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ORDINATIONS – TRUE AND FALSE

THE WORD ordination, as applied to the Christian ministry, seems to be very imperfectly comprehended by the majority of people – including ministers. The ceremony practised by some Christian people in connection with the appointment of their ministers – [R5940 : page 246] such as the laying on of hands, etc. – is not ordination, but merely a ceremony connected with the ordination. The word ordination signifies simply the setting apart, authorization or appointment, to some particular work or office.

The proper thought connected with ordination is that which the Bible gives when we read that the Apostle "ordained Elders in every Church." (Acts 14:23.) Similarly, amongst the Lord's people today, Elders are chosen, or appointed, or authorized, by the congregation by the stretching forth of their hands – by the congregational vote. Every Elder and every Deacon Scripturally chosen by the vote, "the stretching forth of the hand" (not by laying on of hands), is thus ordained, or appointed, or authorized, to serve in the capacity indicated.

In thus ordaining Elders and Deacons, the Lord's people are instructed that they are to seek to know the mind of the Lord. Their voting for and electing one of the brethren to be a Deacon or an Elder implies that they believe that such a person possesses the Divinely indicated qualifications for the service. No one should be voted for who does not give evidence of having received the begetting of the Holy Spirit, which is the Divine authorization to preach or to teach, as set forth in Isaiah 61:1.

All of the Lord's spirit-begotten people are ordained in this general way to speak in the Master's name the wonderful Words of Life, according to their opportunities. But when a congregation of such ordained, spirit-begotten children of God chooses from its midst

some to be Elders, others to be Deacons, it implies that they consider the ones chosen to be especially qualified, "apt to teach" – ensamples to the brethren in word, in conduct. – 1 Tim. 3:2.

The wrong thought respecting ordination is the one which ignores the Divine anointing (Isaiah 61:1), and which merely looks to the education and the talents of the one elected. Thus ignoring the Divine test, many today are serving as Ministers and Elders in the Church of Christ who would make no profession of being spirit-begotten and who give no outward evidence thereof. Such are not properly ordained Ministers of God, and their church ordination gives no Divine blessing or power.

The most erroneous thought respecting ordination is that held by the three oldest Christian denominations – the Roman Catholic, the Episcopal Church of England, and the Greek Catholic Church. With these ancient churches, ordination has a different meaning entirely. They claim to have *Apostolic succession of authority* – that originally only the Apostles had a right to teach or to preach, and that any other teachers or preachers needed to get authorization and Divine power from the hands of the Apostles. They claim that before the Apostles died, there was a special order of bishops ordained in the Church; and that *apostolic power and authority* passed to those bishops, and has thus come down to our day and is possessed by the bishops of these denominations. They claim that only such as *they* ordain are Christian ministers.

In a word, these three ancient churches have set aside entirely the Divine ordination, the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and substituted an authorization through a so-called "apostolic succession" of power and authority. Not only did Jesus tell us that there were only Twelve Apostles, but Revelation 2:2 points out this grievous error of those who claim to be apostles and are not, but do lie.

SOME IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

The above condensed statement of what is really meant by the ordaining of Christian ministers should be read over repeatedly until fully comprehended. Then the following questions and answers will be better understood:

(1) Are all Elders and Deacons chosen by congregations of God's people to be considered Divinely ordained?

No, no one can be considered Divinely ordained who has not received the begetting of the Holy Spirit. For a congregation to ordain any one who does not profess to be fully consecrated to God and to have received the begetting of the Holy Spirit is for them to do what they have not been authorized by the Lord to do. The person thus chosen would be merely the representative of the church thus ordaining him, but would not be a representative of the Lord.

But for a congregation to recognize the Lord's authorization of a Brother, and to recognize further his aptness to teach and his possession of the qualities fitting him for service according to the Divine Word, means the giving to that Brother of a *proper* election or ordination to be the representative of the congregation in the name of the Lord. No Brother should attempt to serve a company of the Lord's people without their request, and their request or their vote constitutes their appointment of him to that service – in other words, their ordination of him, or appointment, for the service, whether for a day or a year.

(2) If it is proper that all Elders and Deacons should thus be ordained and should not attempt to serve regularly without ordination, what did St. Paul mean when he declared that he was an Apostle not of men nor by men, but by the Lord Jesus Christ? – Galatians 1:1.

No man or congregation is competent to appoint or elect an Apostle. No congregational vote would make one of the brethren an Apostle. That is a special office or function which is of Divine appointment solely. Thus the Lord Jesus appointed only Twelve Apostles – "Twelve Apostles of the Lamb" – St. Paul taking the place of Judas, who lost his apostleship. (Rev. 21:14; Psalm 109:8; Acts 1:20.) It is in this particular that the Church of Rome, the Church of England, and the Greek Church [R5940 : page 247] do violence to the principles of God's Word, in that they claim to make, but do not really make, Apostolic Bishops – bishops possessed of apostolic power and authority.

St. Paul did not desire us to understand that he took no notice of earthly appointment, except in respect to his apostolic office. On the contrary, the Church at Antioch *ordained* Paul and Barnabas and afterwards Paul and Silas, to be their representatives and apparently at their expense to carry the Message to others. The Antioch Church did not ordain the Apostle Paul to be an Apostle, but ordained him to be their missionary; and he accepted their ordination and rendered reports to them, as the account in Acts shows. – Acts 14:26-28.

(3) Does the **WATCH TOWER BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY** ever "*ordain*" ministers or representatives in connection with the Harvest Work?

