

Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, OCTOBER 17, 1860.

The Work of the Ministry.

Second Article.

ORDINATION.

A week or two since, we referred to the exalted position the Christian minister occupied amongst his fellowmen; but were unable for want of space to treat the subject as fully as we desired.

The Church of the living God is described as "the pillar and ground of the truth." As all rule and authority is committed to it—the body of believers—it is of vast moment that all its members be well informed in whatever relates to its constitution and officers. We therefore venture to resume the subject for the purpose of noticing briefly, the initiatory services of this great work as they are observed by ourselves and other bodies of professing christians. Each denomination has its own peculiar views respecting Ordination and the light in which it is regarded. The mode of conducting these services by each community, is a very good index to their church government. Episcopal ministers whether Papal or Protestant receive their ordination and installation to office from their bishops, and are termed *priests*. The Wesleyan body in imitation of these, ordain their preachers by the President of Conference who sustains a position somewhat analogous to the Episcopalian bishop, and who alone possesses this power. They also use a portion of the ordination service of the Church of England. The Presbyterian body, however, object strongly to any one of their ministers being placed over the others in this or any other part of their church organization. The body of Presbyters within certain districts, are those who rule the church, and have vested in them the power of ordaining ministers, and can do so we believe, without regard to any church requiring their services. Congregationalists on the other hand, whether Baptists or Pedobaptists, believe that ordination is vested in the church, the body of believers united together for fellowship and public worship in each district, communion, or locality. It is the practise, especially of Baptist Churches, in cases of ordination to invite delegates, from neighbouring churches of like faith and order, to attend on a given day, and meet with them as an advisory Council. This Council of delegates when assembled in conjunction with the Church which invites them, make the necessary examinations of the candidate, and after consultation, determine whether or no the ordination services shall be proceeded with.

Now, these three modes of ordination—1st by the Bishop or President, 2nd by the Presbytery, and 3rd by a church, with the advice of a Council called for the special purpose, may appear in some respects similar in their results, and may be thought merely three different ways of doing one and the same thing; but a little closer examination will shew that a very important difference exists. More particularly will this appear if it is considered what effect they each may have, first, on the church, and secondly, on the minister himself. In cases where the ordination comes from one individual or from several whose authority is supreme, the act of ordination is supposed to constitute the minister, and give him authority in those churches; whilst on the other hand, where the ordination is the more direct act of the church, it but recognizes him who it is believed has already been constituted a minister of Christ, by the bestowment of gifts and graces from the Lord Jesus, the Head of the Church. In all those communities in which the power of the church is supposed to reside in the Bishop, President, or Synod, ordination is supposed to confer qualities which the persons ordained had not previously in possession; whereas we can find no authority for any church dignitary or presbyter to convey to his brethren any more than a recognition of a work already performed by the Master.

Error in this particular we believe, has led to all the evils of priestcraft, and eventually to the pretended infallibility of the Pope. Where the minister is appointed to his office, and placed in his situation by an authority outside of the congregation of professed believers to whom he ministers, there it is not at all surprising to find him "lording it over God's heritage," and encouraging a superstitious notion of his right to exercise control over them. Cases have sometimes arisen where a Council of delegates have judged it best not to proceed with the ordination of a Candidate, who has presented himself for that purpose. In such case, one or more individuals who have differed from the Council may have concluded to proceed with the ordination, notwithstanding the council's decision to

the contrary. By such means however, the design of the service,—a recognition by his brethren, of his being set apart to the sacred office,—is destroyed, and his future usefulness probably permanently damaged.

Whilst we thus view the work of the ministry as the result of a *divine call* from the Head of the Church to each individual minister, and consider that this involves a *perpetual obligation* to continue for life in the work, except where natural obstacles arise to that being done, we deem it at the same time highly proper for others who have gifts conferred on them, by which they may edify believers and benefit their fellow men, that they should employ those gifts as they may have opportunity. In giving encouragement to a judicious use of gifts by lay brethren, we conceive that we are not interfering with the regularly constituted gospel ministry, but rather exalting it to a higher position. The minister who may bring out and direct the largest amount of this element will be doubly useful.

We therefore could not agree with the following sentiment expressed recently on the consummating the union of the two sections of Presbyterians at Pictou; the Rev. W. McCulloch, there said "An ordained ministry is either the order of Christ, or it is not. If it be, lay preaching is wrong." We know not how this can be reconciled with the statement in Acts viii. 1-4. By that passage of Scripture it appears that all the church were scattered abroad "except the apostles," and "they went every where preaching the word." Quite a number of other passages might be quoted, and much more might be said on the subject. These few leading thoughts we leave with our readers as but an outline, which they may fill up by their own reflections.

Wesleyan Methodism in Nova Scotia, &c.

THE ORGAN OF THE BODY.

The *Provincial Wesleyan* has changed its editor and made its appearance in a greatly improved typography. Mathew H. Richey, Esq. the former editor, surrendered "the scissors and the pen to his successor" in a *Valedictory* on the 25th ult, and observed that with that issue would terminate the responsibility which he had held "for the past six years."

