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## A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE MISSIONS OF THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

Our Church has been engaged in Foreign Mission work since 1866. The history of her missionary endeavor is, therefore, short. It is like the history of the Church herself as an independent organization. But the history of the Presbyterian Church South, albeit her career is so short, has many lessons for the Churches of the Lord Jesus Christ throughout the Earth; and the history of her efforts to preach the Gospel among heathen peoples should be regarded by herself at least as of great practical importance as well as of deep interest.

We have undertaken in another place to give a compendious account of the Foreign Missionary effort of our Church.\* But our limits in that place forbade our giving any particular and detailed account of the several Missions which the Church has planted.

Accordingly it is proposed in the present paper to sketch in a meagre way the planting and progress of these several missions. We cannot promise in the following pages any of that life which could have been infused into the history had we had access to such letters of missionaries as must be stored in our Committee's rooms, or must be in the possession of their more familiar personal friends. We must, also, confess that, in many instances, the official reports of our Committee and such letters from missionaries, as we have been able to get at through their publication, have not sufficed to give that exact information which was desired; so that we have had to conten-

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\*See Southern Presbyterians, pp. 362-371. (In American Church History Series.)

## A CALL TO THE MINISTRY.

PROF. T. R. ENGLISH.

Attention is directed to this theme, not because of its novelty, nor because it has not been ably and thoroughly discussed, nor yet because the writer has any new theory to propound; but rather because of the fact that it is a most *timely* theme, and one to which the attention of the church cannot be called too often. It is a question of great practical importance, and yet one concerning which erroneous views are extremely prevalent, not only among those who look upon it merely as a matter for speculation, but also among those who are vitally interested.

It can hardly be doubted but that there are those in the ministry, or knocking at its doors, who have never been truly called thereto; and perhaps a like number who have been called, and yet have hitherto failed to recognize that call, or at least are in painful uncertainty touching this important matter.

The necessity of a *divine* call to this high and responsible office is so patent that it is almost a work of supererogation to present the proof of it. Reason itself demands that it should be so. No one has the right to represent another, or to speak in his name, unless duly authorized to do so. Every government appoints its own ambassadors, and duly accredits them; and even the vilest criminal claims the inherent right of nominating his own attorney. What an anomaly it would be, if the power to appoint ambassadors for the "King of Kings" were committed to another, or if it were left to anyone who might choose to do so, to undertake an office which involves the spiritual and eternal welfare of a perishing world, as well as the success, yea the very existence, of the Redeemer's kingdom! Think of one presuming to offer pardon, without being *commissioned* to do so; or denouncing judgment without express authority from the Lord himself! When we turn to the Word of God, we find that the Prophets traced back their authority to Jehovah himself. The theocratic kings wielded a sceptre put into their hands by the Ruler of the universe, and the priests ministered at the altar only by divine appointment.

Our Lord ever insisted that he came not of himself, but was "sent" of God. The Apostles received their commission directly from the Lord Jesus, and when they went about to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Judas, they prayed saying: "Thou Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two *thou* hast chosen." Paul never wearied of reminding his hearers that he was an apostle "by the will of God." These and similar facts do not directly prove the necessity of a divine call, but analogy points unerringly to such a conclusion.

But direct proof is not wanting. Our Lord, having called the attention of his disciples to the need of laborers, said to them: "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth laborers into his harvest," thus claiming it as his prerogative alone to send them forth, so that not even an apostle, nor a college of apostles could give this authority. But not to dwell on this point, and passing by other passages of scripture, it is sufficient to call attention to the words of Paul addressed to the Elders of Ephesus: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the *Holy Ghost hath made you overseers.*" Not only were they *divinely called* to the discharge of the duties of the office, but *the particular sphere* in which they were to discharge those duties was likewise fixed by the same high authority. The necessity of a divine call, being the dictate alike of Reason and Revelation, is firmly maintained by all evangelical denominations, and need not be argued here any further.

Here emerges another question, however, concerning which there is by no means the same unanimity of opinion: "*How does God call men into the ministry?*" In order to avoid confusion it is important to observe that the term "call," as applied to the ministry, has two distinct but related meanings. A church "calls" a minister as its pastor by *electing* him to this office, and then "calls" him by *communicating* to him the fact of his election. So God "calls" a man to the gospel ministry, in the sense that he chooses or selects him for this purpose, and then "calls" him by making known the fact that he has chosen him. It is the latter sense of the term with which we are now concerned, and the question we are now to consider is this: "How does God communicate to those concerned the fact that he has chosen a particular individual to this office?"

