

SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW.

NUMBER II.

SEPTEMBER, 1848.

ARTICLE I.

CALL TO THE MINISTRY-ITS NATURE AND EVIDENCE.

1. *What Constitutes a Call to the Gospel Ministry, in the Biblical Repertory, for 1831: p. 196.*

2. *The Necessity of a Divine Call. Ch. II. of the Christian Ministry, by the Rev. CHAS. BRIDGES. Fourth Edition. London, 1835.*

3. *Necessary Call to the Ministry. Ch. III of the Christian Ministry, by J. EDMONSTON, a Wesleyan Minister. London, 1828.*

4. *On the Call of a Minister of Jesus Christ to the Sacred Office. Ch. IV. Of EADE'S Gospel Ministry.*

5. *What is a Call to the Ministry? Tracts of the American Tract Society. Vol. 9, p. 333, and vol. 10, p. 285.*

6. *The Use of Preachers, and How to Obtain More, by the Rev. A. A. PORTER. Charleston, 1848.*

7. *A Call to the Ministry - What are the Evidences of a Divine Call? in the Pittsburgh Christian Advocate, 1841.*

8. *A Discourse on Theological Education, and Advice to a Student*, by GEORGE HOWE, D. D. *New York*, 1844.

The nature of the ministerial call depends upon the nature of assurance and the witness of the Spirit,—of both which it is an eminent exemplification. Having, therefore endeavored to state the doctrine of Scripture on these subjects, we are now prepared, without farther introduction, to lay down what we believe to be the doctrine of Scripture concerning the Call to the Ministry, directing our readers to some of the most accessible works in which this subject is specially discussed. A call to the ministry, like all other saving influences, must, as we have seen, be imparted by the Holy Ghost, and an assurance of His having given it, must be imparted to the soul, in order that it may become effectual and operative. The Holy Spirit must impart those qualifications of natural fitness which are essential, in order to prepare for, or to engage in, the work;—He must open up the way for such a course of preparation;—He must give ability and success to our endeavors;—He must inspire the heart with that desire for the work, which cannot be satisfied without the utmost effort to carry it into execution;—He must give that singleness of heart and purpose, which looks only to the glory of God and salvation of souls;—He must bestow that “spirit of wisdom, of power, and of a sound mind,” which alone can lead to that prudence which will give offence to no man, and to that boldness, which will contend for the truth if needs be, even unto blood;—He must open a wide and an effectual door to the individual called, for an entrance upon this high calling;—He must, therefore, dispose the hearts of his appointed officers to ratify His call, and the hearts of his people to attest the fitness and capacity of the individual so called to edify and instruct;†—He must crown his labors with a saving and sanctifying blessing to them that hear;—and He must continue to uphold, direct, instruct, and comfort his servant while engaged in his arduous labors. The whole work of the ministry depends, therefore, upon

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\* Owen's works, vol. 20, p. 400. Princeton Review, for 1831, &c., where these are well stated.

† I Tim., 3: 1. Titus 1. 1 Peter 5: 1-2.

the Holy Ghost for *its* authority, and for *our* obligation and fitness to assume it.

The term call is a metaphor,<sup>\*</sup> referring both to the command or summons by which a person is verbally invited and directed to any duty, and to the vocation or employment to which he is summoned. It is, therefore, that command—addressed to any individual through His word, by the Holy Ghost,—to engage in any work or duty, or to enjoy any privileges and blessings. It is used in the Scriptures generally for every state and condition of life to which any one is destined by God—for which He gives the requisite capacity and qualifications, opening the way for an entrance upon it—and blessing and supporting those who engage in it. The Holy Ghost is represented as the efficient agent in carrying out, in reference to every individual, the *providential* purposes of God, as well as the dispensations of His grace.<sup>†</sup> To every such state, condition and duty, whether in the family, the church, or the commonwealth, the Holy Spirit calls, and his people are called; and hence, these employments are termed callings, or a man's vocation.<sup>‡</sup> A call, therefore, is necessary to the proper discharge and enjoyment of any business or occupation, and this call is the more clear and evident, in proportion as the duty is peculiar, responsible, and attended with temptation and difficulty.<sup>§</sup> A Christian is, therefore, to expect such a call, and a comfortable persuasion or assurance of duty in all that he undertakes.<sup>||</sup>

\* Dr. Jamieson's Reality of the Spirit's Work, p. 293.

† See Bishop Heber's Bampton Lectures on the Holy Spirit; Owen on the Spirit; Hurion on the Spirit; Buchanan on the Holy Spirit, &c. 1 Cor. 7: 24. Eph. 4: 28. 1 Peter 4: 10. Gal. 5: 13.

‡ On this subject the old divines are full, though now the term call is more commonly restricted in books to the effectual or saving call of the Gospel, or to the call of the Ministry.

§ Perkins' Works, Fol, vol. 3, p. 61; vol. 1, p. 64; vol. 2, p. 50. See Commentary on Revelation by the celebrated James Durham, author of the "Sum of Saving Knowledge," 4to., Glasgow, 1788, p. 78. No man, he teaches, ought to become an author without such a call, and every one may know that he has it, p. 77-79. See also Bucani Theol. Instit., Geneva, 1612, p. 492. Bayne on the Ephesians, Fol., London, 1643, p. 4, 350. Hildersbram on John, chap. 4, Fol., 1632, p. 238-240. Works of Rev. William Bridges, vol. 5, p. 75-77.

|| That He may ascertain this and how, see Perkins, vol. 2, p. 159, &c. Corbet, in his Remains, makes a state of continence or single life one of these. See p. 231-236, &c.

The terms call and calling are, however, most generally applied to the commands and invitations addressed to sinners by the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures, and through the preaching of the truth, and to the effectual application and power with which the Holy Ghost makes them “the power of God to their salvation,” sanctification, and devotion to His service.\*

In all cases the calling of God is two-fold, *outward* in His word and providence, and *inward* in those qualifications and desires which enable the believer to judge of his calling.† These inward qualities, fitness and desire are given by the Holy Spirit, and wherever they exist, prove that the person is chosen by God, and fitted and called to the work for which they qualify.

Now, so it is with regard to the work of the ministry—which is a part of the great field of Christian work and duty to which the Holy Spirit calls, and for which He fits and prepares. The call to this work is also external and inward. The *external call* to the ministry, is that testimony, command, precept, promise and invitation of the word, which makes known the duty and the privilege of the Christian ministry, together with all other means by which the mind is led to feel, to understand, and to become personally sensible of this duty. The *internal call*, is that supernatural influence, communicated by the Holy Ghost, by which the soul is freely persuaded and enabled to obey the command, to believe the promises, to desire the privileges, and willingly undergo the self-denial and the labor of the Christian ministry.‡

This *combined* call to the ministry, that is, the outward and the inward call, are in the present state of the church, *ordinary*;—that is, it is effected according to the general order laid down in the word, and established in the church,—and is not *extraordinary*;—and it is also *mediate*, that is, it is made through the cooperation of men, and not directly and solely by God.§

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\* It often means chosen, as in Rom. 8: 28. 1 Cor. 1: 2. 1 Cor. 1: 1. Rom. 1: 6. Isa. 48, and vol. 3, p. 67, Calvin's Trans., soc. ed.

