

THE QUESTION OF REBAPTISM IN ACTS XIX. 5.

Mr. Editor:—Kindly answer me the following question—Do the words, "When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts xix. 5), imply in the opinion of Baptist scholars a baptism by Paul or John?—that is, was it a rebaptism? What is Dr. Conant's view?

INQUIRER.

The above enquiry was sent to the N. Y. Examiner. The editor says:

"We sent the question to Dr. Conant, asking him to answer for himself. This he has courteously done, and in a way that we take particular pleasure in publishing."

Were the twelve disciples (Acts xix. 1-7) rebaptized?

For the right understanding of the passage, it is necessary to remark:

1. That the rendering in the second verse should be (as all readers of the Greek know), Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed? That is, did ye receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit, when ye became believers? And in the next clause, We did not even hear whether there be a Holy Ghost; that is, we heard nothing of that. As remarked by Bengel, they could not, as disciples either of Moses or of John, be ignorant "whether there be any Holy Ghost" often spoken of in the Old Testament, as in Ps. li. 11, Is. lxiii. 10, 11. But of that special gift of the Holy Spirit, afterward promised by Christ and bestowed on believers, they heard nothing.

2. In the last clause of v. 4 the true reading of the Greek text omits the word "Christ," and the translation should be—"that is, on Jesus."

3. There should be no separation of v. 5 from v. 4, and they should be read thus (omitting "verily"): John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him who should come after him, that is, on Jesus; and hearing it, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

The older interpreters, Beza and others, regarded vs. 4 and 5 as the words of Paul, describing John's teaching, and its effect on his hearers, who were baptized by him in the name of Jesus, on whom he taught them to believe as the coming Messiah. But it is now generally held by Biblical scholars that Paul's language ends with v. 4, and that v. 5 is Luke's statement of its effect on the twelve disciples—namely, that "hearing it they were [then] baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." It is the opinion of Dr. Hackett, in his commentary on Acts, and was admitted by the late Dr. Ripley in his reply to Prof. Stuart on Baptism on the ground that this was a special case. They do not regard it as a proof of the insufficiency of John's baptism, but as implying something irregular in this particular case.

This view, though sustained by eminent names, is not without serious difficulties. For example:

1. The twelve were Christian disciples, as implied in the unqualified use of this appellation, who had believed on Jesus as the coming Messiah, and had been baptized on profession of that belief. "Believed," as justly said by Alford, "can bear no other meaning than that of believing on the Lord Jesus."

2. Their case is the same as that of Apollos, who is spoken of (ch. xviii. 25) as "knowing only the baptism of John." It is not now pretended that he was rebaptized, though like these disciples he knew only John's baptism.

3. According to this view Paul is represented as saying, that John required those who received his baptism to repent and believe on Jesus; and Luke as adding, that these disciples, who had already received baptism on profession of that repentance and faith, were now baptized again on the same profession. In other words, on hearing from Paul what they had before heard from John, they again made the same profession which they had already made, of faith in Jesus, by being baptized in his name.

4. On this view their previous baptism, which seemed to Paul inadequate because no mention was made of the Holy Spirit, is now repeated with the same defect; they are baptized only in the name of the Lord Jesus.

5. "In the name of the Lord Jesus" is not the formula directed to be used in Christian baptism (Matt. xxviii. 19).

6. The gift of the Holy Spirit is ascribed to the rebaptism but to the laying on of the Apostle's hands, and it required no supplement of John's baptism, any more than in the case of our Lord's disciples, who received no other.

7. The words "saying" and "hearing,"

in vs. 4 and 5, naturally correspond to each other: "saying unto the people, that they should believe on him who should come after him, that is, on Jesus; and hearing it, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." The revised version of the American Bible Union here follows too closely the common version, retaining "when they heard this," instead of the exact rendering, "and hearing it."

According to Paul's statement, the essential requirements for John's baptism were repentance, and faith in Jesus as the coming Messiah; and hence he might properly say that those who heard were baptized in the name of Jesus, the object of their faith, whether John used that precise form of words or not.

Alford is not correct in saying that this view "would leave our present narrative in a singular state." Paul showed what was implied in John's baptism, and what was still wanting in the experience of these disciples; and this he supplied when he laid his hands on them, and they received the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

T. J. C.

Brooklyn, June 8, 1875.

