

Chapter XI.

1790 - 1843

Union of the Church with Concord Association

Character and claims of Tennessee Associations; Mero District Association, Cumberland Association; Concord Association; withdrawal of the church from the association; reunion with it upon written conditions; a second withdrawal; a second reunion with it upon the same conditions; struggles with the associations; reunion of the two Concord Associations.

The Concord Association embraced in its district the city of Nashville. The church soon after its organization in 1820, united itself as has before been stated, with this association. It did so not because its religious status demanded any such relation, but because union with an association was common, and the church desired to avoid the appearance of singularity, and withall wished to enjoy unrestrained intercourse with the brethren and churches throughout the country. This connection however, proved one of its greatest misfortunes. It was always troubled, frequently interrupted, and finally ended in a scene of violence and disorder. An explanation of these events requires some notice of the character and claims of Tennessee associations. Their history ought to be recorded as a warning to those who may come after us, and as an admonition to our brethren in other states, lest they should fall into the same pernicious errors. It will present to us an astonishing combination

(Tennessee  
Association)

of ignorance as to scriptural church polity; of bold, and reckless interference in affairs beyond their jurisdiction; and of constant grasping after power and rule, over those ministers and churches, who happened to be connected with them. Strange as it may seem to brethren unacquainted with the fact, they all claim the right, and have exercised it from their origin of full jurisdiction over churches in the same sense, and to the same extent that a church has over the individual members of its body. Our ministers they have ruled with unobstructed sway! They have governed both ministers and churches, as effectually as Methodist ministers and churches are governed by their Conferences, or Presbyterian ministers and churches are governed by their Synods. With these precedents before it, the General Association, as will hereafter be seen, gradually assumed the character and authority, of the Methodist General Conference, or the Presbyterian General Assembly, an Ecclesiastical Court of the last resort. It will also be seen that these claims have been steadily, and sometimes successfully resisted by the First Baptist Church in Nashville; and that it was in collision with this church that the General Association, and afterwards the Concord Association, finally exploded, and have now ceased to exist!

The Mero District, as has before been seen, was the first association brought into existence in the Valley of the Cumberland. It was organized in the autumn of 1791, and its career was brief, and

calamitous. All the churches then in the country at present known as Middle Tennessee, some eighteen or twenty, were connected with the Mero District Association. Its transactions in detail, since copies of its minutes lie before us, could readily be presented, but they would be void of general interest, and our main design is to sustain the assertions which have been made regarding the character and claims of Tennessee associations.

(Mero District  
Association)

At the commencement of the present century, Joseph Dorris, pastor of the Baptist Church at Red Sulphur Fork, in the region now embraced in Robertson County, was one among the most popular, and useful ministers in the state. At its meeting in 1801, the messengers from the church at White's Creek, in what is now known as Davidson County, were instructed by that church to lay before the association, and ~~di~~ lay before it, certain charges against Mr. Dorris, and his church! These messengers in the name, and on behalf of the church, publicly declared nonfellowship with him for alleged unchristian conduct, and with his church for not expelling him on that charge, and demanded that the association should arraign them both for trial at its bar. A committee was appointed to investigate the case, summon the parties to appear and report at its next meeting. The committee assembled at Red Sulphur Fork, and were received by both Mr. Dorris, and his church, with the utmost courtesy. They there learned that many months before, scandal had bruited in the neighborhood involving Mr. Dorris, that his brethren had privately investigated all the charges, and that they had entirely satisfied

themselves that they were all false, and malicious. This however did not satisfy the committee. They chose to investigate the case themselves. They did so. Every facility was afforded them; they labored diligently; but no proof was found to implicate either Mr. Dorris, or his church; and the committee so reported to the association at its session in 1802. The report was not satisfactory. An extra session of the association was appointed to be held in the April next ensuing, for the express purpose of trying Mr. Dorris, upon these same charges! The association assembled; Mr. Dorris was present, and assenting to the trial; the whole process proceeded publicly; he was arraigned; witnesses were examined; the case was fully investigated; not a single allegation of any kind against him, could be proved! The association dared not condemn him. Public sentiment would not tolerate injustice so flagrant. It refused to acquit him of the charges, several members avering that the failure to substantiate them by evidence, did not convince them that Mr. Dorris was not guilty. The session adjourned. The storm of public indignation was terrific. This was the last meeting of the Mero District Association. It never assembled again.

