respective embassies, commenced with the words, "*I send thee*," and "*Go and tell this people*." Their divine unction, however, was an essential prerequisite, a necessary preparation for their duties, and hence may be regarded as forming a part of their call. The whole scene which they were permitted to witness, though not essential, was also designed to qualify them more abundantly for their arduous and perilous mission, to inspire them with courage, faith, and hope, and such was its effect. Of whom should they be afraid when officiating in the name of One who "maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire." What ground was there for doubt concerning the issue of their labours, since they went forth at the behest of Him whose "throne is above the heavens, and whose kingdom ruleth over all."

These examples are very instructive, because, though extraordinary, they contain this general principle, which, it is obvious from other passages of Scripture, applies to all whom God calls to the sacred office, *viz.*, that he imparts to them, antecedently to their call, those spiritual qualifications which are the fruit of saving grace. Though they cannot say in the same sense that Paul did, "Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?" they can say this in the sense of seeing him by faith. Christ does not call a man to become a minister until he has first called him to be a disciple. Hence the antecedents of a call are those deep and soul-humbling views of himself, and those encouraging and believing views of the Redeemer, which are described in these two cases. In discussing, therefore, the question of a call to the Gospel ministry, we assume that a man must be a true Christian, not only in theory but experience—an experience wrought in the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost. This being premised, we maintain that a call to the ministry, if genuine, is as truly *divine* as though it possessed the same characteristics with that of the Apostles. "No man taketh this honour upon himself, save he that is called of God, as was Aaron." The Divine will, in regard to this matter, is not, however, manifested now in the same way as it was in their case, and hence our present inquiry is simply this, How does God make known his will to those whom he calls to the sacred office? Our answer is, that *the Divine will is made known by the concurrence of our own views and feelings with the leadings of Providence and the voice of the Church*. The particular order in which this concurrence may take place will depend on circumstances. Sometimes a conviction of duty, or at least, a desire to prepare for this work, is the first step in the pro-

cess, and under this state of mind the candidate offers himself to the Church; and her proper officers, after due examination (if satisfied) concur with him in his views, and encourage him to seek the holy ministry. At others, the first step is taken by the Church, whose pastor, elders, or members, either officially or otherwise, express their belief that such and such persons belonging to their communion possess the requisite qualifications for the sacred office; and their impressions, when conveyed to these brethren and prayerfully considered by them, produce a conviction of duty in conformity with the views previously expressed by the Church. Whether the one or the other be the antecedent or the consequent is not material in our present inquiry. But for the sake of a more clear and full presentation of the subject, we shall give to each a distinct notice.

I. Consider the manifestation of a call as commencing with the candidate himself in a conviction of duty that he ought to enter the sacred office. This feeling has been commonly expressed by the word *desire*, which, though not identical with a *conviction of duty*, is often so nearly allied to it that both convey to many minds substantially the same idea. The existence of this desire at some point in the process is presupposed, and its nature defined in one of the questions propounded to candidates for ordination in the Presbyterian Church. "Have you been induced, as far as you know your own heart, to seek the office of the holy ministry, from love to God, and a sincere desire to promote his glory in the Gospel of his Son?" It is also implied in Paul's epistle to Timothy, "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work."

A conviction of duty is sometimes produced in his breast without any assignable cause, and it becomes so strong that he is not able to suppress it. The biographer of the Rev. Samuel Kilpin, of Exeter, England, states concerning him as follows: "Some time after this period" (his conversion), "his mind became impressed with the duty of preaching to others that Gospel which he had found to be the power of God unto the salvation of his own soul. It bore on his mind with so much weight that his health was affected. He had the most solemn ideas of the responsibility of the sacred office, and the necessity of a clear call from God. After many months spent in strong cries and earnest wrestlings with God, his feelings on the subject were so intense, that he has been heard to say he lay prostrate under some trees, and, with feelings which none but God could comprehend, agonized in prayer that the impressions on his mind might be removed; but the answer appeared to be, 'Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel; a dispensation of the Gospel is committed unto me.' At length, with deep humility and self-abhorrence, relying on the Saviour's strength, he permitted his mind to dwell on the subject, and could view it with calmness. His desire for the salvation of souls was intense; he longed, he wrestled for their salvation. The Church encouraged him, and he was invited to exercise his gifts for the ministry. The unanimous opinion of the minister and Church decided that it was his duty to proceed."

