

ral views of the Gospel Ministry. This is essential for preachers and hearers.

Every one who thinks of entering the holy ministry should entertain lofty views of the office. Without this, he will not labour to acquire those mental, moral and spiritual acquirements so absolutely necessary to the faithful and efficient discharge of the all-important duties to be undertaken. No one should desire to enter the ministry of reconciliation but such as regard it the highest and most responsible trust, the most sacred and divine calling that can be undertaken by man. Every true candidate must therefore strive to know, in the secretaries of his own soul, that he has a twofold call of God. He must first strive to know that he is called from darkness to light—that he is, by the power of the Holy Ghost, created anew in Christ Jesus. Whoever would become a minister of Jesus Christ, and a steward of the mysteries of God, must, *moreover*, have a special call of God to this sacred office. He must, under the powerful influence of the same divine Spirit, feel a prevailing holy desire to be employed in the gospel service. And where this true desire exists, there is a feeling of insufficiency for the awfully solemn work; yet the strong desire that God should be glorified, and accompanied with a desire to do good to humanity, burning “like a fire within,”—may serve to prove his divine vocation to the office. But even when this is felt, the prayer of Moses should often arise from the deepest feelings of the heart, “Lord, if thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence.” This fearfulness, together with the earnest desire, is most essential for the individual, and pre-eminently important for the ministry. Nothing can so deeply or irremediably corrupt the heart as a ministry without a “vocation” to it. “There are no men,” says an old divine, “more hopelessly abandoned than those who, not having been called to the ministry by the vocation of God, do not perform anything worthy of the calling during the whole course of their lives. Every word which he utters closes his mind yet more to the feeling of truth, so that he perishes by means of that which quickens others.”

But the ministry should not only be entered with these solemn thoughts, but our views of the sacredness and responsibility of the office should be heightening the longer we are entrusted with the gospel treasures. We should often deeply feel, “Who is sufficient for these things?” “The moment,” says a practical divine, “we think lightly of the ministry, our right hand is dried up.” Indeed, were the difficulties and responsibilities of the office fully seen beforehand, it is believed that many of the most conscientious and devoted servants of God never would have ventured to assume the office. Accordingly, it has been said by one of Christ’s ambassadors, “God leads His ministers blindfold

into the work, not showing them half of its trials and difficulties, until they have entered on it,—and then only gradually.”

It is not less important that the hearers of the preached word should cherish right views of the ministry. Human nature is so constituted that men cannot easily separate their ideas of the message from the messenger. It is not likely that they can receive the word preached, as the word of God and not of man, if they are accustomed to think meanly of the office: nor is it likely that they will go earnestly to a throne of grace and pray that God would be with His ministering servants; or that they will listen to the preached word, hoping to realize that he has a message to them from God. But the thought should always go with you to the hearing of the preached gospel, that God is with His ambassadors, and that they are bound to declare the whole counsel of God—that, in every instance His word is preached, it proves, in the case of every one within its reach, either a savor of life or a savor of death—that it is, either raising you in the scale of moral beings, or sinking to deeper and deeper ruin. Be persuaded, then, that to be under or within reach of the preached gospel is one of the most solemn and responsible positions you can occupy on this earth.

Seeing that this is the principal means employed by infinite Wisdom to build up His cause among men, we may readily believe that the great enemy of God and man exerts his utmost ingenuity to render the ministry powerless for good. This arch-deceiver will therefore lead such as yield to his seductive influences either to condemn the ministry altogether, or lead men into the belief that they cannot derive any benefit from the ministrations of those in whom they can discover any imperfection, or who do not act in all things according to their peculiar views. With a pretended respect for all righteousness, he will lead them to look for a ministry void of imperfection, such as had never been seen under the law, or in any mere man under the gospel,—and such as the all-wise God never promised to confer on His Church militant. Those who are thus beguiled with such unscriptural expectations in the ministry, not only injure their own souls, but often do much to injure others who receive their sentiments. “There is a generation,” says an eminent writer, “belonging to most churches, pure in their own eyes, who display more anxiety about the minister’s piety than about their own, suspecting his virtues, and ever ready to detect and expose his faults. Defects which are venial in others, are heinous in him. But generally they are those who have a beam in their own eyes, that are so ready to detect a mote in the minister’s.”

There are others of a somewhat kindred spirit, who imagine that they must first ascertain whether the minister is really called of God ere they can hope to benefit under his