

this was done, no doubt, with the consent or at the request of churches. But a rigid uniformity in such matters cannot be expected in all cases, and, in fact, may not be possible or desirable. The great matter is to guard the churches from serious possible evils, to keep out the unworthy or grossly incompetent, and to recognize, encourage, and help forward those called of God to the great and glorious work of the gospel ministry.

It may be proper to state here what rules or principles should govern a Council in coming to a deliberation on the matter or matters referred to it.

1. The Word of God bearing either specifically on the matter submitted, or comprehending it under some general statement or principle. 2. To require that any charge whether touching doctrine, or a serious breach of Christian morality, should be fully, honestly, and satisfactorily proved. 3. Every thing bearing fairly and seriously on the question in hand should be admitted and receive due consideration in deciding the matter. A resort to tricks and sharp practices to keep out proper evidence, misinterpret, misrepresent, or evade it, should not be tolerated by either church or Council, if, unhappily, such an unworthy attempt should be made in any quarter. 4. Brotherly love and consideration should operate in all the proceedings. 5. The dictates of common sense and common justice should, at least, be regarded and carried out. If these are ignored or violated in the treatment of a case, how can other churches, or even the world, respect the decision of either a church or a Council? 6. A supreme regard for what is right before God, what is in harmony with truth and in agreement with the spirit of holiness, should guide and rule in forming a decision on the matter referred.

It may properly be asked now, To what extent, or how far the decision of an Ecclesiastical Council is binding on a church or its members. The answer will depend much on the nature of the question submitted; the kind of Council intended or called; and the circumstances attending the case.

A Council may be either (1) *ex parte*, i. e., called by one party concerned in a difficulty, without the choice, or even concurrence of the other; or (2) a Council may be *mutual*, that is, where both parties have a choice in selecting the brethren to form the Council, or each accepts the nominees, or choice of the other.

1. If the matter referred be touching Christian doctrines or ordinances, then, of course, no decision can rightfully claim to be accepted and considered as binding, only so far as it is conformed to the Word of God, or legitimately built upon the teaching of the New Testament.

2. If the matter referred be a serious difficulty between the pastor and his church, or between a church and some of its members, and both parties agree to commit the settlement of the same to the Council, then all the parties are bound to abide by the decision of the Council.

3. If the reference to a Council includes a charge of grave immorality, in which case the Council is, of necessity, required to act as a *court*, to investigate said charge, weigh the evidence carefully, and pronounce its judgment as to the guilt or innocence of the accused party, then the decision, in such case, should be binding on all the parties, especially if the Council were mutually chosen, or, at least, accepted by all the parties concerned; provided, however, (1st), the trial was fair, honest, and Christian-like, and that no evidence bearing on the matter, *pro* or *con*, was improperly or unjustly shut out; and provided (2nd), that the decision rendered is sustained by the evidence, for where such decision is contrary to the testimony of credible witnesses the decision is a serious misjudgment, and consequently a perversion of right. If such a case of misjudgment were made apparent, the aggrieved party is entitled to, and should be allowed, an appeal to a new Council, if desired.

For it should be considered certain that where serious church or denominational difficulties are not settled fairly, and honorably, righteously and in a Christian manner, they are in an important sense, not settled at all, or more commonly, perhaps, as said by our Lord

in reference to another matter, "the rent is made worse." The aggrieved party or parties will, it is almost certain retain their own views of the case, with the added conviction that injustice and wrong have been committed in the treatment of the matter. A victory gained unfairly or unjustly in a Christian Church, Council, Association, or Convention is only temporary, and cannot in itself serve the cause of truth and righteousness; and must ere long as the real state of the case becomes known, turn to the disadvantage and shame of those who compassed the wrong. Truth calls for penitence, or vengeance; and will not otherwise be satisfied.

In the opinion of the writer it is well not to resort to Councils, unless the gravity of the case demands that kind of reference. Sometimes a judicious Committee of the Church will be able to accomplish quietly and well the work needed,—the removal of difficulties and the restoration of Christian harmony, good-will and co-operation.

In the case of doctrinal differences and disputes it is not always best, or even necessary to call a Council to consider them.

