

Can there be a question as to whether a church, under such circumstances as these, be in a good position to reach a righteous decision as a Council of dispassionate, disinterested brethren? I know a majority who have reached a decision may say, We are not biased. But are they in the best position to judge? Is it not always better to leave the matter with those who are not exposed to such biasing influences at all? For my part, I confess there appears to be no room for controversy on this question.

But even though the majority in a church were in a position to reach the best decision,—even though they do reach the conclusion which a Council would arrive at,—there are reasons why it would be better to refer the matter to a Council.

But even were it possible for the majority always to do the right thing, there would still be a reason why a Council should be called. A majority with which a minority have been in strife are not those from whom a decision will have the most moral effect. It can always be said that it was rendered through party feeling, or some wrong spirit. Whereas, should the same decision be given by a Council, where there cannot be any such reasons to influence judgment, it has greater power to convince them that they themselves have been wrong. At least, it will compel them to hold their peace; they can no longer say that injustice has been done them, and their power to disturb is gone.

Again, it often happens that a difficulty of such a nature that for the church to attempt its settlement would be to rend it, whereas, even though similar feelings might be aroused against a Council, it would do little harm. I know that there are limitations to action based on this reason, but there is force in this plea inside of all restrictions.

It being so evident that a Council of outside brethren is better able to reach right conclusions in any given case than the parties interested, it is always unfortunate when either majority or minority refuse to unite in calling one. The cause of those who refuse is always prejudiced, it matters not though their action be just. It has the appearance of a desire to shun candid and unbiased investigation. It gives the assenting party ground to say, "You are less sure of the justice of your case than we, because you refuse to have it scanned by eyes free from prejudice." Thus they gain a weapon which can be used with grand effect, and the sympathy of the public is thrown upon their side, whether right or wrong.

Some, however, who are willing to call a Council for advice, refuse to bind themselves to accept its decision. To do this they regard as yielding the right of private judgment. But is not this a mistake? Is it not merely yielding the right of private action provisionally?

And must not every member of a church, by virtue of constituting a part of a body, give up his right of private action, when not a violation of conscience, in deference to the decision of the majority, it matters not what his private judgment may continue to be? Now is there any more objection to yielding this right of private action in deference to the decision of a Council? Nay, in the given case, is there not less objection; for have we not seen that the Council is in a better position to decide justly than the church could be? What valid objection there can be for parties in a church who admit the principle that the minority must accept the decisions of the majority, to be equally bound by the decision of a Council which is better able to judge of the case, under the circumstances, than themselves, I fail to see. Why cannot all say, "We, as a church, are exposed to influences which tend to bias the judgment. A decision must be reached which is binding on all, or we cannot exist as a body. Brethren who are disinterested and unbiased are in a better position to form a right judgment and to back that judgment by a stronger power to induce its willing acceptance by all. So we will call a Council of such brethren, and submit our case to their decision, feeling that it will be eager to be bound by their clearer judgment than by our own." This appears rational and Christian, and can be objected to by none except such as are determined to abide by no decision

from church or body unless it agree with their own ideas.

Neither, I am persuaded, does any principle or pre-arrangement of the New Testament preclude such a course. Matt. xviii. 15 at least is not against it. Here the difference is between two individuals. If they cannot settle it between themselves, the offended party is to take disinterested witnesses, and talk the matter over with the offender, before them. If the judgment and advice of these are of no avail, the case is to come before the church. If the voice of the church be disregarded, he is to be "as a Gentile and a Publican." Here the church is calm and dispassionate—in a state in which the right decision is so sure to be reached that it is ratified in heaven, v. 18. Because the church is thus dispassionate, is at least one of the reasons, no doubt, why the matter is taken out of the hands of the interested parties, and referred to her. But when a church is split into two parties, these take the place of the individuals in Matt. xviii. 15. Just as they were required to leave the final judgment to the church as dispassionate, so, on the same principle are these two parties permitted, at least, to submit their difference to some dispassionate tribunal for adjudication. For either party to decide, the question in dispute, would be like either of the individuals, in the first case, determining the dispute to which they were both parties. Of course if the body of the church remain dispassionate, without bias to either side in a dispute in which other members are involved, the church may be in a position to act. But this is not always the case, and when it is the heated interested parties are of the church also, with rights to assist in the decision of their own dispute. So we conclude that this passage is favorable to Councils, so far as it bears upon them.

