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ART. I.—REVIEW OF DR. MATTHEWS' LETTERS.

The Divine Purpose displayed in the works of Providence and Grace; in a series of Twenty Letters, addressed to an Inquiring Mind. By Rev. John Matthews, D. D., [late of] Shepherdstown, Virginia. Lexington, Ky.
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WE are so much accustomed to receive our literature from Great Britain, that we are prone to overlook valuable compositions produced in our own country; especially, if they proceed from a section of the United States not famous for book making; or from the pen of an author but little known. Notwithstanding the national pride, in relation to American literature, so disgustingly displayed in some of our popular journals, it is a fact, that our booksellers are in the habit of reprinting British works, on particular subjects, much inferior to writings of home-production, which lie in utter neglect. Perhaps the Eastern States ought to be considered as an exception from this remark; where, from the first settlement of the country, authorship has not been uncommon; and where almost every preacher, at some time in his life, has the pleasure of seeing something of his own composition, in print. Still it may be observed, that

we have named. There are certain theologians who banish from their libraries, with great contempt, the labours of Poole and Owen, and Ainsworth, and Meade, and Henry; while they cannot too highly laud Rosenmüller, and Paulus, and Ammon, and Kuinoel, and Eichhorn, and De Wette. Should any one suggest a doubt as to the wisdom of communing with men who are Pelagian, Arian, Socinian, or Deistical, he is contemptuously smiled upon, as far behind the age, and uninitiated into the mysterious art of transmuting poison into nourishment, in a word, a slave to old and exploded systems. Until within a few years, interpreters of the Scriptures, like all other men, were judged by their fruits; but now, it has been discovered, that, although the *results* at which German critics arrive, are false and often impious, the *principles* which they teach are the only safe and true ones. Upon the same grounds an astronomer must prefer an instrument which, at every celestial observation, conducts him to false conclusions, but which is new and glittering, to the old, and perhaps, rusty sextant of his father, which never yet betrayed him into error. To speak plainly and soberly, we deprecate the indiscriminate introduction of the modern Socinianism of Germany. Let us gladly avail ourselves of the philology, especially the lexicography and the mere criticism of their scholars; their archaeological, geographical, and historical labour; but let us not blindly accustom our minds even to *contemplate* with calmness and complacency, enormous errors, dangerous to the souls of men, and abominable in the sight of God. Let us select and use such of their productions as contain the results of philological research, but let us not vainly expect in the *commentaries* or extended expositions of neologists, to find any substitute for the pious labours of our forefathers. Happy should we be to see our youth, and especially, candidates for the holy ministry, turning from these dangerous pursuits, to the wholesome instructions of the seventeenth century.

ART. III.—WHAT CONSTITUTES A CALL TO THE GOSPEL MINISTRY?

THIS question has often perplexed and distressed candid and pious minds. Many a man has anxiously examined the interrogatory in its direct application to himself, without being able

for a long time, and perhaps never with entire satisfaction, to answer it. The question recurs again and again, how shall I ascertain whether I have been called, or am called to devote myself to the work of the gospel ministry?

In itself the question is one of very grave importance, and to many persons of absorbing interest. The subject is worthy of careful discussion, as it respects the peace and duty of individuals, the interests of the church and the souls of men. The practical answer to this inquiry, whether right or wrong, has a controlling influence over the subsequent life and efforts of many men. There can be no doubt that many wrong decisions have been made on this subject, which have brought feeble, uneducated, imprudent, or ungodly men into the ministry, to provoke the anger of God against themselves, and to be a curse to others. Nor can it be doubted, that by wrong decisions of this question, many have been kept back from entering the ministry, to their own spiritual injury and great loss to the church. If the inquiry had been rightly pursued and decided in all cases, there would have been no ungodly or incompetent ministers in the church: nor would there have been any lack of faithful, well qualified ministers and missionaries in the field of labour. It is, therefore, a subject which should be better understood by the church, and especially by her sons, on whom are soon to devolve all the responsibilities and labours of her ministry. At this time, when there is really a very great deficiency of ministers, and candidates for the ministry, and when the cause of education is beginning to assume its appropriate place among the benevolent exertions of the church, there seems to be especial necessity for the discussion of this subject. It is a discussion seldom heard from the pulpit or the press, in the judicatory of the church, or in the parlours of Christian families. Hence, when the question presses upon the conscience of a pious youth, he is perplexed, knows not how to decide it, and in many instances postpones it until he is obliged by the delay to decide in the negative, perhaps much to his own discomfort, and the loss of the church. In other cases, the question is decided in the affirmative by the fond wishes of parents or friends, who have never weighed the subject, and much injury is done, both to the youth, and the church of the living God. These suggestions are sufficient to show the importance of the question and of an enlightened discussion, which shall bring the subject distinctly before the members of the church.