Very serious differences and errors existed among the members of the Church at Corinth respecting a fundamental doctrine of Christianity—that of the RESURRECTION; and very serious differences also existed among the members of the Galatian Churches in respect to the capital doctrine of justification by faith in Christ; and yet in neither case was a Council called by the Churches, or recommended by the Apostle. In those cases, no doubt, the errors could be combated in a better and more successful way—that of Christian indoctrination by those who have been taught more perfectly in Divine things. Sound Christian instruction in a wise and kind, faithful, earnest, Christian spirit is generally, if not universally, the most effectual means to remedy or remove serious departures or divergencies from the doctrines of the gospel among members of churches.

I will close this paper with a few remarks on the rights of churches, and the rights of the individual members, respectively. A church is endowed by the Lord Jesus Christ with certain rights and privileges, and which have, of course, attached to them corresponding duties and responsibilities; and among the former, the following may be enumerated.

1. The right of self-government according to the law of Christ, free from control and interference from without.

2. To require of its members a Christian and orderly deportment; and to administer fraternal and Christian admonition to those who are remiss in, or negligent of their duty.

3. To claim from each member contributions, according to his or her means to support the church in providing for the administration of the gospel and its ordinances, and for the growth and edification of the church.

4. Contributions also to extend the Kingdom of Christ in the world—at home and abroad.

5. To exercise a just Scriptural discipline over all the members, particularly over those whose conduct requires, according to the law of Christ respecting His Church, to be enquired into and visited, perhaps, with censure or exclusion.

6. To assign Christian work to each, and to encourage the members to use their gifts, influence, and efforts to mutual edification and to promote the unity, welfare and efficiency of the church; and to labour also to lead others into the fold of Christ.

On the other hand individual members of churches have rights also which in their own sphere are no less sacred and worthy of respect than those possessed by a church, and cannot be violated or infringed upon without offense against the law of Christ and the spirit of Christianity.

I enumerate under this head the following: 1. A right to a voice in the government of the church, and in its discipline; and consequently the liberty to express his views in a fraternal and Christian manner on any matter brought before the church in a proper way. 2. A right to the watch-care and sympathy of the church and to the instruction and admonition it may be in the power of the church to impart or

provide. 3. A right to the common privileges of the church,—to its fellowship and to work therein, to use his gifts, means and efforts for the glory of Christ in connexion with the church, according to the dictates of his own judgment and conscience, and without interference on the part of the church or its members with his proper and just liberty as a disciple of Christ, and ultimately accountable only to Him. 4. In case a member becomes the subject of discipline. Such member has a right to claim fraternal Christian treatment, and a fair, just and honorable trial, according to the law of Christ. To judge a brother from prejudice and passion, and not from clear and sufficient evidence of the alleged wrongdoing on his part, is totally contrary to the word of God and the Spirit of Christ, and is unworthy of a Christian Church. 5. A member has a right to his own private judgment in sacred matters; and to the entire control of his family, business and social relations without interference on the part of the church with his views, or his course, so long as those do not positively conflict with a fundamental doctrine of Christianity, or an express command of Christ.

Now as a member has no right to obstruct or oppose a church in the exercise of its rights,—its utterances and acts when in accordance with the teachings and principles of God's word,—so no church or majority in a church has any authority from Christ to deprive a member of his rights unjustly, or to interfere without just and sufficient cause with any member in the exercise of his rights or of that liberty which the Lord Jesus bestows upon every true disciple in His Kingdom. The Lord has given to no church, to no minister or member of a church and to no Ecclesiastical Council or Christian assembly whatever, a right to do wrong;—to trample on or interfere the one with the rights of the other; or to set aside or disregard any of the doctrines, principles and injunctions laid down in the New Testament. All churches,—their members and ministers,—Ecclesiastical Councils and other Christian assemblies are required alike to be in subjection to Christ, and to act in all matters especially those which relate to His Kingdom in the most honorable and righteous way—in strict accordance with his word, in the spirit of Christianity and for the glory of God: And so far as either act otherwise they have therein neither the authority nor the approval of Christ.

Do Christians really believe their Bibles.