But more frequently this conviction of duty is the result of reflection. A *willingness* to do what God requires is an essential element of true piety. But the particular direction in which this spirit finds an appropriate sphere of usefulness is controlled in a great degree by circumstances, which sometimes are such as to favour this particular calling, and at others to discourage or prevent it. The former is the point now under discussion. The licensure of a friend to preach the Gospel, our own solemn vows to be the Lord's, disappointment with regard to a favourite worldly scheme, or some other providential occurrence, may call the mind to a special consideration of this subject, as the fruit of which our willingness to serve God in any sphere which duty requires may ripen into a desire for this particular work, and a belief that we are called to engage in it; and this desire becomes in due time a fixed purpose, subject only to the concurring voice of Providence and the Church. Hence, a serious and prayerful consideration of the question of duty in this particular is imperative on all our pious young men. If, with prayerful deliberation, and with docile, willing hearts, they inquire with Saul after his conversion, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" God will in due time send some Ananias to "tell them what they ought to do."

Let the sentiment already advanced be deeply fixed in their minds, viz., that they have entered into a solemn covenant to serve the Lord, and by implication that they will serve him to the utmost of their ability. Hence it becomes a serious question, which every young man should put to his own conscience, whether he can or cannot do more for his Divine Master by preaching the Gospel than in any other sphere? and his decision should be made in view of this momentous question, and with the recollection that he must hereafter give account to God for the manner he has improved his talents.

Again, we must not forget that a *desire* to preach the Gospel (if it assumes the form of a desire), must be *pious* in its character. There may be a readiness, amounting even to forwardness, to become a minister of the Gospel, from improper motives, and of course without the promptings of the Holy Spirit. These motives, if discovered to exist within us, should be checked and suppressed. Said one to Christ, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." Our Saviour's reply shows that he was influenced by mercenary motives—that he sought promotion and worldly gain, and hence, while in that state of mind, he was utterly unfit for the sacred office. In order to rebuke this spirit, he said to him, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." As much as to say, "You entirely mistake the nature of this calling—it is not a vocation which affords large opportunities for worldly emolument, but one which requires self-denial." A selfish man, or one who is grasping after wealth, or who, possessing wealth, holds it with a miserly spirit, lacks an important qualification for the ministerial office, in which there is a constant demand for the exercise of a benevolent and self-sacrificing disposition. Yet, as divine grace

can cure an inordinate love of the world, as well as any other evil propensity, its existence is not always a decisive evidence that its possessor has no call to seek the holy ministry. This mercenary spirit should be resisted and overcome by asking God's forgiveness for possessing it, and imploring his grace to enable us to exercise and practise that exalted and expansive benevolence which characterized our Divine Lord.

The same remark holds good with reference to any other defect which may be cured by a faithful and diligent use of the means of grace. We will mention a single thing, the very converse of that which we have just stated, viz., that as our desire for the ministry is liable to be prompted by wrong motives, which we are required to rectify, so, on the other hand, an improper desire for wealth or worldly honour may *prevent* us from seeking this office, even when we are more or less convinced that our duty lies in this direction. Here desire and conviction of duty instead of being the same, or even in harmony with each other, are antagonistic, and unhappily, our earnestness and anxiety for earthly emolument too often obtain the ascendancy, and lead us to engage in secular pursuits, against the remonstrances of our own consciences, to say nothing now of the leadings of Providence, and the voice of the Church. The young men of our country are probably in greater danger at the present time of being diverted from the path of duty in this particular by the splendid openings which lie before them to obtain wealth, than from any other source. Let them be reminded that, though the acquisition of wealth is not wrong in itself, it becomes a great wrong when it stands in the way of performing a higher duty to which God calls them. If their consciences admonish them that they ought to seek the Gospel ministry, there is ground for believing that those desires which are in conflict with this conviction of duty are not of a right character, particularly if Divine Providence and the judgment of Christian friends, concur in favouring their becoming ministers. Under these circumstances, to say we have no desire for the ministry, is a virtual confession of a perverted state of our affections, and our need of repentance and reformation. Let our affections be brought into harmony with our consciences, and, in the case now supposed, a desire for this office would be sure to follow.

But further: our *desires* may be *pious*, and our motives *pure*, we may even think it to be our *duty*, and still we may not be called to preach the Gospel. There may be a lack of suitable talents, or of aptness to teach, or of bodily health; or our age may be so advanced as to render it impracticable to obtain the requisite education. In these cases, the desire to do good, being genuine, should not be checked as to its general character, but directed to such other sphere of usefulness as the leadings of Providence and the advice of judicious and intelligent Christian friends shall appear to indicate. With regard to these several particulars, others are generally better judges than we are. Accordingly, if, for the reasons above given, disinte-