In answer to the inquiry it should be observed, that in its particular application to any individual, its practical solution must be made by himself. Great mischief has been the result of deciding this question by proxy. No one, except himself, can certainly know his views, feelings, and many circumstances, which must be known in order to form an enlightened decision. Principles, however, may be stated, connexions and relations of facts described, and circumstances detailed, which are applicable to almost all cases, and the abstract question so decided, that an honest discriminating mind may be essentially aided in the inquiry; and directed to an enlightened and correct decision in his own case. Such is the object of this article.

It is a first principle in the discussion of this subject, not in any case to be invaded, that a call to the gospel ministry is from God. He, who instituted the office, provides, qualifies, and calls the man to fill it, and perform its functions. It is God's sovereign right to call whom he pleases to his work and special service. This is illustrated in the priesthood under the Old Testament dispensation. No man took this office upon himself, but he who was called of God, as was Aaron, that is, by special appointment and direction of God. This will be very evident to all those who may consult the provisions of the Mosaic statutes. (See Exod. xxviii. 1. Lev. viii. 2. Num. xvi. 5—48.—xvii. 3—11.) Both the fact and the sovereignty of God's providence are justly illustrated in the New Testament institution and history of the ministerial office. Although there is no priesthood in the Christian dispensation, nor family succession in office, there is a ministry to be fulfilled only at the call of him who instituted the same. Accordingly, Christ called twelve disciples, mostly fishermen of Galilee, qualified and commissioned them to preach the gospel to every creature. He called also to the apostleship the persecuting Saul of Tarsus, together with all the first preachers of the gospel whose names are recorded in the early history of the dispensation. All those were specially and also miraculously called. We are not, however, to infer from those facts, that miraculous interpositions were always to be continued in the church for the purpose of supplying her with a regularly called ministry. But we are to infer that He, who first called men to this office, will continue to call and qualify men for this same trust. Scarcely any branch of the church has been so corrupted as to deny this doctrine; and it may

safely be concluded that whenever this doctrine is denied by any community, it has ceased to be a branch of the church of Jesus Christ.

The practical question now to be solved is, how shall we ascertain whom God calls, and how he calls them to the work of the ministry? This is to be solved by facts and principles developed in the ordinary providence of God's dispensations. There may, however, be some extraordinary cases of exception. God can convert persecutors into friends, as the case of Paul instances. But extraordinary cases require extraordinary evidence, and come not within the general rules of judgment. The object is the same in all cases, the care is the same in itself and the evidences are connected with the same result, viz. to ascertain the fact of the call.

The *first class* of evidences, which we mention and which are indispensable, are the *necessary qualifications* for the office. Of these some are *natural*, some *gracious* or *supernatural*, and others *acquired*.

The first *natural* qualification, which we mention, is a *good intellectual capacity*. By this we mean one which reaches mediocrity without any doubt, or rises above such an estimate. The intellect is susceptible of much improvement, but weak minds can never become strong, naturally blunted and droning powers can never become acute and active.

When the duties of the ministerial office are duly estimated, it will be readily seen that good natural talents, especially intellectual, are indispensable to their appropriate discharge. There is a constant demand for laborious mental effort. The investigation of truth; the interpretation of God's revelation, in the wide range of its doctrine, precept, and promise; and the illustration of such an extensive system in a manner profitable to others, must require a vigorous mind as well as patient and laborious application. No individual, whose capacity is below what may fairly be considered mediocrity, should ever consider himself called to the gospel ministry. It is contrary to the ordinary procedure of God's dispensations, to suppose he does not adapt his means and instruments to the ends to be accomplished by them. The harmony and order displayed throughout God's government, are connected with the principle of adapting means to the ends. It is true that means and instruments are not efficient in their agencies, but this militates not against the general law of adaptation. It is also true, that in the ministry there are some cases when an extraordinary

degree of supernatural and acquired qualifications compensate, in a great measure, under peculiar circumstances, for the lack of intellectual talent. But these facts furnish no argument to dispense with* competent intellectual capacity, in all ordinary cases. God has no where taught us to disregard appropriate means, because the excellency of the power is of God and not of us. Nor are we authorized to deduce general rules from extraordinary cases—they are to be estimated by themselves; ordinary cases by ordinary rules. On this ground, it will be readily perceived, that in all ordinary cases, which comprise almost the whole that are called to the ministry, good natural talents are indispensable.

Good discretion is another important qualification of this class; by which we mean a sound judgment and a due circumspection of manners. It may be called prudence, or wisdom in avoiding errors, and in selecting means to accomplish ends which are correct and proper, including also judicious self-government. This qualification is to be estimated according to the age and circumstances of the individual, but no imprudent man can be extensively useful in the sacred office. Men will not trust him in the common concerns of life, and it is not to be supposed that God, who knows the disposition, will call him to the most important of all trusts. The directions given to Timothy and Titus enjoin these qualifications, in high and constant exercise, as indispensable.