† So teaches Calvin; see Institutes, vol. 2, p. 591-592; the terms there used are the universal and the special call.

‡ See Stapler, vol. 1, p. 363, &c.

§ See Divine Right of the Gospel Ministry, p. 116, where the Provincial Assembly of Westminster Divines (the authors of this work,) make super-

In both aspects of the ministerial call, the only efficient and authoritative source from which it flows, is the triune covenant Jehovah, by whom the church has been constituted, and more especially God the Son, in the exercise of His sovereign dominion over the church through the Holy Spirit.\* The ultimate AUTHOR of the ministerial call is, therefore, the Triune God, and the proximate author, the Holy Ghost.

The ESSENCE of the *external* call is found in the whole doctrine, precept, promise, and order concerning the ministry laid down in the word of God; and the essence of the *internal* call, consists in the operations of the Holy Ghost, by which we are persuaded of the duty; led to desire it; endued in some measure with spiritual fitness for it; and made willing to undertake it.† Of these “gifts that are in Him, which are given by the Holy Ghost,” every one is and must be conscious; of their conformity to what the Spirit in the word has promised and made necessary, he may be and is convinced; and being sensible that he is actuated by no avaricious, ambitious, or worldly motives, but by a sincere spirit of love and obedience to God, and a desire to edify the church and proclaim the Gospel for the encouragement of sinners, he is assured, by a conviction more or less powerful, that he has the witness of the Spirit with him, that he is called of God to the work of the ministry. Under his guidance, a spiritual application of the command to preach the Gospel, gives to the soul a relish for the holy and divine work commanded; an adoring view of the sweet and wonderful grace of Christ, in instituting and entrusting it to men; a sense of the all-sufficiency of Christ to fulfil His promise in enabling us to discharge the duty; and a conviction of our title to, and interest in, the work prescribed.

A conviction of a call to this work, arising from an audible voice, or an immediate suggestion, is, for the reasons already given, a blind call, not founded upon the truth in the word, but upon what is within the power of imagination, or of Satanic influence to produce. Such a call is,

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natural endowments and evidence necessary to an immediate call, and deny its present existence. In confirmation, they there quote Chemnitius, p. 120; Zanchius, p. 120; Gerhard, p. 121; Luther, 122; Zuingle, p. 123, 124.

\* See this very fully developed in Eade's Gospel Ministry, ch. 1.

† See Bucani Theol., p. 492: Edward's Works, vol. 4, p. 124, 125, 127.

therefore, either a gross delusion, or, if from God, it is the *accompaniment*, but not the *essence* of the call. Such suggestions or sensible signs are not, therefore, to be expected or trusted in—first, because they are extraordinary and unwarranted; second, because they are beside and independent of the Scriptures; and thirdly, because they do not necessarily imply, or require, or produce, those holy desires and qualifications which are spiritual, supernatural and divine, above nature, and altogether beyond the power of Satanic influence.\*

The EVIDENCE of an *external* call to the ministry, is the possession of the natural qualifications fitting for it—and of those spiritual and acquired habits which are laid down in the word as actually necessary. And the evidence of an *internal* call is the conscious exercise of these qualifying graces and gifts, with a conviction more or less free from doubt, assuring us that they were given by the Holy Spirit, and that by them God testifies to the personal application of His command to our souls.

The OBJECT which a heavenly call to the ministry presents to our minds, is in both cases Christ, the head and legislator of the church, whose ministry it is; by whom it was given; by whom it is directed and sustained; and for whose glory it was and is maintained.

The GROUND or WARRANT of this call, or authorized engagement in the ministry, is the command, institution and promise of Christ, making this office permanent in the church, calling men into it, and securing to them assistance in it.

The NECESSITY for such a call, is founded upon the supernatural and divine ends contemplated by the ministry—the glory of God and the salvation of men—which can only be secured by divine appointment, divine warrant, divine authority, divine assistance, and divine blessing.

The ACCEPTANCE of a call to the ministry, is the actual submission of the whole man,—body, soul and spirit,—to the Lord Jesus Christ, in obedience to His command to preach the Gospel, looking to Him for grace and help to fulfil it; an actual entrance upon that course of study which is necessary to prepare for the work;—and the

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\* Edward's Works, vol. 4, p. 127, 128, 130, 131.

actual discharge of its duties, when so prepared. In this act, the soul looks neither to itself, nor to the effects which are to follow, but only to the word and to Him who there speaks.

The END aimed at in a call to the ministry, is not our glory, honor, or comfort, but the glory and honor of the Triune God, as in Christ Jesus He is reconciling the world unto Himself, through the Gospel preached unto them.

The LIFE and POWER of a call to the ministry, consists in an abiding conviction of the divine authority, glory, and infinite importance of the work; of our fitness in some measure to discharge it; of our single and sincere desire to glorify God in it; and of His presence, comfort and blessing the work.\* THIS is "that secret call of which," as Calvin teaches,\* "every minister is conscious before God, but has not the church as a witness of it; I mean, the good testimony of our heart, that we undertake the offered office neither from ambition, nor avarice, nor any other selfish feeling, but a sincere fear of God and desire to edify the Church. This, as I have said, is indeed necessary for every one of us, if we would approve our ministry to God. Still, however, a man may have been duly called by the church, though he may have accepted with a bad conscience, provided his wickedness is not manifest. It is usual also to say, that private men are called to the ministry when *they seem fit and apt to discharge it*; that is, because learning, conjoined with piety and the other endowments of a good pastor, is a kind of preparation for the office. For, those whom the Lord has destined for this great office, he previously provides with the armor which is requisite for the discharge of it, that they may not come empty and unprepared." Thus reasonably speaks this immortal man.

We have ourselves made extensive research into this question, and so far as we have done so, have found—beyond the writers of the Methodist Church, and we need hardly except even them,†—an undeviating uniformity of

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\* Institutes, vol. 3, p. 67, chap. 3, B. 4, sec. 11.

