

Chapter XXIV

1860

The Church Government Controversy

Letters of Dr. Howell in review of the proceedings of the Mississippi Baptist State Convention; violations by that body of its constitution; its violations of the scriptural principles of Church Polity; expositions of Church Comity generally; its principles outraged by churches in Mississippi, and other states; these infractions countenanced by the committee; defence of the Nashville church.

When the committee of the Baptist State Convention of Mississippi had terminated its negotiations in Nashville, and all correspondence between it and the church had ceased, the pastor, not having mingled in any of its proceedings, addressed to its acting members a series of letters, designed for publication in the Baptist Standard, but which did not appear on account of the suspension of the publication of that paper. These letters are here introduced not only because they are a part of the history of the church, but because the considerations they discuss are vital in their character, and of the utmost consequence to the safety, harmony, and prosperity of our churches.

Letter No. 1.

To Rev. G. H. Martin, Chairman, Rev. T. C. Teasedale, D.D., Corresponding Secretary; Rev. D. E. Burns, Dr. E. Denpre, and M. Granberry, Esq., Committee, in attendance of the Baptist

State Convention of Mississippi.

Dear brethren: After mature reflection, I have decided to address you several letters on the subjects which have lately engrossed so much of your attention. You cannot but be aware that since the beginning of these agitations, now nearly three years, I have carefully abstained from any participation in the discussions of which your Convention speaks in its resolutions adopted at Natchez, in May last. Deeply as I have been concerned personally, and violently as I have from week to week been assailed during this whole period, I have remained scrupulously silent. I preferred to be for the time unrepresented and traduced, rather than to mingle in the unholy strife of (Church Gov-  
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Controversy which your Convention so justly complains. I do not now intend to mingle in it, further than to review your resolutions; your correspondence with the church of which it is my honor to be the pastor; and your proceedings generally; and to compare them with the gospel principles revealed by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the government and harmonious action of his churches. This much duty to the First Baptist Church in this city, to which I sustain a relation so endeared and responsible, and to the denomination of which for forty years, I have been an humble and sincere member, demands at my hands. In these letters I may have occasion to reveal some startling facts, and to speak to you of some things in terms of much plainness, and candor. For all that I may say, no matter what it may be, I beg to assure you that I am myself alone responsible. I speak only my own sentiments, and I speak them freely, but courteously and affectionately.

You will permit me also to add, that if I shall find occasion to censure any of your proceedings while in this city, I shall implicate, not the whole committee appointed by your Convention, but those members of it only who were present, and the sole actors. I respectfully ask that what I here say, may be received by you in the same spirit of kindness which I know actuates me in its utterance.

With these statements in advance, since as you ~~now~~ in your letter to the church of the 2nd of July, ultimo, it contains a declaration of the principles according to which you professed to be governed in the execution of the trust committed to your charge, demands to be reviewed carefully, and in detail. Before however, I enter upon this duty, I wish for special reasons, to glance at each of the other resolutions contained in both of the first, and second series.

As to "the issue" of which your Convention speaks in its second resolution," known as An Old Landmark Reset, I have only to say that it is heterodox in principle, pedobaptistic in doctrine, and incapable of any practical application. Your Convention says "It is not just or sufficient ~~cause~~ for denominational, or personal contention and ill-feeling, much less is it a true test of church fellowship." We of the First Baptist Church in Nashville, do not expect every Baptist to be well instructed in divinity. The ignorant, and confiding may be easily misled by pretentious preachers, especially with reference to a popular dogma. Whatever may be the opinions of a brother with regard to "The Landmark," whether in favor, or against

it, is with us a matter of indifference, provided he makes no disturbance about them. Every one will act as to that "issue" as his own conscience may dictate, and every church will do in regard to it what its members may think the cause of Christ demands. This church never inquires whether a brother believes in "The Landmark" or not. It produces no "personal ill-feeling" among us. It has never been thought of here as "a test of church fellowship."

With the third resolution of your Convention, "The First Baptist Church in Nashville, with its pastor, and deacons," can truly say, "We are emphatically a missionary people, and whilst we regard with feelings of the deepest concern every scriptural effort to carry out with fidelity, and promptness, the "Great Commission," we are not prepared to abandon those organizations (the Southern Baptist Convention, with its Foreign Mission Board, its Domestic and Indian Mission Board, and its Bible Board) which the wisdom and experience of the denomination have adopted for that purpose, but will as heretofore cooperate with them in the discharge of this high Christian obligation." In all this we sympathize with you fully. We wish sincerely, that we could also add as you do, "And we trust these organizations (the Convention, and its several Boards, Bible, Foreign, Mission, and Domestic and Indian Mission) will not be made the means (the occasion?) of assailing one part of the denomination from another." It is too late now, to indulge any such futile "trust." "These organizations - all the Boards generally, and the Bible Board especially - are now made, and as you know, and as we all know,

have been made weekly, for now more than two years, and not less violently since the adoption of your resolutions than before, and will I feel confident, continue to be made hereafter, "the occasion for assailing ministers, and churches of our denomination, and of estranging one part of the denomination from another." These "Spring Street men" to whose fidelity, while they were members of the First Church, the Southern Baptist Convention entrusted the management of the Bible Board, at the time of its organization, soon perverted it from its original design, and made it subservient to their own individual and personal interests. They made money by it for themselves, and at the expense of the Convention. This was tolerated by us all, as long as it could with a good conscience, be endured. It was at length found necessary, and especially after their expulsion from the church, to take the Board out of their hands. This was done kindly, but firmly. They immediately opened their batteries upon the Board and its friends, and from that day to this, they have poured upon both an incessant volley of vituperation, abuse, and slander.

The Foreign Mission Board also not long after, by some means, incurred their displeasure and they instantly commenced attacking that Board, with their characteristic bitterness, and persistency. Nor was it long before their artillery was also playing upon the Domestic and Indian Mission Board! The Convention at its meeting in Richmond in May 1859, made as you will know, extraordinary efforts to satisfy these fiery belligerents and really supposed that it had satisfied them fully. It soon discovered the mistake.

They suspended hostilities for scarcely a single week; and up to this hour they continue their attacks with constantly increasing malignity. Unhappily also these men have extraordinary facilities for the accomplishment of their evil purposes. The Tennessee Baptist, and the several monthlies and quarterlies, published in that office, have a strong corps of editors; the Arkansas Baptist, the Texas Baptist, the Biblical Recorder of North Carolina, and Mr. Buck's Correspondent in Alabama, to say nothing of some other papers, are as you well know, mere echoes of the Tennessee Baptist. The proclivities that way of your own state paper, the Mississippi Baptist are not unknown to you. You are also aware that a party has been formed by these men, in your own churches in Mississippi, and in the churches in other states, known as the "AntiBoard" party, the professed object of which is to break down the Boards of the Convention, and consequently to break down the Convention itself. War is made incessantly upon such churches as will not either concur in their designs, or be silent in regard to them. Seldom does a number of the Tennessee Baptist appear without some attacks upon individual ministers, and brethren by name. I do not remember a single instance in which that paper has been issued in three years without ny name coupled with abuse and slander.