The next association organized in this part of the state was the Cumberland. In the autumn of 1803, this body was formed out of the fragments of the Mero District, together with some other unassociated churches further west, and south, most of which had recently been constituted. This body untaught by past conflicts and disaster, "walked in the footsteps" of its fallen predecessor." Of this fact a single example as proof shall suffice. It occurs in

(The Cumber-  
land Asso-  
ciation

the proceedings of its session for 1835. At this meeting the Cumberland Association, regarding the then recently organized Baptist State Convention, gave its churches the following advice:

In the first place, we do not acknowledge that institution to be what its name purports, viz; a Convention of the Baptists of Tennessee, as it only included a very small part of them; neither do we approve of the course by them taken. We believe that the Baptists have invariably acknowledged the scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the only rule of faith and practice. As such we invite you to behold the strange and palpable contradiction of those who have now faith in the new inventions of the day, not founded upon the scriptures of truth, and are practicing accordingly. We are cordially of the opinion that it is not of the Lord, but calculated if not designed, to create amalgamation, and to destroy the identity of the church. We refer you to Colossians 2 chapter, 20, 21, and 22 verses, which reads thus: 'Whereupon if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why as though living in the world, are ye yet subject to ordinances, touch not, taste not, handle not, which all are to perish with using, after the commands of men. Be ye separate saith the Lord, (touch not the unclean thing, and will receive you.' We would advise you to take the advice of John when he said, 'If any come unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your houses, neither bid him Godspeed; for he that biddeth him Godspeed is par-

taker of his evil deeds, (2 John 10:11), likewise the caution of the Apostle Paul (Rom. 16:17,18) 'Now I beseech you to mark them that cause divisions, and offences, contrary to the doctrines which ye have learned, and avoid them, for they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.' We would further advise you to deal with your members as the gospel directs, and act accordingly.

In its letter to the association the next year, the church at White's Creek, the same that brought the charges against Mr. Derris, and his church, in the Mero District Association, referred to this advice, and might, and perhaps ought to have said, that the preamble by which it was introduced was unintelligible; that the scriptures cited as authority had not the remotest bearing on the subject; and that the advice was alike irrelevant and wicked. It used however, the following language:

"We are sorry to find that universal harmony does not prevail among the members, and delegates, in our association." "Taking a thorough view of the Convention of the Baptists of Tennessee, we feel that we dare not raise our voice against it, lest we be found fighting against God. Of this, we are fully assured, that if the Convention be of God, we cannot overthrow it, and if it be only of men it will come to naught. We trust therefore that it will not be made a barrier to communion among our churches and brethren."

The reading of this calm, and temperate response, produced

the intensest excitement in the association. The letter was referred to a special committee, with instructions to report the next morning, and meanwhile the messengers were not allowed to occupy their seats in the body. The committee reported at length, of which the following contains the substance:

"At our meeting in 1834, the association" "gave this advice to the churches," "respecting the conduct of what is called the Tennessee Baptist Convention, in which advice they set forth their objections to the course of the convention, and advised the churches to have nothing to do with them, and to deal with such of their members as supported these or similar errors; and upon the examination of the letter from the church at White's Creek, we find that said church, or a majority of them; have rejected the advice of the association, in which act they as we conceive, are covenant breakers," we recommend therefore, that the church at White's Creek be excluded from membership in this association."

This report was adopted, and the White's Creek church was forthwith summarily, expelled, and the name stricken from the list of churches in the Cumberland Association!

Examples similar to these, in regard to both ministers and churches, are of frequent occurrence in the proceedings of all the associations in Middle Tennessee, and probably of all the associations in the state.

