

It is important that this point be understood at the outset. Let us beware of placing the sacred office too low. Let us claim for it all that nature can confer.—And it is proper that we should. The opponents of the truth have often been men of great intellectual powers (somewhat *disorganized*, I admit), and it is in the order of Providence that they should be excelled on their own ground.

But this qualification alone is insufficient. After all that nature can do, there is yet a lack. Nature, rightly so called, is *imperfect*, not to say *corrupt*. Hence something must be *acquired*. The most talented man that ever lived is unfit for the office of ambassador, without a sound knowledge of political science. Now, I am far from contending that religion or the grace of God may be acquired, as mathematics or language; yet it must be *acquired*. It is not born with us. It does not come as a matter of course. It is got by application. Every Christian thus obtains it. Every Christian needs it. How much more the *Christian minister!*

I observe, then, that the gospel minister should himself be taught of God. This should form the basis. It is only God that can make him an "able minister of the New Testament." His heart must be filled with love divine. He must himself have been brought into the favour of God; then will "the love of Christ constrain him," and pity to his fellow men move him, to publish the proclamation of mercy, and as an "ambassador for Christ," make it the business of his life to "beseech men to be reconciled to God." This love to Christ, firmly rooted and grounded in the heart, inciting to obedience to the divine commands, and influencing every action of the life, is the noblest qualification of a Christian minister. When our blessed Lord was about to leave the world and return to his Father, with a view to impress this great truth upon the minds of his disciples, and receive their pledge that they would be faithful to the sacred trust, he put to Peter that heart-moving interrogatory, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" He requires him to repeat the assurance of his affection, extorting from him a second and a third solemn declaration of his attachment to his master. Then, after having taken a triple pledge of the apostle's love to himself, (to use the words of a modern divine,) "he gave over into his hands his blood-bought treasure.—Here are the sheep for whom I laid down my life; dear are they to me as the apple of mine eye; to none but safe hands would I commit them; take them, feed them; guide them; rule them with love; protect them; and finally present them all safe to me in heaven. Without the deepest love to Christ, no man is sufficient for these things. For this love no splendour of talents, no acquired learning, no eloquence can compensate. A minister, to become 'apt to teach,' must himself first be taught from above the great doctrine of 'Christ crucified'; and then, under the powerful constraint of pious duty to God, and of glowing charity to man, preach to others what he has himself learned under the tuition of