All this was well known certainly, to many members of the Mississippi Baptist State Convention when this resolution was adopted by that body. Upon what grounds then could you rationally trust ministers and churches would not still be assailed as friends of the Southern Baptist Convention, and that efforts would not con-

tinue to be made to estrange one part of the denomination from another? Some of us here in Nashville, were actors in the struggle with our "Anti Missionary brethren," which occurred in Tennessee, twenty-five years ago. Very much the same conditions of things that then existed has returned upon us, but on a much larger scale, and characterized by a spirit with more bitter and proscriptive. It has already led, and it will hereafter lead to the same results.

In its fourth resolution, your Conventions says: "One of the fundamental necessities of the Baptist denomination of the present age, is a sound Baptist Sabbath School Literature. We (the Convention) therefore hail with the highest gratification, any and all laudable efforts to promote such literature, and most earnestly recommend such efforts to the encouragement and support of all Baptist churches and Sabbath schools."

In all this, provided it means what it says, and nothing more than it says, "the First Baptist Church and its pastor and deacons," go even beyond the Mississippi Baptist State Convention. "A sound Baptist Sabbath School Literature is a fundamental necessity," not "of the present age" only, but of every other age. So we thought many years ago, and to supply this necessity, we aided as far as we were able, in originating the American Baptist Publication Society, and subsequently the Southern Baptist Publication Society, and did all that was in our power to place them on a permanent and firm foundation. God has greatly blessed these organizations. Their publications up to this time have been numerous and valuable. Already they,

with a few private publishing houses, have done, and they soon will do, in this respect, nearly all that can be desired. This church yields to no other Christian body, in its appreciation of Sabbath Schools, and of Sabbath School Literature, and of all the auxiliaries and appliances necessary to render them effective. This much at least, our works testify. Every one may read it in the fact that ours is, and has ever been since the day of its organization, twenty-eight years ago, "emphatically" a Baptist Sunday School;" that a very large proportion of its pupils, as they have grown up to maturity, have been converted and have united with the church, and that it is today the largest and most flourishing Baptist Sabbath School in Tennessee, perhaps in the whole Southwest. No one who knows us, ever candidly questioned our fidelity to Sabbath Schools; to their proper Baptist character, or to the literature with which they have been and are hereafter to be supplied.

I have questioned, and you must pardon me whether, in your resolutions, you say all that you mean. Some three years ago, a partizan organization was gotten up here, and in ill-concealed opposition to the Southern Baptist Publication Society, which to make it more acceptable, they ~~xx~~ named "The Southern Baptist Sabbath School Union." Was it not your purpose to give to this hostile intruder in the South your special recommendation? An argument may, I know, be constructed from your language, to prove that you do not. You "recommend to the encouragement and support of Baptist churches and Sunday Schools "all" laudable efforts "to furnish" a sound Baptist Sabbath School Literature." If the efforts are

not laudable, and if the literature is not sound you do not recommend them.

The Southern Baptist Sabbath School Union is not a "laudable effort," since it is a merely partizan organization, and is of questionable orthodoxy; since it was originate in antagonism with our great denominational institution in the South designed expressly to supply all our churches with Baptist Sabbath School Books - the Southern Baptist Publication Society, since it was unquestionably brought into existence to subserve the purposes of individual pecuniary gain, and aggrandizement; since it seeks by crushing the Southern Baptist Publication Society, an institution which deserves, and has won full confidence, to deprive our churches of the benefit of the large sum of money they have invested in that Society; since most of the acting Board in this city are expelled members of Baptist churches, and not now members of any church; and since its movements have tended to embarrass and confuse our people, and bring them into conflict with each other. It is not, therefore, it cannot be laudable.

Does it give a sound Baptist Sabbath School literature? It has, I am told, published some books. I have not seen them, and therefore do not know whether they are sound or unsound. But how can you take for granted beforehand the soundness of any literature, and especially a literature that comes from such men? They are themselves well known to be unsound in both principles and morals. The question of Job is <sup>pertinent</sup> ~~pertinent~~ in this case: "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" The Patriarch answers? "Not one."

Can you do it? How then can you rely upon such a source for "a sound Baptist Sabbath School Literature?" And can it really be that your Convention intended to endorse and recommend this partizan, and belligerent institution, the whole working of which, as you well know distracts and divides our people and necessarily feeds and perpetuates the very ~~luxury~~ strifes and turmoils of which you so earnestly complain, and to compose, and allay which you were appointed a committee? It would seem not. An argument in this form might be constructed to prove that the Baptist State Convention of Mississippi, did not intend to endorse and recommend the "Gravesite Sabbath School Union," which to give it popularity with us, he has named "Southern Baptist." Unhappily, however, this argument should it be made, would prove to be fallacious. It turns out, all the facts and considerations notwithstanding, that your Convention really did intend by this resolution to endorse and recommend this very institution! One member of your Committee was its first president; the other members of your committee paid into its treasury large sums of money; as appears by its minutes, your Convention at the same session, at which this resolution was adopted, commissioned fifty of its number to attend its next annual meeting; and then and there another of your number - "The Corresponding Secretary of the Mediating Committee" - himself was made its President, who is today at the head of this same "Southern Baptist Sunday School Union/." Thus with one hand you feed the flame, while with the other you endeavor to quench! The First

Baptist Church in Nashville, with its pastor and deacons, cannot see the consistency of the course you think proper to pursue in this matter. The "call no man master."

We are the advocates of peace and union; not at the expense of truth and principle; not for partizan or interested purposes; but for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ and the triumphs of the Gospel.

The fifth and sixth resolutions of your Convention describe a condition of things in our churches in Mississippi, and contiguous states, which I suppose really exists. You say in the fifth that "Very unhappy controversies, bitter strife and personal criminations and recriminations prevail, and that in your candid and honest judgment these have done the cause of Christ an incalculable injury;" and in the sixth, "That these controversies" have degenerated into mere personal strife and denunciation, and that you cannot sanction this involvement of the denomination in any such controversy." All this we as seriously deplore as you do, while at the same time we have the satisfaction of knowing that for none of it is this church, or its pastor, in any way responsible; still to remove these evils we shall gladly cooperate with you in any measures consistent with our fidelity to Christ, and our convictions of truth and duty. As we have, heretofore, we shall continue to discharge our sacred obligations on the whole subject, calmly, affectionately, courteously, firmly, faithfully.