† Mr. Edmondson, one of their writers, in his Treatise on the Ministry, represents the call of the Holy Ghost as being *sensibly* felt, but when he explains *how* this is experienced and proved, he says it is "the inclination of the heart," (p. 78.) "which inclines and draws such persons as are fit to take upon them," &c. He refers to Mr. Fletcher, of whom Mr. Benson says, "he was pressed *in Spirit* to exhort others to seek after the same

views. In no one writer have we found the doctrine of the Reviewer, that “a *supernatural* CONVICTION OF DUTY, wrought by the immediate agency of the Holy Ghost, is an essential element in the evidence of a true vocation to the ministry”—sustained.\* Any such immediate, direct, and self-evident operation of the Holy Spirit, convincing an individual of his duty to enter the ministry is, so far as we know, universally regarded by all judicious writers, as unwarrantable, unattainable and delusive.† Indeed, the same

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blessing,” “and there can be no doubt in the mind of any one,” says Mr. Edmondson, “who knows the character of that great man, that this *pressure of Spirit* was the work of the Holy Ghost. Mr. Edmondson makes the call, therefore, subject to evidence and tests, and in quoting as proofs, Luther, Gilpin, Walsh, and Dr. Leland, only Gilpin *alludes* even to any thing like an *immediate* voice, and he, as well as the others, judged by the effects and results, of the reality of the supposed operation of the Spirit. See p. 65, 71, 74, 78, 80-85.

\* On the dangers resulting from making marks necessary, which are not so made in that word, and of erecting them into tests. Edwards' Works, vol. 4, p. 349, 350, and Ross on the Direct Witness, p. 64, &c.

† As to the Reformers, we believe they unanimously concurred in placing this call *inwardly* in a pious and otherwise qualified mind, and *outwardly*, in what the Augsburg Confession calls “a canonical and regular ordination.” See the Article in the Apol. for the Augsburg Confession, Article xiv., in Hase's Lybri Symbolic, vol., 1, p. 204, and in the Conf. itself; see p. 13. See again authorities from the Reformers to the same effect in the same author, p. 150; also, p. 11, 144, 156, and 554 and 353, 294, 499. See the views of the Reformers treated of in full by Voetius, in his *Politicae Ecclesiasticae*, Tom. 3, 529, 530, 535, 539, &c.

See also Palmer on the Church, vol. 1, part 1, chap. 8. Lazarus Seaman, a member of the Westminster Assembly, has fully examined into this subject, in his “Vindication of the Judgment of the Reformed Churches concerning Ordination,” Lond. 1647. He there shows, that according to them an *internal* call is evidenced by gifts and the people's acceptance, p. 5, and p. 2, Prop. 2, with the proofs, and p. 26, 51. He quotes Zanchius, p. 4, and other Reformers, at p. 14, 28, 29. See also Turretine's Theol., Tom. 3, p. 235, 238, 240, 241-246; Maastricht Theol., vol. 2, p. 788; De Moor's Commentary on Markii Medull, Tom. 6, p. 282-284. See further Bucani Institutiones Theol., Geneva, 1612, locus 40, 2; Wollebius's Christian Divinity, London, 1656, second edition, p. 218. Pictet's Christian Theology, Book 6, chapter 7, p. 448, 446, &c. Spanheim is very strong; see Works, Fol., Tom. 3, p. 791. Stapfer's Theol., vol. 1, p. 363, 432, and vol. 5, p. 36. As to the English Reformers, see in addition Burrough's Summary of Christian Faith and Practice, vol. 2, p. 370, &c. The opinions (taken from all works of authority in that church) are given; see p. 80, 82. Cranmer, p. 400-404; Jewell, p. 410; Nowell's Catechism, p. 412, 419. The Reformatio Legum, p. 421. The Forms of Ordination, p. 31, 32, 96, 97. The Homilies, p. 37, 38. The Collects, p. 93, &c. The Articles, p. 98. See also Hooker's View at length in Eccl. Polity. Bridges on the Christian Ministry, illustrates the doctrine we have stated from Bernard, Quesnel, Calvin and others. See p. 93-103.

views as we have maintained, are advanced, for substance, by our most orthodox divines. "In God's ordinary calls" "to the Gospel Ministry," says Dr. Owen,\* "there is the same sovereignty, though somewhat otherwise exercised. For in such a call, there are three things: 1. A providential designation of a person to such an office, work, or employment. When any office in the house of God, suppose that of the ministry, is fixed and established, the first thing that God doth in the call of any one thereunto, is the providential disposition of the circumstances of his life, directing his thoughts and designs to such an end. And were not the office of the ministry in some places accompanied with many secular advantages, yea provisions (for the lusts and luxuries of men) that are foreign unto it, this entrance into a call for God thereunto, by a mere disposal of men's concerns and circumstances, so as to design the ministry in the course of their lives, would be eminent and perspicuous. But, whilst multitudes of persons out of various corrupt ends, crowd themselves into the entrances of this office, the secret workings of the providence of God towards the disposal of them, whom he really designs unto his work herein, are greatly clouded and obscured. 2. It is a part of this call of God, when he blesseth, succeedeth and prospereth the endeavors of men, to prepare them-

As to the Scotch Reformers and Divines, see the Books of Discipline of that church.

As to the Puritans, see the works of Anthony Burgess on John, p. 497. Hildersham on John, chap. 4, p. 261.

As to the Westminster Assembly and its divines, see "The Divine Right of the Gospel Ministry," by the Provincial Assembly of London, 1654. The work of Lazarus Seaman, as above. The Pulpit's Patronage, by Rev. Thomas Ball, London, 1656, 4to. The works of Rutherford and Gillespie. Baxter's Five Disputations on Ch. Gov., London, 1659, 4to. Disp. 2, p. 109-266. Owen's Works on the Hebrews on chap. 5, vol. 4; vol. 3, p. 38, and in his general works; vol. 19, p. 39, &c. and p. 53. Corbet's Remains, 63-66. See also Owen's Works, vol. 20, p. 400. Here Dr. Owen especially discusses the subject. He shows that there are first, prerequisite qualifications, p. 400; second, an outward call by the church, p. 403, 404; third, inward indications of the mind, given by God; see p. 401-403, &c. See also a Plea for Scripture Ordination, by Rev. James Owen, 2d ed., Lond., 1707, p. 7.

See also Andrew Fuller on the Ministerial Call and Qualifications in Works, vol. 5, p. 207. Bishop Hopkin's Works, vol. 1, p. 495, 496. His interpretation of John 20: 22, 23, as referring to "nothing else but their solemn mission to the ministry," deserves attention, p. 497, 498. Short's Bampton Lectures, p. 209-211.

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\* Owen, vol. 24, p. 38.

selves with those previous dispositions and qualifications which are necessary unto the actual call. and susception of this office. And hereof also there are three parts. First, An inclination of their hearts in compliance with his designation of them unto their office. Where this is not effected, but men proceed according as they are stimulated by *outward* impressions or considerations, God is not as yet at all in this work. Secondly. An especial blessing of their endeavors for the due improvement of their natural faculties and abilities, in study and learning, for the necessary aids and instruments of knowledge and wisdom. Thirdly. The communications of peculiar gifts unto them, rendering them meet and able unto the discharge of the duty of their office, which in an ordinary call is indispensably required as previous to an actual separation unto the office itself. 3. He ordereth things so, as that a person whom he, will employ in the service of his house, shall have an outward call according unto rule, for his admission thereunto. And in all these things, God acts according to his own sovereign will and pleasure.”