Discretion undoubtedly admits of much improvement by knowledge and experience, but much depends on the constitution of the mind and its early habits. A mind, constitutionally imprudent and obstinately habituated to indiscretion, should consider the evidence complete for its exemption from the ministry. God does not sanction indiscretion any where, and he calls no man of incurable imprudence to this difficult work. Still we are aware that the grace of God often does much in correcting indiscreet tendencies in the natural disposition: and perhaps it may, therefore, be said, that when this is the only objection to the verity of the call, a man should commend himself to the grace of God, and seek to overcome the difficulty in his preparation for the office, and in the exercise of its functions. This may be true in its application to imprudence which arises from an ardent temperament, or even habitual carelessness, but not to that which arises from defective judgment, or a manifest want of correct discernment. Persons of the former character may sometimes be called; the latter never.

A discreet mind is so fully set forth in the qualifications described and often repeated in the New Testament, that we must believe it essential.

Good common sense is also a qualification indispensable and of immeasurable importance. This differs somewhat from discretion or prudence, although it might include the elements of a discreet mind and a judicious exercise of all the mental faculties in the ordinary concerns of life. It includes more, and intends a readiness and accuracy in discerning the relations of thoughts, feelings, and actions, by which a man acquires a correct knowledge of men and things in their character and tendencies, in judging of the proprieties of social intercourse; and a facility in accommodating himself to the circumstances, habits, and even prejudices of men. It is sometimes described by its practical result—a correct knowledge of human nature.

This qualification is illustrated in the history of the apostle Paul, and is distinctly implied in the Scriptural directions given to ministers of the gospel. Every man, who carefully reads the directions to Timothy and Titus, will perceive that what we call common sense must be involved in the character enjoined. It is also obvious that the man, whose official business it is to treat with men of diverse temperaments, knowledge, and habits, should know how to estimate character and accommodate the manner of his instructions to the widely different classes. Without this qualification, a man, with the best intentions, may not only fail of doing good, but do positive mischief. We have no doubt that this property of character may be greatly improved by observation and experience, but a great deficiency can never be supplied. It depends on a well-balanced judgment and a well-adjusted sensibility. A man may have strong intellectual power and correct moral principle, and yet be destitute of this character. The consequence will be, that such a man's conduct will be disproportioned, and his judgment can never be trusted. Any man who is naturally destitute of common sense, as now defined, will always be a novice in the world, and ought not to be in the ministry. A poet has well described this character of a well-balanced mind:

“Something there is more needful than expense,
And something previous e'en to taste—'tis sense,
Good sense, which only is the gift of heaven;
And though no science, fairly worth the seven.”

Without this qualification, a minister of the gospel cannot so manifest the truth as to "commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God." A large portion of those ministers, who, in our estimation, have mistaken their call, are more deficient in this respect than in any other. A vast amount of mischief has been done to the interests of the church, by the introduction of men into the sacred office, who are destitute of common sense. They may be men of piety, learning, and strong intellect, yet their influence is abridged, neutralized, or destroyed. Give us a ministry, deficient in talent, learning, and every thing else, save the fear of God, rather than in common sense. We can bear with ignorance and weakness, if need be, but with impudence, and that folly which is opposed to common sense, we cannot bear. It is like vanity, which is not often considered a vice, but is more universally detested than all the vices together.

In addition to those natural qualifications already mentioned, *good organs of speech*, and sufficient soundness of constitution to endure *laborious study and vigorous bodily effort* are necessary. By *good organs of speech*, we mean such a degree of perfection in the organs and such a command over them, that the voice may be distinct, easy, and inoffensive. We do not mean to fix a high standard of elocution, nor intimate that ministerial success depends on that excellence of speech, which consists in perfect organs and fine intonations of voice, but that a prominent, and unpleasant defect in the organs and voice disqualifies for the public preaching of the gospel. We know that some impediments in speech may be overcome by persevering effort in cultivating the art of speaking, as the history of Demosthenes and some others proves, but there are others which, either from the construction of the organs, or from want of skill in management, can never be overcome. Such persons as have unconquerable impediments in speech, should never consider themselves called to the work of the ministry. We do not rank this in importance with the other qualifications mentioned, but it is a consideration to be estimated in its place; and under certain circumstances it may be controlling. A competent readiness of speech, both in the construction and command of the organs, and in the communication of thoughts, is necessary to usefulness in a minister of the gospel.

