

is an invaluable blessing. God forbid that I should wish to deprive any man of it. You say if I and my adherents would attend public worship with you we would be instructed and edified. We may say the same of you. We have tried it. You have not. We are instructed amongst you, we allow, after this sort—the industrious bee sucks honey out of the bitter flower.

May I not say with young Elihu, "Days should speak, and multitude of years search wisdom." Old men are not always wise, nor great men always good, but there is a spirit in man and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding.

If you and your adherents would attend our meetings, and hear the solemn truths of the gospel uttered in a feeling manner, flowing from the abundance of a heart, glowing with love to God and love to man, the congregation affected under it, and hear them sing the praises of God, an impartial spectator would think they bore a near resemblance to the heavenly chorister. I am persuaded you would be instructed and edified.

You mention something respecting the tribes of Israel separating,—priests made out of the lowest of the people, etc., and as it is only a slur or reflection, and not anything essential, I omit saying anything about it; as it is evident many great men and learned priests have been very low in their day. That you were inspired I make no doubt of, and I believe you felt every word you spoke. I believe you did not get your sentiments from books, for if you had, and credited hundreds of our pious ancestors works, you would not write nor speak as you do. You ask me to excuse you for quoting from a passage of Scripture. I am loath to excuse any one for making a wrong use of Scripture. However I can freely forgive and hope you will shine in both church and State as a star of the first magnitude in the firmament of God's power. After recommending you to God and the Word of his grace, I remain

Your most obedient and humble servant in the gospel,
EDWARD MANNING.

Ordination.

BY REV. S. MARCH.

The term "Ordination" is used in an ecclesiastical sense, and is understood to mean the formal and public setting apart of a person to the special work of the gospel ministry by the imposition of hands. It is an act by which he becomes invested with a certain spiritual authority, and entitled to certain privileges as its accompaniment. Such a ministry is important and necessary for the fulfillment of the divine purpose in bringing the world to the feet of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ordination has been recognized and practised in the church from the days of the apostles until now.

The question naturally arises, To whom has the power and responsibility of ordination been committed?

A careful study of the New Testament, and more particularly of the Acts of the Apostles and the epistles, will show that it was divinely vested in and rested with the Christian church. And since the church cannot be considered as thus invested in its abstract and universal sense, it must be understood as so invested in its local, limited or concrete sense; as *par et*, the church at Antioch, or Jerusalem, or Laodicea, or Philippi, as the case may be. Hence the answer to the question will be that the church, in any given locality, must assume the responsibility, and possesses the power to choose and ordain the person who is to act as its pastor or teacher. Among Baptists this has always been, and still is the accepted theory. It is believed that this position is at once Scriptural, sound and safe.

There are, however, certain considerations which must be taken into account by a local church before attempting to proceed to act in a matter so vitally related to its own interests and those of the cause of which it is but a single representative. Here it is required to look not only on its own things, but also on the things of others. Other churches in other localities are interested in and are not merely passive spectators of the work to be done at home, but look anxiously out upon the world and in their measure feel for and seek to promote the welfare of all others. Hence, the local church must take special care that the candidate for ordination shall possess such force of moral character, such mental and spiritual qualifications as will render him acceptable and efficient in the discharge of the duties which he is called upon to engage in.

Now, in considering these matters it has been customary from the beginning to call in the aid and advice of other churches who, by their pastors or elders and brethren, of sound judgment and understanding, willingly render their assistance, and thus give to the church a fuller and wider recognition and endorsement of its action. In which there is disclosed to us such a Scriptural interdependence among the churches as would prove a safeguard for the prevention of any act by which one church might through its action become derogatory to the welfare of the churches elsewhere; a consideration which should never be lost sight of in cases where an ordination is contemplated. Great injury may result to the church and the cause at large by neglect or forgetfulness of this principle.