This election, or selection, like that of the individual to life eternal, is secret and hidden in the bosom of God. It is not blazoned on the skies. No trumpet-tongued angel proclaims it. No voice from heaven declares it to astonished listeners. No visible commission bearing Heaven's own seal attests it. How then can we be assured of the reality of that which we have not seen, and which has not been directly revealed? The allusion just made to our election to life eternal suggests the answer to this query. That is secret, and yet it may be known to ourselves and others, for Paul writing to the Thessalonians, says: "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." Now as the election of an individual may be certified, not only to himself, for his own comfort and encouragement, but to others as well; so when God elects an individual to this high and holy office, he makes it known not only to the one called, but also to others, and especially to his church in which he is to be an office-bearer.

According to the views of the Presbyterian church, and we believe also in strict accordance with the Word of God, whenever one has been chosen of God as his ambassador, this fact is in due time communicated to three parties, viz.: (1) The individual chosen. (2) A particular church or congregation. i. e. The church considered as the body to whom he is sent to minister. (3) A court of the church (Presbytery). i. e. The church considered as Christ's vicegerent upon earth.

Let us consider these in turn.

1st. The Individual. It is agreed on all hands that the individual himself, as having the deepest possible interest in the matter, should be assured of the fact that this choice has fallen upon him; but when we come to enquire *how or by what means* this momentous fact is made known to him, there is a wide difference of opinion. It is contended by some that God indicates his choice simply by giving those qualifications which seem to give promise of usefulness in the ministry. "*The power to do* defines the duty and creates the call." Others insist that the call is made known by the needs of the field, in conjunction with supposed fitness for the work. Others again, that the desire for the work is a providential indication, which, if not contradicted by positive disqualifications, affords sufficient warrant for engaging in it.

Without stopping to discuss these and similar views in detail, let us consider what seems to us the true method by which

God makes known his will in this important matter.

Beyond all question, the possession of certain qualifications, such as piety, experience, aptness to teach, &c., do point in the direction of the ministry, but they are of the nature of *negative evidence*. The possession of piety, for instance, does not prove that one is called of God to preach, for there is urgent need of piety in all the walks of life; but let it be remembered on the other hand, that the absence of piety is most conclusive evidence that he is not called. So of the other qualifications mentioned, and others of like character. Undoubtedly these are finger-boards pointing in the direction of the ministry, but stopping short of it, and the greater the number, and the more marked the character of these qualifications, the more confidently may be expect to find in the possessor of them the Lord's chosen. The miner well knows that it is useless for him to seek for gold except in certain gold-bearing rocks, but the most promising strata may yield no gold. Even the godly Samuel, fresh from his mourning over Saul's sad failure, and with a profound sense of the nation's needs, was so impressed by the apparent fitness for the throne of Jesse's eldest son, that he could but exclaim: "Surely the Lord's anointed is before him!" But the Lord said unto him: "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because *I have refused him*; for the Lord seeth not as man seeth."

In addition to these gifts and graces, the possession of which at least suggests that the privileged possessor *may be* one of those chosen to this high office, there are certain providential indications which serve a like purpose. God makes use of means in calling men into his kingdom, and no less certainly does he use means in calling men into the ministry of his Son. The urgent need for more laborers, which is so apparent to every one who will look around him, is just one of these means; and there are doubtless many in the ministry now whose attention was first directed to this matter by that Macedonian cry, so stirring to one who knows the value of a soul and the preciousness of salvation. The vision of a perishing world banished sleep from their eyes, and drove them to their knees with the anxious enquiry, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" In like manner the presence of an open door often invites the passer-by to enter. The means to acquire a suitable education; freedom from such ob-

ligations as would debar one from undertaking this work ; the known wishes and convictions of others, are often used of God to call attention to this matter.

But after all, neither the possession of the necessary gifts and graces, nor supposed providential indications, nor both of these combined, can furnish any trustworthy evidence of a call. It not unfrequently happens that one is possessed of many natural gifts and graces ; the gospel is preached to him with all faithfulness for a long series of years : and yet he is passed by, and some desparado, or some half-witted unfortunate, with the most meagre opportunities, is called to the kingdom and sonship before him. In like manner, many, who by reason of their qualifications and surroundings, seem predestined to the ministry, are nevertheless passed by, and God not unfrequently calls those who are to a great extent lacking in the requisite qualifications, and seemingly debarred by their surroundings.

Were we dependent upon these external indications just mentioned, no one could ever arrive at certainty as to whether or not he was called of God ; truly a most desirable thing.