To all this the objection will, we know be presented, that as the work of the ministry is especial and extraordinary, and not an ordinary duty, the call to this work must also be extraordinary, immediate and direct from the Holy Ghost.

But we can see no force in the objection:

1. In the first place, the work of the ministry is only one department of that wide field of Christian obligation, effort and usefulness, which is under the direction and control of the Holy Spirit, into which, as we have seen, He calls, and for which He qualifies.

2. The whole work and operation of the Holy Spirit is conducted upon a uniform plan—so that, however various the field, the work, or the effect to be produced—it is one and the same Spirit that worketh all, in all, and by all. The manner of this working of the Holy Spirit in one case, will therefore be His manner in all ordinary cases; and if that manner in one case is secret and unknown, and only evidenced by the state produced, and not by the operation producing it,—then this will be the manner in all cases.

3. This view is sustained by the analogy between the work of the ministry and every other Christian work, and

between the call to the ministry and the call to every other duty and privilege.

In regard to all such cases, there is no difference in the NATURE of the duty, but only in its *degree* of importance.\* All spiritual duties depend alike upon divine appointment and divine assistance. Entire consecration to God is the spirit and principle of all piety, and entire devotion to Him and to His service, is the full and perfect manifestation of piety. The obligation to this entire consecration of all our powers and efforts to the promotion of God's glory in the salvation of men arises from our relation to God in Christ, and rests, therefore, equally upon all men. As it regards any *particular* duty, the obligation springs from the command of God in His word; and the qualifications for it are to be *determined* by that word, while they can only be *imparted* by the Spirit. In all cases, our knowledge of duty arises from the Scriptures; in all cases saving and sanctifying impressions come through them; and in all cases the Holy Spirit is the efficient agent in opening the understanding to perceive and the heart to obey. The Word of God is, therefore, in all cases the guide to duty, the standard of duty, and the warrant of duty. And when our own hearts testify to the existence within us of the qualifications prescribed in that word for any office or duty; of the dispositions it requires; and of the desire and willingness it demands; then, that word assures us that these are the gifts and fruits of the Spirit, and that having given them, He has thereby fitted us for, and called us to, the duty in question.†

No duty is obligatory upon the conscience of a Christian that is not made binding by the Word of God, since the Scriptures "thoroughly furnish unto every good word and work." This word, therefore, is the *external* call to any work. And its call is as general and as extensive as the field of Christian duty, and includes within its range every

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\* See this analogy admitted in the Southern Presb. Review, No. 3, p. 143, 144.

† The divine influence, says Eade, in his truly spiritual and admirable work on The Gospel Ministry, is known not by direct, immediate intuition or knowledge, but first, by its influence and results in the partakers; and second, in the qualities ascribed to it; see p. 99, 223, 208, 215, 216, 303. At the same time, he dwells constantly on the truth, that the call to the ministry in all its parts is certainly from the Holy Ghost, as its efficient cause, root and fountain. See p. 304, 309, 312, 323, 324, 351.

specific requirement.\* The *internal* call is in every case the operation of the Holy Spirit in the soul, by which this external call is made to commend itself to the heart, and to produce an internal compliance with it.†

The application of passages of Scripture enforcing any *particular* duty—as for instance that of the ministry—is in accordance with a general rule pursued by the Holy Ghost, in His illuminating and saving operations. In such cases the truth is special, the duty special, and the application special, but the power by which an application is made, and the manner in which it is made, is in all cases analogous.‡ Truths referring to special persons and to special cases, are, therefore, as a universal rule, only accompanied by special illumination and enforcement in the case and circumstances designed.§

The ministry, however, is no more special as a privilege and duty than the Christian calling, or than any other particular Christian duty.¶ All are permitted and bestowed by sovereign goodness. The proper discharge of all is beyond mere natural ability and capacity. All are unwarranted, except to those specially called to undertake them. As is the case with all other Christian duties, therefore, the ministry depends upon divine appointment; its qualifications are measured by divine requirements; fitness for its discharge proceeds from the divine bounty; obligation to use the gifts thus bestowed is created by the divine command; and the sense of *individual* responsibility, is an inference from our actually possessing these gifts, wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, and from our opportunity of engaging in the work.

The ministry is an instituted and permanent means of grace and “labor of love.” And as the Holy Ghost instituted and ordained it, so He continues it to the end of time, by an ordinary and regular method of procedure.\*\*

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\* See Turretine, Tom. 3, p. 240.

† See Bellamy’s Works, vol. 2, p. 537, 538.

‡ Halyburton’s Works, p. 543.

§ Jamieson’s Reality, p. 23, 84.

¶ For instance, the office and work of Deacons, Elders, Teachers, Professors, Missionaries, Evangelists, &c. &c. On the doctrine of the general calling of Christians, in reference to all duty, see also, in addition to the authors already quoted, Baxter’s Works. Index, term Calling.

\*\* See Hurrion’s Works, Vol. 3, p. 304, 305, 306.

The ground of a call to it, is found in the whole doctrine of Scripture, concerning the nature and necessity of the office, and the obligations to fulfil it.\* This doctrine is general and unlimited in its application, except to persons of the female sex, or of natural incapacity, or such as are destitute of the required qualifications to whom it does not apply.† The ability to apply this doctrine of the ministry to himself individually, and to assume the actual discharge of its functions, is the result of its special application by the Holy Ghost to his soul, which application is to be sought and secured in this, just as it is in every other case of Christian privilege and duty.‡

To make a call to the ministry depend, therefore, upon a direct and immediate suggestion of the Spirit, constraining an individual to engage in this work, is to teach that the Scriptures are not the only infallible guide to duty, and that they are not able “THOROUGHLY TO FURNISH FOR EVERY GOOD WORK;” since the ministry is expressly described as “A GOOD WORK;”—it is to teach that God immediately, directly, and independently of His own Word, which is perfect as a rule of duty, reveals and imposes duty; it is to teach God does this through evidence, which opens up the way to the greatest possible delusion, and which is incapable of certain authentication;§ it is to substitute for an authentic and infallible directory and rule of duty one that is variable, uncertain, delusive, indeterminable,—one which even Mr. Gurney admits only *mature* Christians can discern, and which *all* admit, must be tested by the only sure test, and proved genuine by its subsequent results:— and unless, therefore, this evidence of a ministerial call is resolved essentially into the combined testimony of the Word, its saving application and effects, and the secret but effectual operation of the Spirit leading to a comfortable persuasion of duty, it is *vitally* different from what we must believe to be rational, scriptural, and attainable.¶ The

\* See Owen’s Works, Vol. 3, p. 352, 351, 239, 240, 248, 297, 296, 299.