To one aspect of this subject, I desire to call your attention; and the attention of the Mississippi Baptist State Convention

especially. I do so because I am convinced that you have been laboring under some very serious mistakes. You have by this time perhaps yourselves discovered that the denominational disease which you proposed to heal, is not precisely either in its cause or nature, what you had imagined. You supposed that Nashville was its seat, and center, and eradicating it from this church, it would as a matter of course, everywhere else of itself expire. In this opinion you have found yourselves mistaken. It is an epidemic and spread over the whole land. It is also more deeply fixed, and malignant than you had before thought, and requiring remedies different and much more comprehensive than any you had essayed to institute. Nashville has been less affected than almost any other point. Had you accomplished the utmost of your expectations here, you would have dried up but one of the many streams that flow from the poisonous fountain and which fill our churches and all the Southwest with malaria and death. You have found it everywhere prevailing in forms most painful and stubborn. Brethren throughout the whole country forgot that there were two sides to these question, which you have sketched or referred to in your resolutions; that even their own churches might not harmonize in regard to them; and that if introduced into them might prove elements of serious disturbance. Mr. Graves' partizans were too restless, and fiery to be quiet. They were eager to introduce the dissensions connected with his trial, and expulsion, into every village and country church, and rejudge and decide his case for themselves. They did this by hundreds, and

they did it too without a particle of testimony except on one side, and even that exclusively from the accused party himself and his heated advocates. From the other side they heard not; they asked not to hear; they would not hear one word! They of course triumphantly acquitted Mr. Graves and his fellow recusants. In some instances even intelligent churches, to avoid disturbances suffered themselves to be led unresistingly in this work of disorganizations. But it was not so in all cases. In very many other instances, the introduction of these questions proved a firebrand that set the churches in a blaze. Take for example the church in Jackson, Tennessee, of which the present editor of your own state paper, the Mississippi Baptist, was then the pastor. Mr. Jones persisted in taking Mr. Graves after he was expelled into his pulpit and to his communion table, and thus for the time broke up and dispersed the church. Whenever these and such like proceedings were introduced, they became the bane that poisoned the churches; the blasting and mildew that fell upon them; and destroyed their life.

You brethren seem, before you visited our city, not to have been much impressed with these facts, prominent and striking as they were. You therefore in your letter to us, speak of "the very serious difficulties in Nashville," and of aiding us to settle "the difficulties of the Baptist church in Nashville!" I beg to assure you affectionately, that we have never had any difficulties so serious that we did not feel, God helping us, fully able to grapple with them successfully, without exterior

assistance. You can yourselves, perhaps now bear me witness that there are few organizations anywhere, religious, political, or literary, composed of abler men than those you found in this church. May I also further assure you, that "the Baptist Church in Nashville," has no unsettled difficulties and has not had for more than two years. When ~~the~~ war was made upon us, we were slow to meet and turn back the tide of battle. We were restrained, not by fear but by a prudent caution. We determined not to act precipitately. But when the proper time arrived we did meet it, and drove it out of the church. God sustained and blessed us, and from that hour, <sup>has</sup> all here among us, ~~xxxx~~ been peace and calmness and serenity. By the expelled belligerents the battle was transferred from this city to the country churches, first in our own state and then in the states contiguous. These country churches were as I have said, but too ready to take up arms, and carry on the strife; and it will be alone of God's infinite mercy if the inspired maxim is not in this case strictly fulfilled: "He that taketh the sword, shall perish by the sword."

In this unhappy work, of which you brethren, now so justly complain, your own state, had its full share, ~~had~~ the individual churches in Mississippi and elsewhere, governed themselves according to those principles which have received up to this time, ~~the~~ sanction of the denomination in all ages; had they been content in this case, as in most other cases, they have been, to attend to their own affairs and to refrain from interfering in the affairs of others, had they been disposed to respect the dis-

disciplinary decisions of each other, at least so far as not to interpose to prevent their moral effect; then these conflicts now so painful to you and to us, never could have found their way beyond the limits of this city. Consequently, the state of things, which in these resolutions your Convention so much deprecates, never would have existed. You will pardon me when I tell you plainly that your church brought it upon themselves, and they did so gratuitously and in opposition to the plain teaching of Jesus Christ and his apostles!

Now dear brethren, allow me to say, are even you of the Mediating Committee, without serious implication in these very disturbances? When, as you know, this church was forced in faithfulness to the cause of Jesus Christ, to expel Mr. Graves, Mr. Dayton, and their insurgent party, you yourselves continued its decision, and invited these very men among you as ministers; you received them into your pulpits; you and your churches continued and encouraged them, as if they had still been in full fellowship; and you thus prevented them from submitting to the legal rule of the church of which they had been members! But for this conduct on your part, which has been followed by others in contiguous states, they would long since have returned to the church, and the "peace and harmony of our Zion" would not have been disturbed. These agitations and conflicts, therefore, are not chargeable to the First Baptist Church, Nashville," nor to its pastor, nor to both of them together. We did no more than you yourselves have often done, and what we are confident you would have done here, had you been in our place, since your churches have, unhappily

sometimes found it necessary to expel, and have, as you well know, expelled ministers from their fellowship.

I have said that your "individual churches in Mississippi, have in most cases been content to attend to their own affairs, and to refrain from interfering in the affairs of others." Some dozen years ago, the church in Columbus over which your Corresponding Secretary now presides, found it necessary to exclude a minister, who had been, if he was not at the time, its pastor. The case was very similar to those which have occurred among us. Mr. Baily, as is Mr. Graves, was an immigrant from the North, and so indeed are nearly all, certainly all the leaders, of the Graves faction in Nashville. Messrs Dayton, Marks, Creighton, Shankland, I. O. Wright, Scovel, Conner, Lovel, and others are all from the North. Mr. Bailey like Mr. Graves, was a man of learning and talents. The church in Columbus bore with his morals as long as they dared do so, as did this church with those of Mr. Graves. He was called to its bar; he refused to give satisfaction; he was expelled. All this occurred here as to Mr. Graves. When Mr. Baily was excluded how did your churches in Mississippi; and ours in Tennessee, and others elsewhere conduct themselves? Did they set up a "hue and cry" all over the land; did they bring the case before their own tribunals; did they bring it into their own District and General Associations and State Conventions; did they all retry the case with no testimony before them but that of the expelled party; did they denounce the church in Columbus, as a deliberate persecutor