As the Holy Spirit makes the Word effectual to the conversion of sinners, and as in the use of external means he calls from a life of sin to holiness : so does he use these external means for calling into his ministry. It is the Spirit who convinces a man that it is his duty to preach the gospel, but he does so in the use of means. Throwing light on his word, in so far as it bears on the subject ; showing him the nature of the work to be done, the qualifications necessary for it, the presence of these qualifications in himself, the necessity of entire submission to his will ; throwing light also upon his providences, showing an open door where there appeared before only a dead wall ; he mightily convinces him that it is his *duty* to preach the gospel.

This *deep conviction of duty*, which oftentimes appears to be nothing more than a logical inference from certain facts, but which perhaps just as often bears no such relation, is really *the work of the Holy Spirit*, and is to be regarded as *an indispensable mark of a divine call*.

There are doubtless those who, in the judgment of charity, are truly called of God, and yet have never the "woe is me" of the Apostle. The true explanation perhaps is, that the external call has been so clear and distinct, and in such en-

ture accord with the desires and inclinations of the individual, that the internal call has scarcely been recognized. The prisoner may be unaware of the fact that he is no longer his own master until he attempts to exercise his supposed liberty ; and perhaps those who now suppose that they are in the ministry of their own choice, rather than of necessity, would find themselves confronted by that self-same woe, should they attempt to turn aside.

But while we are safe in saying that the Holy Spirit calls men into the ministry as he does souls into his kingdom, in the use of outward and ordinary means, we may go a step farther and say that he is no more tied to the use of means in the one case than in the other. We know that the Spirit acts directly and without the intervention of means in regeneration, quickening the dead soul, renewing the affections and the will. In like manner, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the call to the ministry is, to some extent at least, *direct and immediate*. As he mysteriously, yet most powerfully, "persuades and enables" the dead soul to turn unto himself; so does he "persuade and enable" this or that individual to undertake this most difficult and responsible office.

As the quickened soul is not directly conscious of the regenerating work of the Spirit, but only of its results; so when the Spirit calls to this work, he hears no voice; he feels no touch; he is not conscious of his personal presence; but his foot prints are clearly recognized in the deep conviction of duty that remains to attest his presence and work.

As the renewed soul, deeply conscious that the change that has taken place in him has not had its origin in the "will of the flesh, nor of the will of man," with all confidence attributes it to the spirit of God; so does one thus called of God recognize the divine origin of this newborn impulse. In this way only can we account for those cases, by no means rare, where individuals, against the judgment of their friends, against their own previous judgment, against their own strong inclinations, and in the face of apparently insuperable obstacles, have felt impelled to seek the ministry, and have been afterwards owned of God, and of his church as well.

A *desire* to undertake the work of the ministry is often mentioned as one of the proofs of a call, but this statement needs to be carefully guarded. When once the conviction that one has been called to this work becomes clear and unmistakable,

then there springs up a desire for it, since every earnest and sincere christian desires to do his duty; indeed the very cry of his soul is, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" Why should one desire to do a work to which God has not called him? Is it not akin to presumption for one to fasten his eye upon so high an office and say in effect, "I would like to fill this office," in advance of any intimation of the will of him who alone has the right of appointment? Moses, so far from desiring the high honor thrust upon him, hung back even to the point of sinful hesitancy, and the desire came only when the duty was undeniable. The same was true of many of the prophets of old, and many of those most highly honored of God in later times have at first fled from the office, crying, "Nolo episcopari."

When once the duty becomes plain the desire comes inevitably, and hence Paul in his Epistle to Timothy assumes the presence of such a desire on the part of the candidate as one of his necessary qualifications.

Our Form of Government likewise assumes, that the candidate has been "induced to seek the office" from "love to God, and a sincere desire to promote the glory of God in the Gospel of his Son," but in both cases the desire is one that *springs out of a sense of duty*; the desire of glorifying God by obedience to his known will.

The question here arises, may not one be mistaken in attributing this conviction of duty to the Holy Spirit? Most assuredly. Just as men may be mistaken, and honestly so, in attributing to the regenerating work of the Spirit that which experience shows has been the result of other causes, so many no doubt honestly attribute to the Spirit these impressions and convictions of duty which have had an entirely different source. There exists precisely the same liability to mistake upon the part of him who believes that he has been called of God to the ministry as upon the part of him who believes that he has been called of God into his kingdom; hence arises the necessity for corroborative evidence in both cases, which we will now proceed to consider, so far as it relates to the ministry.