The passage which has the most direct bearing upon this subject is Acts xv. Here a church submits a question to a Council. This church at Antioch is in danger of being disturbed over a question of doctrine. So they refer the case, through Paul and Barnabas, to the church at Jerusalem, and to the apostles who were of its membership. It is true that it was a question of doctrine, and it was submitted to the decision of a body which was under apostolic guidance. There can therefore be no case exactly similar to-day. But it shows that a church is permitted to seek, outside of itself, the aid of the best wisdom available, nay, it seems to suggest, if not demand, this course. It is also suggestive that the church at Antioch referred their case to the brethren at Jerusalem, while they were under the apostolic guidance of Paul. Is there any reason for their seeking a decision from the apostles and brethren at Jerusalem, when Paul was able to give them inspired guidance, except that a judgment from this centre of christian influence would have greater apparent authority, and be more readily accepted? Is not this a scriptural illustration of a principle which we have noticed above? I have already written at too great length. If objections are urged against the ground here taken, we may have something further to say.

For the Christian Messenger.

From France.

PARIS, April 23, 1883.

The delightful promptness with which our Spring has appeared is a new departure for that coyest and most uncertain maiden. I believe it is the result of a vigorous determination to cut the ground from under the feet of lachrymose newspaper-corner poets and sentimental songstresses who bewail the lingering of the ethereal mildness, and confide lamentingly to tortured ears, how their hearts are weary—wreathy waiting for the spring. To be sure she had an unusually sound nap while our fierce northern winter held away with icy thralls and gloomy skies, and so awoke to luster strength and fuller life. "It is my turn now," she said, stepping on February's heels, and giving him a brisk shove with her rosy elbow—"be gone, old greybeard!" and in a moment she touched tree and bush, flower and grass with her eternal youth, her immortal smile. I am not a poet, but truly to see the coming of the green in the gardens, the soft, grey, sun-warmed clouds, the happy children crowding to play in the paths of the

lowly Luxembourg, or Tuilleries is enough to brighten one's poorest prose and give it a touch of poetry. And the season in undeniably exceptional. During the whole of March there was not one disagreeable day, even in "Holy Week" and "Good Friday," which the faithful hold to be invariably somber and cloudy, the weather was beautiful. Then, just when the need of it was perceived, we had rain in abundance—beginning, since the 1st of April, with light showers, but increasing to a liberal, drenching, and most beneficent down-pour. Now one sees the first fruits of it in the great bunches of asparagus, tiny panniers of red strawberries, crisp heads of lettuce, and little radishes, made to look as pretty as bunches of flowers.

On the Place St. Michel, and the Place St. Sulpice, the flower markets resume their important business. We have grown wise in our flower buying, and leave our purchases till late in the day—then the "ladies" of the flower market are tired and willing to negotiate sales. "How much madam?"—we indicate a bunch each, of white lilies, narcissus, wall-flowers, and the more precious ranunculus. "Oh, well, monsieur" she answers, "a franc" or half or twice as much.

Promptly we offer a third less, or even half.

"Oh, no! impossible."

"But come now let us be reasonable. What is your price, madam?"

"See! I desire nothing better in life than to accommodate you!"

Inflexibility on the buyer's part, continues and the fragrant spring blossoms are soon exchanged for the few sous. All this time coming till late in the autumn, the most modest ménage need never be without it a sweet posy. The climate and the immense culture of flowers all round Paris keep the large market supplied with the old-fashioned homely flowers, of which one never tires. Mignonette and wall-flowers, roses, pansies, pinks, daffodils, jonquils, and a dozen more may be had fresh every day in the week. But during winter, at a high of the very grand shops exhibit rare flowers, there is nothing to compare with the abundance of flowers and hot house plants to which the dwellers in our American cities are accustomed. Even at Easter, with the exception of a few plants in some of the churches—there was no display or decoration.

An imposing military display will be made at Moscow on the occasion of the Czar's Coronation, which the Nihilists still declare shall never take place. Under the chief command of the Grand Duke Vladimir there will be twelve thousand five hundred men, with nineteen generals, and more than six hundred officers, while a special police force of nearly three hundred men will assist the Moscow police.

Face Difficulties.