rested Christian advisers express doubts concerning our call, and especially if this is done in their official capacity, as office-bearers in the Church, we may safely conclude, as a general thing, that we are not called to seek the Gospel ministry. Even though preparation may have been made, and the candidate is permitted to exercise his gifts as a licentiate, he may, after all, prove to be so defective in his ability to edify the Church, as to show that he has mistaken his calling. On this assumption, the constitution of the Presbyterian Church provides that, "When a licentiate shall have been preaching for a considerable time, and his services do not appear to be edifying to the churches, the Presbytery may, if they think proper, recall his license." In this view of the case, a man's call to the ministry should not be regarded as being fully and finally settled until the way is opened for his ordination, either by a call from some church to become their pastor, or such a call to some other field of labour as will justify the Presbytery in investing him with the sacred office. He may, however, long before this, have sufficient evidence to make it his duty to obtain the necessary preparation, but as he proceeds in his preliminary studies, he should frequently bring his desires and convictions of duty to the test of a rigid examination, both in the way of inspecting his own feelings and motives, and in ascertaining the views of others concerning his fitness for the ministry. By this process, faithfully carried out, he would seldom fail of arriving at a satisfactory decision before completing his college course—a decision which the Presbytery would find no occasion to reverse.

II. This would be especially the case if the leadings of Divine Providence should clearly favour his entering the ministry. This kind of evidence is available both to the person himself, in strengthening or diminishing his conviction of duty, and to the Church, in forming a correct judgment concerning his call to this office. We have already given this a partial and incidental notice in discussing the preceding point, but it is entitled to a separate and distinct consideration.

We have heard a call of Providence defined to be the opening of this door of usefulness and the shutting up of every other. In some rare cases this may be so, but, ordinarily, no such constraint is laid by God upon his servants. He opens this door, and indicates to them, by his providence, that they ought to enter it. But he does not generally close other doors against them, but he submits the question to their decision, as free moral agents, and in view of their accountability to him. We have reason to believe that this decision is not always made with a proper regard to the leadings of providence, but often contrary to them. Sometimes, probably, the error lies in entering the ministry without sufficient providential indications, but, more frequently, in engaging in other pursuits when providence had opened the way for their becoming ministers of the Gospel.

Under the head of Providential indications may be mentioned, as having a general bearing on the question of duty, the scarcity of

ministers, compared with the wants of the world, and the readiness of men in all countries to receive the Gospel. If, as is the fact, a hundred ministers are needed where ten only offer themselves, the presumption is, that there are ninety others, somewhere in the Church, who ought to enter the sacred office. And hence our pious young men, in reflecting upon the subject of personal duty, and our pastors and church judicatories, in deliberating with regard to them, should not overlook this fact. But still, this evidence is only presumptive, and must be corroborated by other favourable circumstances, in order to make it satisfactory in its application to a particular case.

These circumstances are such as the following, viz., good natural talents, a sound bodily constitution, a suitable age, if not educated, to acquire a thorough intellectual training, a capacity for communicating knowledge to others, an elevated tone of piety, love for the souls of men, and zeal in seeking their salvation. The first half and more of this category are readily understood and appreciated. All sensible men concur in the views already expressed, that persons of feeble mind, or poor health, or advanced age, or who are cut off from the means of acquiring adequate instruction, or who are unable to utter their thoughts with considerable ease and fluency, should be regarded as providentially prevented from entering the ministry. But when we come to those particulars which are religious and spiritual, and attempt to graduate our piety, or the piety of our brethren, and to measure the strength and fervour of their desire to promote the salvation of sinners, the examination assumes a more difficult, and, with reference to them, a delicate aspect. The fact, however, is undeniable, that they may have none of those disabilities above mentioned, and yet be so deficient in piety and zeal as to be poorly fitted for the "cure of souls." In what respect this low state of piety is providential is another matter. Certainly it is not so in such a sense as to exculpate them from blame. It is their sin, and should be repented of without delay. They should return to God with humble and earnest prayer, and employ scriptural means for a revival of religion in their hearts. When they have done this, they may find the path of duty opened before them, in a manner satisfactory both to themselves and the Church. But so long as they continue in this cold and backslidden state, all the other providential indications above mentioned are insufficient to show that they have a Divine call to preach the Gospel. This is a vital point, and demands the serious consideration of pious young men. Let them make it the first business of their lives to become eminently holy and devoted to God, to be diligent and "zealous of good works." Their devout feelings, thus enlightened, would, in many instances, prompt them to offer themselves to the service of the Church, and their brethren would cheerfully receive, encourage, and educate them as candidates for the sacred office. There are not a few preparing for other pursuits who possess most or all the natural endowments which belong to a providential call to the ministry, but lack the requisite unction

of the Holy Spirit, and this, if they seek it, God will grant, with the same freeness that a tender parent bestows good things upon his children.