2d. Whenever the Spirit makes known the fact of his call to an individual, he never fails in due time to signify this fact to those also to whom he is to minister. When Moses was sent to the Israelites they were not left without evidence that Je-



hovah had sent him. They did not have to take his word for it, but were certified by signs as convincing as those exhibited to Moses himself. When our Lord came as a messenger sent from God, he presented his credentials to all from whom he claimed submission and belief. He fully recognized the truth that they were under no obligation to believe him unless he gave them the proofs that he was indeed sent of God. The minister of to-day is not above his master, and he must exhibit his credentials before he can claim a hearing as God's messenger. But what are these credentials? So far as the Church is concerned, his mission to her is to *edify*. If he is able to edify, (and this implies the possession of all those qualifications enumerated in 1 Tim. 3:1-7), then this fact confirms and strengthens to that degree his claim as one called of God. If, however, upon sufficient trial, he is unable to edify the Church, then this is proof conclusive that he has not been called of God, and that his claims are without foundation. The very purpose for which he is licensed is to ascertain by actual trial whether he possesses the qualifications he claims, and so able to edify.

Let it be carefully noted, that while the lack of this ability to edify is conclusive against his pretensions, and forms an effectual bar to the ministry, yet on the other hand, his acknowledged success in this particular, while it serves to strengthen his claims, still leaves the matter in doubt. There is yet one other party whose concurrent judgment is necessary before the fact of a call can be established, and before one can lawfully exercise the ministry.

3d. God has appointed rulers in his church who are charged with the oversight thereof, and whose duty it is to guard it from all harm. What can be more detrimental to her highest welfare than to have those in her ministry whom God has never called, wolves in sheep's clothing?

Hence it is an imperative duty resting upon them to scan most carefully the credentials of every one claiming to be God's messenger, and it is their prerogative to pass final judgment upon all claimants. The right to the *possession* of this office comes directly from God, and from him alone, but *the right to exercise it* must come from those to whom the government of the church has been entrusted by the great Head thereof.

When Moses went down into Egypt at the command of Je-

hovah, he went first of all to *the elders of Israel*, and not until he had secured their approval did he presume to go unto Pharaoh. Indeed he was directed by the Lord to take the elders with him when he went in unto the King of Egypt. Under the Presbyterian system of government, the court upon which this responsibility devolves is the Presbytery. Upon what then is the judgment of the Presbytery based? There is, (a) The credible testimony of the candidate, brought out by an examination, that he is a child of God, and seeks the ministry only in obedience to his call; that he desires it only because he is convinced that God has called him to it. (b) The fact, also brought out by an examination, that he possessed the natural and spiritual qualifications needful for the proper discharge of the duties of the office, and that his conviction of a call has been of such a nature as to cause him to make thorough and faithful preparation for it. (c) The testimony of some church, that upon actual trial he has been found able to edify the church, as evidenced by the presence of a call for his pastoral labors, with the promise of an adequate support. After a careful review of this threefold evidence, the Presbytery, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, allows his claim as a *credible* one, and gives authority to exercise in the church the office to which he has been called by the great Head.

Ordination then is an act of a court, and is but a solemn and formal *declaration of the fact* that the individual has been called of God, and is accordingly authorized to exercise that office.

But may not the Presbytery, as well as the church calling, be mistaken in its judgment? May it not, through lack of care, or from mistaken views, fail to reflect the mind of the Spirit? Undoubtedly so. It not unfrequently happens that one, after some time spent in the ministry, becomes convinced that he has never been called of God, and in this conclusion the church acquiesces. What happens to the individual who makes a credible profession of his faith, and is admitted to the sealing ordinances, happens now to the minister: he is an ambassador *but in name*.

As one who has been admitted to the membership of the church should ever seek confirmatory evidence of the reality of that change which he professes, and believes to have taken place, so should the minister seek for assurance of his call.

The question, "Have I been called of God?" has not been *settled* by the fact of ordination. What are these confirmatory evidences? Paul says, "The seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord," and when God blesses one's ministry; when his labors are crowned with true success; when by his ministry the church is edified and men are made holy; when it may be said of him as it was of his Master, "for God was with him:" then here is strong confirmatory evidence of a divine call, similar to the evidence of a holy life to the fact of a new birth.