† Do. do., vol. 20, p. 406, 419-421.

‡ Do. do. vol. 3, p. 352, 239, 240, 299.

§ See Dr. Wardlaw’s Letters to the Society of Friends, p. 328, 329, 330, 332, and Durham on Revelation, who shows that the supposed impulse of the Spirit is no sure sign, p. 72, 73.

¶ See Dr. Wardlaw’s Letters to the Society of Friends, p. 337, 341, 345, 350.

Scriptures nowhere promise such a call, and nowhere give rules by which to ascertain and determine it.\*

On the contrary, while the person claiming such sensible evidence of his call, may be himself deceived,—and while no other individual on earth can ascertain or test its existence, God, by express appointment, has made it the duty of his people and of his officers to judge, of the call to the ministry *in every case*, by tests which must supersede and set aside any inward impression whatever, if not in accordance with them. Were then such a direct and sensible call necessary, God would thus be made to require evidence of a divine call from the individual who seeks the ministry, which is beyond the possible scrutiny of the parties whom He has nevertheless appointed judges of His call, and distinct from, and often perhaps contradictory to, the evidence which these judges are required to demand.

Nor is this the only absurdity implied in such a theory of the ministerial call, for as the ministry can only be delegated to such as are authorized by Christ, His people and officers must have as certain evidence that Christ has called the individual as the individual himself. And hence, if a conscious, supernatural, and direct call is necessary to him, it is equally necessary to them; and this is true as it regards Ruling Elders and Deacons, just as much as in the case of Ministers, all being alike of divine appointment and divine calling. But can we believe that God would subject either the individual or his church to such uncertainty and painful, contrariety; or, that He would place the evidence of a call to such a duty as that of the ministry in a state of feeling which enthusiasts have ever been ready to claim; which is found to exist just in proportion to the demand made for it, which is found generally as strong in calling to the preaching of error as to the preaching of the truth; which becomes stronger the more erratic and changeful its subject becomes, (e. g. Montanus, Swedenborg,† Joe Smith, &c.;) which is wholly unnecessary to the clear and certain determination of duty; which is dangerous and delusive to the individual and to others; and which, while it encourages the self-confident and pre-

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\* See do. do., 342, 343, 371.

† He had no doubt of his sincere call by immediate suggestion of the Spirit. See *New Englander*, Oct., 1847, p. 500.

sumptuous, discourages or repels the humble, the conscientious and the sincere? For ourselves, we must regard such a supposition as derogatory to God, to the Holy Ghost, to Scripture, to reason, and to the ministry itself. And when we know that a mediate call and appointment to the ministry, through the instrumentality of men, is expressly declared by God himself to have been nevertheless determined efficaciously and purposely by the Holy Ghost, and to have been the gift of Christ, (Acts 20: 28; Acts 13: 2 and 4; Acts 14: 23; and 1 Tim. 4: 14,) we may well shrink back from originating or imposing tests of duty which may keep back many from this work to the injury both of themselves and of the church. For, let it be borne in mind, that while it is true, that to enter the work of the ministry uncalled is presumption, it is equally and emphatically true, that to refuse to enter it when called—however feebly that call may be expressed, if given at all—is dangerous rebellion. “The communication of gifts unto men,” says Owen, “is ordinarily accompanied with a powerful and effectual inclination of the minds of men to undertake the work and engage in it, against those objections, discouragements, oppositions and difficulties, which present themselves unto them in their undertaking. This is so, I say, ordinarily, for there are more instances than one, of those who, having the word of prophecy committed unto them, instead of going to Ninevah, do consult their own reputation, ease, and advantage, and so tack about to Tarshish. AND THERE ARE NOT A FEW, WHO HIDE AND NAPKIN UP THEIR TALENTS, WHICH ARE GIVEN THEM TO TRADE WITHAL, THOUGH REPRESENTED UNTO US UNDER ONE INSTANCE ONLY. BUT THESE MUST ONE DAY ANSWER FOR THEIR DISOBEDIENCE UNTO THE HEAVENLY CALL.”

The Holy Spirit, as has been seen, is pleased to carry on

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\* On the lawfulness of this argument, see Southern Presb. Review, No. 2, p. 136, 147.

† See Wardlaw's Letters, *ibid.*, p. 49, 50, 53. See also Durham on Revelation, p. 69, and Hooker's Eccl. Pol., B. 5, chap. 57, sec. 9.

‡ See all the passages requiring a regular order of introduction by a Presbytery, and Durham on Revelation, p. 68. See also 1 Kings 19: 19., when Elijah is made to call Elisha.

§ Biblical Repertory, 1831, p. 197, 199-205, 208, 209.

|| Owen, vol. 24, p. 238.

His operations in and by His own word, and in and by our faculties. The only other point to be noticed, and on which we think the Reviewer's theory most seriously wrong, is that He does this *instrumentally*. He works in and by *means*. This He does in perfect consistency with His sovereign, free and divine character, as the Lord and giver of spiritual life and power—"the Father of lights from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift."<sup>\*</sup> The use of means on the part of the Holy Spirit in nature and providence, and in the ordinances and other instrumentality employed in working out saving results, is no more inconsistent with the divine prerogatives and glory of this ever blessed agent in one case than in another.

According to the general opinion of writers, therefore, the distinction between the *extraordinary* call of prophets and apostles, and the *ordinary* call of ministers under the established order of the church is, that the former was generally (for it was not always and certainly so<sup>†</sup>) immediate, direct and independent of the word and of existing officers, while the latter is always mediate, that is, through and in conjunction with, the instrumentality of man.<sup>‡</sup> The use of means in leading to this call, has reference to the internal as well as to the external call, and to the evidence of that call as appreciable by ourselves and others. The Holy Ghost employs such means, in order to influence a man's views preparatory to his engaging in the work, by leading him to think of it, to desire it, and to shape his course of life and study with a view to it; and they affect also his final conviction of duty, and his actual determination to engage in the work itself. The manifestation of the Holy Spirit's operations are also, it is to be remembered, different in different individuals, so that what is the evidence of a sincere guidance to the work of the ministry in one case may not be in another. The circumstances of the case, and the character and condition of the individual, will diversify the character of the Spirit's operations, and the nature and

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<sup>\*</sup> See Perkins' Works, vol. 3, p. 483. Heber's Bampton Lectures, p. 326, 327, 334, 328: "In no part of the divine word is this influence represented as operating or taking effect, except in connection with the employment of means." Henderson on Inspiration, p. 52, &c.

<sup>†</sup> 1 Kings 19: 19.