III. But the Church must not wait for candidates to offer themselves before she takes any steps for introducing her sons into the Gospel ministry. Her duty is not fully discharged when, through her judicatories, she sits in judgment on the fitness of those who offer themselves for this work. Measures should be adopted for bringing this subject distinctly before the minds of her members, and, if need be, to express to them, either officially or unofficially, her own convictions of their duty to preach the Gospel.*

In an important sense, it does not belong to the Church, but to God, to decide the question, who and how many shall become preachers of the Gospel. He is the author of their regeneration; and when converted, it is his prerogative to call such as he pleases to the office of the Gospel ministry. But there is also an important sense in which his people are responsible for the preparation of those materials out of which preachers are ordinarily called; and also for the proper direction of their minds to the question of personal duty with regard to this office. The materials for future ministers are generally found within our own churches; either as communicants, or in a state of ecclesiastical pupilage. Hence the churches may be properly appealed to on this subject; and if delinquent, they should be exhorted to employ scriptural means to bring young men into the sacred office. To the use or neglect of these means, may be ascribed, as we believe, in a great measure, the large difference between the number of candidates in different churches.

We could name one church which has been organized twenty-five years, and has furnished from her members twenty-five candidates; and a second, older and stronger than the other, which has furnished only two or three. The latter church, too, has enjoyed, as well as the former, some precious revivals of religion, and the additions to her communion have consisted of a good proportion of young men. But their attention seems not to have been called particularly to the subject of personal consecration to the ministry. As laymen, they are useful men; but many of them might have become acceptable, and some of them able preachers. Can that church give a satisfactory answer to the question, why they are not preachers? We consider it a great privilege for a church to have constantly among her members one or more candidates; and if this should be made one of the objects for which she daily and weekly offered up her prayers, and should have its appropriate place in the instructions of the pulpit, we doubt whether she would remain long without enjoying this privilege.

As a general thing, there is less occasion for the Church to rebuke the officious and self-conceited forwardness of young men who offer

* Some of the remarks and illustrations which follow were published by the author in the *Home and Foreign Record* in several numbers of the years 1854-5.

themselves uncalled to the sacred office, than to seek out those who, like Saul, are "hid among the stuff," and are indisposed to engage in a work for which they possess the requisite qualifications. Some are diffident and unassuming, and for this reason are not inclined to take the first step toward entering an office, the responsibilities of which weighed so heavily even on the Apostle Paul, as to draw from him the solemn interrogatory, "Who is sufficient for these things?" The Church is not to wait for such to offer themselves, but must propose the question to *them*, and remove from their minds those objections which a mistaken humility has interposed to prevent them from performing their duty in this respect.

Others again are "hid among the stuff" from secular considerations, and need to be addressed faithfully and earnestly by their Christian brethren, on the claims of the Gospel ministry, as compared with secular avocations. One needs instruction; a second to have his conscience aroused; a third a more fervent and elevated tone of piety; and the want of some one of these may be the main obstacle in the way of their seeking the Gospel ministry. Parents, elders, pastors, teachers, and professors, are the persons whose positions are peculiarly favourable for reaching these cases, and if through their neglect such young men are not brought into the ministry, will not the Head of the Church hold them responsible for the deficiency of the ministerial supply which may result from this omission of duty? While, therefore, we ought to caution those who without sufficient reason think themselves called, we must remember that those who are called, are usually brought forward by the agency of religious advisers, and that advice if not sought for by them should be volunteered by us, accompanied by such encouragement as the circumstances may require.

In M'Crie's Life of that distinguished reformer, John Knox, we find the following account of his call to the ministry: "These persons were so pleased with Knox's talents, and his manner of teaching his pupils, that they urged him strongly to preach in public, and to become colleague to Rough. But he resisted all their solicitations, assigning as his reason, that he did not consider himself as having a call to this employment, and he would not be guilty of intrusion. They did not, however, desist from their purpose; but having consulted with their brethren, came to a resolution, without his knowledge, that a call should be publicly given him, in the name of the whole, to become one of their ministers."

"Accordingly, on a day fixed for the purpose, Rough preached a sermon on the election of ministers, in which he declared the power which any congregation, however small, had over any one in whom they perceived gifts suited to the office, and how dangerous it was for such a person to reject the call of those who desired instruction. Sermon being concluded, the preacher turned to Knox, who was present, and addressed him in these words: 'Brother, you shall not be offended, although I speak unto you that which I have in charge,

even from all those here present, which is this: In the name of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ, and in the name of all that presently call you by my mouth, I charge you, that you refuse not this holy vocation, but as you tender the glory of God, the increase of Christ's kingdom, the edification of your brethren, and the comfort of me, whom you understand well enough to be oppressed with the multitude of labours, that you take the public office and charge of preaching, even as you look to avoid God's heavy displeasure, and desire that he shall multiply his graces unto you.' Then addressing himself to the congregation, he said, 'Was not this your charge unto me, and do you not approve this vocation?' They all answered, 'It was; and we approve it.'