of Mr. Baily, actuated only by envy, and malice and a desire to destroy him; did churches and associations and conventions everywhere invite Mr. Bailey to come and preach for them; did Mr. Baily publish these invitations, accept them, and set out upon his prerogatives and continue them for three years, seizing the occasion as Mr. Graves did, to collect large sums of money by contributions and subscriptions, for his various purposes? Had you, and he, done all this what would then have been the condition of your churches in Mississippi and ours in Tennessee? You and Mr. Graves have done it, and produced all the calamities that are now upon us. Mr. Bailey did no such thing. I knew him well. He was above it.. But had he done so and had you escorted him about the country, eager to do him special honor, and to replenish his purse, as you did in Mr. Graves' case, would he have returned to Columbus, have humbled himself before the church, and sought and obtained restoration to fellowship? Never. But he did return; was restored and carried with him to another place a letter of dismissal. You did not uphold Mr. Bailey, and he submitted. You do uphold Mr. Graves and he scorns to submit to the church. Would the church at Columbus have been more patient under the influence of such an injury than has been the First Church in Nashville? I recollect but one single instance, in which our churches, associations, and convention, ever acted in relation to the expulsion of a minister, as they have in this case of Mr. Graves, and that



not taken in bringing him to trial. But we have seen that he had determined months beforehand to revolt irrespective of the manner, or circumstances of his arraignment. In his paper of the 17th of that month, a quarter of a year before his trial, "The Concord Association would take cognizance of the fact, and pronounce the church in disorder!" How did he know that if he had not drilled his men even then? The Concord Association did take cognizance of the fact, and although it had not the shadow of a right to act, then at least, it did pronounce the church in disorder! It did more. It expelled the church for daring to arraign Mr. Graves and that too without even the formality of appointing a committee to inquire into the case, as demanded by its constitution! He said in his paper months before he was accused, and irrespective of what the charges, if any one dared to bring them, might be; or whether just or unjust, that if he were arraigned, "Every church in Middle Tennessee and North Alabama, would be forced to take sides, and the limits of the state would not confine" the movement! Well do you brethren know that this destructive, and unscriptural purpose, so long meditated was carried out to a most disastrous extent. The churches throughout the country, and the associations, and even the Convention were forced to take sides and the limits of the state did not confine their action." What they did in pursuance of these wicked purposes, and how they did it, you yourselves know but too well. Thus were inaugurated "the unhappy controversies, the bitter strifes, and personal

criminations and recriminations" of which your resolutions speak, and "which had done the cause of Christ an incalculable amount of injury." Was it then because of informality in the indictment; was it because the arraignment was unscriptural; was it because of anything of this kind? You know it was not. He had decided upon his course, and had actually published, as we have seen, his decision, many months before any charges were made. And more. Plainly he had determined long beforehand to compel the church to try and expel him that he might make of it precisely what he has made of it! Who then did all this? Not the First Baptist Church in this city; not the pastor of this church; but Mr. Graves and his partizans. They declared months before they were arraigned and before they knew that they would be arraigned, that in case they were, they would do it. They carried their treat-threatening into full effect. They, not we, are responsible.

Nor are these all the facts that belong to the subject. When expelled they called the threatened Council. It was perfectly and intensely partizan in its composition and all its proceedings. The church was not notified of its meeting. We had no voice there. But we were by this same assembly, condemned and punished in our absence. That body had no more jurisdiction over us, than it had over the cabinet at Washington. But what did it care for so small a matter as jurisdiction? They charged that I, while yet in Richmond, had entered with the church, into a foul conspiracy to effect the overthrow of Mr. Graves; that we were moved in all that we

had done by envy, ambition, and jealousy; and that we sought to remove him, that we might ourselves have the preeminence, and that all our proceedings were unscriptural. These were the issues upon which without being summoned; without being present; and without having a single word of defence we were condemned! A book was at once published which you brethren have, no doubt, all read, charging the church and its pastor with every crime in the catalogue of sins, affirming at the same time that it gave "Both Sides." The country was flooded with it. His weekly and his quarterly, and his partizan papers in other states, teemed with defamations. Published proceedings of the most inflammatory character, constantly stunned the public ear in Mississippi, and elsewhere, to not a few of which were attached the names of brethren who were members of the very Convention that adopted the resolutions now under review! Of all this what must be the result? Necessarily confusion, shame, and overthrow. Your churches and ministers in Mississippi, as well as ours in Tennessee, and those in the other states, in this reprehensible conduct, have "sown the wind." As an inevitable consequence they must now "reap the whirlwind."

I will in this letter only add, that "the First Baptist Church in Nashville," with its pastor and deacons could not if it had desired to do so have precluded the condition of things which you deprecate in the resolutions. We then had no organ through which we could speak to the brethren and churches abroad. Until nearly all the mischief was perpetrated we had no access to the public ear. We were dumb. Streams of defamations; misrepresentation

and abuse , were continually poured upon us, to which we are obliged to submit in silence. How then could we excite the public mind on this, or any other subject. You know full well that it was impossible. Silently, but firmly, we did our duty, unmoved by threats or intimidations. We appealed to nobody. We asked for no approval. We shrink from no disapproval. We did not then. God being our helper, we never will hereafter, through the fear of man, or for any other consideration, compromise our duty to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus brethren does it plainly appear that this church, and its pastor, can never be truthfully charged with having agitated the public mind on this subject nor with having been in any considerable respect, the authors, or abettors of those evils, of which in its resolutions before us the Baptist State Convention of Mississippi, so justly complains.

So much I thought it my duty to say in reference to the second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth resolutions in the series before me. Here for the present I take my leave, and beg meantime to subscribe myself.

Yours respectfully and truly, etc., etc.

Letter No. 2

Dear Brethren:

The seventh resolution in the first series of resolutions, and all three in the second series, of your State Convention/<sup>are</sup>to my mind, unpolitic, unconstitutional, and unscriptural. To make the truth of this proposition appear, is mainly my purpose in the present letter. The Baptist State Convention of Mississippi had an undoubted right to announce the doctrine which it holds on church organization and polity, which it does in its first resolution; it had an equal right to state the position which it maintains with reference to Landmarkism, to missions, and to Sunday schools and Sunday School Literature, which it does in the second; third and fourth resolutions; no one could object to its stating the existing disturbed and tumultous condition of the churches in the Southwest, and its deprecation of this state of things, as it does in the fifth and sixth resolutions but when, as in its seventh resolution, it "appoints a committee with instructions" to go through the country, visit churches, offer its mediation, where it supposes there are "parties at variance," "to use all proper efforts to reconcile these parties, and to remove these difficulties out of the way of the denomination;" when, as in the first resolution of the second series, it solicits other like bodies to cooperate in this work, as in the second it declares these measures of "paramount importance, and an imperious necessity of the times," and when as in the third it solicits the support for these proceedings

of "all our editors," of Baptist newspapers; it passes beyond the bounding of both propriety and law.