<sup>‡</sup> See Turretine, Tom. 3, p. 241.

hence individuals in “*desiring* this office,” are not to look for all *possible*, or even for all *desirable* evidence of the Spirit’s work leading them to it, but only for that degree of evidence which, is *sufficient*. And who will deny that one clear mark of such a call, specified and imparted by the Holy Spirit in his own word, is sufficient, however it may be clouded with doubts?\*

The call to the ministry, therefore, is not less connected with, and dependent upon human instrumentality, than a call to any other Christian duty. The obligations requiring it, taken in connection with the express limitations of the word of God, as it regards sex and fitness, is general, resting primarily upon the whole church, and secondarily, upon every member of the church not thus specifically excluded from it. Means must, therefore, be used by others and by themselves, and preëminently by parents and pastors, in order to ascertain the will of God concerning the children and youth of the church.

In calling persons into the Christian ministry, there is a great work to be done by the church. The commission of Christ is general, and is made specially and savingly applicable through the instrumentality of the church to whomsoever the Lord our God shall call.† The Christian ministry was given by Christ to the whole body of the church, and the entire doctrine concerning it was, and is addressed to that church. Believers generally, therefore, are under obligation to see to it that this ministry is perpetuated and maintained, and to use every proper means to secure this end. Hence, they are bound to “pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into the harvest.” But THEY MUST DO MORE THAN THIS, OR THEY ARE VERILY GUILTY CONCERNING THIS MATTER. Prayer without effort is presumption. The nature of the ministry—its necessity—its design—its permanence—its qualifications—its obligations and demands—these all constitute a part of what Christ has taught, and what concerns His glory, and these, therefore, must constitute a part of the teaching of the church. All these things ought to be diligently en-

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\* See Dr. M’Leod’s True Godliness, p.152-166,174,167,199, 201-211.

† See Presbytery and not Prelacy, the Scriptural and Primitive Polity of the Churches, p. 72-88. See Owen’s Works. Turretine, Tom. 3, p. 235, 239, 245, 246.

forced, and brought before the minds of her youth, and before the minds of parents and instructors. Parents ought to dedicate their children to God and to the work of the ministry. They ought to study the natural bent and gifts of their children, and when they see a hopeful capacity for this work, they ought to train up such children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, with a special view to the ministry.\* Timothy, among Apostolic preachers; Origen and Athanasius, among the Fathers, and a host of the most burning and shining lights of every age, have been thus consecrated and trained up for the ministry.† A call to the ministry is often given in infancy, and is manifested by the bent and inclination of the mind, and “implies in all cases, so far as is necessary, a call to those studies and pursuits which will fit and prepare for the actual discharge of the ministry,‡ not being *primarily* but only ultimately to the work itself. The ministerial call, is primarily a call to diligent preparation for the work, in order that those qualifications which are the result of supernatural grace, or of human industry may be sought, and by God’s blessing, obtained. And the latter class of qualifications, not being now miraculously bestowed, such diligent preparation and study, as Durham teaches, is in every case, absolutely and by evident divine appointment necessary.§ Where, therefore, the Spirit truly calls any man to the work of the ministry, it may be laid down as a certain rule that He leads to all the preparatory means necessary for it.||

Hence, pastors and elders should carefully look out among their youth for such as give evidence of natural fitness for this work ; and in addition to’ the teaching of the pulpit, they ought to bring the subject of the ministry before their minds and advise them to pursue a course of study in reference to it, if peradventure God may open up to them an effectual door of entrance.\*\*

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\* See Perkins’ Works, vol. 1, p. 759. For parents to neglect this duty, as it regards every calling, he makes a positive sin. See also Owen’s Works, vol. 3, p. 339, 340.

† See De Moore’s Comment, on Mark. Tom. 6, p. 282, 283. Mr. Porter’s Discourse, p. 14.

‡ De Moore, Tom. 6, p. 282.

§ On the Revelation, p. 216.

|| Do., p. 72, 73, and Dr. Howe on Theol. Education.

\*\* Do., and Greenham’s Works, Fol. 1605, p. 24, 726.

The church is under special obligation to use diligently all the means and agencies appointed in the word and by the church, to “commit this ministry to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also,” and “to lay hands suddenly on no man,” but first to train them up under her own direction in the schools of the prophets in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, that they may be “proved,” and “thoroughly furnished for this good work.” Such was not only the doctrine but the practice also of the reformers, and of our venerated fathers. And it is still the universal practice, as it regards the calling of deacons, ruling elders, Sabbath school teachers, professors of theology, &c. who are all called to their work and persuaded to enter upon it—not because they seek the office, and urge their call and fitness for the work, but because the church, judging that they are competent, calls them to the work, and by moral suasion “compels them” to engage in it.

“It were useful to the church,”<sup>\*</sup> says Durham, “and conducting exceedingly for the clearing of entrance to the ministry, that there were some choice and way of trial, both of such as might be presently found fit to enter the ministry, and also of others that might be advised to study in reference thereunto; and that it might not be left unto men themselves alone, whether they will offer themselves to trial in reference to that charge or not. For so many may, and no question do, smother good gifts, which might be useful, thereby prejudging the church thereof, who, by this grave, convincing, and (ere it fail) authoritative way, might be brought forth, and would more easily be made to yield thereunto, when the burden thereof were not wholly left on themselves; whereas, now, partly from shame and modesty, partly from custom and undervaluing of the ministry, none ordinarily, who otherwise have a temporal being or any place, do betake themselves to this calling: and it is hard to say; that either none such are gifted for it, or that such gifts should be lost.” . . . . . “There is no question but the church might call a member, upon supposition of his qualifications, to trial, and (being found conform to what was supposed) might appoint him to the ministry; and that member ought to yield to both, from that duty that

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<sup>\*</sup> Durham, 73, 74, 75.

lyeth on every member in reference to the whole body, which is to be preferred to any particular member's interest." . . . . . "And seeing all incorporations and commonwealths have this liberty to call and employ their members, without respect to their own inclinations, so as it may be most useful for the good of the body; this which nature teacheth, and experience hath conferred in them, cannot be denied to the church, which is a body and hath its own policy given to it by Jesus Christ for the building up of itself. This way is also agreeable to Scripture, and to the practice of the primitive times:" . . . . . "By all which it appears like the Apostolic way to enquire for men that may be found qualified for the ministry: and also, that shunning or repining to enter the ministry in any person found qualified for it, and thus called to it, hath never been supposed as allowable by the Apostles; but it was looked upon as a duty for those that were so called to obey, as it was the duty of others to enquire for such. To this also may that exhortation of Peter relate, 1 Peter 5: 2, "Feed the flock of God which is amongst you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly," &c. whereby it would seem, that he is pressing obedience from those that were called, that willingly they should undertake the oversight of God's flock. Which words, if well considered, would pinch exceedingly a tender conscience of any man, if a call were thus pressed upon him. And indeed, if it were at men's option arbitrarily to refuse such a call, the directions that are given to people and ministers for searching out, calling and ordaining such, were to no purpose, for thus they might all be frustrated." . . . . . "This is also the established doctrine of our church in the first Book of Discipline, in that head that concerneth prophesying and interpreting. Scripture, whereof these are the words, "Moreover, men in whom is supposed to be any gift, which might edify the church, if they were employed, must be charged by the ministers and elders, to join themselves with the session and company of interpreters, to the end that the Kirk may judge, whether they be able to serve to God's glory and the profit of the Kirk, in the vocation of ministers, or not. And, if any be found disobedient, and not willing to communicate the gifts and special graces of God with their brethren, after sufficient admonition, *discipline must proceed against*

*them*, provided that the civil magistrate concur with the judgment and election of the Kirk; *for no man may be permitted as best pleaseth him to live within the Kirk of God*; but every man must be constrained, by fraternal admonition and correction, to bestow his labors, when of the Kirk he is required, to the edification of others. Which, if it were zealously followed, might, by God's blessing, prove both profitable and honorable to the church."