The Concord Association, of which the First Baptist Church in Nashville was a member, was organized at Hodge's Meeting House in

(The Concord  
Association)

Wilson County, September 25, 1810. It commenced its career with twenty seven churches. How far its constitution is a copy of the constitutions of other associations in this quarter cannot now be stated. In one respect especially it is strangely unscriptural and contradictory. Of these allegations a full discussion will be demanded in a future chapter. It is sufficient to say at present, that it expressly <sup>in</sup> Articles 3, 11, 12 - denies to itself any power to rule over the churches, and in the same article expressly provides for the exercise of this very power! The disastrous practical working of this constitution will be seen hereafter. The Constitution ~~is~~ as follows:

Article 1. The Association shall be composed of members duly chosen by the different churches in our union (and within the bounds prescribed to this association) and sent to represent them in the association, who shall be members they may think best qualified for that purpose, and producing letters from their respective churches, certifying their appointment, shall be entitled to seats.

Article 2. In the letters from the different churches, shall be expressed the number in fellowship, baptized, received by letter, dismissed, excommunicated, restored, since the last association.

Article 3. The members thus chosen, and convened, shall be <sup>Baptist</sup> denominated the Concord/Association, who shall have no power to Lord it over God's heritage, neither shall they have any classical power, or infringe any of the internal rights of

the churches, nevertheless it may become necessary in some cases to have a uniform rule of proceeding, viz;

When an offence may be committed by one church against another, that it shall be the duty of the churches so offended, to labor with the offender for satisfaction; and if she fails of success, she shall call in the aid of two or more churches in union, to assist in the work; and if finally satisfaction (in their opinion of the helps thus called in) is not obtained, the case may then be brought before the Association, who shall act on it. And further to illustrate the mode of proceeding in the above cases, reference should be had to the 18th chapter of the gospel of Matthew, and other scriptures, which respect discipline in the bringing to trial, and determining on the case of an individual member in an individual church. And the association will take cognizance of no case of the above kind, unless the above proceedings have previously been had thereon.

Article 4. The association when convened, shall be governed by a regular and proper decorum, which they are authorized to form for themselves.

Article 5. The association shall appoint a Moderator from among themselves, for the time being, whose duty it shall be to see that the Rules of Decorum are attended to; to take the opinion of the Association on all questions properly brought before it; etc., but no person shall be eligible to the appointment of Moderator, more than once in two years. A Clerk shall also be appointed, whose duty it shall be to take proper

and correct minutes of their proceedings.

Article 6. New churches may be admitted into the Union, who shall petition by letter, and delegated, or delegates, and on examination, if found orthodox, and orderly, may be received, and manifested by the Moderator's giving the delegate, or delegates, the right hand of fellowship.

Article 7. Every church in the Union shall be entitled to be represented in the Association, but shall not have more than two members from each church.

Article 8. Every query presented to the Association, by any church in the Union, shall be read; on which the sense of the Association shall be taken, whether it be considered; and if there be a majority for taking it into consideration, it shall be examined; otherwise it shall be withdrawn. Nevertheless, no Query shall be received from any church, which has not first been deliberately considered in the church from which it comes, and on which they cannot get satisfaction.

Article 9. Every motion made (in order) and seconded, shall come under the consideration of the Association, unless withdrawn by the person who made it.

Article 10. The Association shall endeavor to furnish the churches with the minutes of their proceedings, and in order to enable them to do it in the most convenient way, it is expected that the churches will contribute such sums of money as they may think proper, and send it by their messengers appointed, for that purpose, and it shall be disbursed, as

the Association may direct.

Article 11. Presbyteries for the purpose of constituting churches, ordaining ministers, and restoring those whose gifts may be suspended by excommunication, to their former functions, shall be composed of two or more ordained ministers in the Union, and shall be members of two, or more churches.

Article 12. The Association shall provide for the general union of the churches; preserve a chain of communion among them; give them advice in matters of difficulty; appropriate the money contributed by the churches for an Associationa fund, to any purpose they may think necessary for the benefit of the churches; and appoint any member, or members of the Association, by, and with his, or their consent, to transact any business for the benefit of the Union, which they may think proper.

Article 13. The Association may exclude from this Union, any church or churches, which are unorthodox in principle, or disorderly in practice.