In proceeding to this act they will satisfy themselves that the candidate "is of good report among those who are without;" that he is "not a novice," but a "scribe well instructed" in the truth; "sober, grave, temperate," "able to teach others also," "an example in word and

doctrine," and who will hold fast the form of sound words," and will "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints," and "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

Co-ordinately with these inquiries they will ascertain whether the candidate has received a call from God to this work. Perhaps this is a matter which it is not easy for anyone but the candidate himself to decide, yet it is regarded by the present writer as an indispensable. Efficiency in the gospel ministry is dependent upon a special call to the work, of which the candidate himself shall have the deepest and most profound conviction; added to which there should be the clearest and fullest assurance on the part of the brethren who are called upon to judge and decide in this respect. This is a point which concerns "the deep things of God," and can be judged only from a spiritual point of view. The Spirit of God if sought will not fail, however, to guide to right conclusions.

And let us beware that we do not allow ourselves, in judging the qualifications or fitness of anyone for this position, to be carried away with mere superficialities. In these days of advanced learning and science it is not enough that one be able to talk well upon a theme, or arrange a discourse logically and rhetorically, that he possesses a pleasant countenance, a good physique, or a musical and resonant voice, however desirable all these things may be. There are many to be found in our colleges and seminaries of learning who could fulfil these conditions but whom God never designed should be pastors and preachers in our churches. The preacher must be, like Daniel, "a man in whom the Spirit of God is," one who is burning with desire for soul winning, who feels "woe is me if I preach not the gospel," whose motto is, like Paul's, "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

And let no candidate for ordination suffer himself to believe that any church would be justified in proceeding to ordination, merely because thereby the candidate would better his financial standing, or be in a position in the community to engage in social functions, officiate at weddings, etc., with profit to himself, and so facilitate his power to avail himself of greater educational or other advantages, or become only a matter of convenience in any way to either himself or the church.

The main question will be what will conserve the best spiritual interests of the cause of truth in the community, advance the kingdom of Christ and bring a retinue of souls into loving and loyal allegiance to him.

Another question of vital moment in this connection will be, how does the candidate regard the Sacred Writing? Does he accept the Old and New Testament as the only authoritative and sufficient rule of faith and practice? It is important that the old landmarks should not be thrown down, and while keeping a mind open to the revelations of nature and science, that the supreme authority of God's Word should be steadily and persistently maintained. God's works in their message to us can never be in antagonism to his own Word. In its turn each will aid in the interpretation of the other.

As a matter of expediency it is desirable that the candidate shall have enjoyed the advantages of a liberal education and a certain standard of scholarship should be reached, but no cast iron rule can be laid down on this point; for the lesson of history in this relation is that "God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty," and that here the learning of the Greek and the wisdom of the wise are but foolishness. The fishermen of Galilee are more than a match for the sages of Greece, or the orators of Rome. And so has it ever been. It is quite possible to set too high a value upon learning and too little upon the effectual working of the mighty power of God by his spirit through a less instructed instrumentality. In these things let us seek to know and be controlled by the mind of the Spirit."

With respect to the question of the constitution and maintenance of a standing ordaining council, upon which much has been written in previous numbers of the MESSENGER AND VISITOR, the writer finds no authority in the Word of God for it; and in the proposal to ordain at public gatherings of Association or Convention, he finds ground for serious objection. Both these propositions tend to weaken the sense of individual responsibility on the part of individual churches, and derogate the exercise of that freedom of action which is the strength and glory of Baptist churches. I am aware that nothing of this kind is intended or desired, but it will inevitably follow if persisted in. A Baptist church cannot throw off its responsibilities upon a Baptist council, nor can a Baptist Association assume to itself obligations and duties which devolve upon the individual churches of which it is composed.

Moreover, it is far more desirable, and more in keeping with Baptist usage, that the ordination take place where the candidate is designed to labor. Nothing will so much bring him into sympathy with the people of his charge, and become a means of greater power in the community, than the opportunity which his ordination affords of expressing his views, both of God's dealings with himself in his conversion and call to the work to which he devotes his life, and of that Word of God whose

doctrinal truths and practical lessons will form the theme of his future ministry. Nothing will awaken a deeper sympathy for the pastor among his people than the impressions produced by the searching enquiries of his brethren in the ministry as they endeavor to bring out the great things of God's love and grace through the lips of the candidate, and as they witness the solemn consecration which is thus publicly made of his service to his Lord. The sermon, the laying on of hands, the prayer and words of admonition and direction. These all tend to make an impression on the community most salutary and abiding. Much of this would probably be lost if the ordination should take place in connection with the pressing work of an associational gathering.

