

lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd."—Num. xxvii. 15-17.

My brother, I have chosen these words as the ground of my address to you on the calling, qualification and duties of the Christian Ministry. You need not be informed by me that they constitute the affecting prayer of Moses, the man of God, when told by Jehovah that his prolonged and responsible ministry had now terminated, and that he must ascend the mountain, from whence he was to view the promised land and then be gathered unto his people as was his brother Aaron. The servant of the Lord, with characteristic meekness, seeks no reversal of the divine creed, and well assured of his personal interest in the covenant of grace shrinks not from death, but in the spirit of true patriotism makes intercession for the great congregation from whose head he was so soon and so suddenly to be taken, and whose dispersion he dreaded as the possible consequence of his removal. Recognizing alike the sovereignty of God in demanding the surrender of his spirit and his omniscience as perfectly acquainted with the hearts of all men and therefore fully able to raise up another in his room, he thus addresses Jehovah: "Let the Lord the God of the spirits of all flesh set a man over the congregation," and no less felicitously and comprehensively do the words that follow describe the work of him who was to be set over the people, both in its aggressive and conservation aspects, both in the work to be done and in the care to be exercised. "Who may go out before them and who may go in before them and who may lead them out and who may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd."

Nor need I tell you that the prayer was immediately answered. The pastor sought was found at once and was forthwith ordained. One who had proved himself faithful in lesser trusts was raised to the highest trust by the divine call and consecration. My brother, the prayer of Moses has been in substance the prayer of this congregation, the answer to which they fondly hope they have received in your presence among them to-day. In addressing you then this shall be my motto: "*Go out before this people and lead them out, go in before them and lead them in.*"

First. Go out before them as one assured of your call by God to the work of the Christian

ministry. It becomes you to be fully persuaded that the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, has set you over this people. There is such a thing as a divine call to the ministry. Not less in the pastorate of the Christian church than in the office of the prophet, the priest or the apostle does the principle hold good that "no man taketh this honour upon himself, but he that is called of God as was Aaron." You may afford to discard superstitious views by which the doctrine of a divine call to the ministry has been mystified and perverted, the dogmas of apostolical succession and of grace conferred by the laying on of Episcopal hands, but not the question, "Have you been moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon yourself the office of the ministry?" It is the Lord of the harvest alone who sends forth labourers into His harvest. It is God who says to His church, "I will give you pastors after my own heart who shall feed you with knowledge and instruction." The commission "Feed my sheep. Feed my lambs" comes from Jesus only and from Jesus directly to the called one. If true overseers of the flock, the Holy Ghost hath made us overseers. Before the call of a church and subsequent to the call out of darkness into light comes the call to preach, not originating in a fleshly desire, or literary taste, or simple choice of a profession; but in an intelligent, ardent and irrepressible longing to preach the Gospel, implanted in our bosoms by the Holy Ghost. Go out before your people, then, my brother, well persuaded by your call by God to this great work. For want of this many have preached without power, or profit, or comfort and have commanded no following. Possessed of this you will teach the people as "one having authority;" you will be upheld in seasons when want of visible success will try your faith; you will be kept from entangling yourself with the affairs of this world, and from laying down the office of the sacred ministry and retiring into secular life because tempted either by the privations peculiar to your work, or the higher emoluments of mere worldly avocations.

Secondly. Go out before the congregation *as a devout man*, as one possessed of the true moral and spiritual qualifications required of the Christian minister. In the original choice of men to this office, special thought, not exclusive regard was had to the superior moral