I respectfully ask whether the appointment of a committee, for such purposes, and by such a body (a mere missionary organization) is not even when considered in the most favorable light in which it can be viewed, a dangerous precedent, and ominous of evil? If so, then, as a matter of policy, it never can be approved. If in the government of a state, "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty," how much more emphatically does the maxim hold, when applied to the government of our churches! You may assure me that your object is good, and your motive kind and benevolent. I do not question either your object or your motives. I concede in these respects all you claim. But you are not the first who, influenced the very best designs, have committed great and fundamental errors. If, when the object and motives are good, the independence of our churches may be infringed to accomplish any specified end, is this less really an infringement than if the object and motives had been evil? Surely not. Indeed the interference in such cases is still more dangerous, than it would have been under other circumstances, since in instances of that kind, it is likely rather to be invited than repelled, and if successful to be afterwards regarded as alw to be observed and executed. The times, brethren, upon which we have of late fallen, are characterized by lax discipline, and latitudinarian opinions, which permit lawless men to run riot in our churches; they are characterized by rife departures from

old and established principles and practices; not a few now profess to be Baptists, and whose professions you allow, have set up bold claims for Conventions, Associations and Councils to authority over the churches in their government and disciplines; you will therefore pardon me if I insist upon it, that even as a matter of policy, all parties, and especially at this time ought to observe a salutary caution, regarding the exercise of those powers which your Convention has conferred upon you as a Committee.

You brethren came to this city having these resolutions as your commission to look into the affairs of the First Baptist Church and to "aid" us in adjusting what you supposed to be our "very serious difficulties." The church had maturely considered the objections to your appointment I am now discussing, and therefore declined to acknowledge you in your character as representatives of your Convention, but received you as brethren who "on account of your age, experience, prudence, piety, and impartiality" were entitled to its respect. "You do not come" said the church in its answer," claiming to be invested with any ecclesiastical authority, or power to arrange and settle difficulties, or to announce any authoritative decisions which shall be binding upon the church, or upon any other parties, or which shall be regarded in any way as a precedent to the denomination under any similar circumstances." You seem in your proceedings here to have forgotten all this. We did not forget it. And you will allow me again to state that the church never had ad-

mitted, that it never will admit the right of your Convention, or any other Convention, Association, Council, or similar organization, to interfere either by itself, or by a committee, in any case of discipline which may occur in its own body. It will not allow you nor any one to dictate who it shall subject to trial, expel, or retain in fellowship; it will permit no one to review, revise, or to reverse its proceedings; it will never consent that any of you shall by formal act or otherwise, either approve or disapprove its doings; it will repel every attempt on your part, or on the part of every sister church, to rejudge its acts, or to pronounce upon its status as a church of our Lord Jesus Christ. In taking this position, injustice is done to no one of its members, since all who unite with us, whether ministers or laymen, do so with a full previous knowledge of its principles of government. In the ninth article of our "Declaration of Faith" it is expressly said: "We believe that each individual church, assuming the word of God for its exclusive and infallible guide, possess within itself all the requisite authority for its government." No one, should, or would, therefore, connect himself with it as a member, who does not believe that the churches according to the word of God, are, under Christ, entirely sovereign, and independent; sovereign, in that there is no power above them but Christ, and independent, in that they are subject to the control of no other body, either political or religious.

In this doctrine, brethren, this church is happy to know that it has in theory at least, the full concurrence of our own State Convention. In its first resolution it affirms that, "Such

a church so constituted, is an independent, executive body; the only ecclesiastical authority known to the inspired word of God; and must of right construe the constitution, and laws for itself." To reconcile this to your seventh resolution, and all those of the second series, is no part of my business. But that you as a committee acting under these last, did not intend to infringe the principles, of the first, I can readily believe. You so declare in your letter to the church in which you said that in the prosecution of your mission in this city, you did "not propose to exercise any ecclesiastical authority in the premises, " nor presume to claim any superiority whatever over your brethren in Nashville, nor even to express an opinion as to the true church status of the parties in controversy." This declaration we understood you to make both for the Convention by which you were appointed and for yourselves as a committee. We conceded your "prudence," your "impartiality," and all the other characteristics which you claimed. Nevertheless, the doubtful form of your commission, and having by some painful previous experience been taught the importance of caution; the church in its answer to your letter, thought proper to restrict your action here by specific stipulations, to a single point," the restoration of the parties expelled to the fellowship of the church." We did not recognize you as representatives of the Mississippi Baptist State Convention, nor of any other Convention, nor society, nor even, except by courtesy, as a committee; but simply as brethren; and we supposed you would seek to accomplish your purposes by fraternal and impartial

advice. No interference in the government, or discipline of the church was contemplated by us as at all admissable. The question will naturally occur, "What possible harm could ~~have~~ <sup>have</sup> arisen from a mission thus carefully guarded, and prudently conducted." The design was mere "mediation" and nothing more. Action under such circumstances and with such apologies may appear very plausible in theory. But brethren, was not your real interference in the discipline of this church nonetheless an undeniable fact? It certainly was. No one can doubt it. The fact will remain when the motives and purposes that prompted it are forgotten. Let each intervention be frequently repeated, and become common, and how long will it be before they are claimed as a right and the church be denounced as contumacious which shall dare to resist them, or, with such an established precedent in their favor shall venture to pronounce them unscriptural? Irrespective of all the other considerations, as a measure of policy they are serious and must be condemned. Providence has perhaps wisely arrested this movement in its incipency, by permitting the utter failure of your mission to this city, since had it been successful the scriptural government of his churches might not have been saved from subversion and overthrow.

The resolutions now before us, are in my judgment, also clearly unconstitutional.

The organic law of the body by which you were appointed, strictly forbids any proceedings of this kind. Read again brethren the constitution of your Convention, and especially

the fourth article, and you will yourselves, I think, agree with me in the opinion I have now expressed. It specifically disavows the very thing, you were appointed and instructed to do. And the twelfth article provides that this feature in that instrument shall never be changed. These two articles are as follows:

Art. 4. The Convention shall never possess a single attribute of power or authority over any church or association. It absolutely, and forever disclaims any right of this kind; hereby acknowledging that cardinal principle, that every church is sovereign, and independent."

Art. 12. The Convention shall have power at any annual meeting to make alterations in the constitution by a majority of two thirds of the members present, provided the fourth article shall be scrupulously preserved."