Article 14. The Association at their sittings, may admit any of the distant brethren present, to sit with them, who shall be at liberty to discuss any question, and give their advice, but not admitted to vote.

Article 15. All questions before the Association shall be determined by a majority of the members present, except in the reception, and exclusion of churches, which shall require the concurrence of two thirds.

Article 16. Two thirds of the members shall be a quorum to do business.

Article 17. Amendments may be made at any time, to this plan, or form of government, with the concurrence of two thirds of the members present.

Article 18. The minutes of the Association shall be read, and corrected, if need be, and signed by the Mederator, and attested by the Clerk.

Article 19. This Association may adjourn to anytime, and place, they may think proper."

The Declaration of Faith is substantially that of the First Baptist Church; and the Rules of Order are common.

Neither of these therefore, need here be introduced.

The church at its first session after its organization, connected itself with the Concord Association. This event occurred at Cedar Grove, Wilson County, August 6, 1820. Until after the death of Mr. Dabbs, its first pastor, the church, though not satisfied with the government of the Association, continued its membership. It then ceased to represent itself in that body. This was not an accidental event. It was designated to be, and was practically, a withdrawal from the association. Not willing however, to live entirely apart from the brethren; and having no other organization in which they might meet together even occasionally, any where; and being earnestly persuaded to do so; messengers, with a letter, were sent to its meeting held at Overall's, Rutherford County, which assembled the 16th of September 1826. The minutes of that session contain a record, as

follows:

"The Nashville Church presented a letter, and applied for admittance. The letter was received, and the messengers took their seats."

Nothing is said in these minutes, or any where else in the records, of any previous severance of the church from the association; nothing is said as to the reasons of this reunion; nor is a word said as to any conditions upon which it took place. All these are learned only from the records of the church. The letter to the association explains all, large extracts from which are here presented:

(Conditions  
of reunion  
of the  
church with  
the Concord  
Association)

"The Church of Jesus Christ at Nashville to the Concord Association, sendeth Christian salutation.

Dear brethren: After an interval of two years, we again address you by letter, and messengers," and request to be admitted into your body.

Deeming it necessary that we distinctly understand each other upon forming this union, we think it proper to state our views of this relation."

"Your Code of Government, as published in 1824, declares that 'The Association shall have no power to Lord it over God's heritage, neither shall it have any classical power, or infringe any of the internal rights of the churches.'

"By this we understand that the Association has no power to interfere with the order, doctrine, government, or practice, of any church, governed in all these, by the great charter of our

religious privileges, the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We consider all these to be the internal rights of the churches; rights expressly defined, and limited by him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom, and knowledge; and therefore rights which are inalienable, and over which no body of men on earth has any control."

"We take your constitution as guarantying to every church connected with your association, a full, free, and unmolested liberty of conscience; a liberty unshackled by any authority except his who has made them free; a liberty that is not, and will not be used as a cloak of licentiousness by any one who fears God, and desires to walk by the light of his truth; or liberty which none other than God who gave it, has any right to destroy, and which this association will most certainly never assail."

These rights, privileges, and liberties, solemnly pledged to it, the church makes this application to be again received into the Concord Association.

The conditions were accepted; their faithful observance solemnly guaranteed; and the church was unanimously re-admitted. How far the association regarded these solemn pledges when it felt disposed to violate them, will be seen hereafter.

One of those stormy periods which so often prevail among the Baptist churches in Tennessee, was now arising. Agitation, and conflict were thickening, and deepening on every hand. In the form of fragments, three parties held, during 1827, as many separate meetings, each of which claimed to be the Concord Association.

The first meeting was held at Little Cedar Lick, Wilson County, commencing April 14th. Eleven churches only were present by their messengers. These churches contained most of the ministers, and brethren, known as Predestinarians. The time was mainly occupied with the discussion of controverted doctrines, and what was to be done regarding them. The only business of any importance, seems to have been the adoption of a paper, the character of which will be sufficiently seen by the preamble, and first resolution, as follows:

"Whereas, There were promises given in 1824, to maintain the ground whereon the Regulars, and Separates, reunited in Virginia; and from these promises we did hope that the same peaceable course would have been pursued by our brethren here, that was maintained by the Separates in Virginia; and as in these hopes we have been disappointed; Therefore,

Resolved, That we think ourselves free from any promise on our part, as respects "the observance of the compromise in Virginia, between the Regulars and the Separate Baptists."