TITHES OF ALL WE POSSESS.

BY AMANDA M. DOUGLASS.

Mr. Shelburne knitted his brows, gave a sigh, and leaned back in his chair. Mrs. Shelburne started from her knitting and her thoughts, and said in a rather anxious tone:

"What is it, Walter?" "The same old story." There was a peculiar discouragement in his voice. "Another deficiency; as I supposed there would be, although it is larger than I imagined."

"How much?" "One hundred and twenty odd dollars, and the insurance; well, say one hundred and fifty. I made a good deal of allowance in the summer because so many people were away and the collections small. And now it is worse than then."

She had been thinking before her husband spoke of what she would do this spring. She was tired of the green and the gold in the library, so she would have a pretty drab moquette carpet with a blue border, chairs to match, the edges relieved with blue gimp, blue and pearl damask lambrequins over the white curtains, and blue picture cords. How lovely the room would look!

"It's too bad," she said as a blue and silvery haze floated through her brain.

"I am willing and glad to contribute my share, always, but it is putting your hand in your pocket continually. Expenses must be lowered somehow."

"And Mr. Murray's salary is only eighteen hundred. You can't very well begin there. We could not live on that."

"No, we could not have the face to offer him any less," and Mr. Shelburne smiled over his perplexity.

"There must be something wrong about the giving," said Mr. Shelburne, thoughtfully. "It seems as if we were giving all the time. The congregation is small, to be sure, and it comes harder upon those who can afford to give."

"All can contribute something. I mean to have a good talk at the next meeting."

"I suppose we give away a tenth, at least?"

"Oh, more than that," returned Mr. Shelburne. "And if every one did—"

She rose, and opened a drawer in her dainty writing-desk, taking therefrom an account book.

"Walter," she said, with a smile, "just to be certain, let us count up our charities for the last year. Your income was—how much! At least you said you had invested three thousand outside of your business."

"Yes, and we spent nearly five; call it eight thousand."

"I think we have," she returned slowly, "but let us be sure. We may owe a little," and she smiled archly.

Some moments of silent calculation elapsed. The Shelburnes were quite methodical in their habits, and always kept an account of expenses.

"Two hundred and thirty," said Mrs. Shelburne.

"Three hundred and ninety-seven," said Mr. Shelburne.

"Which only makes six hundred and twenty-seven," exclaimed Mrs. Shelburne in surprise.

Mr. Shelburne laughed. "I would not have believed it, he declared, good naturedly, and yet a little annoyed. "So we owe enough to make up the deficiency. And yet it seems as if we had given continually

the past year. There was one hundred toward the debt, and our yearly subscription of two hundred—"

"We have not given it all to the church," said Mrs. Shelburne. "There have been some private charities. But you know we resolved when we were married to devote one-tenth of our income to the Lord's work."

"And I have never regretted it. My income was three thousand a year then, and although I am not rich, I feel that I have been prospered abundantly."

"How much do you suppose our church expenses are in the course of the year?" she asked.

"I can tell you very soon," turning to his books. "For pastor's salary, eighteen hundred, sexton, music and incidentals, five hundred, and a floating debt of four hundred has been paid. Three thousand a year would be ample and allow us a little on the church debt."

"There are in our congregation at least five men who have as large an income as you."

"The Thompsons and the Wests are much richer. I have no real estate besides this house."

"Granting that each one gave five hundred, which would still allow a margin for outside charities, you see there would be three thousand immediately."

Mr. Shelburne glanced up in surprise.

"Then there are five families who spend perhaps two thousand a year, and twenty perhaps one thousand, and quite a number of poor people, though very few are destitute. So it seems to me that our regular church income ought to be between three and four thousand without any special effort."

"What a calculator you are! I have never looked upon it quite in that light."

"I had occasion to go to the laundry this afternoon while Mrs. Briggs was ironing. She asked me for some old clothes for a poor woman whose husband had died suddenly, and we had a long talk about giving. She said she had always considered it a sacred duty to lay by one-tenth of all she earned, which she did every Saturday night. She earns from eight to ten dollars a week. That must be a great sacrifice to her, although it is a great pleasure as well. Her whole heart is in the cause. And the Apostolic injunction was 'to lay by as we were prospered.' God has blessed us in every respect—in health, prosperity, happiness and our two lovely children. Surely we can do this for the sake of Him who died while we were yet sinners. Even if it is for a poor, struggling church, it is for His sake as well."