It does. All the Pilgrims are thus ordained, appointed, or set apart for the special work of the ministry. Keep in memory always that ceremony is not ordination, but that appointment and direction are ordination. The Society ordains, authorizes, directs the course of the Pilgrims who are its representatives as well as the representatives of the Lord and His Word.

(4) Has the **WATCH TOWER BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY** the right to withdraw ordination from a Pilgrim brother?

Yes, surely! If it has the power to appoint and direct, it has power also to withdraw its past appointment and direction.

(5) Would the withdrawal of the Society's appointment or ordination mean that the Pilgrim thus suspended from its service would have no right to preach thereafter?

Surely not! In withdrawing its appointment from a Pilgrim the Society would merely be indicating that for some reason it no longer was represented by that Pilgrim, and that it no longer was responsible for him or his teachings or his conduct or his maintenance. The Pilgrim brother thus dropped from the Pilgrim List might still be a Brother and be so esteemed by the Society, but might not be any longer considered a suitable person to represent the Society, either by reason of showing some weakness of character or some lack of the aptness to teach or some other reason which the Society would believe should not be encouraged, or for which it would not wish to be held responsible, or for various reasons, illness, etc.

(6) What is the meaning of V.D.M., and what would be signified by the conferring of the V.D.M. Degree?

The title V.D.M. is a very old one. Indeed, it has been out of use so long that comparatively few know its meaning. The three letters represent the Latin words, *Verbi Dei Minister*. The English of this is, "Minister of the Divine Word." When, during the Dark Ages, the Divine Word fell into disuse and creeds were substituted, this title was generally lost and ignored. There were no ministers of the Divine Word; for the Divine Word was not preached, but, instead, the creeds of men. Instead of these simple words so expressive of the proper thought in connection with all the Lord's public servants, we today have high-sounding titles, such as Reverend and Doctor of Divinity, which are quite unscriptural. To confer the degree of MINISTER OF THE DIVINE WORD would not mean to ordain, but merely imply that the Society in giving this degree had looked into the reputation, and so far as possible into the character and especially into the

doctrinal development of the person to whom the degree was given, and that he was in the estimation of the Examining Board found worthy of being called a Minister of the Divine Word.

(7) Are there any such Ministers of the Divine Word now?

Yes, assuredly! Every Pilgrim sent out by the Society is sent out as a Minister of the Divine Word, not a minister of creeds, nor of "isms"; but purely and simply a Minister of the Word of God. And in every case where a congregation of the Lord's people has elected a consecrated, [R5941 : page 247] spirit-begotten child of God to be an Elder, they have by their election ordained, or set apart, or indicated, that Elder as being a Minister of the Divine Word – one who serves, distributes, dispenses the Truth of God's Word.

(8) What is the object of the Society in getting out a list of questions with the intimation that the person who could answer those questions in a manner satisfactory to the Society would be considered a MINISTER OF THE DIVINE WORD?

Those questions are designed to fill a long-felt want. The questions are quite unsectarian; they are all Scriptural. The Society desires to know from the Pilgrims who are now in the service, or from any others who may at any time represent the Society as Pilgrims, what are their thoughts, their sentiments and their understanding as respects these fundamental questions appertaining to the Gospel of Christ. Any Brother not willing to answer those questions would be considered to be confused in his mind, unstable, and hence not qualified to teach – not "apt to teach." This would not imply that he might not still be a Brother, but that he would not be considered a Brother suitable for the Pilgrim service. Neither would it mean that the Brother must not preach, but merely that the Society *would not recommend* him as an exponent of the Divine Word.

Any Brother willing to answer the questions, but showing considerable confusion in his replies, would to us indicate that he needed further instruction before he could properly represent the Society and what the Society believes to be the Truth respecting God's Word. Such a Brother would probably be brought to Brooklyn and have an opportunity to participate for a time in other features of the service, as well as in the Bible Study classes held at every meal time; and, by fullest liberty, have an opportunity of asking any kind of questions on subjects connected with the Truth, that thus the whole matter might be thoroughly regulated and clearly seen and understood.

A FRIENDLY SUGGESTION

Many of the Sisters in the Bethel Family, learning about the questions, made a special request that they might have a list of these and give their answers, with a view to practise and instruction which they might thus derive. Elders and Deacons in various classes have similarly requested the questions. We believe that it would be profitable for all of the classes of Bible Students everywhere, if they would choose to Eldership such as could answer these questions so as to be worthy of the Society's V.D.M. degree. This might make a good many changes amongst the Elders, but we believe that they would be profitable changes. Furthermore, we believe that all Elders earnestly desiring to teach the Truth, and the Truth only, would be glad to have the very assistance which these questions would bring to them.

We have been surprised, sometimes, how careless some of the dear friends seem to be in respect to those whom they elect or ordain as Elders – often novices, contrary to the direction of the Lord's Word, thus doing harm both to the novice and to the class. (1 Timothy 3:1-7.) Next to the importance of the election of only a consecrated, spirit-begotten child of God to Eldership should be the question – To what extent has he availed himself of the privileges of

study, information? It is our thought that it is unwise to choose as an Elder any **[R5941 : page 248]** Brother who has not read at least once the entire six volumes of *STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES*, or who is not a regular *WATCH TOWER* reader. Let it be borne in mind that the Society exercises no authority, makes no criticism, but merely gives advice; and that in the interest of the Lord's Cause and the Lord's people.