The necessity for retrenchment of expenditure is given as the reason for this change. He remarks that "it is no slender satisfaction to observe in the terms which have been chosen (by the Conference), to designate his conduct,—such as zealous, fearless, prudent, &c.,—a recognition of those qualities which have been most needed during his term of service, and to be assured that the splenetic efforts of some, with whose political predilections his forward march in the path of duty had brought him into conflict, to disseminate a belief that censure had fallen upon some portion of his editorial career, are altogether unsupported by fact. The insinuation," he adds, "it is just to the Conference to state, is as false as it is malicious."

The new Editor in his next issue appealed to his friends to aid him in making the "Conference organ" what it ought to be,—high in tone as the advocate of Church interests and privileges,—fearless and uncompromising in its conservatism of the principles of public morality, "free from every suspicion of political partizanship, &c., &c."

From a brief notice, which follows the article above alluded to, we learn that the Book Steward—the Rev. Mr. Churchill,—has now undertaken the management of the paper. The long experience of that gentleman with the press will here find ample scope, and we doubt not will tend greatly to promote the interests of the body. We beg to tender him a fraternal welcome to a participation in all the rights and privileges of the fourth estate.

PRESIDENCY OF THE CONFERENCE.

At the last session of the Conference of Eastern British America held at Fredericton, N. B., the Rev. Enoch Wood, D. D., of Canada, was nominated for the office of President as the successor of the Rev. Dr. Richey.

The right of the annual appointment of President of each affiliated Conference is vested in the Methodist Conference of Great Britain. The question of who should be named, or whether any one should be nominated seems to have been one of "absorbing interest, and the topic of free conversation among the brethren" on the above occasion. A few of the ministers, it appears were in favor of referring the appointment of President to the British Conference without mentioning any name. It was however ultimately agreed almost unanimously, to send a request for Dr. Wood to be appointed to that office. The Editor of the *Provincial Wesleyan* of the 10th instant informs his readers that "For reasons not yet generally, if at all known, on this side the Atlantic, a compliance with this request has not been granted, our request,"

the editor remarks, "which certainly seemed to us not an unreasonable one (or it would not have been made) has been refused. We are sure that the resulting disappointment is by no means confined to the ministry, but participated in to a large extent by the Church at large."

The present editor appears to hold views in reference to the appointment of President the British Conference has made, quite at variance with those of his predecessor. In an article on "the Presidency of the Conference" in his last issue, he remarks,

"We could, but regret that some reasons were not given to justify the opinion expressed in these columns (a week or two since), that 'the appointment by the Parent Conference of the Rev. W. B. Boyce, as the successor of the Rev. Dr. Richey in this office, had been made 'with a judiciousness eminently characteristic of that body, and with an enlightened interest in the Methodism of Eastern British America.' We have the fullest confidence in the wisdom and integrity of the British Conference,—in its integrity always,—in its wisdom whenever it has sufficient information to guide it in its decisions; but, we confess, that we must have more light than has yet reached us upon the subject, before we shall be able to concur in the above mentioned opinion."

For reasons not yet generally, if at all known on this side of the Atlantic, a compliance with this request has not been granted,—our request, which certainly seemed to us not an unreasonable one, (or it would not have been made) has been refused. We are sure that the resulting disappointment is by no means confined to the ministry, but participated in to a large extent by the Church at large."

Whilst therefore the Eastern British American Conference have exercised the privilege accorded to them of designating "by name those by whom they have wished to be appointed to these offices," (President and co-Delegate, or Vice-President), their almost unanimous vote has been set aside, and a comparative stranger, we presume, has been put over them. This refusal to listen to a nomination of President by the almost unanimous voice of the body over whom he is to preside, he remarks is "the first of its kind to be refused to an affiliated Conference."

The minutes of the British Conference state that

"It would have afforded us pleasure to acquiesce in your wishes respecting the appointment of your President. The exigencies of the important work in which Dr. Enoch Wood is engaged render it inexpedient to remove him from his present sphere of labour. We have appointed the Rev. William B. Boyce to preside at your next Conference, and the Rev. Humphrey Pickard, D. D., to act as Co-Delegate."

We refrain from making any comments on this phase of Methodism. If the possession of such power in the mother Conference over the various branches of the family is essential to the connexion, it may be better that the Eastern British Conference acquiesce in the parental decision, and as the editor advises, give Mr. Boyce "a right hearty loyal welcome," as their "lawfully appointed President."

We have received a further communication from our correspondent "*Vox populi, vox Dei*," the bulk of which is occupied in re-asserting his former statements respecting "association appropriations." This part of his letter he must excuse us from publishing. In defence of his *nom de plume* he remarks:—

"One word about the strange and inappropriate signature, '*Vox populi, Vox Dei*.' The voice of the people, the voice of God." In Acts v. 1, 2, 3. Peter seems to recognize the right that owners of money have to appropriate it as they think proper. So far then their will must be the voice of God. In Mat. xviii. 15, 16, 17, Jesus Christ recognizes the voice of the church, in matters of discipline at least, to be the voice of God, and as being rectified and bound in heaven. Then, when a church passes a resolution to dedicate a portion of its property to one benevolent object, I affirm there is good reason for believing the act is ratified in heaven, and so far may be regarded as the voice of God on earth. All such church actions of course must be in accordance with his written word before they can be regarded as the voice of God. In this sense I use the signature."