"Overwhelmed by this unexpected and solemn charge, Knox, after an ineffectual attempt to address the audience, burst into tears, rushed out of the assembly, and shut himself in his chamber. His countenance and behaviour, from that day till the day he was compelled to present himself in the public place of preaching, did sufficiently declare the grief and trouble of his heart, for no man saw any sign of mirth from him for many days together."

Similar instances have occurred since. In the funeral discourse of the Rev. Gilbert MacMaster, D.D., of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, the preacher stated that he entered upon the practice of medicine at Pittsburg, Pa., and that, at a meeting of the Synod of his Church in that city some time after, he was visited by a committee of Synod, and informed that in the judgment of that committee and of the other members of that body who were acquainted with him, it was his duty to change his profession, and become a minister of the Gospel. He listened to their counsel, and, after prayerful deliberation, commenced the study of theology. He lived to an advanced age, having, before his decease, served the Church in the Gospel ministry, and in a highly useful and distinguished manner, for more than thirty years.

These general hints and illustrations, concerning the province of the Church in this matter, may be greatly amplified. To a few of them we will give some further notice.

1. It is the duty of every church to see that no one in her communion, who ought to become a preacher of the Gospel, is kept back for want of proper instruction concerning the nature of a call to this office. As soon as a young man is received into the church he should be encouraged and urged, if necessary, to engage in some useful service, whereby his capacity and zeal for doing good may be tested, cultivated, and improved. And if this trial of his qualifications is satisfactory, his attention should be directed particularly to the question of duty with regard to the sacred office, accompanied by such instruction and advice as will aid him in arriving at a correct conclusion. Sometimes pious friends have reason to think that a man is called before he realizes it himself. His mind may have been directed to it; he may be impressed with the great necessity of more labourers to

meet the wants of a perishing world. But he scarcely ventures even to inquire whether it may not be *his own duty* to preach the Gospel—assuming, without particular examination, that he is not called to this work. Samuel was called to the prophetic office when he was quite young. The call was audible; it was addressed to him by name and repeated thrice. Yet he did not know that it was from the Lord until Eli instructed him; after which, when “the Lord came, and stood, and called, as at other times, Samuel, Samuel,” he answered, “Speak, for thy servant heareth.” Mr. Kilpin, who has been already alluded to, considered his “first impressions relating to the ministry,” as “the delusions of the devil,” and used to spend “hours in the fields, under hedges, by night and by day, praying that the great God would deliver him from those delusions.” This “anxiety brought on a weakness in his stomach, which refused to retain anything he had eaten, during one year, and reduced him almost to a shadow.” What a relief it would have been to his mind, if the pastor and church, *instead of waiting for him* to disclose his feelings to *them*, and ask their advice, had addressed *him* on the subject, and given him *their views* concerning his duty.

Christian parents sustain an important relation to this matter, with regard to their children. They should dedicate them to the Lord from their birth, and in their daily prayers ask him to renew their hearts, and employ them in his service. But, besides these, they should, by a careful religious training, endeavour to guide their minds in the path of piety and usefulness; and their spiritual overseers should aid them, if necessary, in the discharge of their duty in this particular, especially in such a direction of their thoughts toward the ministry as will lead them to entertain right views on this subject. Young men and boys often converse familiarly with their parents, and with each other, concerning their plans for future life; and parents should embrace these opportunities to inculcate those great principles of holy living which are adapted to make them seek the glory of God, and the advancement of Christ’s kingdom as their chief and highest aim. We do not say that this course would always result in leading their sons to become ministers. All are not expected to enter the sacred office. This is not God’s method of carrying on his work. He makes a division of Christian labour according to his pleasure. But if such a course would not make them ministers in all cases, it would prepare them for active usefulness in the Church; and with reference to the ministry, it would remove that indisposition for this work which is often induced by an opposite course of parental training, and be an important step towards qualifying them to become ministers, if the Lord is pleased to call them.

2. The officers of the church, and particularly the pastor, should impress upon the minds of all their members the *importance* of the office, as compared with secular avocations—that it is in no respect inferior to them in dignity, and that a man of the first order of talents is not degraded but honoured by being called to this office—that there

is a far greater necessity for an increase of ministers than of men for any other profession—that the work to be done is more intimately connected with the welfare of the human race than any other,* and that the demand for more labourers is immediate and cannot be neglected, or even postponed, by God's people, without a serious dereliction of duty. These thoughts, kept before the minds of parents and children, and especially of the young men of the church, would produce a silent but constant influence, in calling out those whose talents ought to be devoted to the holy ministry.