"Are you willing to tell God that you fully believe and from this day will sacredly endeavour to stand on every word of the Bible?" Such was the question recently addressed by her pastor to a truly earnest Christian lady of his congregation; and she was too sincere to say she could meet the test without much more deliberation. She felt that she had not fully committed herself to every word of God. Do the mass of professing Christians really believe their Bibles? After they have deducted the things that were only meant for the Apostles and their age, and the things that belong to advanced Christians, and the things that they do not quite comprehend, and the things that are qualified and modified by other things in the Bible, and the things that are matters of hope and probability rather than assured faith; how much is left which they really believe at all? Is such a mutilated, qualified, questioning faith of any real efficiency? Is the chain any stronger than the weakest link? Do not the conditions of a divine revelation require that if we receive it on God's authority at all, we must receive it all? Is not this the reason why the world so often asks where is your God, and the disciples themselves stand baffled before a scoffing devil asking "Why could not we cast him out?" Because of your unbelief? We must not expect the infidel to have more faith in our Bible than he sees in us. "If I believed these things as you claim to," said a gifted skeptic, "they would seem to be of such infinite importance I could do nothing but proclaim them to the world."

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1882.

SECOND QUARTER.

Lesson VI.—MAY 7, 1882.

SUFFERERS BROUGHT TO CHRIST. Mark vii. 24-37.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vss. 26-30.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"The Lord is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works."—Psalm cxlv. 9.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

M. The Lesson, Mark vii. 24-37.

T. Parallel in Matthew, Matt. xv. 21-31.

W. The Widow of Zarephath, 1 Kings xvii. 8-24.

T. The Shunammite Mother, 2 Kings iv. 18-37.

F. Jews and Gentiles, Eph. ii. 11-22.

S. The Royal Benefactor, Isa. chap. xxxiii.

S. Sharing in Christ's Sufferings, 1 Pet. iv. 12-19.

HUMAN WOE RELIEVED.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. A Sad Mother Blessed, Vss. 24-30. II. Deaf Ears Opened, Vss. 31-37.

QUESTIONS.—What was the Saviour's usual course when opposition became violent?

Vs. 24-30.—To what region did Jesus retire? What distinguishes this journey? Who came to him for help? To what heathen race did she belong? What had been the relation of this race to the Jews? What did he mean by "children" and "dogs"? What privileges did the Jews then enjoy? What is the position of Gentiles now?

Vs. 31-37.—What afflicted person was brought to Christ? What significance in Christ's "looking up" and "sighing"? How far can Christianity now relieve human woe without miracle?

Special Subjects.—Delayed answers to prayer. Parallel with a more ancient Phœnician mother. The Canaanite. The Saviour's different methods as to outward acts in healing. The world's testimony to Christ.

We have in this lesson "the one recorded exception to that self-imposed law of Christ's ministry which kept him within the limits of the land of Israel."—Ellicott.

NOTES.—I. The Syrophenician Mother. (Vs. 24-30)

Vs. 24.—Jesus left Capernaum, the scene of the last lesson, and went into the borders, or region of, Tyre and Sidon, the two great Phœnician sea-ports, on the northwest coast of Palestine. The journey from Capernaum to Tyre was one which might be made in one day's active walking. It seems that, for this once, Jesus entered into Gentile territory. The object of this journey may have been to avoid the wrath of the Pharisees, and to have an opportunity to instruct the Twelve in preparation for their work. But there was also a secret purpose of grace to the Syrophenician mother, as there was to Zaccheus, when he entered into Jericho. He entered into an house, and would have no man know it. But his fame had preceded him (iii. 8), and he could not be hid.

Vs. 25, 26.—No time was given to Jesus for retirement. Straightway (New Version) a woman in need came to him. Her young, or little, daughter had an unclean spirit; or, as Matthew states, "was grievously vexed with a demon." Heard of him. She did not require sight. Faith came by hearing, (Rom. x. 17). Fell at his feet. Her faith puts her in the posture of deep reverence and earnest entreaty. A Greek. A name given to Gentiles, irrespective of their special nationality, Syrophenician. One who dwelt in the Phœnician portion of Syria. Matthew speaks of her as "a woman of Canaan," i. e., a descendant of the original inhabitants of Palestine, who were to have been entirely driven out and destroyed, (Deut. xx. 17); not only a Gentile, but of an accursed race, (Gen. ix. 5); Besought him. See her acknowledgment of his Messiahship in this prayer, in Matt. xv. 22; the more remarkable, since she was not a Jew. Matthew also records the chilling silence of Jesus in answer to her agonizing petition, even to the wonder of the disciples, who, impatient at her coming after them, entreated him to grant what she asked, and to send her away.