Such means, used by pastors, elders and parents to press upon the minds of youth the nature and obligation of the ministry, do not as some object in any degree conflict with the sovereign purpose and intention of God, because they only present to the minds of the young a work which God has appointed—the requirement and duty God has commanded—and the promise which God has imparted. And as it is only in God's name this is done, so it is only to His Spirit all parties look for ability, to make these means effectual.\* In using such instrumentality in the calling of His ministers, God eminently displays His sovereignty, dignifies His church and people, glorifies Himself by making use of His creatures, and at the same time secures the order, harmony, efficiency, and perpetuity of His church. And that God is pleased with such efforts on the part of his church and people, appears from the fact, that many of the most eminent ministers in ancient times, as for instance, Chrysostom and Ambrose, and among the moderns, as in the case of Calvin, were led to enter the ministry through the urgency of ministers.† The case of Mr. Durham, to whom, as has been said in connection with Professor Dickson, "The sum of saving knowledge" is attributed,‡ and who was in his day a burning and a shining light—may be given as an illustration of the practice of the Scottish church at that day.§ "His call and coming forth to the holy ministry, says his biographer, was truly remarkable, which was this: The Scots army being to engage with the

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\* See Turretine, vol. 1, p. 458.

† See also the case of Elijah, I Kings 19. 19.

‡ Formerly bound up with the Confession of Faith, as it is still in Scotland.

§ The work to which his life is prefixed (on the Revelation) is introduced by Baillie and Carstians. See p. 8,9. Mr. Dickson, was himself six years a Professor before he was appointed a Minister. See Select Writings of, vol. 1, p. 8.

English army in sight, he judged it meet to call his company and soldiers, (for he was in the army,) to prayer before the engagement. And as he was beginning to pray, it happened that the Rev. Mr. David Dickson, Professor of Divinity, then at Glasgow, came riding by the army, who seeing the soldiers addressing themselves to prayer, and hearing the voice of one praying, drew near and lighted from his horse, and joined with them, who was so much taken with Mr. Durham's prayer, that after prayer, Mr. Dickson called for the captain, and having conversed with him a little, he did solemnly charge him, that so soon as this piece of service he was engaged in was over, he should devote himself to serve God in the holy ministry, for to that he judged the Lord called him. But though as yet Mr. Durham had no clearness to hearken to Mr. Dickson's desire, yet two remarkable providences falling out just upon the back of Mr. Dickson's solemn charge, served very much to clear his way to comply with Mr. Dickson's desire."

..... "Accordingly, in pursuance of this his resolution, he very quickly after went to Glasgow, and studied divinity under Mr. Dickson, then Professor there, and made such proficiency in his studies, that in a short time (being called thereto) he humbly offered himself to trials, anno 1646, and was licensed by the Presbytery of Irvine to preach the Gospel."

Equally striking and confirmatory of our views, is the testimony of Halyburton, as given in his own Memoirs, in the chapter on his entrance into the ministry: "It was," says he,\* "like hell once to entertain a thought of preaching to others what I did not believe myself; but now things began to alter, and the Lord led me on to that which I declined before; and I find the steps of his providence about me in this matter do deserve to be remembered by me: 1. My mother did devote me from my childhood to this work, and often expressed her desire to lend me to the Lord all the days of my life, to serve him in the Gospel of his Son. This has often had its own weight on my spirit. 2. The course of my studies had looked that way;" .....

..... He brought me under a lively sense of that forcible tie that was hereon laid on me, to lay out myself in

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\* Memoirs, Part 4, chap. 1.

any way that he should call me to be serviceable to him; and I was made to think that I should be the more happy the more directly my work should look that way. While, like Peter, I was musing sometimes on these things, about the month of April, 1698; two ministers were sent to my great surprise, from the Presbytery of Kirkaldy, urging me to enter on trials: I did altogether decline the proposal, because I had no reading, wanted the languages, and had been much diverted from study." "The ministers continued to solicit me, and press home their desire; but while I stood out against their solicitations, though not without some secret struggle, and doubting whether in so doing I might not be declining duty, I began to observe the Lord raising a storm against me;" . . . . . "While I was in this case Mr. Riddel did, May, 30, come to the Wemyss, and, after much converse and many reasonings, charged me to try and have my thoughts on my text, and then do or stand off, as the Lord should clear duty; which I did consent to. But after this, I still did shift and decline, and could not think of a compliance; and then, December 28, Provost Ramsay wrote earnestly desiring me to take the charge of my Lord Maitland." . . . . "Having at Mr. Forrester's earnest desire, undertaken a homily in the new college, which I was to deliver next week, I took time to consider of it: and after that I had, on Feb. 28, 1699, delivered my discourse on Job 28: 28, I went to visit my acquaintance, worthy Mr. Shiels, who did urge me to enter on trials, with that gravity and concern that had more weight on my spirit than all that had been spoken to me." "The Presbytery of Kirkaldy, March 16, 1699, urged me, to try a common head, and if I was not, after that, clear to proceed, promised to leave me to my choice; whereupon I consented, and delivered it, April 20, when I accepted of a text." &c.