But there is one other ground of assurance, not unlike that vouchsafed to the believer in the "witness of the Spirit." As the Spirit bears direct testimony to the sonship of the believer, apart from the evidence arising from a holy life, so there is reason to believe that he bears a like *direct testimony* in the matter of a call to the ministry. Many there be, who, by reason of their own unfaithfulness, pass their lives in doubt and uncertainty as to their spiritual state; so there are those who are seldom or never quite sure that they are not intruders in the sacred office. But when the response to the call is hearty, and the life is devoted to a faithful discharge of its duties, this blessed and soul-strengthening assurance is seldom wanting. Those who honor God in the ministry will be honored by him in turn. What a source of comfort and strength it was to Joshua to know of a certainty that Jehovah had indeed commanded him, and was consequently backing him! How often did Jesus of Nazareth refer to the fact that he had not come of himself but had been "sent" of the Father! And that ever present assurance of his divine call, what a tower of strength it was to Paul in the hour of danger and discouragement! Let every minister seek most diligently for this witness of the spirit, not only to his sonship, but also to his right to the office of the ministry!

A few words by way of application, and we are done.

1. How can the ranks of the ministry be filled? The obvious answer is that contained in the words of our Lord, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest." This injunction has been too often both misunderstood and abused. By those who look on the ministry as profession, of the very highest order indeed, but not differing essentially from other professions, this command is virtually ignored. To many, on the other hand, who recognize the necessity of a divine call, it is simply a discharge

from all responsibility in the matter. There *is* however a duty incumbent on the church, and that duty is *to pray for an increase of laborers*. But true prayer is always accompanied by effort. We cannot convert a single soul, and yet it is our duty to pray for the conversion of those around us, and then to second our prayers with our efforts. We must indeed pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers, but this prayer must be seconded by earnest efforts, if it is to be effectual. It would indeed be a strange anomaly if here alone we were under obligation to pray, and stop with this. When we reflect how God calls men into his kingdom in the use of means, it is not difficult to see that he calls into the ministry in the use of similar means. As men are not ordinarily called into the kingdom, unless the claims of the gospel are in some way presented to them, so we need not expect them to be called to this work unless its claims are presented; and it would be just as reasonable to leave the presentation of these claims to him in the one case as in the other.

We dare not attempt to persuade any individual that he is called to this work, for of that we cannot be sure, but we can urge each one to give the matter a careful consideration. We dare not say, "God calls you," but we can say, "Listen!" Parents can offer their children to the Lord for this purpose. Were there more Hannahs, there would be more Samuels. They can educate them with this end in view, so that if the Lord should be pleased to accept them they would be ready for his work.

We are loath to believe that the Lord God calls only, or even for the most part, the young and immature, and those who have not as yet formed any plans; and for this reason the claims of the ministry should be presented also to those of maturer years and riper experience. The call came to Moses when he was eighty years of age, and when to all human appearances his destiny had been clearly fixed.

2. It not unfrequently happens, that after a careful consideration of all the evidence available, the individual is still in doubt. He shrinks from running without being sent, or refusing a call of God. The path of duty is not clear. What is to be done? How is this matter to be decided? "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Let him take it to God in prayer, and he will make it plain. If he has indeed called, in response to this honest cry for guid-

ance, *he will call yet more clearly and unmistakably*, or if perchance he has not called, he will still make it plain. Such a question ought to be settled on the knees, and it is doubtful if it is ever rightly settled in any other way.

3. Let the candidate beware of looking upon his call to the ministry as *a settled fact*. He is as yet but a *candidate* for the sacred office, and however deep his convictions, or clear his views, it yet remains to be seen whether they are well grounded or not.

The thing we spoke of as being settled on the knees, is *the duty of preparing for the ministry*, for God's calls are ever to *present duties*. His fidelity and success in the work of preparation is a most important element in the final decision of the question, for it is a true saying, "Whom God appoints, he anoints," and unfaithfulness in preparation is but a sad prophecy of an unfaithful ministry.

The young convert who is as confident of heaven as if he had weathered all the storms of life, and had already received the crown of life, is a sad spectacle, and not unlike that of a candidate for the ministry, who looks upon his entrance upon it as quite *a matter of course*, and wholly irrespective of any preparation for its high and responsible duties.

God *calls to preparation* just as certainly as he does to the actual exercise of the office, and to the preparation first, and if the evidences of a call to this are wanting, the claim to the other is a vain presumption. Let not the individual take it for granted that he has been called, because the first stages of his preparation have been successfully passed, nor because he has a "call" from some church, nor yet because Presbytery has pronounced his claim a credible one, but let him ever seek for new, repeated, and ever increasing evidence that God has indeed put this high honor upon him.

Let the Church also beware how, in her eagerness for an increase of laborers, the claims of individuals are admitted *as a matter of course*.

A responsibility has been thrust upon her by the great Head which she cannot shift upon another, and if the unspeakable curse of a man-made ministry comes upon her the blame lies at her door.