

may choose lawfully any ordinary business or profession. It is not to be thought that a man is moved inwardly by the Holy Ghost to undertake it, when he enters upon it merely because it is an honourable profession, and has attached to it a certain rank, respectability, or endowment; or because his friends have designed him for it; still less, because he has a family living waiting for him; or has good prospects of preferment; or, least of all, because he is unfit for any other business or calling.

Of all these, though in different degrees, we may most assuredly assert that they are not the reasons from which any man can safely gather that he is called by the secret voice of God's most Holy Spirit to be a watchman for his brethren's souls, and an ambassador of Christ. Many of them, indeed, may blamelessly come in as secondary motives. To have been educated for the work; destined to it by pious parents; led to it by the outward appointments of God's Providence; to desire rather to live moderately by the altar than more abundantly upon secular earnings,—all of these may properly come in to aid a choice, but they must not be its basis. Some desire, at least, to live nearer to Christ in employment and pursuit than worldly callings render possible; some personal sense of the deliverance brought to the soul by His Gospel; some desire to speak His precious Name to others; some love for souls; some aptness for ministering to them; some of the desires and qualities of the Watchman, the Steward, the Shepherd, the Physician, the good Master-builder, must be certainly within us, and attest the working of the Spirit of the Lord, if we would assert safely that we act beneath His guidance. And these may, and in not a few instances, thank God, do, mount up to an earnest self-devoting love to the Lord our Redeemer; to a supreme desire and labour to live in all things for His glory; to a spirit burdened with a "wo is me," and struggling like a pent-up fire until it can witness unto others of the love of God our Father, of the power of Christ's cross, of the healing, ennobling presence of the Lord the Holy Ghost. In such instances as these it is comparatively easy to trace the presence of a call from God; but in the case of the numerous intermediate shades of character which lie between these and apathy or coldness, there may be much real perplexity in settling this important question, "Am I truly called of God to serve Him in this office?" For though an answer to this question may oftentimes be obtained by a careful sifting of our motives, yet such is the deceitfulness of the heart, that even after the belief, at least, that they have so tried themselves, some may be led without due cause either to presume or to despond. Whilst, therefore, it may be very useful to ask ourselves such questions as these,—to what do my thoughts most naturally turn in thinking over my future course? do they mainly settle upon its ease, or family enjoyment, or respectability, or, on the other hand, upon its labours, its fellowship with Christ its glorifying God, and its eternal crown? and though the answers to these questions may give us some insight into the state of our hearts, yet even here it will be especially needful for us to remember, that it is not of *feelings* one way or the other that the great question should be