Read again, brethren, and study this whole constitution for yourselves, and I beg you to observe its extreme caution, on this very subject. This is conclusive to my mind that the fathers who framed it had serious apprehensions that there might at no distant day, prevail a strong inclination to violate it, in the very direction in which it was violated at your last meeting. They seem to have foreseen the unscrupulous spirit, that now seems rampant throughout the Southwest, and has already rendered constitutions and every other compact, however sacred mere ropes of sand. The Constitution of the General Association of Tennessee and North Alabama, was even more guarded and definite than that of your own State

Convention. I prepared it myself many years ago, and  
of  
threw into it all the barriers which it was capable. It defines  
the object of the organization - state missions; Publications,  
embracing Bible, and book distribution, and Sabbath schools;  
Education; Home missions; and Foreign Missions, - it re-  
quires that the body shall foster these; and it prohibits  
in the strongest possible language, the introduction of any  
other object, and beyond this nish any action whatever. Yet  
this was the very body that under the guidance of Messrs.  
Graves, Dayton, Pendleton, and others has led the way in the  
work of desecration, confusion, and destruction! It erected  
itself at its meeting in October, 1858, into an Appellate Court,  
and occupied several days in the trial of a case of discipline  
then pending, and undecided in this church! You know the  
result. Our brethren everywhere know the result. It acquitted the  
recusant and expelled the church! This conduct was outrageous; but  
you brethren, as we shall hereafter see, sustained it! What  
confidence, I ask, can now be placed in constitutions? To  
the popular, ambitious, and unscrupulous so many of whom are  
now found in our ranks, they are mere cobwebs in the path of  
the elephant. Brethren, constitutions must be sacredly pre-  
served. The First Baptist Church in Nashville, will never  
by word or deed countenance their desecration, no matter by  
whom. Such another violation of its organic law, will never  
again, I trust, be attempted by the Baptist State Convention  
of Mississippi.

These resolutions of your Convention are also palpably un-

scriptural.

The Savior has, undoubtedly, committed the government of his churches, not to any of these organizations, since they are all bodies unknown to the word of God, but to the individual churches themselves. Nor may even his churches legislate in any case whatever. They are under him as king in Zion, clothed only with powers judicial and executive. Associations, Conventions, and Councils have no jurisdiction in the churches of any kind. When they assume to act in them, they arrogate to themselves the authority which belongs only to Jesus Christ. Therefore any such action on their part, is not only "null and void," but is rebellious, revolutionary, and in the highest degree criminal. I am glad to know that my opinion on this subject, as well as of the action of your Convention, are sustained by high authorities, to some of which I beg permission to refer.

In compliance with the first resolutions in the second series adopted by your Convention, the Corresponding Secretary of your committee addressed the Baptist State Convention of South Carolina, at its meeting of July of last year, as follows:

"I was instructed to convey to your body certain peace resolutions which were passed by our Convention (the Mississippi) and respectfully solicited your cooperation in this important work of mediation between the parties at variance in the city of Nashville. The said resolutions are herewith transmitted, and they are earnestly commended to your kind consideration." Should the proffered mediation be accepted,

the meeting of the committee will most likely take place late in August; and I take the liberty to say it would afford as supreme gratification to meet a similar committee from your body to unite with us in the attempt to restore peace to our beloved Zion. "This communication was referred to a committee consisting of Dr. Boyce, Dr. Reynolds, B. C. Pressly, Esq., and Rev. Messrs Kendrick, Winkler, and Dargan, to report an answer. The report of this committee was unanimously adopted by the Convention. They say to you: "We regret ~~■~~ brethren that it is not in our power to accede to your request; and appoint a similar committee to yours. Such action on our part would seem to be foreign to the purpose which the Convention was intended to accomplish; and did we not so think, we would still be unwilling even to offer to give counsel, or advice, without previous request of the parties concerned, or at least previous assurance that such is their desire. Besides this we prefer as far as practicable to follow the strictest construction of our Master's commands. And it seems to us that he has in his wisdom, so ordered the affairs of His kingdom, as to confine matters of difficulty and discipline within the narrowest limits. Indeed we fear that such an act, on the part of a State Convention might become a dangerous precedent." Thus spoke the brethren of a whole state, distinguished for intelligence, prudence, and piety; and never did a body of wise men speak more wisely. They sustain, as you must see, my own conclusions in every respect. Conventions, Associations,

and Councils, never can with safety, or with propriety, interfere with the action of churches, in cases of discipline. Whether they applied to another similar body, I do not know. I presume not, since I heard of no such applications, and I imagine you feared, that if you did, a similar answer would be returned, and which I suspect you were not ambitious to receive.

In reference to the authority and scripture legality of Councils, which no bodies without any Constitution or rules, as well as of Associations or Conventions, the language of a recent decision of the Baptist church in Lumpkin, in the state of Georgia is definite, and in point. That church having having been called upon by the Baptist church in Preston in the same state, to aid in precisely such a Council as was convoked in this city in the spring of 1859, and having in view exactly the same purpose, which were not unlike those you prepared and of which we may have occasion again to speak hereafter answered thus:

"1. The Lumpkin church recognizes no warrant in the New Testament for such a Council as you have called; nor for any Council to pass judgment upon the acts of a church. It is easy to conceive and appreciate the necessity in some instances of calling upon sister churches to mediate by advice and counsel, in those cases of much doubt, and intricacy when the church is unwilling to act without such friendly assistance. Various reasons may justify a church in summoning to her aid the piety and wisdom of other churches. The utmost that the brethren called upon to do is to advise. They have no authority to bind or to

coerce. But yours is a different case, and the results sought to be accomplished are widely different, inasmuch as the Council you have invoked is to determine which is the true church, yourselves and those associated with you, or the majority whom you accuse of disorder. Its decision is intended to be of effect, and to bind somebody, either morally, or legally, or else the session will result in an abortion.

Where do you get New Testament authority for binding any one by the decision? If it can legally bind no one, where is the use of its session? It must be evident to you and all right thinking people that the Council can possess no binding authority. The want of jurisdiction attaches to it in the beginning and follows it throughout all its deliberations. It cannot determine anything. After it shall have performed all its functions, and exhausted all its powers, the church will not be bound by its action. On the contrary it will be under the highest obligation to disregard its decision. Having no jurisdiction, and consequently no authority, either express, or implied, inherent, or derivative, it can impose its mandates on no one. The body that might thus summarily and unscripturally be decreed to be a church, would be no more, nor no less a church than before the decree was issued. Nor would the church unchurched be any less a church than before. Are not these propositions and conclusions true? Can you show how it is possible to invest a legal body with the essential attribute of legality? A Council called without authority, and sitting without scripture warrant, is informal and illegal, and its solemn adjudications are utterly null and

void. Of course the Lumpkin church could not be a party to a proceeding so lacking in all the elements of regularity, legality, and jurisdiction; a proceeding which would not bind her, and which she would be under no obligation to respect, no matter what might be the result.