It should be remembered, that a constitution too feeble to endure *vigorous bodily and mental effort*, cannot fulfil the

duties of the sacred office. Many seem to consider the ministry favourable to feebleness, ease, and indolence. But nothing can be more preposterous; the ministry is a laborious employment, putting in requisition more vigour of mind, more constant effort, and more resolution, than any ordinary station in human society. God does not call men to the ministry, who are, by feebleness of constitution, physically unable to perform its duties. It is, however, true, that most youth, who have sufficient health to study, may improve their vigour and firmness of constitution, under the blessing of God, by appropriate regimen and active exercise. But if a man be unfitted by feebleness for other employments, he is unfitted for the office of the holy ministry. Such, as it seems to us, are the principal *and most important* natural qualifications; but we admit, nay we insist that all these do not constitute a call to the ministry: nor is the possession of them, in the highest degree, complete evidence of the call. They are only pre-requisites, but as such are to be carefully and honestly considered in deciding the practical question.

The *supernatural or gracious* qualifications may be summarily expressed in few words; *a living, active, controlling, and consistent piety*. All this, in a much higher than the ordinary degree, is indispensable to that high and holy employment. Let us look at those characteristics a little more carefully.

The principle of grace in the heart is absolutely indispensable to the minister of Christ: for all the directions of inspiration enjoin or presuppose a pious heart. "To the wicked, God saith, what hast thou to do, to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant into thy mouth?" The nature of the case shows plainly that an ungodly minister can never be qualified for the godly duties of his office, but must be a curse to the church. He knows not God and obeys not his voice. An un sanctified man cannot be heartily and seriously engaged in the ministerial work. A coward might sooner be a good soldier, or a traitor be a trust-worthy officer, than an unconverted man a faithful minister. Surely God does not call to this holy office, those who are unrenewed, however learned and accomplished they may become.

But evidence of regeneration is not enough to answer the purpose in this inquiry. A man, who is to be an example to Christ's flock, must not only have grace in his heart, but such as is *living and active*. Weak graces may support a man

through an even and common course of duty; and a little strength may bear a light burden. But it is no *even* course of duty, no light burden, that rests on the minister of Jesus Christ. A man, who is to be a leader against "principalities and powers, and against spiritual wickedness in high places," must have no weak attachment to his Master, no small degree of grace, to encounter the adversary and watch against his wiles. To undertake such a work, he must possess a glowing, active piety, which will lead him humbly and constantly to rely on the promise of Christ, and the influence of the Holy Ghost; to meditate much on the instructions with which he is furnished, and live near the mercy-seat.

Moreover, his piety must be *consistent and controlling* in its influence over the feelings and passions, over the desires and volitions, over the daily habits and enterprises. In examining the case before us, a reasonable doubt of the existence of personal religion in the heart, or a wavering, unsteady, influence of religious principle, should settle the question at once in the negative. On this point, a young man cannot be too careful, or too critical in the examination. We mean not to intimate, that the faith or hope of assurance must be always ascertained before a man is authorized to believe that he is called to devote himself to the ministry. This is not to be expected; but a comfortable, abiding hope, both lively and humble, accompanied by evidences of a gracious state, which relieves the mind from perplexing doubt and distressing anxiety, should be considered indispensable. We need not, in this place, detail the evils which result from a total want of gracious qualifications, nor use arguments to prove that vital piety is necessary in a candidate for the gospel ministry; because, in our branch of the church, for the youth of which this article is particularly intended, the prevailing sentiment is strongly maintained, that piety is an essential requisite for the ministry. But it is necessary to direct the minds of our youth to the fact, that the present state of the church and the world, demands a high order of piety. The ministry to be trained up for the exigency of the present time, must be actuated by great self-denial, a burning zeal, and a firm reliance on the grace of God; all evinced by a consistent conversation, a persevering watchfulness, and fervent prayer. Something should be said to direct the attention and prayers of the church to this important subject. The church of God should be more influenced with the truth, that the spirit of serious, deep, and living piety, so in-

dispensable in the rising ministry, as well as in those already in the field of labour, is the gift of God, the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Deeply impressed with this sentiment, and the vast importance of these qualifications, the church ought to pray fervently and perseveringly for a double portion of that good Spirit, whose influence qualifies for the ministry, to rest on our youth to be called and trained for the sacred office.

The necessity of unquestioned piety for the ministry is, generally, if not universally, acknowledged in the Presbyterian church, but we think the importance of its consistent, active, and controlling character, is not sufficiently estimated. We wish to bring this thought distinctly before the praying members of the church, that they may bear it on their minds with devout earnestness when they approach the mercy-seat. We desire to bring this thought prominently before the minds of our young men, who are beginning to look towards the ministry. We wish them to understand, that all other evidences of their call to enter this office, unaccompanied by humble, fervid, and consistent piety, are of very doubtful character. If this be wanting, no matter how strongly they may feel impressed with the notion that they are called to preach the gospel, we credit them not. Men of doubtful or inconsistent piety are not called to so high a trust. Let them seek some other employment, and not impose themselves upon the church as pastors sent of God. We deprecate a cold-hearted ministry as a curse.

