

every ordinary profession we follow. Now the same holds true in regard to the profession of the ministry; yet we must be careful to distinguish here between that natural taste which is felt for an ordinary profession, and that which constitutes the internal call for the profession of the ministry. The taste which an individual possesses for painting, music, and all such arts, is a natural taste, and generally shows itself in his early boyhood, and acquires additional strength and prominence during all the advancing stages of his life; but the taste for the ministry of the gospel is of an entirely different nature. It is not natural, for in many individuals it has not been felt till they have reached full manhood. Neither is it a purely intellectual taste which only sympathizes with the beautiful, the harmonious, and the grand in nature; for were it so, the ministry would present but little inducement on this score. A taste for the ministry, then, or that which enters as a chief element in what we term the *internal call*, is a spiritual desire; and this desire is not merely a passive feeling, but is constantly alive, and yearns for the glory of God, and the salvation of immortal souls. It must in some degree correspond with that of the Apostle, when he says: "My little children, of whom I travail again in birth, till Christ be found in you."

In order that the internal call be a full, real, and not a doubtful one, there must be a full conformity in the soul to the object of the ministry; and this conformity embraces three principal elements, viz., faith, desire, and fear. First there must be faith. Without this vital element of religion, it is difficult to conceive how any man can have the least desire for this holy vocation. The minister must believe the message which he delivers to others, or he cannot make it a matter of self-appropriation, and thus all his sermons, however lively and rhetorical, they may for a while appear under the mask of natural eloquence, or the impulse of youthful buoyancy, will soon wane away into dry, dull, and uninteresting declamations. Without faith in the divine message, there cannot be any true eloquence displayed in public preaching. Earnestness is an essential element in eloquence; but without faith, there cannot be real earnestness. In all the most celebrated orators of ancient and modern times earnestness was the most prominent characteristic. Demosthenes, when thundering forth his matchless eloquence in behalf of the liberty of Greece, was in right earnest. Cicero, when pleading for the safety of Rome, and uttering his eloquent speech against Catiline, was in earnest; and so the minister of the gospel, before he can be an effective and eloquent pleader of his Master's cause, must be in earnest.

But along with faith, which we see is essential to earnestness, there must also be an actual desire for the ministerial profession,

or the internal call is not complete. Faith itself does not necessarily include desire; for if it did, all believers would choose the ministry. Of course faith, in proportion to its strength in different individuals, is always blended with a proportionate desire to live as far as they can, to the glory of God, but not always to choose the ministry for promoting this end; for the sincere believer can glorify God and exert an influence for good in whatever lot his life may be cast. The reason that not more from among believers follow the ministry is probably from a consciousness of their physical or mental unfitness for such an important calling. Although faith is an inlet of spiritual light into the soul, it does not necessarily give additional strength to the mental faculties. Faith works efficaciously on the heart and affections, but it does not give a new mental power, nor, as we observed, will it invigorate those which are naturally weak. When a man becomes a Christian he undoubtedly undergoes a mighty change, for all his misplaced affections are put right and made to flow forth in a proper channel; but in every other respect, he is the same as he was before. All his natural peculiarities remain with him still; so that in regard to any physical or mental qualifications he may require for the efficient discharge of the duties of the ministry, faith, of itself, does not supply them. But the Christian is always an humble man, and takes a calm, common-sense view of things; and hence it is, that when he sees himself laboring under any natural deficiency that would incapacitate him from discharging effectively the work of the ministry, he modestly declines to aspire after such a high and responsible office, and contents himself by glorifying God and benefiting his fellow creatures in an humbler sphere. This, no doubt, accounts for the comparatively small number of true believers who study for the ministry.

But in regard to the desire for the clerical profession, it is necessary even for the sincere Christian to examine and analyze it well, and see what are the real component elements, so to speak, that enter into it. It would seem, indeed, at first sight that a true Christian in aspiring to such a high calling, could have but one element in his desire after it, namely, a desire for extending God's cause and saving immortal souls; yet it must be admitted that with few, if indeed with any, is this fully and absolutely the case. None need hope, however much they may desire it, to attain to absolute perfection in this life. Much of imperfection mingles even with our best services; and our thoughts and desires often flow forth with more or less impurity.

Now a taste, or desire for the ministry, even in the very best inclined, we must admit, contains more or less of other foreign ingredients than the main one,—the glory of God. It may be tinged with a love for popularity, or even with some faint desire for