

LESSON FIVE

ED. NOTES:

Note 1: Numbers 1 & 2 in this section of the textbook assume that the ordination is of a man who is to be the pastor over the congregation that called for the Ordination Council. However, that the candidate is to be the pastor of the calling church is not always the case.

Sometimes a church wants one of their men ordained who is not to be their pastor. The ordination is to the ministry, not necessarily to the pastorate. The man might be a Home or Foreign Missionary who is being sent out or an Evangelist, or one of the faithful men in the church who is to remain at the church as an assistant to the pastor or as one in charge of some one or another of the ministries of the church. The choice of who is to be ordained and why is strictly up to that local church. Many men are ordained before being sent out to start a mission work in the home country or some foreign country. This choice is strictly up to the church calling for their ordination.

Note 2: The question in #9 of whether the candidate agrees with the stand of the denomination is a moot point because denominationalism itself is an unscriptural construct of men. Each Local Church is an independent entity and the only concourse it has with other churches is one of simple fellowship and joint but voluntary labour in areas such as missions that can be better accomplished together than separately. And that fellowship and joint effort is only with other scriptural churches. Denominations set rules concerning what the beliefs and practices must be for those churches who have membership in the denomination. This is an unscriptural encroachment on the autonomy of those local churches. The question in this section of the textbook should be whether the candidate holds views that are in agreement with the Scriptures, not whether he is in agreement with a particular denominational stance.

Dr. VBK

LESSON FIVE

ORDINATIONS.

ON occasions of the induction of candidates into the public and official work of the ministry, the counsel and co-operation of others is usually sought by the church whose minister is to be ordained. This is done not for the sake of authority, but for the sake of order; not because it is essential, but because it is customary, and moreover because it is expedient and wise to pursue such a course.

Any church has the undoubted right to have any man whom they may elect, serve them as pastor, without interference by any other man, or body of men whatever; and to ordain, or set him apart, by such formal services as they may choose, either with or without the assistance of any other persons than themselves. The presence of ordained ministers, though desirable, is not essential.

But as every church desires to stand in cordial relations of fraternity and fellowship with all the other churches of its denomination; and as the man to be ordained is about to take his place in the brotherhood of ministers, and desires to sustain relations of sympathy, fraternity and fellowship with them all, it is a wise and prudent course to call together messengers from the various churches to examine the matter, and advise as to the propriety of inducting the candidate

into the ministry ; giving him their approval and commendation—if they do approve—as he enters the sacred office.

This is accomplished in one of two ways. Either by requesting a given number of churches to send messengers to constitute a *Council* for action in the case ; or, by inviting certain ministers to come together as a *Presbytery*, and perform the service desired. As to which shall be done, is a matter of opinion and choice with the church and the candidate, and wholly a matter of indifference so far as the results are concerned. At the North, the Council is commonly chosen ; in the South, the Presbytery is usually preferred. As a matter of fact, ministers perform almost the entire service, though the Council may be composed in part of laymen.

1. The Council, or Presbytery, is to be called together by the church over which the candidate is to be ordained, and not by the candidate.

2. The candidate should be a member of the church calling the Council, and over which he is to be ordained.

3. The church, before calling the Council, should take all proper care and pains to be satisfied as to the fitness of the candidate for the important position he is about to assume, as their pastor. It is not simply the question as to whether he can interest an audience by a public discourse, but whether he gives evidence of having been called of God to the work ; whether he is fitted to instruct and build up the church ; his ability to conduct the social services ; his adaptation to pastoral work, and his prudence and

ability to be a wise and safe guide and leader of the people.

4. The church should also inform itself as to his general character, and reputation, and what has been his walk and deportment hitherto. For all this the church is responsible, and this duty should not be thrown upon the Council.

5. When the Council is convened, and organized, the church—which does not compose a part of the Council, but reports to it—through some one appointed to represent it, reports what action they have taken in the case, the information they possess, and ask the advice and co-operation of the Council, as to whether their action has been wise, and is to be approved.

6. The Council then proceeds to examine the candidate. This examination is usually in three specific directions.

a. As to his Christian experience.

b. As to his call to the ministry.

c. As to his view of Christian doctrine.

On each of these he makes his statement, and at the conclusion of each, is asked any questions, which any member of the body may see fit to propound.