Vs. 27, 28.—Let the children first be filled. To one of less faith, this would have seemed a denial; but to her, the word first brought an intimation that her turn might come; and her faith converts the apparent refusal of her request,—it is not meet, etc.—into a triumphant argument for granting it. We do not understand Jesus as sympathizing in the feeling of the day which stigmatized the Gentiles as dogs. The woman is quick to see this; and argues that the dogs (little dogs, or household

dogs), as a part of the family, under the table eat of the children's crumbs. Note her humility in using the diminutive for crumbs, i. e., little crumbs; small particles which children carelessly scatter. In her destitution, such crumbs of grace would be a feast.

Vs. 29, 30.—For this saying, etc. More fully, in Matthew: "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee, even as thou wilt." Go thy way. As a conqueror. Faith overcomes not only the world, (1 John v. 4), but Christ. The devil is gone out. The work was immediate. She found its fulfillment at home, where the child was quietly lying upon her bed, most likely sleeping peacefully, with the demon gone out.

II. The Cure of the Deaf and Dumb Man, (Vs. 31-37).

Vs. 31, 32.—As there could be no retirement now for Jesus, even in the heathen country, he returned to the Sea of Galilee, passing upward through Sidon, (New Version), thence across the Jordan, and down its eastern bank into the regions of Decapolis, a country embracing, as its name indicates, ten cities. The miracle now under consideration was performed on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee. Deaf, and had an impediment. He was probably not born deaf, but had lost his hearing; and, with his hearing, his speech had almost gone. They bring and beseech. Another instance of the kind offices of friends. To put his hand, etc. They not only pray for the cure, but dictate the manner of it.

Vs. 33-35.—Took him aside. As he did the blind man, (viii. 23), to avoid the excitement which attended publicity, both for the man's sake and his own. Put his fingers into his ears, etc. Looking up to [into] heaven. In prayer. See John xi. 41, 42. Sighed. In deep sympathy with human suffering. See John xi. 35. Christ is God-man; for as man he sighed, as God he wrought the cure. Ephphatha. The very word of power which fell from the Saviour's lips. Mark loves to treasure up these "wonderful words of life." See v. 41; xv. 34. Be opened. As potent as the sublime utterance: "Let there be light," (Gen. i. 3). Straightway. Omitted in New Version; but the result was, nevertheless, instantaneous. Ears were opened, etc. A graphic description of a perfect cure.

Vs. 36, 37.—Charged them. Not the man only, but the people. Tell no man. Jesus desired a quiet period for the instruction of his apostles. They published it. The very prohibition seemed to increase their zeal. But zeal is no excuse for disobedience. He hath done all things well. Reminding us, as Trench remarks, of the words of the first creation, (Gen. i. 31). But the old and the new creation are by the One Being by whom all things exist. He maketh the deaf to hear, etc. A truth still in the present tense. That is the mission of his gospel now. See Isaiah xxxv. 5. Matthew (xv. 30, 31) speaks of this period as one full of miracles.

SUGGESTED LESSONS.

The Lord often causes evil to minister to good. Had it not been for the "evil spirit" in her daughter, this woman may never have heard of Jesus, and never have been blessed by the development of a great faith.

A lesson to mothers. Bring your "young" children to Jesus, and argue with them the matter of immediate salvation. This woman would take no denial.

Faith wins grander victories than force. The sigh of Jesus is most eloquent in proof that he is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities."

The sigh of Jesus is a lesson to us.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

One day, Jesus went away from Galilee—far away into another country, where he had never been before. The people in Galilee and in Judea were nearly all Jews. They had the Old Testament, and knew about God. But the people in this country, where Jesus went, were heathen. Sometimes the Jews called these people "dogs," because they were heathen. He entered into a house, but had not been in the house long, when a woman came to find him. The disciples wished to send her away; but Jesus did not. As soon as this woman saw Jesus, she fell right down at his feet and began to beg him to do something for her. Do you know what she wanted?