The second meeting which claimed to be the Concord Association was held at Drake's Creek, Sumner County, commencing on the 1st day of September. Sixteen churches, those known as Arminians, were present by their messengers. Here also the session was occupied in discussions such as those at Little Cedar Lick. The only business of any consequence, which was done, was the adoption of a circular for distribution among the people. This paper is long, obscure

and of no interest. It is therefore not inserted. Sufficient to say that it too, repudiates the Virginia compromise between the Regular, and Separate Baptists, and as did the brethren at Little Cedar Lick, so the brethren at Drake's Creek, decided thereafter to pursue their own course, unbound by any fraternal shackles whatever.

The third was the regularly appointed meeting of the Concord Association. This meeting was held at Rutland's Church in Wilson County, commencing the 15th day of September, <sup>1827</sup> This meeting was attended by the messengers of the First Church in Nashville, which regarded the other two sessions as illegitimate, and therefore gave them no attention. Discussions on the doctrine of the Divine Sovereignty were now a mania. Accordingly the "Declaration of Faith, of the Association," was called up, and re-considered. The debate was long, and exceedingly stormy. That paper was thoroughly revised, and so amended as that from it were erased all its Predestinarian features. The consequences were a division of the association, and thenceforward there were for many years, two Concord Associations, both occupying the same ground, eleven churches forming that which adhered to the old, and sixteen that which adhered to the new "Declaration of Faith."

In the midst of these discussions the First Baptist Church in Nashville, by its messengers, again withdraw from the association. The following paper was presented, and by request, was published in the minutes:

"Dear brethren: When the church of Jesus Christ in Nashville, sent us up to meet you, they vested us with authority to request to

be dismissed from the association, should circumstances render it proper. Our only object in uniting with you was to promote the welfare of the cause of Christ, and the harmony of his people. We cannot approve the course some individuals have pursued in the present controversy; yet we do not wish in this withdrawal, to be considered as taking a party stand with either party.

We do not think there is authority in the New Testament for associations at any rate, and much less that there is any ground for supposing them authorized for the purposes to which they are generally applied. If we can meet you at any future time, merely for the purposes of worship, and general advancement, and edification, we will cheerfully do so, but until we think these ends can be attained, we request the privilege of continuing to ourselves."

Twice had the church now united with that body, and twice had it withdrawn from it its membership. It now remained apart four years, and again, upon application, was admitted a member of "the Concord Association of United Baptists," at its session at West Station Camp, Saturday before the first Lord's day in September 1831." The record of this event is very brief in the minutes, both of the church, and of the association, on the proceedings of the church, it is simply said, under date of August the 10th:

"The church agreed to send a letter, and messengers, to the ensuing Concord association, with a view to join said association."

In the proceedings of the association the record is equally brief:

"Nashville Church took her seat under the former constitution."

By a casual reader this record would not be understood.

It is therefore proper here to add, that by "the former constitution," is meant that the church reunited with the association expressly upon the conditions agreed upon at Overall's September 16, 1826, upon its second reunion with that body. The association therefore now again bound itself by solemn contract, never under any circumstances, to "interfere with the order, doctrine, government, or practice, of the church and never to attempt to "Lard it over the church, that is to govern it, or in any way, to infringe any of its internal rights."

The church now felt happy in the confident belief that all its conflicts with the association were over. Unfortunately they had scarcely commenced. Constitutions, contract, solemn pledges, are not things that ever did, or ever will, bind the Concord Association, when unscrupulous leaders desire it to violate them. Five years only brought the church into another battle with the association much more desperate than any which it had before fought, a brief account of which must now be submitted.

