

Communications.

Ordination.

BRO. DUNTON TO BRO. WALLER.

Bro. Waller:

I have carefully perused your communication in the P. C. MESSENGER of Feb. 23d, and have noted particularly those portions in it, where you advert to some of the statements of facts contained in my first letter to the P. C. MESSENGER. Since then I have seen your second letter, and have noted its contents, both of which appear to be brotherly and candid; hence I feel constrained to comply with your request, so far as I am capable, and will now speak upon the subject *in extenso*, although I feel somewhat loth to enter the arena of polemic controversy, lest we be thought a lover of captious dispute, not but what we believe in the right of candid investigation and independent inquiry upon this, and all other questions of Gospel interest, yet we approach this subject with a degree of trepidation, being apprehensive that some of our good brethren will regard a discussion of ordination with disfavor, being somewhat over-scrupulous and fastidious in relation to any agitation of questions which they fear will disturb the general tranquility of the brotherhood by arousing thought upon, and calling in question the correctness of long continued usages and practices in the churches. We have no idea of sowing any dissension in the camp of the saints, nor of inveighing against any rightfully constituted authority; but shall ever maintain a respectful deference to all our thoughtful brotherhood, upon this question, in regard to which there is a diversity of sentiment among us, we persistently maintain that the church, or congregation, has the supreme power in creating all of its officers, be they deacon, elder, preacher or evangelist, and must hold them all to as strict accountability as it does the humblest private member.

We will now review your answers to our five questions.

1. How is a church of Christ constituted? You answer, of baptized believers. While we admit this, yet it is no answer at all. Baptized believers are the elements of which it is constituted, and become an important factor in the case; but how a church of Christ is constituted you fail to tell us, hence, we will answer. A church, or organization of Christ, is constituted by the voluntary association of baptized believers into an organized body. The true answer is important to the success of this discussion.

If, as you say, the officers of the congregation are chosen by the congregation and ordained by the evangelist by fasting, prayer, and the laying on of hands, then we have but few evangelical churches now-a-days. We admit that they are chosen by the congregation, but we deny the right of the evangelist to ordain, and also call in question the manner in which you say it should be done. This theory that our modern evangelists succeed to, and are invested with, all the powers of Timothy or Titus is an unwarranted assumption, and a dangerous one, and is germane to a prelacy in church administration by high church functionaries. And as one congregation has no right to usurp the prerogatives of another congregation, they have no right to empower their creatures to do so no more than they, being the supreme tribunal of God on earth, in the administration of moral discipline, can invest their creatures with that power, and it is a great leap of logic to infer from the practice of the specially inspired founders and advisers of the early churches rules which other ages should follow, inasmuch as we now have no more inspired apostles or evangelists among us. In our estimation, there are no powers or rights, inherent in a church of Christ which stand out with more salient clearness

than the right it has to make its own officers, and also the power which it has to cashier its own officers when they are unfaithful to their official trusts. These are among the characteristic features which render every local independent church of Christ, not only a result, but an embodiment of the Gospel. Hence, it stands forever opposed to all of those standards of human legality and jurisprudence, whether of sublimated, clerical, or ecclesiastical power, or of those minor gradations of official dictation; and when we recognize the fact that the power of moral discipline is lodged with the church, or is vested in the membership of each and every particular church of Christ, we see not only its composition and powers, but its governmental character as an independent church of Christ, is manifest. These are among the logical outgrowths of the fundamental principles of the Gospel of Christ, and are among the logical results of God's rightful sovereignty over man. In every such free church, the power of independency is such that no foreign ecclesiastical power can impose on it any teacher, preacher, or officer, admit, or exclude members, or form for it a creed, or in any way regulate its mode of proceeding, for it is a sovereign body, of spiritual freemen, with Christ as their head.

You quote Paul to Titus, first chapter and fifth verse: "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee." There is no word for ordained in the Greek, but it is rendered from different words, and we learn that in the above passage, that the word rendered ordain, signifies to fix, settle, establish.

Without indicating the manner in which it was done, we cannot think that it is logical to conclude that either Timothy or Titus ever exercised dative powers of an absolute character in constituting church officers; but maintain that they consulted the popular will of the early churches, under the immediate direction and influence of the Holy Ghost. We base this argument upon the analogy of apostolic precedent, and this view shows a compatible and harmonious agreement in the actions of the early teachers in this regard. Titus ordained the same way that he set in order the things that were wanting; he did it by his teaching; he enjoined these things upon the churches by virtue of divine authority, but it is not logical to conclude that he did it *ipse facto*, as a physical does of the things referred to. "And when they had ordained them elders in every church and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord on whom they believed." Acts xiv. 23. The learned Dr. Lee says that the Greek participle here rendered ordained is *cheirotoneo*, is derived from *cheir*, the hand, and *teino*, to stretch. In various Greek and English lexicons it is rendered, to vote or choose, by holding up the hand, appoint by vote, to choose, select, ordain, appoint, constitute.