It would not only be proper, but desirable, for the candidate to be examined on matters not specifically included in the above list. As for instance, what would be his treatment of certain matters of church difficulty, or perplexing questions of discipline, or any of the many practical matters with which a pastor has to deal.

7. A Council having accepted the position of advis-

ers to the church, should be faithful to their convictions, and not allow themselves to act contrary to their best judgment, merely to please either the church or the candidate.

8. A young man may not have had opportunity to make himself familiar with the details of scholastic theology, but no man should assume to enter upon the important work of the Christian ministry, or be encouraged to do so, until he be grounded and settled in the fundamental truths of the Christian system. The work is too important and responsible. To say, "He will learn as he goes on," and that "He will come out all right," is to trifle with sacred things.

9. On some minor points a candidate may not be thoroughly settled, but if he have fixed opinions contrary to the standards of his denomination, either as to doctrine or practice, on matters deemed by the Council important, they should not approve his ordination, nor assist in it. For even on the assumption that he be right and they wrong, his induction into the ministry would introduce an inharmonious element into the denomination, and almost certainly lead to dissension and discord.

10. When the examination of the candidate is completed, he retires, and the Council deliberates by itself, and decides whether it approves of proceeding to ordination. If they do, they so determine, and notify the church, or its committee, to that effect. And as the church has referred the matter of public services to the Council, they proceed to make arrangements for the same.

11. Usual ordination services are in the following order :

a. Introductory services, consisting of singing, reading the Scriptures, and prayer.

b. The sermon; by some one usually previously selected for the purpose.

c. The ordaining prayer; during which the candidate kneels, and near the close of which the one who prays, with one or two others, lay their hands on his head.

d. The hand of fellowship; by which he is welcomed to the fellowship of the ministry.

e. The charge to the candidate; in which certain matters of duty and deportment are urged upon him.

f. The charge to the church. This is designed to impress upon the church their duties and responsibilities towards their pastor.

Singing may follow, and the benediction is pronounced, usually by the candidate.

12. It is proper for a certified copy of the minutes of the Council, embracing the order of exercise, to be given the candidate, as the certificate of his ordination.

13. It must be kept in mind that ordination does not make a minister of Christ. It endows him with no gifts, graces, or capabilities which he did not before possess. Nor does it impart any ecclesiastical authority; for those who ordain, have none to give. His call to the ministry must be from God; his call to the pastorate must be from the church. The ceremony of ordination is no more than a recognition of his divine calling to the work, an approval of the church's action and of his entrance upon the duties of the office; while the public ceremonies are but

an appropriate and an impressive public commendation of the candidate, sending him forth to his work with a fraternal benediction.

14. Nor is the form of public service by which a candidate is inducted into the office to which he had previously been chosen, important. The "laying on of hands" has usually been deemed essential to ordination. It has the force of long prevailing and widely extended usage. Moreover, it is, if rightly understood, an appropriate form of fraternal benediction. But there is no instance found in the New Testament in which a man was inducted into the gospel ministry by the imposition of hands; nor any precept enjoining it. It is not, therefore, of divine authority, and cannot be made essential to ministerial character or standing. But, since it is customary, and since uniformity of usage is desirable, the usual forms should be followed, unless they be regarded as a violation of conscience or of principle.

15. It may not unfrequently happen that a council, while recognizing the divine call of the candidate to the ministerial office, may yet be convinced that he is not fully prepared to assume the sacred functions, and enter at once upon the responsible duties of the position. He may need clearer views of divine truth, in order to be a safe teacher, and more maturity and experience in order to be a competent leader. The prudent and kindly course in such a case, would be for the council to adjourn, for so long a time as they might deem necessary, in order that he might at a later day give them entire satisfaction as to his preparation for the sacred office.

INSTALLATION.

INSTALLATION, though with some denominations it means a more formal and official act, yet with independent churches, it implies an unofficial service, by which a pastor is introduced to a new field of labor. Installation services are not held with any uniformity; indeed but few of the many pastoral changes are attended by them.

They constitute a fraternal greeting to a pastor, at his entrance upon a new field of labor, and bring the new era of the church's history prominently before the community, by a public service. Beyond this, they have no ecclesiastical significance.

No Council is called, and no examination is had; but several ministers are invited in, to take part in the services. Some one is selected to preach a sermon on the occasion; some one to give an address of welcome to the newly elected pastor; and some one to address the church, by way of congratulation and counsel. This is substantially the form and meaning of an installation service.

END LESSON FIVE