

they are called, may be so much more extensive than those they are occupying, as to more than compensate for this loss. Or they may be called to occupy positions which, though not more important, require a kind of labor for which they have peculiar qualifications, whilst others may be found to succeed them in their present fields. In other words, in the case of one of these ministers, the two places between which he is called to decide may be equally important; and yet it may be much more easy to find a man qualified to fill the one he is occupying, than the one to which he is called. In either of these cases, a change is not only proper, but desirable. The late Dr. Alexander was an eminent example of the class of ministers of whom we now speak. Equally acceptable as a minister amongst the plainer or the more educated class of people, able to gain an influence rapidly and to keep it permanently, he might have been a settled pastor in the same church for life; and yet he found himself called of God from Virginia to a church in Philadelphia, and from that to the Theological Seminary.

II. Having made these remarks concerning that phase of the question, which relates to ministers themselves, we proceed to state the principles which, as it seems to us, should control them in encouraging or discouraging calls, and in the acceptance or rejection of them.

1. When a minister has accepted a call, under the clear conviction that it is from God, his evident duty is, to throw himself into the work there with his whole heart, and look no further. Most assuredly, if God has called him to that field, he has a work for him to do there. How extensive that work is, or how long it will take to do it, he cannot possibly know. Certain it is, however, that his Divine Master says to him—"What thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." This he cannot do, so long as he does not feel fully identified with his people, and is in fact hoping and looking for an opportunity to leave them. The servant of God, it is true, must ever be ready to hear a call from Him, and to see the openings of His providence; but he may be very sure, that when he shall have finished his work in the field assigned him, the call to another will come to him without his seeking it. Difficulties he may have to contend with; but faith can overcome great difficulties. It moves the arm that moves the universe. A believing, earnest, prayerful ministry is "mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong-holds." To come and go only at His call, is the happiness of the faithful minister. In all ordinary cases, then, the call should come *unsought*.

2. A call cannot be regarded as providential unless it be either to a wider field of usefulness, or to a field equally wide, in which the peculiar talents of the pastor are specially needed; or unless it be from a field he finds himself incapable of occupying properly, to one better suited to his talents and attainments, or to his state of health. Since it is the duty of every minister to desire and seek the greatest possible degree of usefulness; it is not probable, perhaps not possible, that God will call any one from a field where he is doing good, to one where he will do less good. And since a change of location, except in cases already mentioned, is always attended with some considerable loss of influence, at least for the time being; the new field should offer considerably greater prospects of usefulness, than that which the pastor is called to leave for it.

The comparative importance of different fields of ministerial labor, is to be estimated in several ways. There may be a larger population accessible at one point than at another. One position may be more commanding than another, offering the opportunity of exerting an influence over a wider territory. One church may offer more effective co-operation with the pastor than another. One position may better suit the peculiar talents of the minister than another. And then, in the church in which a minister is settled, there may be dissatisfaction