

It is our desire in this our annual address, to communicate to you, if God please, some portion of the same solemn but invigorating sentiment, while you with us remember, that if some of our numbers have entered the "Mansions" above, while others still walk on earth, then are we in a more special sense "come to the general assembly and church of the first born whose names are written in Heaven." Thither is the whole family journeying—part of the travelling procession is even now arrived.

And what, brethren, is the instruction to be derived from the thought? Do we not see in it a renewed and solemn pledge to fidelity and zeal, inasmuch as our departed brethren were faithful even unto death? It is indeed the renewal, feeble certainly, but dear to us, of the holy example of the Captain of our salvation—each minor instance of triumphant perseverance is an index pointing towards His bright and perfect pattern.

We are led then with christian solicitude to inquire, what peculiar duties remain to us, who bring up, as it were, the train of Christ's followers on the Heavenly road. And, the peculiar condition of our churches—the whole frame of society around us—and, let us add, the strong feeling recently excited in the minds of many of our dear brethren, either here, or gone to their rest, strongly suggest to us, as a subject of our address, that of the Education of Ministers of the Gospel; and in writing on this subject, we intend to take the expression in a very wide sense, as involving the whole preparation of the mind for the work of the Gospel, whether it consist in inward exercise, or outward improvement.

It is important then to regard this subject in a twofold light. First, in respect to that which the Great Master of Assemblies has reserved peculiarly to Himself, to which the Christian Church has commonly appropriated the designation of "a call of the Holy Ghost." And secondly, that participation in preparatory work, which He permits to human instrumentality and enjoins as a duty on His servants.

Of these, the first is in all cases absolutely indispensable. If it be disregarded and all good do not entirely cease, yet guilt rests on the churches for the omission, and a most terrible burthen of responsibility and condemnation on him who dares thus profanely intrude into the sanctuary.

The second, however important and desirable in all cases, is certainly not indispensable in all, as possessed in a high degree; for the Lord himself chose his distinguished "twelve" from among the comparatively uninstructed, in order that the might of His power might shine out gloriously in the miraculous wisdom and knowledge which their speech proclaimed, and the wonderful results following their ministrations. And so, in all ages, He has, from time to time, raised up witnesses with a small amount of human knowledge, to whom he has committed, in a greater or less degree, the ministration of the word, and whom He has owned as His, in the blessing