2. The Lumpkin Church, claiming for itself sovereignty and independence, could never submit its rights, and what is more, its existence as a church to the arbitrament of any class of men, nor to any Ecclesiastical Council on earth. The position of sovereignty and independence carries with it the right inalienable of disciplining its own members. Wherever it has jurisdiction over the offence and the offender, it claims that its jurisdiction is final; and in the name of Christ, and by the authority of the word of God, it demands complete respect for its judgment on the part of sister churches. It cannot, and will not consent to have its acts - acts performed within its own exclusive jurisdiction, and dominion - passed upon, nor her rights invaded, nor her existence jeopardized, by any earthly tribunal, however imposing, or august it may be. It would feel it to be its duty to carry this determined persistence in the maintenance of its rights of sovereignty and equality within its own dominion - rights which are indispensable to the proper enforcement of discipline, and which lie at the foundation of its existence as a free and independent body - to the extent of severing every tie that binds it to sister associated churches rather than submit to a successful invasion from any

quarter. Holding these views of its own rights, it cannot without a reckless abandonment of principle, trench upon the rights of another. On the contrary the duty is paramount to abstain from any act that may in the remotest degree imperil the rights, or put in jeopardy, the existence of a sister church. The "Golden Rule" is as applicable to churches as to individuals; and the results of strictly obeying it are salutary beyond the conception of the wisest and best of the earth.

Even had the majority united and concerned in the request, this church would have declined sending a delegate to sit in a Council convened for such a purpose. The president would be a dangerous one, and the ultimate consequences might tend to the subjugation and overthrow of the churches, and the distinction of their power and supremacy, by the erection over them of a power higher than they are; a power unknown to primitive churches; "a power" arrogant in its pretensions and despotic in its government." Against this spiritual despotism the Baptists have waged an increasing warfare, as far back as history unveils the past, and for which they have suffered even unto death. Beware of small beginnings. Power is aggrandizing and ~~never~~ <sup>never</sup> voluntarily takes any backward steps, nor relinquished its dominion. Its progress is onward, and monopolizing until liberty vanquishes and dies in its unfraternal embrace.

3. It should be the policy of sister churches to localize all such difficulties; and confine them to the particular region that gave them birth. They should never be permitted to widen

out and extend to other communities. It is apprehended - yea, historically certain - that the Council would only augment and scatter the flames. The majority would not be bound by its decisions if against them. If the decision should be in favor of the minority, they would claim the benefit of it, and at once set about the assertive of their supposed rights. The association would then become the receptacle of a dispute over which it had no jurisdiction and which was not contemplated in its organization. If the association should so far invade the rights of the church as to constitute itself into an Appellate Court, the difficulty is at once magnified in its proportions, the dangers are increased, and the breach suddenly too wide ever to be bridged.

By far too many outsiders become interested partizans for anything like a speedy reconciliation. Ner do any association that ever enters upon such an area of strife. It scatters firebrand into its own midst that may multiply and consume it. Principle, polity, expediency all unite in forever closing the doors of associations against all such cases.

Heartily and warmly does the First Baptist Church in Nashville, and do I endorse this decision of the Lumpkin Church. It sets forth most lucidly, the principles by which we have been governed from the first, and by which we intend to be governed in the future. Long ago we took our position upon this ground, and no embarrassment, persecutions, or denunciations, come from what quarter they may, and result as they may, in our honor, or dishonor, will ever

drive us from it. Such a body of men as you are, dear brethren, could have done much to sustain these principles. You would perhaps, for a time at least, in this quarter, have overthrown and destroyed them. We should be glad to have you with us. This we will not conceal. But irrespective of your course, whether you are for us or against us, our determination is fixed. It will never be changed.

With these facts and principles before us, in regard to Conventions, Associations, Councils, and sister churches, and their relations to each other generally, and especially in the department of Church Polity, I cannot but deprecate as most unfortunate in all its aspects, the adoption and the essay to carry out the provisions of the seventh resolution, and the whole of the second series of resolutions of your State Convention. They give countenance to the recent innovations upon Church government, which have been but too successfully essayed in the Southwest; they look in a direction threatening to the peace and union of our churches; they inaugurate a precedent, which if carried out must crush the sovereignty and independence of the churches; and make them mere vassals of these State organizations; and they are a departure from gospel principles, which, may lead us we know not where, and to results we know not what. When once the flood of power has broken over the scripture barriers, that confine it, who is safe from its desolating progress. Whose rights and privileges will it regard, when found in the way of its ambitious purposes?

It is now clear, and as I trust even to you, that these

resolutions - the Seventh of the first series, and all of the second series - of the Baptist State Convention of Mississippi are impolitic, that they are unconstitutional and that they are unscriptural. By the "sober second thought" of all brethren, they will be, they must be everywhere condemned.

As ever, Yours truly, etc., etc.

Letter No. 3.

Dear Brethren:

We now turn to consider as proposed, the first resolution in the former series, adopted by your Convention at its late meeting in the city of Natchez. This resolution confessedly denies the power with which you were entrusted by that body. We repeat it:

"A church according to the New Testament, is a congregation of immersed believers, who covenant together to keep house for God, the New Testament being their Constitution and only rule of faith and practice. Such church, so constituted, is an independent, executive body; the only ecclesiastical authority known to the inspired word of God; and must of right construe the constitution and laws for itself. Nevertheless any act of such church (done either by a majority or unanimously) in violation of the word of God, is null and void."

With these doctrines for your guide, I hoped that you would rise superior to those influences which are so commonly

potent, in cases such as your case to our city to adjust. Brethren are apt under such circumstances to exhaust all their energies in spasmodic exhortations to peace, irrespective of principle, and brotherly love. In this hope I was disappointed. I noticed soon after your appointment, and while yet some doubt existed as to the measures you would adopt, articles in various newspapers of a certain class, insisting that you should pursue this mistaken course. Your proceedings here prove that you adopted fully this advice, notwithstanding the resolution of your Convention, and the terms of the letter of the church, accepting your mediation." The papers referred to deprecated any action on your part other than that previously prescribed by Mr. Graves himself! Your own state organ, conducted by Mr. Jones to whose proceedings while in Jackson, Tennessee, we have before had occasion to refer, in its issue of the 12th of August last, entreats you not in anything you might do here, to come in collision with the decisions of the General Association of Tennessee and North Alabama, nor of the Concord Association nor of the Graves Council. It warns you not to infringe in anyway their doings, and impresses upon you the absolute importance of giving them at least your tacit approbation. That paper says:

As we understand it, the committee are not to interfere with generally received principles, so far as such controversy is confined to principles; but they are simply to tender their aid to the parties to devise a basis honorable to all,

where without the sacrifice of honor, they may bury all personal difficulties forever, and as far as possible live as brethren. With Brother Buck of the Correspondent, whose article we publish below, we believe that an interference on either side of the controversy, with what either party consider settled principles, would only tend to make matters worse; would only tend to widen the breach instead of healing it."