This woman had left a little daughter at home. One of Satan's unclean spirits was in this little daughter. She believed Jesus could cast the devil out of her daughter without even going to see her. Jesus saw in a moment what wonderful faith this poor heathen woman had in him. He saw that she had even more faith than his own disciples! Jesus

wanted to show his disciples what strong faith this woman had. Jesus spoke to the woman as if he had not come to cure heathen people, but only to cure the Jews who believed in God. Jesus said. (Read verse 27, and question.)

Let the children tell, in passing, how deaf and dumb people talk now a days. Ask why Jesus looked up to heaven. —Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

Boutch's Department.

Scripture Enigma. No. 169.

1. The first name given by Isaiah to Christ in his prophecy concerning His birth.

2. The prophet of the Old Testament to whom John the Baptist is compared.

3. The disciple of whom Jesus said, "Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile."

4. The disciple who would not believe of the other disciples when they testified of His resurrection.

5. One of the official titles of Christ, the meaning of which is, One who pleads another's cause.

6. Another title found in Zechariah, third and fourth chapters.

7. A letter of the Greek alphabet which Christ uses as demonstrating His union with His people to the end of time.

8-9. Two mystical words, signifying lights and perfection, which were applied to the breastplate of the high priest.

10. A man who continued a firm friend to Paul in the midst of the apostle's persecution at Athens.

11. One who ministered to Paul when in prison.

12. The son of a giant who sought to slay David, but was slain by Abishai.

13. A prophet of Judea who lived in the reign of David.

14-15. Two words, signifying divine favor and renewal, promised by God in the eighty-fourth Psalm to all that walk uprightly.

16. A precious stone used in the construction of the temple.

17. A country of the East, celebrated for its production of precious stones and gold.

18. Of whom does Christ say in Revelation that He is the root and offspring?

The initials of these described words compose a sentence which Christ spent His time when on earth.

—Watchman.

CURIOS QUESTIONS.

360. What was the name of the ancient capital of the island of Lesbos?

361. With what "old disciple" did Paul lodge at Jerusalem?

362. What member of the Court of the Areopagus at Athens was converted under the preaching of Paul?

363. What was the first encampment of the Israelites after crossing the river Arnan?

364. Anagrams. Form each of these lines into a word:

1. I can sham piety.

2. A trite rule.

365. Reverse the letters of a sharp sound, and form another meaning to combine with needles.

366. Reverse to look carefully, and form to preserve carefully.

367. Reverse a frail support, and form a beautiful animal.

368. Reverse a piece of stuffing, and form a large bird.

369. Reverse clothing, and form a boast.

870. Form a square of words of the following:

1. To go forth.

2. A perfume.

3. What one does when looking.

4. To undo knots.

5. A volatile fluid.

Find answers to the above—write them down—and see how they agree with the answers to be given next week.

Answer to Scripture Enigma.

No. 168.

1. Part: Job xli. 26; Eph. vi. 16.

2. Master: Matt. xxiii. 8; John xiii. 13.

3. Custom: Judges xi. 39, 40; 1 Sam. ii. 13, 14; Matt. ix. 2.

4. Damascus: Gen. xv. 2; 2 Kings v. 9-12; Acts ix. 3; 2 Cor. xi. 32, 33.

ANSWER TO SCRIPTURE CONTRASTS.

349. Isaiah liii. 3.

350. Heb. xii. 2.

351. Rom. v. 3-5; 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10; Jas. i. 2; 1 Pet. i. 6.

352. Phil. iii. 1; iv. 4; 1 Thess. v. 16.

353. Rom. xv. 13; Gal. v. 22.

354. Nails viii. 10.

355. Job xx. 5; Eccles. viii. 6.

356. Psa. xvi. 11; Isa. xxxv. 10.

ANSWERS TO CURIOUS QUESTIONS.

357. Described words.

1. Bail; 2. Pail; 3. Mail; 4. Nail;

5. Rail; 6. Hail; 7. Sill; 8. Wall;

9. Tail; 10. Fall; 11. Jail.

358. A Charade.

Misunderstand.

359. Poetry Completed.

We shape ourselves the joy or fear

Of which the coming life is made

And fill our future's atmosphere

With sunshine or with shade.

The tissue of the life to be,

We weave of colors all our own;

And in the field of destiny

We reap what we have sown.