When we speak of those qualifications which are *acquired*, in distinction from those last mentioned, we mean those attained by human agency under the guidance and in reliance on the Spirit of God. We do not mean acquisitions of science or theological knowledge: these are necessary to the discharge of ministerial duty, but they may be attained, after the question of the call is settled, in a course of preparation, which may never be omitted. We mean *habits of self-control, diligence, and facility in acquiring knowledge*—in other words, some degree of improvement in the natural and gracious qualifications. The faculties should be so far developed, and the graces become established, that both the possessor and others may be able to judge more satisfactorily of their character, and what will be their prospects when ripened by study and experience.

Self-control, or government of the appetites, passions, and tongue, is essential to the character of him who ministers in

holy things. Those, who are to be "examples of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity," must learn the art of self-government. They must possess the elements of such a character before they devote themselves to the sacred office, or they have not good reasons to consider themselves called of God to the work.

As for *habits of diligence and facility of acquiring knowledge*, their necessity may be readily seen. Christ has no use for idle drones, and men of sluggish minds, in this laborious service. Men, whose habits are unconquerably idle, and who will not devote their minds to the acquisition of knowledge with intensity and perseverance, may vegetate away their lives in some other pursuit; the ministry is no place for them; Christ does not call them to mope in his work. It is placing too much in jeopardy to expect that a man of idle habits and sluggish intellect, will be roused to diligence and mental energy by an introduction to the sacred office. Such an expectation is not warranted by the word of God, the nature of the case, or by experience.

We mention *facility* in acquiring knowledge in this class, because it does not always depend on the strength of intellect, and must be ascertained by sufficient experiment. There is ordinarily an opportunity for ascertaining this fact in the early stages of education. But let it be remembered that a man's mind must be disciplined to intense and accurate investigation, and a readiness in directing the attention from one subject to another. This will be readily conceded, when it is recollected that the greatest portion of a minister's time for study consists of fragments and short intervals between the active duties of pastoral labour; and if these are lost, his course will certainly be retrograde. Lost, they certainly will be, without this discipline. Its elements are diligence, facility of learning, and intensity of thought. These must be acquired to a good degree in early life, or in all ordinary cases they will not be acquired at all. Most other qualifications, that are acquired, may be assigned to a course of preparation, especially in the cases of young men. Sometimes the question is pressed upon a man's conscience after the age of twenty-five or thirty years. In all such cases the ripeness of the judgment, and the habits of mind and business will have developed the features of character; and it will then be very difficult to break up old habits and establish new ones. Of such cases we shall say something before we close this article. We now proceed with the cases of youth.

After all that we have said, the practical difficulty in deciding the question is not removed. Not one, nor all, of the qualifications mentioned, can constitute a call to the ministry, but they are prerequisites, without which no call can be proved. And we have been the more particular and prolix on this part of the inquiry, because we think it is altogether too much neglected. It is important that these qualifications should be well considered, that time and expense may be saved when young men have been led by some inexplicable impulse, to undertake the preparation for a work, to which they were never called, and for which they could never be qualified.

But how shall a young man estimate his own qualifications? We answer this question very briefly. A young man, desirous to enter the ministry, should examine his mind, disposition, habits, and gracious affections, with great care, frequency, and prayer: he should deal honestly with himself. But if, after all, he is unable to decide on all the parts of his character to his own satisfaction, let him select some pious, intelligent, and judicious friend of his acquaintance, and state the case for his counsel. Let him seek for one who will neither flatter, nor deal harshly with him; one who will be honest and faithful. The mere statement of his case to a friend may serve to satisfy him; if he should get no advice; and the observations of a judicious friend may present the main points of his character, or some relations of the inquiry in such a light as to produce entire satisfaction.

We shall now state distinctly what constitutes a call to the ministry, and intimate some of the evidences which are satisfactory in favour of its reception.

The call consists in the influence of the Holy Ghost enlightening the mind to apprehend the duty, and directing the feelings to desire and seek to be employed by Christ in the holy ministry. This is a call to the sacred office, and nothing else can be substituted in its place. It may sometimes be counterfeited, and young men may for a time be deceived, and the church may be deceived in them, but the result will undeceive both. Against such deception every possible effort should be made to guard our young men, and the church.

But the practical difficulty is not in giving an abstract definition of the call itself; it lies in ascertaining the evidence of the Spirit's influence, enlightening and directing the mind. To this point we make a few remarks. It now becomes a question of fact.

