

land theory of the ministry which identifies it with the pastorate lies at the bottom of the distinction between pastors and acting pastors, has an air of greater probability about it. According to this, the ordained are ministers only while pastors of particular churches. Ceasing to be pastors they demit the ministry, and become layman. Dr. Ross combats this theory with weapons which are fatal to it. It has never been extensively held, and in 1865 was formally repudiated by the Congregational churches of the United States when they said in convention:—"The ministry includes all who are called of God to preach the gospel, and are set apart to that work by ordination." Dr. Ross approves of this theory as "scriptural, reasonable and adequate." But it is noteworthy that he makes one or two additions to it which modify it considerably. Thus he makes it a point to speak of ministers as "ordained by the churches," and asserts with a dogmatism well nigh sublime enough to be ridiculous, that their position as ministers, or their "standing" as he is fond of calling it, is in the hands of the association of churches in the particular locality where they reside.

Dr. Ross's article is long, occupying 22 pages of the *Bibliotheca*, and comprises many matters peculiar to American Congregationalism, in which we have only historical interest. But there are great principles involved in it which concern Christian churches in all ages and lands. These we shall in the main discuss. Perhaps we can get at them better by asking a few questions.

1. By what authoritative standard is this dispute, and all others about ecclesiastical matters, to be settled? Is there any, and if so, what and where is it? Dr. Ross quotes Penchard, the Cambridge, Savoy, and Saybrook platforms, Upham's Ratio, the Congregational dictionary, the Boston platform, and even the statutes of some States, but never once makes his appeal to the New Testament. Either it is mute on the subject he discusses, or it is of no authority. Congregationalists have from their earliest history been distinguished for making the New Testament their text-book of ecclesiastical polity, and if this be not it they have none.

2. What is ordination? Only a diploma, a declaration that, in the opinion of the parties who ordain, the man is fit to be a minister, and is justified in thinking that God has called him to this work.

3. Does ordination make a minister? If so, Paul was not a minister, though he over and over again says he was. Is Moody a minister, or only a "speaking brother"—only a "layman"—as Dr. Ross would say? Congregationalists have held from time immemorial that ordination does not make the minister. Principal Fairbairn well expresses their position by saying,

"The Divine choice is expressed through men the Divine word enlightens and the Divine spirit guides."

4. What authority is there for the functions claimed for associations? None whatever. There is even less New Testament evidence in their favor than for councils. Associations are merely a manifestation of the gregarious element in sanctified human nature, and are one form of the social development in religion. This is left to the voluntary action of Christian people and churches, but that an optional form of organization should be the depository and custodian of ministerial standing is absurd. Dr. Ross assumes that associationalism is an integral and essential part of the Congregational polity. But it is not. There are many churches and ministers who stand aloof from associations, and it is expressly and stoutly maintained by British Congregationalists with entire unanimity, so far as we are aware, that their status is equally good, whether within or without an association. There are those in the United States who take the same ground, and though but a small minority now, there can be little doubt their number will increase, until the associational theory shares the fate of the council theory. Dr. Ross acknowledges the failure of the council system, as he well may in the face of the fact that for 30 years past it has been falling more and more into disuse until to-day two-thirds of the pastors in the U. S. have never been installed. The attempt to make association compulsory will end in the same way. An increasing number of ministers and churches will drop out of them until more are they that are unassociated than are associated. When this comes to pass, Dr. Ross will have to hunt up another theory of ministerial standing to replace those that have been weighed in the balances and found wanting.

5. What is the solution of the whole difficulty? The answer is, return to the good old way of New Testament simplicity, the discovery of which emancipated the fathers and founders of Independency from the ecclesiastical trammels which bound them. Some lingering influence of the old time New England system of church and state seems to be casting a spell over Dr. Ross's mind. What more standing does a minister want than ordination and church membership give him? Dr. Ross refers more than once to a legal standing accorded by the courts in some of the United States, which is assuredly a vestige of church and state. He also contends that a minister should have standing among his peers, and not depend on laymen for it. This is essential sacerdotalism, and involves a view of things against which genuine Congregationalism has always protested. It has never sanctioned the distinction between clergy and laity, or exalted ministers as such above the brotherhood. Authority is recognized