Hence, the above passage, not only asserts the fact that elders were constituted, but indicates the manner in which it was done. What confirms this view of ordination by a popular vote of the churches, taken by show of hands, is the manner in which the same word is used in the passive singular form in 2 Cor. viii. 19: "Who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace." "Who was chosen" is the same word as in Acts xiv. 23, except it is in the passive singular form, and most clearly refers to an election by the churches. One of the finest Greek scholars on this coast, in a private note to the writer, says that these words absolutely mean hand-vote; hence, we conclude that appointments of officers, in the early churches, were made by lifting up of hands, and not by laying

on of hands. See the creation of a greater officer than that of elder, done by the popular will of the early disciples, by apostolic authority under the divine influence; this example ought to settle the creation of church officers in favor of the popular will of congregations now. See Acts i. 15: "And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said (the number of names together were about a hundred and twenty) men and brethren," etc. "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us; beginning from the baptism of John unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection." Acts i. 21, 22. Dr. Adam Clark says must one be made a witness; hence, how was he ordained or made a witness. Verse 23: "And they appointed (nominated) two," etc. Verse 26: "And they gave forth their lots, and the lot fell upon Mathias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles." Dr. Clark says that Mathias was chosen (ordained) by the whole company, no imposition of hands referred to, in this case, for it is a clear example of the election of an apostle, the first choice, of a high officer. After the ascension of Christ there is no evidence that hands were ever laid upon any of the apostles, to induct them into the apostolic office. "And he ordained twelve that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach." Mark iii. 14. "All of the apostles were chosen, of Christ, and all of them were ordained." John xv. 16. "Go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel unto me," etc. Acts ix. 15. "Wherunto I am ordained a preacher and an apostle." 1 Tim. ii. 7. There is no command, or example, for the imposition of hands as a rite, or induction of persons into office in a church of Christ, for all those extraordinary transactions, attended by the imposition of hands in the early history of the churches, were, all of them, limited, by their own nature, to the age of miracles.

We have thought that the seven, chosen by the multitude (Acts vi. 5) were deacons, and have so expressed ourselves; but there is no Scriptural proof that they were; the term deacon is nowhere applied to any of them, the necessity, nature, and extent of their appointment is clearly limited by the expression, "this business," which was, to see that the widows of the gracious brethren were impartially ministered unto. We cannot see that the choice of the seven was the creation of a permanent office. "And we entered into the house of Philip the Evangelist, who was one of the seven." Acts xxi. 18. He was one of the seven about twenty-nine years before this time, but was not an evangelist by virtue of that, under divine direction; the multitude chose the seven, and under the same authority they sanctioned the proceeding. There is no proof that the laying on of hands constituted their appointment.

The purpose of the laying on of hands must be determined by those Scriptures that speak of it. Jesus Christ laid hands on, to heal, so did the apostles; the apostles laid on hands to impart gifts.

Bro. Waller, you say that none but the apostles had power to impart spiritual gifts. (Acts ix. 17). Ananias was not an apostle, he laid hands on Saul, and he received the Holy Ghost. You say that when gifts were imparted, they did that, and did no more. Ananias did more, for the laying on of his hands gave sight and the Holy Ghost; but neither of these acts ordained Paul an apostle; he was called to be an apostle, by the Holy Ghost, at that time; and twelve years afterward he had hands laid on him again, by those who were not apostles, and thereby he received a special dispensation of grace and knowledge for a special work. See

Ephesians iii. 1-8.

Timothy received his first gift by the laying on of the hands of those who were not apostles. "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." 1 Tim. iv. 14. Hands were laid on him again. "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands." 2 Tim. i. 6. No ordination or induction into office in this case, but Timothy was given something that was in him, which he was not to neglect, but was to stir up. These transactions also, and all others like them, are limited by their own nature to the age of miracles. Hence, Timothy must have been constituted an evangelist, by the will of the early disciples. Acts viii. 17, 19, and Acts xix. 5, 7. Spiritual gifts were bestowed in both the above cases.