(Doulson)

Its meeting for 1831, was held at McCrory's Creek, in Davidson County, commencing on the third day of September, and continuing four days, during the whole of which the conflict raged fiercely. The letters from four or five churches, in Rutherford, and Sumner counties, and from corresponding associations, especially the Red River, complained bitterly of the leniency of the Concord towards missions and missionaries generally. They charged the friends of the Baptist State Convention with being guilty of all manner of corruptions, and misdemeanors, and called upon the association

to "cut off," as individuals, all the ministers of its body that favor <sup>ed</sup> it, and to expel all those churches who harbored its aiders and abettors. The session was organized in the usual form; it was then announced that the business could not proceed until it had been purged of its missionary leaven; a committee was therefore appointed to bring in resolutions on that subject; the committee retired, and in a few minutes returned with a paper evidently previously prepared. The report recommended that the association should do all that was demanded of it by the malcontent churches and associations, in their letters referred to. The question of adopting the report at once came up and of course the expulsion of the ministers, and churches favorable to missions generally, and to the Baptist State Convention especially. The debate commenced, and it was soon perceived that the opposers of missions were very greatly in the ascendant as to numbers, but that nearly all the talent of the body was on the other side. If at any time a direct vote could have been reached, the exciting report would have been adopted by a very large numerical majority. The friends of missions, had however, the constitution of the association in their favor, since it provides (Article 15) that no church shall be expelled but by a majority of two thirds. Still they considered it most safe to prevent if they could, a direct vote. The report was brought in on Saturday morning. The discussion continued through the whole of that day. On Monday morning it was renewed, and kept up with spirit, until late in the evening, when it was laid upon the table to make way for a preamble, and resolutions, prepared by the majority them-

selves, which they liked better than they did the report. During these two days the debate was upon the merits of the missionary question, and took therefore a very wide range. It was participated in by many members on both sides. The arguments were those which were common, and which have been sketched in a previous chapter. In addition to these it was shown in a speech of two hours, on Monday, by Dr. Howell, and which was heard with the profoundest attention, not by the association only, but also by an immense congregation in attendance, that the adoption of the report would be a flagrant violation, not only of the "Articles of Union," contained in the constitution of the association, but also of the solemn pledge, and contract, made to the First Baptist Church in Nashville, never to interfere in "its order, doctrine, government, or practice." How this contract affected the subject need not be further explained. The Articles of Union provide, as we have seen, as follows:

"When an offence may be committed by one church against another, it shall be the duty of the church so offended, to labor for satisfaction, and if she fail of success, she shall call in the aid of two or more churches in the Union, to assist in the labors, and if finally, satisfaction (in the estimation of the helps thus called) cannot be obtained, then the aggrieved church may bring the case before the association, who are bound to act on it," "and the association shall take cognizance of no case of the above kind, until the above proceedings have been had thereon."

It was well known to the association that West Station Camp, Providence, and the other churches that professed to be offended,

had taken no steps of any kind, with the churches in Nashville, at Mill Creek, and the rest, the alleged offenders; that they had nevertheless impeached them before the association; that in doing so they had violated the Articles of Union; and that by its constitution, the association was expressly prohibited, as the case then stood from any final action; that the attempt to induce the association to act upon these cases, by a presentment in general terms, but intended to have a specific application, was an effort to evade the law, and could not be countenanced; that the association was bound in honor, and truth, to be governed by its own organic law, the scriptural character of which was not then under consideration, but which whether scriptural or not, its members had covenanted to observe; and that if these churches were convicted of the sin of preaching the gospel to the poor, and of meeting together to consult as to the best means of accomplishing their purposes, all of which they confessed, their opponents should they adopt this report, would incur the guilt of violating all their own most solemn associational covenants.

