

The Christian.

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EDITORIAL.

ORDINATION.

In this issue of the CHRISTIAN, two questions are submitted for the careful consideration of its readers. The first is—How did the apostles and primitive Christians ordain officers in the church? The second is—How should such officers be now ordained? We do not now enquire how many kind of officers were ordained in the primitive church, nor how many should be now ordained or set apart for the work, but what was the *method* in setting apart or ordaining church officers, and what should be the method now?

It is well for us that the pattern shown in the New Testament on this matter is so plain that every church seeking to follow the word of God can see it, and humbly and in the love and fear of God follow the example with the assurance of his approbation.

We have but two examples of ordination on record, and these two are very plain, as a rule for all coming time.

The first is in the sixth chapter of Acts. The twelve called the multitude of the disciples together and told them to look out from among them seven suitable men whom they might appoint to serve tables or attend to the temporal affairs of the church, so that the apostles could give all their time to prayer and to the ministry of the word. This was so wise that it pleased the whole multitude, and they chose the men and set them before the apostles; and when they had prayed they laid hands on them.

The apostles did not look out the men. They told the church to do it. The church did so, and set the men of their choice before the apostles who prayed and then laid their hands on them.

The other case of separating or ordaining men to office, is recorded in the thirteenth of Acts. Although there are many points of dissimilarity in the two cases, yet when we reach the point of ordaining we find them exactly the same. In the first case, the Lord is declaring what his method is; and in the second confirming it; and these being the only cases on record it settles in the minds of intelligent believers the two questions with which we started this article.

We will consider some of the points in which the two cases differ. In the first, the Lord has need of men to serve tables, and the church were told to seek them out. In the second case, the Lord had need of men to go forth preaching the gospel to the lost, and had himself selected the men. They were in a special manner His servants, while the first were especially servants of the church, and by the church selected. Still they both were to be ordained to their special work. The first were to be ordained by persons superior to themselves in the church; while the second were to be ordained by those inferior in rank to themselves. Saul was the only apostle at Antioch, but brethren below him were to ordain him and Barnabas, and still the same form was observed in both cases—prayer and the laying on of hands. The prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch who were fasting and ministering to the Lord, were told by the Holy Spirit to separate to him Barnabas and Saul for his

special work, and before that meeting adjourned they were ordained and then sent away, and so exactly were the divine directions followed, that it is added, "So they being sent forth by the Holy Ghost departed unto Seleucia," etc.

But it is proper here to consider the objection many good brethren have to the laying on of hands by the church in our day. They say the apostles laid hands on Christians to impart a miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit which none but the apostles had power to do, and that others in our day lay on hands for the same purpose, thus deceiving and being deceived. Now this is all true, but it is not all the truth. The apostles did many things that no others could do, and an attempt by others to do these things is only mockery and deception. The apostles also did many things that Christians in our day are solemnly bound to do, and it is imperative on us to observe the distinction so that we may know and pursue the path of duty.

In the case before us, the apostles laid their hands on the seven men, *not* to impart a miraculous gift, but to set forth the Lord's form of ordaining men to office. The same is true of the laying on of the hands of the teachers at Antioch. No miraculous gift was imparted in either case. It was simply a divinely appointed token of office. It was not confined to the apostles. It had nothing miraculous about it. Nothing passing from a superior to an inferior. The case at Antioch clears away all these mistakes.

Some of those who oppose the laying on of hands suggest no form at all, but leave the whole in confusion, others seeing this inconsistency suggest that the show of hands would be a proper form in ordaining to office. Now we would ask such, what would be gained in repudiating the form which the Lord has given us and adopting the "show of hands," a form without any authority in the New Testament? Some who have witnessed the ordination object to it and say, "for a man to pray and all the time he is praying hold his hands on the head of the candidate, and also have a number of others holding on their hands, is not doing things decently and in order. Be it so; we ask, is this the pattern shown to us in the Book? We think not. If the prayer and the laying on of hands had been simultaneous, it would so read in the narrative, but it does not say they prayed laying on their hands, or they laid on their hands praying, but 1st, "And when they had prayed they laid their hands on them." 2nd, "And when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them they sent them away." Acts vi. 6; xiii. 3. Thus it is evident that it was after, and not during the prayer that their hands were laid on, making the form decent and orderly. When everything is ready and earnest prayer has been offered for God's blessing to rest on their work and on the persons chosen, for one or more to quietly put their hands on their heads as the Lord has directed, is quite orderly. Its very simplicity and silence are beautifully impressive.

If it be asked what fasting has to do with ordination, the answer is, it may or may not be observed in such a meeting, just as in any other meeting. Certainly if persons prefer to attend a prayer meeting fasting, they are at liberty to do so, and the same is true in a meeting for ordaining officers. In our first example, in Acts vi. nothing is said of fasting. In Acts xvii. the brethren were in a prayer meeting fasting, before any message came from the Holy Spirit, and the same meeting was continued until the ordination was finished. Thus we learn that fasting was an accidental matter and not like prayer.

P. E. I. ASSOCIATION.

Since THE CHRISTIAN last greeted its readers the P. E. Island Annual has taken place.

The weather was very fine, and kind friends were always on hand to supply the wants of visiting brethren and sisters.

There was a good representation from the different churches scattered over our fair Island, as well as some from abroad.

The preachers present were:—Bros. D. Crawford, O. B. Emery, G. Manifold, H. E. Cooke, H. W. Stewart, Wm. Murray, R. E. Stevens, F. L. Norton, and J. S. Smith.

On Saturday evening the usual social meeting was held, conducted by Bro. R. E. Stevens. Bro. Emery gave the address of welcome, and Bro. Crawford responded. The evening was pleasantly and profitably spent, and all went to their homes, taking with them those that were from long distances.

The Lord's day services began at 11 A. M. Bro. Manifold opened the meeting by announcing the hymn, "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name." After the opening exercises, Bro. Crawford preached from Luke xix. 12-24. The discourse was eloquent and forcible, and although Bro. Crawford is several years past the three score and ten line, yet he spoke with the vigour of a man in the prime of life.

The Lord's Supper was then dispensed to the waiting congregation, Bro. Wm. Murray presiding. How true is the language, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."

At 6 P. M. Bro. Cooke conducted a social meeting, and at 7 P. M. the evening service began, opened by Bro. R. E. Stevens, scripture reading, 1 Peter, first chapter, after which Bro. H. W. Stewart preached an excellent sermon, the basis of which may be found in John xii. 32. From these words Bro. Stewart very clearly showed how Christ "draws all men unto Him."

This closed the services of the day, and all retired to their homes, realizing that it is good to wait on the Lord.

On Monday at 9.30 A. M., the brethren met, and an hour was spent in singing, prayer and short addresses.

At 10.30 the business of the year was brought on. Elder D. Crawford was elected Moderator, and the writer re-appointed Secretary. Reports from the churches showed an increase in membership, and a greater interest in both Home and Foreign Missions.

The subject of union between the three provinces for home mission work was also discussed, and a committee was appointed to lay the matter before the churches. It was then agreed that this committee meet in Charlottetown, August 13th, to complete the arrangement (if possible) so far as the Island churches are concerned, in order that the result might be submitted to the N. B. and N. S. Annual which meets September 3rd.

Communications were read from Sisters Flaglor and Payson, pressing the claim of the C. W. B. M. on the P. E. Island brethren and sisters. Bro. Robert Stewart read a paper on Deacons and Deaconesses, which elicited some comment.

The Association was then brought to a close to meet in New Glasgow next July.

G. A. JEFFREY.

Summerside, P. E. I., July 23, 1896.