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\* Investigation will shew that these examples are not exceptions to a general rule, but are themselves illustrations of it. We have noted some to which we will refer, selecting that very valuable history of the Reformers, Puritans, and other eminent English divines, Middleton's Evangelical Biography, 4 vols., 8vo. (Ecolampadius changed his designed profession, of law for that of theology, "being led and guided thereto by love of the truth," which he had been led to embrace. (Vol.-1, p. 86.) Zuingle appears to have been early designed and trained for the work, (vol. 1, p. 100.) Bilney abandoned the law when converted to the truth, and devoted him-self wholly to the study of divinity, (vol. 1, p. 104.) Such was the case

If, then, it is manifestly the duty of parents, pastors, and elders to use efforts to bring the subject, of the ministry to the proper consideration of such as appear to be suitable for it—it is manifestly the duty of all those who have reason to think they possess in, any degree the necessary qualifications for the work, to examine into its claims upon them, and God’s purpose concerning them. Hence, the office of the ministry is declared by the Apostles, (1 Tim. 3: 1,) to be “a good,” a useful, and an honorable “work.” “He who desireth it,” that is, reaches or stretches out towards it, he who longs after and tries to gain this office, (for which he the Apostle lays down, the social, moral, and ecclesiastical qualifications,) is commended by the Apostle.\* In his word, God in effect says to every one whom he has suitably qualified, “Whom shall I send, who shall go for us?” and to this they should be found replying: “Then said I, here Lord am I, send me.” He who cherishes an inclination to this work, with a proper sense of its nature, and of the necessity of seeking it in that way of orderly preparation and trial which God has ordained, manifests

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with Frith, (p. 123,) with Tindale, (p. 128,) with Lambert, (p. 139,) with Urbanus Regius, (p. 145,) with Capito, (p. 148,) Grynaeus, (p. 149,) Myconius, (251,) Bucer, (264,) Hooper, (317,) Bradford, (353,) Justus Jonas, (374,) Latimer, (378,) Ridley, (403, 404,) Peter Martyr, (500,) Calvin and Jewell were both early devoted to the ministry, and on receiving the truth, began to preach it. Knox was led to the ministry by the bent of his inclinations, (vol. 2, p. 133) and on conviction of the truth, became a Protestant minister, (p. 134.) Such was Gilpin’s history also (p. 192 and 196.) Ussher, from infancy, had a fondness for study, and gave up a paternal estate in order to pursue divinity, vol. 3, p. 313. Bishop Reynolds was also early inclined to the work and prepared for it, (p. 424;) and Manton, (429,) and Herbert, who refers his call to God, “who put into my heart,” he says, “these good desires and resolutions, (p. 56, 54, 50, 49.) Sibbes entered the ministry as soon as converted, (vol. 3, p. 70.) Bishop Hall was from infancy devoted to the ministry, and educated for it (vol. 3, p. 352.) So was Charnock trained, (445, 446.) Owen was diverted to the ministry from other pursuits, as soon as he received a spiritual change, (462.) So also Jacomb, (vol. 4, p. 314.) Leighton was educated for the work, (vol. 4, p. 487.) This was the case with Baxter, (p. 16, 17,) with Flavel, (48,) P. Henry, M. Henry, Burkitt, Harvey and Watts, (see p. 110, 240, 241, 265.) Doddridge, without assistance, could not have entered the ministry, (283.) Davies was devoted to this work before his birth, and then trained for it, (341.) So with Whitfield, (419,) &c. &c.

\*See all the Commentaries on this passage. See also Hooker’s *Ecl. Polity*, B. 5, ch. 77, sec. 13; Perkins’ *Works*, vol. 1, p. 759. Greesham’s *Works*, p. 24, 726.

a commendable spirit,\* and need not hesitate to act upon his desire, for says Owen,† “There are invariable rules to try men and their ministry at all times, whether they are sent of God or not. The doctrine which they teach, the ends which they promote, the lives which they lead, the circumstances of the seasons wherein they appear, will sufficiently manifest whence such teachers are.” A desire for the work of the ministry, if sincere and directed to the glory of God, is placed by the Rev. Robert Trail, among the leadings of God in calling to the ministry, which call he considers as made clear, when this desire leads to diligence in the use of all the means of attaining fitness for it, and to some edifying success in it. “So that, indeed a man ordinarily can never be so well confirmed, in the faith of his being called of God, until he make some essay in this work.” (1 Tim. 3: 10.)‡

Every young man, therefore, not naturally incapacitated, is bound to investigate this subject. The ministry is a good and glorious work—it is a most worthy object of desire—it is a work which all are bound in some way to uphold, maintain and elevate, and it may therefore be the duty of such a young man, or such a man even if of mature years, to do this by becoming ministers themselves. This question every individual must examine and decide in the fear of God. They must ascertain the *natural* qualifications for it, and examine whether they possess them. They must inquire into the *special* qualifications laid down for it by the Apostle, and see how far they may hope to attain to them. They must consider the *duties* of the ministry, and examine how far they can hope willingly to discharge them. They must look at its *trials*, and “examine themselves” how they can hope to bear them. They must analyze its *motives*, and ascertain how far they are actuated by them. They are to pray, to read, to take advice, and *in every other way*, according to the Scriptures, to seek by “doing God’s will to know the mind of the Lord.” NO YOUNG MAN IS GUILTLESS WHO HAS NOT DONE

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\* See Turretine, Tom. 3, p. 238. Dutch Annotations. Diodati. The German Bible, and Tonson’s Bible, with Notes.

† On the Hebrews.

‡ See his Discourse on the Ministry in the Morning Exercises, vol. 3, p. 20, 203. See Dr. M’Leod’s True Godliness, p. 167.

ALL THIS , AND MORE. If he has done all this, and then finds himself conscientiously excluded from the work, by natural, providential, or any other *certain* hindrances, then, and NOT TILL THEN, can he rest satisfied that he “may sit down and take his ease in Zion.” But, if a young man has never considered this subject, and its claims upon his attention; if he has *taken it for granted*, that he cannot serve God in this work; if he has *made light* of the whole subject; and regarded it as unworthy of his investigation;— and if he has considered the work itself as beneath his ambitious aspirations; then may the curse of God rest upon him and upon his whole course of life, “because he came not up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord, against the mighty.” That many do thus suffer, because of their unwillingness to hear, and answer God’s call to this work, made to them in his word and providence, we verily believe. That many, who ought to “prove their own selves,” whether or not God would have them to enter the ministry, “care for none of these things,” and are heinously guilty before God, we verily believe. That inadequate views of the true dignity, honor, and importance of the ministry, and of its paramount claims, above all other kinds of service, to an ample and sufficient support, encourage this indisposition on the part of many to think of the ministry as a business for life, we also verily believe. And that all views which, foster this Gallio spirit are necessarily and very fatally injurious to the church and to the individuals themselves, and are therefore most earnestly to be deprecated and contended against, we do also most earnestly believe.

In conclusion, let us say that if in this condition of the general Christian mind in reference to the subject of the ministry and its paramount obligation, God makes it evident by putting the desire into their hearts—that he “has chosen the poor of this world,” and called them to this “good work”—then most firmly do we believe that IT IS THE PRIVILEGE AND DUTY of the church to encourage and sustain them;—to rejoice that the Lord of the harvest has sent them into his vineyard;—to rejoice in being permitted to cooperate with Him in preparing and fitting them for the work;—and to feel assured that God can still glorify himself, by selecting, as his ambassador, the more humble members of his church. “Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness

of God is stronger than men. For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen; yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. (1 Cor. 1: 25.)