Have the courage to face difficulty, lest it kick you harder than you bargained for. Difficulties, like thieves, often disappear at a glance. Have the courage to leave a convivial party at the proper hour for doing so, however great the sacrifice; and to stay away from one upon the slightest grounds for objection, however great the temptation to go. Have the courage to do without that which you do not need, however much you admire it. Have the courage to speak your mind when it is necessary that you should do so, and hold your tongue when it is better that you should be silent. Have the courage to speak to a poor friend in a seedy coat, even in the street, and when a rich one is nigh. The effort is less than many people think it to be, and the act is worthy of a king. Have the courage to admit you have been in the wrong, and you will remove the fact in the mind of others, putting a desirable impression in place of an unfavorable one. Have the courage to adhere to the first resolution when you cannot change it for a better, and to abandon it even at the eleventh hour upon conviction.

The other day some Wisconsin people were astonished to see their dog come into the house with a piece of paper tied to his tail. There was written on the paper, "My legs are broken. Please help me." They carefully examined his legs, but found them all right, when somebody recognised the writing of a woman who lived half-a-mile away. They went to her house and found her helpless from a fall which broke her legs. She could not stir, nor attract anybody's attention, and she might have starved or frozen to death, but luckily the dog came in, and crawling to a table she managed to write the note and fasten it to his tail.

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1883. SECOND QUARTER.

Lesson IX.—MAY 27, 1883.

PAUL AND BARNABAS IN CYPRUS.

Acts xiii. 1-12.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 2-4.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."—Acts xiii. 2.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

M. The Lesson, Acts xiii. 1-12.

T. The Great Commission, Matt. xxviii. 16-20.

W. True Ministers, [Mark xvi. 14-20. 2 Cor., ch. iii.]

T. True Ministers, 2 Cor., ch. iv.

F. Paul an Apostle, Gal. ch. i.

S. Signs of an Apostle, 2 Cor., ch. xlii.

S. Light for the Gentiles, Isa. xlix. 1-12.

THE HOLY SPIRIT SENDS OUT THE FIRST FOREIGN MISSIONARIES.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Missionaries Appointed, Vs. 1-3. II. Preaching in Cyprus, Vs. 4-7. III. Paul the Apostle, Vs. 8-12.

QUESTIONS.—What was the state of the church in Judea? Ch. xii. 24. What had already taken place at Antioch?

Vs. 1-3.—Who were the missionaries? Who selected them? Who first selects true missionaries now? How were Barnabas and Paul set apart? What was God's purpose as to the Gentiles?

Vs. 4-7.—Trace their route on the map; point out Cyprus and the cities named. Why, do you think, did they go first to Cyprus? To whom at first did they preach? What evil man was at Paphos? What sort of man was the proconsul?

Vs. 8-12.—Who opposed the missionaries? What new name for Saul? What significance in the change? For what office had the Lord selected him? In what capacity had he labored hitherto? With what was he now specially filled? What did he say to Elymas? What signs of apostleship were given to him?

Scripture Searchings.—What commands of Jesus require Foreign Missions? What threatenings against opposers in the Bible?

In the first five chapters we have the founding of the Church in Jerusalem; the next seven relate its growth and development. With this chapter commences the era of missions to the heathen. Antioch in Syria becomes the great centre of operations; Paul the prominent figure among the apostles; and the field is seen to be the world.

NOTE.—Vs. 1-3.—In lesson VII. we saw the origin and prosperity of the Church that grew at Antioch. It continued to grow in numbers and power; and Antioch became, at this time, the great centre of missionary operations among the Gentiles. The church was rich in men of gifts and influence. Two of the four classes in Eph. iv. 11, are here mentioned, viz.: prophets and teachers. The prophets seem to have been the more gifted order, as, at times, under special inspiration in healing, foretelling events, or speaking with unusual spiritual energy. They were all teachers, but the teachers were not prophets. Barnabas heads the list, being at this time the most prominent. Simon... called Niger, some suppose that he was an African convert. Lucius of Cyrene. Possibly the kinsman of Paul referred to in Rom. xvi. 21. He may have been one of the "men of Cyrene" spoken of in xi. 20. Manaen... had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch. He was most likely foster brother of Herod, his mother being nurse to this Herod Antipas, who slew the Baptist. The two, so closely associated in boyhood, could not have been more widely separated in manhood. Last of the five is Saul, soon by force of character and call of the Holy Spirit, to become first. As they ministered to the Lord. As they were engaged in the services of worship, such as teaching the Word, praying, etc. While thus waiting on the Lord, the command came to engage in missionary work. Fasted. This would intimate a special season of inquiry of God, perhaps with reference to this very question. The Holy Ghost said. He, therefore, is the authority for foreign missions. He bade them separate or set apart Barnabas and Saul, choosing his own men; and said Separate them for me; teaching us that missions are distinctly his work. Whereunto I have called them. The men chosen were not such as were failures at Antioch, but the mightiest of them all. The church immediately obeyed the bidding of the Holy Spirit, and, with appropriate religious services, sent them forth.