"A very good sermon, my dear," said Mr. Shelburne. "I am almost sorry that you cannot come to the meeting to-morrow night, explain the matter in this straightforward way. Why, if we church members, we Christian men and women, gave one tenth even, which surely is not so wonderful a sum, there would be no want in our churches. We should not have to preach begging sermons, and there would be a surplus in the treasury for the calls of our needy brethren. And if such a woman as Mrs. Briggs, with a hopeless invalid son, can do it, surely we more fortunate people ought."

"And we surely mean to try," she said with a sweet smile, her face still flushed and her eyes brightly earnest.

"I'll never complain again until I have looked over my accounts," said Mr. Shelburne. "I am afraid our charities appear much larger to our partial eyes than they really are. Neither will I add what I ought to give with what I have given."

Melrose was a pretty city suburb. The residents had found it rather inconvenient to go down town two or three times on a Sunday. By degrees two or three chapels had been built. Mr. Shelburne and several of his brethren resolved theirs should be free. Subscriptions paid monthly or quarterly, and collections at the principal services, were the chief dependence. For two years there had been considerable enthusiasm, but now it was an old story.

"You are always begging," one member after another would say; and Mr. Shelburne being treasurer, sometimes found his task hard and ungracious.

But he went to the meeting the next evening with a light heart, and a check for one hundred and seventy-five dollars in his pocket. The pastor's monthly stipend was due, the last quarter to the sexton, the insurance part of an unpaid coal bill, and several other odds and ends.

The brethren glanced at each other in dismay.

"There must be some unpaid subscriptions," said one.

"The collections have fallen off a good deal," said another.

"It seems as if we were making special efforts all the time," said Mr. West in rather a dissatisfied tone.

Mr. Shelburne rose in his grave, quiet fashion.

"Brethren," he began, "I have a few words to say on this subject. Last evening my wife and I had a little talk. We resolved long ago that as the Jews gave a tenth of their substance towards religious purposes, we as Christians could do no less on principle. Even this to my mind does not cover the whole ground. It seldom compels us to cast into the Lord's treasury all that we have. Mrs. Shelburne and I were quite sure that we had kept our pledge the past year, but come to look over our accounts we were surprised to find quite a deficit on our side. I am very happy to make an offering of this amount to night, which more than covers our indebtedness. And I am resolved never to complain of giving largely again until I have given more than a tenth of my income. Some of our poorest members do this, and I for one will not be ashamed of the widow's two mites."

Then he began to do up the separate parcels in envelopes and address them. There was a hush of silence in the room.

"Brother Shelburne, I expected to help make up the deficiency," said Mr. West. "We must not allow you all the generosity."

"Mine is a just debt," replied Mr. Shelburne. "I can hardly call it generosity until we give more than we can afford, and feel the pinch somewhere."

"You may add another hundred to my yearly subscription," exclaimed Mr. West. "And to mine," said Mr. Lanor. "I confess that I have not come up to the Scriptural injunction in giving. It has sometimes seemed a hardship to me to be importuned for one thing and another, yet I have been prospered year after year. I have hardly thought of myself as a steward of the Lord."

The ground being once broken, the brethren began to compare notes. They could not help but see that with an average of much less than one-tenth they would be in a very prosperous condition. It was a personal question with them, and it was not necessary to gauge their benevolence by what brother Smith or brother Brown did. They parted with a warm and heartfelt shake of the hand, each resolved to do a little better in the future. The church at Melrose prospered abundantly. One and another wondered what could be the secret of its success. They gave to the missionary cause to their poorer brethren; little debts were wiped out, and salaries paid promptly. Yet the congregation was scarcely above the average of ordinary churches in pretty country towns, not to be called a poor church, but many with as available resources fall into a languishing state. The pastor is disheartened, the brethren are as always importuning.

Is it right? If we felt the matter as obligatory upon us as the Jews did, would the cause drag wearily? If we laid by as we were prospered, think of our Lord and Master first, would it seem a heavy burthen to us, and grievous to be borne?—Ah, this fund, this tent, would be the most joyous of all our gifts. We should not lay it grudgingly upon the altar and glance at it with longing eyes that strangely enough magnify it to twice the amount. For "the Lord loveth the cheerful giver."