The qualifications being presupposed, without which it is needless to inquire at all, we say that the fact is to be ascertained in the same way that every other influence of the Holy Spirit is to be ascertained; by the effects produced on the mind. Miraculous interpositions, audible voices, dreams, or unaccountable visions, are not to be expected, sought, nor regarded. The dispensation and the age in which we live have no such character. Those evidences did belong to the introduction of the gospel dispensation, and were given for a special and temporary purpose. If, in our time, they are supposed to exist, and affirmed actually to have been witnessed, we more than suspect the truth of both the supposition and affirmation. Supernatural appearances, and audible voices from heaven, are imaginary, and come not from the Spirit of God. The great Head of the church has furnished his people with a perfect rule of faith and conduct in the revelation of his will, and sufficient guidance in the special, but not miraculous influence of the Holy Spirit. It is true that men may dream of facts and principles of duty in accordance with revealed truth. When a man's mind is deeply exercised from day to day, and has become familiar with the subject, but not satisfied, it is not strange, that in restless sleep, his thoughts should pursue the perplexing topic. It may sometimes happen, that the imagination, unfettered by the severities of wakeful inquiry, will form a happy combination of facts and circumstances, which may serve to extricate the subject from its difficulties. The clue being thus furnished, the mind, in the due exercise of all its wakeful energies, may come to an enlightened decision. Such things have occurred, though rarely, in the common concerns of life, and possibly they may have sometimes been connected with the solution of this question. But such things are entitled to regard, no further than they will bear the scrutiny of the most critical and devout examination. We are not prepared to say that the Holy Spirit, or those "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation," never operate on the imagination to govern and regulate its wayward and discursive flights. But it is certainly not their ordinary method of guidance. What we mean to affirm, and earnestly to maintain, is, that impressions of the imagination cannot be trusted in this case. When, therefore, any man relies upon such supposed evidences of his call to the ministry, we are sure that he errs, if not in the result, certainly in the method

and evidence of its attainment. The principle is wrong, and the process unsatisfactory.

The great practical question must be determined according to the principles we have suggested, by the *character* of the views and feelings; the *inducements* which associate most readily and habitually with the desire; and the *circumstances* which obviously attend the case. Let all these be carefully examined.

The *character* of the *views and feelings* should be scrutinized with the utmost care, great seriousness, and earnest persevering prayer for divine direction. The test, by which they are all to be estimated, is the revealed will of God. No preconceived apprehensions of the nature, responsibility, pleasures, or privations of the ministerial office, can be admitted as the rule of estimation. The rule is prescribed in the gospel, and must not be forsaken; the whole directions relating to the subject must be consulted; the terms of the commission; the instructions, by precept and example, for its execution; and the account to be rendered.

The *views*, which are produced by the influence of God's Spirit, will accord with the inspired descriptions in the book of truth. The *feelings*, induced by the same influence, must be impressed with the sentiment of amazing importance attached to those descriptions of means in the accomplishment of God's gracious designs.

The ministry is a vastly important work, solemnly responsible, requiring laborious diligence, untiring patience, and great self-denial. The candidate must have some just views of the relations to God and to the church involved in the ministry. We do not mean to say that he must appreciate all its duties, perplexities, trials, honours, and pleasures; this cannot be without experience in the work. But he should have just views as far as they extend, and these should be somewhat more enlarged than is common to persons of his age and advantages. Looking into the instructions of the New Testament, he will perceive the relation of the office to the salvation of immortal souls: and then looking upon a world lying in wickedness, he will perceive the appropriateness and importance of the ministry as a means of bringing sinners from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God. He will perceive the need of many more labourers in the field, that "the harvest is plenteous, but the labourers few;" and the necessities of perishing millions will lead him to feel desirous

of being employed as an humble instrument to rescue some precious souls from the slavery of sin and Satan, and bring them to Christ.

The *feelings* must be those of commiseration for perishing sinners, great anxiety for their salvation, a tender regard for the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, and a serious earnestness to be instrumental in promoting the glory of God. A desire to glorify God and promote the salvation of souls, must be the controlling principle and governing anxiety of his mind. The ministry must not be desired ultimately, nor principally, for the sake of gratifying friends, nor for gaining advantages of study and mental improvement; nor for the sake of ease, emolument, or respectability; nor for the sake of gratifying a taste for argument, philosophy, or eloquence; but with singleness of heart to please God. The honesty and pureness of the desire form an essential character of the feelings: let them be thoroughly examined and conscientiously estimated.

This desire for the ministry, excited by divine influence, will frequently arise and be associated with the most serious moments and duties. It will often kindle into earnestness in the exercises of devotion, in reading God's word, and in contemplating the great want of ministers in the church and missionary field. The more difficulty a man finds in settling the question of duty, and the longer he postpones the decision, the more frequently will the desire recur. And the feelings of anxiety connected with thoughts of the ministry, will be excited not only when the employment and subjects of meditation are naturally suggested, but in the bustle of business, and ordinary occupations. Sometimes, from the perplexity and obstacles attending the inquiry, there may be an effort to repress the feelings and banish the thoughts connected with this inquiry, but they will again recur, and in many cases more frequently from the effort to repress them. This is a character of the feelings and manner of their development which deserves to be well considered.