And adds,

"Finally, Brother Editor, you must allow your humble correspondent '*Vox*,' to be his own judge of the amount of claim each mission has upon him. He may be in a position to form as correct an opinion about these Missions as any one else, and you must leave it to himself to say what mission has the greater claim. '*Vox*' flatters himself that he is not blind, and consequently thinks he knows gold when he sees it, although all is not gold that, at a distance, appears like it."

What our friend alludes to as "gold" does not to us very distinctly appear. We often feel that it would be a great convenience if some of it were not at so great "a distance."

"To conclude," he adds, "you will please insert this as my last, (unless by request I give further explanation). By the time this is replied to, the subject will have had a sufficient airing," and our churches will have had an

opportunity of hearing the matter discussed, and will now form their own opinions. May they be in accordance with the will of God. And when their offerings appear at our next Associations we may recognize to what extent *Vox Populi is Vox Dei*."

This matter we presume will not require further "airing." Those of our readers who think it has had too much already will, we trust, put the best construction they can on this effort of "*Vox*" to discuss the subject.

The Church of England in Nova Scotia.

The Diocesan Assembly consisting of Delegates, Clergy and Laymen, from various parts of the Province, met at Salem (the Bishop's Chapel, on Thursday last. After the preliminary services the Bishop addressed the Synod and gave a brief account of his late visit to the United States. We learn from the *Reporter* that in his Lordship's visit to Richmond, Virginia, "One fact struck him as worthy of notice. In that democratic country it has been felt for the interests of the church that the Bishops should not only have an absolute voice, but that they should carry on their deliberations with closed doors. Nothing accordingly, that occurs in the House of Bishops is allowed to transpire."

He then alluded briefly to the visit of His Royal Highness, and proceeded to refute several statements that appeared in the *Church Witness* relative to oaths of obedience, &c.

He next referred to the objects of the meeting. One of the most important motions was the notice relative to an application to the Parliament of this country for an act. A similar course had been pursued in other colonies. Some persons take no part in the Synod in consequence of having serious doubts as to the question whether they could thus legally meet together. The Church of England here is in a peculiar position. At home, from its alliance with the State, it has had various advantages conferred upon it, and some restrictions. Amongst these restrictions was a restriction upon their right of assembling together. But these restrictions are necessary in England, and there have been doubts whether they apply to the colonies. Different opinions have been given; but all would remember that Her Majesty's ministers had more than once declared that there were no impediments in the way. However, people still had their doubts, and consequently various acts had been passed to remove them.

It was much better, therefore, he said since these doubts existed that they should be removed by an application to Parliament for an act. He had considered the notice and prepared a short draft. A petition, also, would have to accompany the act.

In referring to the Church newspaper, the *Record*, the Bishop said in the arrangements first made he pledged himself to the committee that at the end of every quarter he would provide what balance might be requisite to pay its expenses of printing, &c. He was very happy to say that that paper had succeeded beyond his expectations.

Now the circulation of this paper was quite sufficient to pay. Though the circulation was so large. His Lordship continued, he had already advanced several sums towards the payment of the arrears, which would amount to £300, were paid up. All must agree that he should not be called upon to such an extent. If the arrears were paid as they ought there would be no difficulty at all.

His Lordship concluded by expressing a hope that the same excellent spirit which had marked similar occasions would be display'd.

Considerable difference of opinion was expressed on the propriety of an application to the Legislature for an act to remove any doubts that may exist as to the power of the Church of England to meet together for the purpose of regulating their affairs in matters referring to discipline, &c."

Several clergymen expressed an opinion in favor of such application while some others thought differently.

Hon. M. B. Almon spoke at some length in opposition to such motion, he said:

"Now, my lord, if I understand aright the design of this act it will but give effect to all the proceedings in this Society. We are aware that there are some parishes in this diocese which do not assent to the Synod at all. Those parishes will certainly be opposed to the passage of any act to legalize what we do here. I am satisfied then that the application to the Legislature will be met by a counter action in those parishes that dissent from the Synod. They will petition the Legislature that the act do not pass, I am sure. What will be the situation of this Church then if we are so openly opposed by a large branch of it? Will it not have the effect of creating a division, of creating those feelings which time will scarcely ever allay? Now, let me ask you, gentlemen, to look upon this application in this serious light, to consider the consequences which I fear will be involved. I have heard it said by His Lordship that he has sufficient power here under his patent, and for the confirmation of that authority he has given us the highest authority. He has also said that he has had the opinion of legal minds in this Province, that what you do here is effectual, and that we meeting in this way have a right to make regulations. Now if there is opinion of that kind which we ought to respect, ought we not to consider carefully whether it necessary to make this application. Take care lest by applying to the Legislature you are not creating a feeling in the church which we will all deeply deplore. Be content, my lord, with the liberty your acts now have,