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For the Christian Messenger.

HOME MISSION MATTERS.

PLAN FOR AUXILIARIES.

The Eastern Association having endorsed the forming of auxiliary Home Mission Societies in the mission fields and churches to aid the Union in their work, it may be advantageous to the cause to lay the plan before the people, so that those who feel the need of some scheme of operation may avail themselves of this method. The plan originated in Pietou, and was suggested by Bro. J. P. McDonald. The idea of auxiliaries had been previously suggested by Dea. Joshua Ellis, of Canard, and by Rev. Dr. Tupper. But it was reserved for the friends in Pietou to give it practical shape. If each locality in Home Mission fields would adopt and work it, we doubt not it would develop their own strength, and

greatly assist the Board. I will here submit the constitution in outline which may be modified to suit the circumstances of different localities.

CONSTITUTION AND BYE-LAWS.

1. This Society shall be called the — Auxiliary of "The Nova Scotia Baptist Home Missionary Union."

2. The object of this Society shall be to raise funds in support of the preaching of the gospel under the Union, especially in this locality.

3. This Society shall consist of persons who agree weekly to set apart a certain portion of their worldly substance according to the word of God in 1 Cor. xvi. 2, the same to be paid weekly, monthly or otherwise.

4. The officers of this Society shall be a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and a suitable number of collectors, all of which officers shall constitute the Managing Committee.

5. The duties of the officers. (These shall be what usually devolve upon such officers, which may be defined.) Also—The Secretary shall furnish the collectors with necessary blanks.

The Treasurer shall monthly notify the collectors of arrearages on the weekly dues. The collectors shall monthly collect all such arrearages and pay the same to the Treasurer.

6. This Society shall hold its Annual Meeting in the first week in May of each year, at which the work of the past year shall be fully reported, and officers appointed for the year to come.

BYE-LAWS.

1. All meetings of the committee and of the Society shall be opened and closed with prayer.

2. The Constitution and Bye-laws shall be read at the opening of each Annual Meeting.

3. The Constitution and Bye-laws of the Society may be altered or amended at any Annual Meeting by a vote of a majority of the members present.

Remarks. Under No. 5 of the Constitution the duties of officers may be more fully defined. The Treasurer should be directed half-yearly to transmit the funds to the Treasurer of the Union, especially after the Annual Meeting in the first part of May, so as to enable the Union to close their accounts the last of May as they are required to do.

These auxiliaries may be formed in each section of every mission field, also in weak churches, and if practicable in strong churches. This will secure permanency, and consequent efficiency in all our Home Missionary operations. It is to be hoped that all concerned and especially missionaries now in their fields, needing a system, will at once recognize these auxiliaries. Lack of funds is now our greatest obstacle. Let us all remember that the silver and the gold are the Lord's, and systematically pour them into His treasury.

Yours,

D. FREEMAN.

For the Christian Messenger.

A SUCCESSFUL AND AN UNSUCCESSFUL CHURCH.

Two very different objects to look at—unless we are governed by the Episcopal idea—and judge by external lines and features, if we do so, we may deceive ourselves and be deceived by the outward appearance of wealth and splendour. Goodly stones may be so piled as to form an object, pleasing to the eye, and gratifying to the most refined and fastidious taste. Yea more, within, all may harmonise with the grandeur and architectural skill displayed without 'the Church,' and if we accepted this idea, instead of the scriptural, success and non-success must be considered from another standpoint. The Scripture ideal of a successful Church seems to rest upon the life, activity and individuality of its several parts. 'Lively stones' are needed, and then the Church can be as to its location for worship as Paul said to Philemon, 'in thy house.' Humble as it may be, there a successful Church may feed and be fed, and led by God's Spirit great will be their zeal to make known the glory and grace of Christ their living head. Taking this view, why is it that Churches thus composed of a number of professing Christians can so often be distinguished as successful and non-successful Churches? I will tell a story of two Churches, as given in our meeting a few days since, by a gentleman from H. M. S. the *Seagull*. Referring to the past and present he said, 'I have travelled almost in every land, and mingled with Christians of every creed