The *strength*, as well as the purity and frequency of the desires, should be particularly observed. Those, who are called by the Spirit of God, will feel neither faint nor sluggish wishes, but strong aspirations of the heart, often eager, energetic and absorbing, carrying them often before the mercys-seat to plead for direction. The desire often becomes so strong and eager, that no difficulty can discourage hope, no effort can banish the anxiety, and no object can divert the mind from its

absorbing interest in the question. This may not be the constant and uniform character of the desires, but if difficulties and doubts attend the inquiry, the strength of the anxiety will increase; and whatever may be the intervals of anxiety, the intensity of the feelings will increase at each recurrence.

Men always have some *inducements* to cherish any desire, and to seek any object or employment. In this case they should be carefully examined. The deceitfulness of the heart, even when partially sanctified, and the subtleties of the adversary will often perplex and disturb the mind: it will, therefore, be necessary to examine, most critically, all the bearings of this question. All selfish gratification, all worldly ends, and all unhallowed ambition, should be separated from the inducements to the ministry. There may, sometimes, be difficulty in ascertaining the reasons which have the strongest influence over the feelings and desires. A tempting adversary, and the unsanctified propensities of the heart, may endeavour to corrupt the desires by mingling secular, or some other improper inducements along with the glory of God, in promoting the salvation of souls. The inquiry here should be, what are the inducements which most naturally occur to the mind, and associate with the desires and feelings? Sometimes an occurrence, which has been forgotten, may have excited very early predilections for the ministry, without any hope of piety existing at the time, and without any just sense of the vast importance and responsibility involved in the work. In the course of preparation, or in the progress of business, in which such a youth may have engaged, the Holy Ghost may have renewed and sanctified his heart, and turned his anxieties into another channel, and toward a higher object, although involving the same office. Then his views and feelings will be associated with the glory of God in man's salvation; but still the accustomed worldly motives may frequently intermingle with his better inducements, and perplex his mind on the question of duty. The best remedy and preventive for such perplexities, are prayer and watchfulness against unhallowed feelings, whether arising from the cause abovementioned, or any other. It may be stated that a detection of unhallowed, ambitious feelings in the heart, is not conclusive evidence that God has not called the man to his work; but if they predominate, and form a prevailing habit of the mind, they are utterly inconsistent with the supposition of a call from God. They belong not to the class of feelings and desires induced by the Spirit of

God: they militate against the evidence of a call, so far as they become habitual and strong, or are indulged. The truth is, corruptions will occasionally mingle with the holiest duties, and the best desires of men, but they may not be allowed or cherished in any degree, nor the fact made an apology for any insincerity. Many unholy considerations often trouble the Christian, and none more than him who begins to look towards the ministry of reconciliation. All the inducements, therefore, as well as the desires, should be examined most seriously and devoutly, before the question can be answered, and the estimate fully and satisfactorily made.

Providential *circumstances* are also to be considered, and may sometimes have a controlling influence in deciding the question. Events in God's providence may change the relations and prospects of an individual so entirely as to leave no room for further inquiry. They may remove all probability of attaining the requisite qualifications; new responsibilities may be brought upon a man in some new relations, which militate altogether against preparation for the ministry. Other circumstances in providence, may be intended to try the integrity, perseverance, and energy, of those desires and feelings, which tend to the sacred office. They may seem prospectively adverse, but are calculated to develop the character and qualifications for usefulness in the sacred work.

In other cases, events occur which remove obstacles, and open the way to gratify a desire long secretly cherished, but which seemed to be forbidden by the providence of God. All providential circumstances, which have a direct bearing on the object in view, should be carefully examined, and prayerfully estimated. But ordinary events should not be made to decide questions which require so much personal examination: and it may be requisite to state the whole case to some judicious friends, for their counsel.

But let it be remembered, that the obligation is personal, and the ministry must be undertaken voluntarily, from one's own conviction of duty. The only reliance on another's advice in this case, which can be allowed, is to aid in discovering the path of duty; and God employs the sound judgment of pious friends, as well as other dispensations of his providence in leading to this discovery. But the more independently of all advice the question can be fully and satisfactorily settled, the more firm, uniform, and persevering are likely to be the efforts in attaining the desired object.

There is a class of cases of somewhat frequent occurrence, on which we proposed to make a few remarks. We mean those in which men have this question pressed upon their minds late in life; after the judgment is matured, habits are formed and arrangements of business have been made. These are often more difficult to decide than any others. But some of them are the most easy; and we have often wondered at the difficulties which press upon minds cultivated and disciplined by education, study, and professional engagements. We now allude to such as have received an early education with other views, and have been employed in the professions of law or medicine, or in the instruction of youth. Sometimes men of this description are called to engage in the ministry, and yet have great difficulty in deciding the practical question. Perhaps it is sufficient to refer their case to another class; and let them try their qualifications, the character of their feelings and desires, and their circumstances, according to the suggestions which we have already made.