3. Objections which may arise in their minds, upon presenting this subject to their consideration, must be removed, and the decision of the question solemnly referred to their consciences, in view of the fact that their Christian brethren (where the case is plain) regard it as their duty to preach the Gospel. This assumes (what we think is true) that they may be talented and pious, and, in a general sense, willing to do their duty, but that various reasons conspire to make them hesitate with regard to this vocation. In some it may be diffidence; as in the case of Moses, who, when he was designated by God as the deliverer of the Israelites from Egypt, replied, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" Or of Jeremiah, who, in view of his appointment to be "a prophet unto the nations," said, "Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak; for I am a child." God encouraged them by the promise that "*he would be with them*,"—a promise which is applicable to all pious and humble-minded men whom he calls to labour in his service.

In others worldly considerations, or the influence of secular-minded friends, lead to the same result. Two cases of this kind are recorded by the evangelist Luke. One of them in response to our Lord's command, "Follow me," replied, "Suffer me first to go and bury my father." Whatever may be the specific import of these words, they convey the general idea of filial duty. He deemed himself under obligation to render certain services to his father, requiring some indefinite period, longer or shorter, which services he regarded as para-

* From a speech of Hon. David K. Hitchcock, before the Massachusetts Senate, we take the following paragraph:

"What other class of men, as a class, have better deserved public recognition and favour? What other class have done more to set forward the cause of true freedom, and so little to hold it back? The oft-quoted words of Webster should not be forgotten—'I hope,' says he, 'that our learned men have done something for the honour of our literature abroad. I hope that the courts of justice and members of the bar of this country have done something to elevate the character and the profession of the law. I hope that the discussions in Congress have done something to ameliorate the condition of the human race, to secure and extend the great charter of human rights, and to strengthen and advance the great principle of human liberty. But I contend that no literary efforts, no adjudications, no constitutional discussions, nothing that has been said or done, in favour of the great interests of universal man, has done us more credit at home and abroad than the establishment of our body of clergymen, their support by voluntary contributions, and the general excellence of their character for learning and piety.' Mr. Webster elsewhere speaks of 'their devotedness to their sacred calling, purity of life and character, their learning, intelligence, and piety, and that wisdom which cometh from above.' He might have added, their devotion to the principles of true liberty."

mount, for the time being, to the call of Christ. Our Saviour's answer to this objection, was "Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou, and preach the kingdom of God." He did not design by this, to absolve him from filial duties. On one occasion, he expressed strong disapprobation of some who, under the pretext of a religious vow, refused to support their aged parents. But in the present instance, the person laboured under a mistake as to what duty required. The kind attention and service which he desired to render were necessary; but they could be performed by other members of the family as well as by him, and hence, it was not indispensable for him to do these things *personally*, since he could easily make arrangements to have them done by others, who were not called to preach the Gospel.

In the other case, the person wished to defer it till he should return home and obtain the opinion of his relatives. His language was "Lord, I will follow thee, but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house." But Christ's reply shows, that more was intended than his words seemed to express. He was vacillating and undecided in his mind, and his real motive in asking leave to bid farewell to his friends, was to submit the question to their decision,—a thing however proper in itself, and even an incumbent duty, under some circumstances, was in his case a dangerous expedient; because from the religious or rather irreligious character of his friends, he had no reason to expect from them a decision, which would be based on correct principles. "No man," says Christ, "having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God." A ploughman who looks back, cannot make a straight furrow. So a man who is undetermined about his duty, after it is made sufficiently evident, exhibits a state of mind which renders him incompetent to labour with efficiency and success. Christ, therefore, warned him of the hazard of placing himself under those domestic influences, which he could not but know would be likely to increase his doubts and divert his mind altogether from this holy calling.

How far we ought to be governed in deciding this question by the advice of friends, depends very much on their character. If they are pious and devoted Christians, and entertain scriptural views concerning the ministerial office, their counsel ought to be sought; and when given, it should have great weight. But if, as appears to have been the case with those under consideration, they are irreligious and worldly-minded, a resort to them on such a subject will be liable to become an obstacle in the way of performing our duty.

A well-known minister, now deceased, informed the writer that he had received a letter from a friend to the following effect:—that he pursued a course of literary and classical studies, with a view to the Gospel ministry, but that under the influence of aspiring and ambitious feelings, fostered by worldly-minded and irreligious kindred, he was diverted from his purpose, and devoted himself to the study of law. He made gratifying proficiency in preparing for the legal profession, and had before him every reasonable prospect of success.