Vs. 4, 5.—The fact that they were

commissioned by the Holy Ghost is of such importance that it is reiterated. They naturally went to Seleucia, the seaport of Antioch, in order to set sail. Their first field was the island of Cyprus, some sixty or seventy miles away, in the Mediterranean. This was the nearest great island; was in the track of western travel; and was the home of Barnabas. They landed at Salamis, which was the nearest port on the eastern side of the island. They at once began their work and preached, not science nor sentiment, but the word of God, expounding the Scriptures, especially in their relation to Jesus as Messiah and Saviour. The synagogues of the Jews. "To the Jew first." But to these synagogues Gentile proselytes also came, who were seeking a knowledge of the true God. In their work they had John Mark, whom we met in Lesson VIII, the nephew of Barnabas, as their minister, or assistant.

Vs. 6, 7.—Paul and Barnabas took a tour through the island, probably preaching in the villages on the way, and came to Paphos, at the western end, about one hundred miles from Salamis. This was the capital, and residence of the Roman proconsul. The city was notorious for its licentiousness. There they found a renegade Jew, a false prophet, who was a sorcerer or magician, whose name was Bar-Jesus, or Son of the Saviour. He had assumed the name of Elymas, a word of Arabic origin, signifying the wise man, or magician. Even the great men of the day were victims of superstition, and were accustomed to consult soothsayers and magicians, of whom there were multitudes, who pretended to foretell events and to control evil influences by their arts. It was not wonderful, therefore, that the deputy or proconsul of this island, Sergius Paulus, though represented as a prudent or intelligent and thoughtful man, had been influenced by the mysterious pretensions of Elymas. Having learned something of the missionaries, he sent for them and desired to hear the word of God. i. e., the gospel of Christ. This was, indeed, a most auspicious beginning.

Vs. 8-10.—But Elymas, fearing to lose his hold on the governor, interfered and sought to turn away the deputy from the faith. This is the emergency which brings Paul to the front. From this time his Hebrew name, except in his story of his conversion (xxii. 7-13; xxvi. 14), gives place to the Latin form, Paul. His force of character, inspired and directed by the Holy Spirit, his language is of terrible force, especially in the New Version, O full of all guile and all villainy, thou son of the devil. As a liar, he was the son of the father of lies. Enemy of all righteousness. He was not an honest opposer of Christianity, as Paul had been, but a hater of all truth; and was seeking, for the sake of money, to lead astray a noble mind and destroy his soul.

Vs. 11.—The hand of the Lord. Not Paul's hand, but the omnipotent one. Blind. A case of poetic justice to one who would have blinded a soul. For a season. Grace is mixed with judgment. Possibly, as in Paul's case, his blindness may have resulted in spiritual sight.

Vs. 12.—Was the deputy genuinely converted? It is said he believed. But so it is said of Simon Magus, (viii. 13). Yet the fact that he was a thoughtful man and seemed to be a candid enquirer, would favor the theory that a real spiritual work was wrought in him. Yet many are astonished at the doctrine (teaching) of the Lord, who do not become the children of God.

Help for Parents, or for the Teacher of the Primary Class.

LESSON THOUGHT.—The whole world for Christ.

TRUTHS TO BE TAUGHT:—1. The world is lost, without Christ. 2. They who love Christ will be glad to make him known. 3. Every Christian has a work to do for Christ. 4. Obstacles should not hinder that work.

This lesson should be preceded by a brief review of Lesson VII, which will naturally include mention of Barnabas and Saul, the first and last of those now named as prophets and teachers in the Church at Antioch. Trace on a map the route of Barnabas and Saul. Explain that this was the beginning of foreign mission work by the Christian church, and glance at the wonderful amount of such work that is now done. Show that we shall always learn our duty if with all our heart we seek to know; that God has promised to be our guide and teacher, hence we have only to ask aright, with an earnest and obedient spirit; that God calls every one to work for him; and that even though we can do but little, he will accept it and honor it.


At Paphos a notable event occurred, which can be described in somewhat of detail; the opposition of "Elymas the Sorcerer." Mention the change of name of Saul, henceforth to be known as PAUL. Nothing should hinder our service and devotion to God.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

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