The Antimissionary party seemed now to be convinced that the adoption of this report would be disastrous to themselves, and, on motion of one of their own leaders, was unanimously laid upon the table. Mr. Buford, another champion of the party then introduced the following paper, prepared by Mr. Washington Lowe, of whom something has been seen in a previous chapter, and who <sup>was</sup> there as a messenger from Red River Association:

"Concord Association having assembled at McCrory's Creek,

Davidson County, Tennessee, on Saturday last, the third instant, for the purpose of transacting her business as usual; and Whereas there seems to be a great want of harmony, union, and concert of action, among the members; in short, Whereas there is a manifest division, and separation of feeling in heart among them, in consequence of "the Tennessee Baptist Convention," members of which are also members of said Concord Association; and Whereas we find, after having labored for two or three days, under a state of the greatest confusion, and excitement, that we are unable to come to any satisfactory understanding, or adjustment of conflicting opinions; Therefore

1. Resolved by us, the undersigned, constituting a majority of the delegates elected, and sent from the several churches, that we consider it most expedient, and practicable, under existing circumstances, and for the reasons aforesaid, that the constitution of our association (if sanctioned by a majority of our churches, be and the same is hereby declared to be dissolved, null, and void, and of no effect.

2. Resolved, That we recommend to the churches that we represent (if our present act be sanctioned) with such other churches as may wish to join us, to meet by letter, and delegates, at Ridge Meeting House, Wilson County, Tennessee, on Saturday before the fifth Sunday in October next, for the purpose of uniting in the forming, and organizing of another association to be wholly disconnected from the Baptist Convention.

3. Resolved, That Elder John M. Watson be requested to superintend the printing, and distributing of one thousand copies of the fore-

going, among the churches, as soon as possible?"

The course of the debate was now changed, but the excitement was not diminished, but rather increased, and the association adjourned until Tuesday morning. When on that morning it assembled, it was soon found that by the introduction of this measure the opponents of the Convention had unwittingly cast themselves still more completely into the hands of its friends. Still they advocated the measures proposed with great pertinacity, and considerable ability. By the former means, the attempt was made to expel by resolution, a large proportion of its churches and ministers. In this the association found itself arrested, by the failure of their accusers to pursue the preliminary measures demanded in the "Articles of Union," contained in the third article of its constitution. Now they had abandoned their resolution, and sought to gain the same end by dissolving the association. This measure was opposed by many brethren ably. Dr. Howell especially, combated it by presenting the following considerations: - That if they desired to form a new association into which no friend of missions ever should be admitted, they could do so without first dissolving the Concord Association, since it was their right to withdraw from it whenever they saw proper, and they would then be at liberty to unite in any other similar organization that might seem to them expedient; that to destroy the association because they had determined to quit it, was like pulling down a house upon the head of one part of the family, because they intended to leave it, and had the power to demolish it;

that the association could not be dissolved by the process which they proposed, since it required the same power to dissolve, that it did to organize an association, consequently the most they could do was to propose by resolution to the churches to call a convention and dissolve the association, but to dissolve it themselves by a resolution of their own, was a work wholly beyond their power, and therefore their resolutions, even if adopted, would be extra judicial, and therefore wholly mandatory; that their object being, confessedly, the exclusion from the association of certain churches, and ministers, favorable to the Convention, ought to be sought by direct constitutional means, and not by these indirect methods, which while they are really unconstitutional, and illegal, were not reputable to those who introduced, and defended them; that there were several features in the measures proposed, even if they were otherwise legal, which would require for their adoption a majority of two thirds of the votes in the association; they looked to the expulsion of members of the body, which according to the fifteenth article of the constitution could not be done without "the concurrence of two thirds;" and it also proposed to act upon the constitution, to do which, the seventeenth article demands "a majority of two thirds of all members present," and that therefore, plainly, the preamble, and resolutions, ought not to be adopted; that they ought not to be adopted because they are <sup>not</sup> necessary to the end proposed; because they were evidently malignant in their purposes; because if adopted, they could not accomplish the end designed; because to pursue the end sought by such indirect, and deceptions means, as every one knew these to

be, was not reputable, and ought not by that body to be countenanced; and because the whole proceeding was extra constitutional, and illegal, and especially in a religious body unbrotherly, and mischievous.