But from the moment he determined to abandon the Gospel ministry and study law, God appeared to forsake him; he lost his former spirit of prayer, and religious comfort departed from his breast. At length, under the pressure of strong conviction of duty, urged upon his conscience by an agent of the Board of Education, whom he heard preach, he was led to retrace his steps, and consecrate himself anew to the service of the Church, and to that sacred office to which, as he believed, he had once been called. The letter above referred to was written to inform his old friend of his decision, and to tell him, moreover, that its influence upon his piety and Christian enjoyment, was almost instantaneous; that his communion with God was no longer intercepted (as before) by insurmountable barriers; his graces seemed to have a more vigorous growth, and his "peace was like a river."

Perhaps there are many young men in the Presbyterian Church, who, against the call of God, and their own convictions of duty, are turning away their minds from this high and holy vocation, to engage in some secular pursuit. If so, can they expect to be prospered? Especially, can they hope for "peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost?" The path of duty is the only one in which a man can secure the Divine favour.

A few days ago, we learned from a reliable source (the names of the parties were given to us) that a pious young man in Pennsylvania, of fine talents and scholarship, the son of a clergyman, became fascinated while in college, with a young lady, the daughter of a clergyman, who was also president of the college. She was ambitious of literary distinction for the person whom she might marry, and had aspirations of the same kind herself. To a proposal of marriage from this gentleman, she consented on condition that he would pledge himself not to enter the Gospel ministry. He reluctantly yielded to this condition, and the engagement was made. Subsequently he was so much impressed with a conviction of his error in this particular, that he endeavoured, but without success, to obtain from her a release from that pledge. They were married; he did not enter the ministry; but he was often rendered unhappy, by what he deemed a neglect of duty. Some four years ago, he was called away by death, and in his last moments, he expressed regret that he had ever made that promise.

Where these counter influences are known to exist, the pastor and session of the church have a solemn duty to discharge towards those who are exposed to them, in endeavouring to prevent this injurious effect; especially if they are satisfied that the persons thus exposed possess the requisite qualifications for the ministry, and that the adverse reasonings which their friends urge against it, have little or no force. Even the *postponing* of duty in this particular, beyond what circumstances absolutely require, is sometimes the cause of serious evil. A young gentleman, well known to the writer, graduated at one of our colleges, having in view the Gospel ministry. Needing additional funds to enable him to pursue his *theological* studies, he

engaged in teaching, not long after which he married, studied law, entered the arena of political preferment, and became a member of the Legislature. Every circumstance seemed to promise a prosperous and brilliant career. By his marriage he obtained a handsome worldly fortune; and his talents and eloquence would soon have given him a high rank as a statesman. Whether his conscience upbraided him for turning aside from his original purpose, we are not informed. But Divine Providence interposed, and by a series of domestic afflictions checked his political aspirations, revived his Christian graces, turned his mind again to theological studies, and made him, after ten years' delay, a minister of the Gospel.

Cases may occur, in which young men commence a course of classical study for the purpose of preparing for the sacred office, without a Divine call. Such persons, upon ascertaining this fact, *ought* to change their purpose, and engage in some other pursuit. But for one, who is conscious of having received a call, to allow himself to be diverted from this object, or even to *postpone unduly* his preparation for it, must be displeasing to God, and he may expect to be chastised in some form or other for his neglect of duty. Even if he is not conscious himself of neglecting his duty, it may be really so, and his Christian brethren may be convinced of it; in which case they are under as sacred an obligation to warn him of the peril he is in by hesitating to obey the call of God, as they are to admonish the incompetent or unworthy not to "run without being sent."

4. There should also be presented to the consideration of pious young men, those scriptural motives which are adapted to give to their minds a favourable direction towards the sacred office. On one occasion Peter said to his Divine Master, "Behold, we have left all, and followed thee. What shall we have therefor? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye who have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life." In this reply, Christ virtually admitted the necessity of forsaking all, in order to become a minister of the Gospel. True, the apostles did not possess much; but the little they had they forsook, that they might have no incumbrance in following Christ. They also forsook all prospectively. They abandoned all secular schemes, and gave their undivided attention to the promotion of his cause. They did it, in some instances, against the remonstrances of their nearest relatives; being constrained by their paramount love for Christ, and their regard for his authority and glory. Thus every minister is required to do. Unless he inherits wealth from his parents, or other friends, he must consent to remain poor in this world. The pursuit of earthly treasures is incompatible with the faithful discharge of his official duties. This sentiment should be distinctly held

forth by the proper officers of the Church, when presenting to her sons the subject of a call to the ministry. But they must not stop there—but add the encouraging motive, that, if they obey this call, and faithfully perform the sacred functions belonging to their office, Christ will bestow upon them a richer recompense than silver or gold, houses or lands. The reward here promised relates both to this world and to the next. It is, however, chiefly spiritual in its character, and hence is not designed or adapted to tempt the avarice or ambition of unsanctified men.