Now, Bro. Waller, you say that when Paul left Titus in Crete, for the important purpose named, he must have left an example; so Paul is to furnish the example. And you say that it must be found somewhere in the Book of God. You quote 2 Tim. ii. 2: "And the things that thou hast heard of me, among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Query, Did Timothy hear Titus ordain those elders in Crete? And was the laying on of hands one of the things which other men were to be taught how to do? Then you quote 2 Tim. iii. 14: "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." Do you say that among the things which Timothy was enjoined to hear, learn, and commit to others, was how to ordain elders? We maintain that the above passage have no reference to a succession of ordination by the laying on of hands; but they have reference to a succession of qualified persons by instruction, and this link in the Gospel system is as perpetual as the system itself.

Paul furnishes no example of ordination of elders, by evangelists, in the sense which you understand it, or we are very much mistaken.

Now, if you will tell me what evangelist ordained the Apostle Peter an elder, and how he did it, then there will be an example; then who is to do the fasting and praying, the officiating evangelist, or the elders elect? There is no Scriptural authority for this theory, more than there is for another practice, which I will now illustrate.

Now, for instance, suppose that a church is to be organized down at Jericho, they proceed to choose their officers, they then send up to Jerusalem for the elders of the church there to come down and ordain the officers elect in the church to be organized at Jericho. They come down, the congregation assembles; one of the elders reads Paul's instructions to Timothy and Titus, relative to the qualifications of deacons and elders, then they sing and pray, after which the officers elect remain upon their knees, the officiating elders pass along and lay their hands upon their heads, without saying a word, and this is thought by many to be a very imposing and valid Scriptural ordination; but it is not evangelical, and moreover it is not Scriptural. Does it not, like the Evangelist theory, contravene the rightful prerogatives of the congregation?

You speak of the mode of setting apart church officers, and what does that mean, is it not to separate from the rest, to select from among others, for a special use or service; if so, what church can invest her creatures with such power over other churches? Is not the power that makes greater than that which is made? A church can only confer such powers as it possesses, and it is evident that one church cannot choose, set apart, con-

secrate, invest, or ordain officers for other churches, without infringing the rightful independence of said churches.

We maintain the idea of the sovereign right, power, and independence of the churches of Christ, as against the idea of undus official investment, authority, or dictation, are also opposed to the practice of all unmeaning ceremonies. We regard these objectionable features as so many relics that serve as connecting links to bind us fast in the retrogressive meshes of denominationalism, and without them the separation between the churches of Christ and sectarian Babylon is rendered more distinct and visible.

May the light of Gospel truth enlighten our minds that a unity of purpose and practice may ultimately prevail among all our churches.

Yours brotherly,

S. B. DUNTON.

Our Troubles.

With faith made strong by an investigation of the prophecies and an examination of the miracles wrought by the Savior, and having implicit confidence in the providence of God, and knowing that he is a prayer hearing and a prayer answering God, we move in the direction of the altar of prayer, to call upon him who said, "Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you" when another trouble comes in. This trouble originates from an opinion entertained by some.

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that God will not hear and answer prayer, unless the petitioner is upon his knees, when he prays. The question now comes up, as we are about to pray to God, shall we clothe ourselves in sackcloth, dipped in ashes, shall we fall upon the ground, shall we kneel upon our knees, or shall we stand, when we pray? The attitude in prayer causes perplexity, for God has recognized many postures, but has ordained none. So, properly speaking, the position of the body in prayer, is an untaught question, and has generated strife.

In the investigation of the attitude in prayer we affirm first, that Christianity consists of what Christ and the apostles taught, and what they practiced everywhere. Any practice that obtained in one place, that was not observed everywhere, was not a part of Christianity, but a custom of that country, and was observed because it did not conflict with the Christian religion. Paul said: "And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God; but under the law of Christ) that I might gain them that are without law; to the weak became I as weak that I might gain the weak; I am made all things, to all men, that I might by all means save some." 1 Cor. ix. 20-22. Paul was firm and steadfast, in all things that belong to Christianity, not willing to compromise any fact, truth, or ordinance composing the doctrine of Christ. But upon all untaught questions he was liberal and willing for every Christian to be fully persuaded in his own mind. We know that attitude, position, and gesture convey thoughts. Standing, lifting up holy hands, is indicative of reverence and adoration. Kneeling suggests servitude and submission. Falling down with the face upon the ground, in the dust, dirt or ashes, denote great distress; while falling upon the ground with the face uplifted, denotes that we, in a dejected condition, are ready to look up and praise the Lord, whose mercy endureth forever. The attitude of prayer was usually suggested by the custom of the country into which the men of God went with a message of peace from him. When Jonah delivered his message to