At a late hour in the day, the question was taken by yeas and nays. Thirty seven votes only, were given, all the other members having gone home. To adopt the preamble and resolutions, twenty five votes were therefore required. Upon counting the votes it was found that twenty two only were cast for the preamble, and resolutions, and fifteen against them. They were therefore lost. Four days had the struggle continued in the association, and this was the only vote had up to that time, but it was a decisive one, and would to the friends at a distance, have appeared much more so if the votes could have been weighed instead of being counted. Of the votes on the above paper, fourteen were ministers, five only of whom voted for it, and nine voted against it, and these nine embraced nearly all the talents, and strength of the body. The whole number of members reported that year, in all the churches, was two thousand one hundred and twenty seven. Of the thirteen hundred and twelve belonged to the missionary churches, and had only fifteen delegates in the association; and eight hundred and fifteen only belonged to the Antimissionary churches, and were represented in the association by twenty two delegates. This discrepancy grew out of the fact that the missionary churches had a much more numerous membership than the Antimissionary churches, and the constitutional

244

provision that each church should have two, and only two representatives. Their churches, and consequently their representatives, were the most numerous. The actual numerical majority both of the ministry, and the people, was therefore with the Convention.

Having signally failed in their purpose the opposition left the house in confusion, and returned to their homes. They issued however, the circular proposed; met at Ridge Meeting House at the time designated in the resolutions, and organized the Stone's River Association, which still, it is believed, lingers in feeble existence. The Moderator and Clerk remained with the friends of missions. The records, and organization of the Concord Association, were therefore retained. Those present proceeded to close the business of the session, when the body adjourned in the usual form, to the time, and place of its next annual meeting.

During the twenty years next succeeding, this association having been taught a lesson so salutary, made no further essays to discipline ministers, and churches, and therefore proceeded in union, and harmony. Meantime the conservative men of the body having either died, or removed to other places, the association fell into the hands of several clerical adventurers from the North, who had settled within the bounds, especially Messrs. J. R. Graves and A. C. Dayton, of Nashville, and J. M. Pendleton of Murfreesborough, and some others. These men brought it in 1859, again into collision with the Nashville church, in an attempt to revise, and reverse its discipline, which resulted in the final explosion, and destruction of the association.

These events however belong to a subsequent period, and are therefore reserved for a future chapter.

During this period of peace, and prosperity, one achievement of great importance, was accomplished, which in this Memorial would not be proper to omit. The original Baptist churches in Robertson, Sumner, Wilson, Rutherford, Davidson, Williamson, and Maury counties, had now divided into four denominations; the Campbellites, the Separates, the Antimissionaries, and the United Baptists. The Campbellites were unassociated, the Antimissionaries were organized into the Stone's River Association, the Separates into the Concord Association of Separate Baptists, and those who retained their original integrity into the Concord Association of United Baptists. These all occupied the same ground. As these revolutions proceeded the factious elements in the Separate Concord Association gradually went off to the Campbellites, and those in the United Concord Association to the Antimissionaries. No good reason now existed why these two Concord associations should not again unite. Incipient measures looking to this end, were adopted by the United Baptist Concord Association, at its meeting held at Rutherford's Creek, Maury County, commencing September 5, 1840, and transmitted to the Separate Baptist Concord Association, then in session at Knob Spring, only a few miles distant. They were met cordially, and in the same spirit, by that association. A Convention was recommended to the churches respectively of each, by both associations, to arrange the terms of reunion. The churches of both approved; they all appointed messengers; and these messengers met in Convention, at Rutland's church, Wilson county, November 18, 1842, where the

(Reunion of  
the United  
and Sepa-  
rate Baptis

reunion was harmoniously, and satisfactorily arranged; the doctrinal principles being restated, and explained, but the original constitution remaining, unfortunately, as before. To consummate the design a meeting was appointed, and held, at Enon, Rutherford county, in August 1843, where the churches of both associations, met by their messengers, as one association, and the reunion was complete.

The results were for the time being, most happy. Intercourse was resumed not only in the Concord, which had been suspended for many years, but also between most of the United and Separate associations in the state, and henceforth these two denominations ceased to be distinguished from each other. In all the benevolent operations of the Baptists of Tennessee, they mingled together freely, apparently forgetful that they had ever belonged to different denominations. In this great work, the First Church in Nashville, which had always, in its proceedings, refused to make any distinction between these two classes of Baptists, led the way, and its influence was paramount during the whole process.