A succinct statement of what was enjoyed by the apostles, will give us some clue to those privileges virtually promised to every faithful minister of Christ—the difference consisting mainly in a difference of circumstances between us and them. They were permitted to witness several sublime and interesting scenes—such as our Lord's transfiguration, his agony in the garden, his resurrection and ascension. They had conferred upon them extraordinary gifts and prerogatives, viz.: the power of working miracles, discerning spirits, and the keys of the kingdom of heaven, *i. e.* the prerogative of settling the canon of Scripture, and of administering ecclesiastical government and discipline. They were favoured with several remarkable deliverances. Thus—Peter, and again Peter and John, were delivered from prison by an angel, and Paul and Silas by an earthquake. They made great attainments in grace and comfort. They were blest with signal success in winning souls to Christ. Most of them had the honour of dying the death of martyrs. And they all inherited distinguished happiness and glory in heaven. Leaving out those particulars which were extraordinary and miraculous, which applied to them peculiarly as apostles, and as witnesses of Christ's personal ministry on earth, these invaluable blessings may be hoped for, and expected now, by all true Gospel ministers, who fulfil the duties of their high commission with that Christian diligence and zeal, and that holy courage and devotion to their work, which characterized the primitive disciples.

The preceding considerations and motives, presented in the name of the Church to such of her young men as, in her judgment, possess the requisite qualifications for the sacred office, and accompanied by an expression of her belief of their fitness for the ministry, would generally produce a corresponding conviction in their own minds (Divine Providence also favouring it) that they are called to this work; and thus, by an inverse order from that which has been previously considered, there would be the same concurring evidence of a call as in the former case. As, however, no church is infallible, this presentation of the subject might, in some instances, fail to convince them that this is their duty, just as it may occur, that their own desire for the work, and their belief of a call to it, do not always meet the concurrence of the church. Providential difficulties may also stand in the way. On the other hand, they may have, in some rare instances, a call to preach, where some part of this threefold concur-

rence is wanting; but these few exceptions (if any exist) do not viti-ate, but rather confirm the rule.

If every church should perform her duty in this particular, and take the initiatory step in the matter, instead of waiting for those who deem themselves called to disclose their impressions to the Church, there would be, in our opinion, a large increase in the number of candidates. Much observation and inquiry have convinced us, that many pious and talented young men engage in secular pursuits, who, if such a course as this were pursued by the Church, would devote themselves to the ministry. The various reasons which prevent them from making a tender of their services would often lose their force, or wholly disappear, if called to this work by the voice of the church.

There exists, at this time, a special reason why this method should be resorted to. The common expectation of God's people, founded on Scripture prophecy, is, that the millennial glory of the Church is near at hand; and, as introductory thereto, the Bible teaches us, that the Gospel is to be preached to every creature. Of course there is an urgent necessity for increasing very largely, and in the shortest practicable period, the number of ministers, in order to carry into effect this work of preliminary preparation. Christ will hold the Church responsible for the use of appropriate means to accomplish this object, and especially to furnish an adequate supply of well-qualified ministers and missionaries, who, in her name, and that of her Divine Head, shall go forth and preach the Gospel in all the world, as the harbingers of his glorious reign.

ARTICLE XI.

THE DIGNITY OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

BY THE REV. DUNCAN KENNEDY, D.D., OF TROY, N. Y.*

"I magnify mine office."—ROM. xi. 13.

No two names can be found, designating the same person, that suggest wider extremes of moral character, than Saul the persecutor and Paul the apostle. The announcement of the former presents to the mind the embodiment of some of the most repulsive elements of depraved humanity; and he who bears it stands before us a cruel bigot, a bitter reviler, a bold blasphemer, whose concentrated energies are devoted to the single work of making "havoc of the

* This Discourse was delivered by Dr. Kennedy in 1851, on the occasion of the Inauguration of Dr. WM. H. CAMPBELL, as Professor in the Theological Seminary of the Dutch Reformed Church, at New Brunswick, N. J. Dr. KENNEDY was at that time Pastor of the North Dutch Church, Albany. He has now returned to the Presbyterian Church, and is Pastor of the Second Street Presbyterian Church, Troy, N. Y. The allusions, at the close of the Discourse, to the Inauguration and the Seminary, have been omitted.—ED.