But there are some, who have had less advantages in early life, whose minds are tried on this subject. From the nature and circumstances of their case, there must be more difficulty in solving the question. Perhaps there would be no difficulty in deciding on such cases, if there were not great want of ministers in actual service. Then, it is fair to conclude, the evidence of the call would be so extraordinary and distinct, that there would be no room for doubt. This conclusion is in accordance with the common procedure of God's government, in which he adapts his directions to the exigency of the times. We could not exclude all such from the sacred office, nor would we encourage them on slight grounds to seek it.

There are now situations in the Church, which are destitute of pastors, and are likely to remain destitute, in which a man of sound discretion, vigorous enterprise, ardent piety, and moderate acquirements in literature and science, might be very useful in the ministry. It is commonly easy to ascertain the character of a man's judgment, common sense, piety, and energy, at the age now supposed. But if there should be a doubt of the character after the maturity of twenty-five or thirty years, we should consider it an excluding fact. Of all these qualifications, it should be said in such a case, they must be much above mediocrity. No man should consider himself called away from the common occupations of life, at so late a period, whether from agricultural, mechanical, or mercantile pursuits,

or from the instruction of youth, unless he is acknowledged to possess some qualifications of high order, which give him influence in society, and the confidence of the Church. There is one difficulty, however, which such men should confidently examine. It is the breaking up of established habits and engaging in a new employment, amidst entirely new associations. This is never easily done. Its practicability at every age depends on the mental discipline and facility of acquiring knowledge. If, at the age now contemplated, a man's mind be not disciplined to accurate thought, and ready expression, he will find it next to impossible for him to be either comfortable or useful in the ministry. With a prospect so extremely doubtful, no one should consider himself called to undertake the duties of the sacred office.

It is sometimes said, that men of cultivated minds and taste, cannot live and be useful among rough, uncultivated, and poor people, we must, therefore, have some men of moderate acquirements, who will be satisfied with coarse fare, uncouth manners, and the privations incident to such places. But the force of this argument in its principal intention, we deny: it is used as an apology for introducing ignorance into the pulpit. It is indeed, true, that habits formed in cultivated society, and in the acquisition of a thorough education, may lead a man to desire a place congenial to his taste, especially as such places afford a more dense population, and a larger sphere of usefulness, but it is not true, that he cannot live and labour wherever his Master calls him to go. If his heart be thoroughly imbued with the love of Christ, and a desire to be instrumental in saving precious souls, he will be ready to sacrifice any worldly pleasure, and to practise any self-denial involved in a plain course of duty. The truth is, such comparisons are out of place, when used to justify the introduction of unqualified men to the ministry. There can be no apology for introducing ignorance and boorish habits into the sacred office. Piety and poverty cannot consecrate such to be instructors and examples in the Church of God.

Still we would not infer, that no man, without a thorough classical education, or the time and means of attaining it, is ever called to the gospel ministry. Men, possessing a high order of native talent, sound discriminating judgment, ardent piety, and persevering industry, may be very useful in this office, with a limited stock of learning. Some of our most useful men, in active pastoral duties, are of this description.

And more of them might be employed to great advantage in the Church. But in such cases, the evidences of the call should be clear and decisive, leaving no doubt in the mind of the individual himself: and we think, in this case, the public estimation of his character should be well considered. It is a good rule for such a man to adopt, that unless the path of duty is made very plain before him, he should remain in the employment where providence has placed him. When once a man has arranged his plan, entered upon his course of business, formed, and adjusted his habits to his employment for several years, he should have very substantial reasons for leaving a lawful employment, and undertaking so entire a change. Examples of most disastrous character are not wanting in the ministry, where the experiment has been made, with complete failure.

With these remarks, we commend this whole subject to the most careful and devout attention of all such as think of dedicating themselves to the gospel ministry. We commend it to the fervent prayers of the church; and record our earnest supplication, that the Lord would call, qualify, and send forth able and faithful ministers of the New Testament, to supply the great deficiency of spiritual labourers in his vineyard.

ART. IV.—ARABS OF THE DESERT.

Notes on the Bedouins and Wahabys, collected during his travels in the East, by the late JOHN LEWIS BURCKHARDT.
London: 1830. 4to. pp. 439.

THESE notes of the persevering Burckhardt relate chiefly to the Arabs of the desert, and furnish an account of their condition as late as 1816, soon after which the author died in Egypt, whilst contemplating the exploration of the interior of Africa. They are mere memoranda, which might have formed an appropriate appendix to his volume of travels in Arabia; but as they embody a larger number of particulars respecting these interesting Nomades, than any other traveller has been able to furnish, we shall undertake to condense them for our pages.

The volume commences with a classification of the Bedouin tribes of the Syrian desert. Of these the most powerful are the Aenezes, who live in the northern part of Arabia; generally passing the winter on a plain bordered by the Euphrates;