These thoughts are presented for what they are worth, by one whose privilege it has been to be present and take part at many ordinations during a period of over forty years. Not one of which has he had occasion to look back upon either with regret or shame, but on the contrary with gratitude and praise.

A Cold Snap in the Sunny South.

The verdict seems to be that it has been the worst since 1857. A week ago, as the people were huddled around the church stove before the prayer meeting, one of our boatmen said: "I reckon I can drink ice water all the time now for there were several inches in my barrels this morning." It continued cold and clear till Saturday morning, when the snow began to fall. Somewhat irregularly it continued to fall during the day and was somewhat blustering at times on Sunday. There were no services all day and very few were seen on the streets. As most of the people buy their wood by the load and cut it up as they burn it, I have no doubt many had hard work to keep warm. Many had to borrow wood from their neighbors, and on Monday morning, since the draymen would not take out their horses, "the men had to turn to and tote wood in their arms," to keep their unfortunate neighbors from freezing. This wood had very recently been cut, but green wood is better than none. "I reckon," said one of the wood-carriers, "that there were fifty families in town that did not have a stick of wood." There was not more than about five inches of snow on the shore though there was about two feet in the interior. The lowest temperature recorded by any thermometer in town was three degrees above zero, but the Sound was frozen over early one morning. In the interior, especially in the mountains, the temperature must have been very much lower. The young people in the Provinces would enjoy a sleigh ride with such weather, but our people do not want any more of it. No wonder, for few wear anything but cotton next to their skins, and some of the men remove their socks to keep their feet warm. I hardly think half a dozen pairs of "rubbers" could be found in this town, and I believe my wife and I had the only overshoes in the place. The shoes were generally thin and porous. The open cracks in the floors and walls admitted cold air very freely and open fires with green wood did not heat it very quickly or thoroughly. Even the small stoves were kept very busy with little success. The rain is coming down in torrents today and the rays of the sun will soon come out and make the people forget all their troubles.

Morehead City, N. C., February 16. JOHN LEWIS.

The Responsibility of Strength.

Strength is power, and power always involves responsibility. Physical strength is not the most important kind of power, although it is admirable and to be cultivated. Mental strength is the mightier, and intelligence often accomplishes what force cannot do. Spiritual strength is the superior of either. The world conceived long ago that a character sturdy in righteousness is the most striking illustration possible of conquering vigor.

As our day is, so is the strength given us. That is, we can do, or endure, whatever God ordains for us. We have sufficient strength. And as our strength is, so is the divine requirement to use it. It is not given us, whatever its character, merely that we may have it, but that we may be the more useful, both to ourselves and others, by reason of its possession. Whatever of good we can do because we are strong, especially if it be something which others cannot do, we are bound to do. So far as we neglect, or fail, to do what is reasonably possible to us we must consent to be held accountable. To regard our strength as a divine gift and a means of unselfish service is both a privilege and a duty.

We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak," declares the apostle. This is a most important element of our responsibility. Up to the limit of their power, however little they may possess, they have their own duty to be done. But we who are stronger can supplement their ability. By the relief afforded by our sympathy and co-operation their efforts are rendered more successful, their comparative feebleness is developed into greater sturdiness and efficiency. And, by the blessed law of reflex influence, in helping others we grow stronger ourselves. Our own powers are enlarged and a wider field of possibility is opened before us.

Strength promotes courage. Boastfulness and even silent over-confidence are to be condemned. But it is right to estimate our own powers justly and to trust in them, always recognizing also dependence upon God. Nobody accomplishes much who is continually in doubt about his ability. He succeeds who dares. This is as true in spiritual matters as elsewhere. The strong are expected to be brave, active, successful, because they are strong, and the expectation is fair. The responsibility of strength ought to be appreciated and welcomed.—Ex.