The article of Mr. Buch to which the Mississippi Baptist refers, and which Mr. Jones so heartily endorses, has the following paragraph:

"The strictness of the way that leads to the desired result contemplated by the agency, this committee, requires that they avoid all intermeddling with the matters in controversy, between the belligerent parties. To demand concession from either party, or to attempt any explanations of the questions involved would have no other effect than to widen and deepen the breach. They must also avoid anything that would tend in the least to call in question the act of any church, association, or convention, in regard to this difficulty, otherwise their agency will be promotion of increased excitement, widen the breach, and hasten the dreaded catastrophe - the disruption of the denomination."

Your Convention, and the church in this city, demanded that you brethren, should proceed upon known and admitted principle; Mr. Jones of your State, Mr. Buck of Alabama, and the rest of the editors previously committed to Mr. Graves and his party demanded that you should not proceed upon principle, and especially that you should call in question <sup>no</sup> ~~an~~ principle of his however

erroneous or disorganizing! And newspapers, as you known have now become a power in the land. They give laws to the multitude no matter how ignorant, or erratic their editors may be. They rule too with despotic sway. They demanded that you should bring the individuals in contention, personally together, and covering up everything compel them to "make friends." You were told that if in these respects you obeyed their wishes, you would reach the desired results; and if not, that you would "hasten the disruption of the denomination." You accepted their counsel; you obeyed their wishes, and for this very reason, you failed to reach any desirable result. Had you acted upon principle, you would I doubt not have succeeded. Pardon me, my dear brethren, if take the liberty of saying, and I do so in all kindness; that ~~me~~ exhortations to parties in conflict, to "be friends," must always prove utterly futile. Passionate appeals to men to be in health without regard to the sanitary measures necessary to obtain and preserve it, would be just as wise and effectual. No permanent nor even desirable ~~xxxx~~ <sup>peace</sup> can ever be gained by the sacrifice of principle. An agreement to suppress principle to secure peace, would undoubtedly be a conspiracy to do "evil that good may come." No, brethren, Christ and his truth first, brotherhood and harmony afterwards. The latter can never permanently exist but when firmly based upon the former.

It may be that I do not fully understand the resolutions now under review. Let us subject them to a careful scrutiny. What do you mean by "keeping house for God?" You make a dis-

inction between the "Constitution and the laws" of the church! Does not the New Testament embrace them both? Which part of it contains the Constitution; and which part contains the laws, and how do you distinguish between the Constitution and the laws? And the addendum - what is precisely its meaning: - "Nevertheless any act of such church (done either by a majority or unanimously) in violation of the word of God, is null and void?" One of two things seems to me to be certain, probably both were designed. By its introduction in this connection, you must intend to intimate either that after all there is some tribunal to which the disciplinary acts of a church believed to be "in violation of the word of God," are to be referred for a final and authoritative decision, and by which they may be pronounced "null and void," or that the acts of this church expelling Mr. Graves and his party, are "in violation of the word of God" you yourselves being the tribunal of judgment, and are therefore "null and void." We will discuss it in both these aspects.

Do you intend to intimate that there is somewhere, and in some form a tribunal to which the disciplinary acts of a church may be referred for a final decision, and by which they may be authoritatively, or in any other way declared "in violation of the word of God" and therefore "null and void?" That you do, to a casual observer is not very clear. He would probably pass over the addendum, as a simple abstract truism, and sufficiently embraced in the body of the resolution. To add it, as a provision, at its close, would therefore, seem to

be wholly unnecessary. Upon reflection, however, one readily sees that it is suspicious. It occupies a peculiar position. Your manner of stating it embarrasses the whole subject. Who is to decide what decision is, and what is not "in violation of the word of God?" The church itself acting in the case, or some power outside of the acting church, apart from it, and above it? A member, for instance, is expelled from Brother Martin's church at Marion. He charges - and this is you know, very common - that in his expulsion the church "acted in violation of the word of God," and that its decision is therefore "null and void." Who is to decide authoritatively this question? To whom is the complainant to appeal? The church firmly believes its verdict to be scriptural, just and right. The expelled member firmly believes, or professes firmly to believe it to be unscriptural, unjust and wrong. Neither can convince the other of error. What is to be done? You tell us that the individual church that acted in the case, "is an independent, executive body, and must of right construe the constitution and laws for itself." If so, and it firmly believes, and earnestly maintains this doctrine then unquestionably the decision of the church in the case must be authoritative and final. There is no appeal from it. There is not power above it. There is no tribunal that can revise or reverse it. Any attempt to do so by direct action, on the part either of an association, a council, or a sister church, or by indirect action, ignoring the decision and receiving and treating the

expelled party as if he were still in good standing, is unscriptural, unbrotherly and a sin against our Lord Jesus Christ, the sole Lawgiver of his churches.

These conclusions are, beyond question, in full accordance with the divine teachings; they are logical; they are true. You yourselves maintain them in the body of your resolutions. Yet in the very next breath you unsettle the whole matter! You add: "Nevertheless any act of such church in violation of the word of God, is "null and void." You tell us that the church sitting in its judicial capacity, must determine for itself, both as to the law, and the facts; that its decision is final; and that if it is not according to the law it is "null and void." This throws us back again upon the question, Who is to decide? Who is to determine what the law is? The church you tell us. And yet the church does not. Who then is to decide whether the church has violated the law? The church you tell us. And yet the church does not. It can be determined that the church has mistaken the laws; and that the church has violated the law. If so, somebody must do it. Who is the determining power? Not the church, since it maintains that it has done right. It must therefore be some tribunal apart from the church. And it must be above the church since only a superior tribunal can decide that the action of another body is null and void. Clearly then, while your resolution disavows it, it is so framed as to require an appellate tribunal apart from the church as a church, and above it. The question is not whether every such act of an in-

dependent, sovereign church, is exactly legal. Churches like individuals are fallible, and liable to err, and do often err. But when they do, what authority, what tribunal is to declare it, and pronounce its action null and void? An then, by whom, and how, is this reversal of the church decision to be practically maintained and carried into effect? You say there is no such authority. You also say in substance, there is such an authority somewhere. Your resolution is confused and hopelessly contradictory. The body of the resolution and the addendum can never be reconciled. You never can escape from its inconsistency.

On this subject, as you may readily see, Mr. Graves is at no loss whatever. He has less information in regard to it than you have, and is not deterred by any conscientious scruples from such conclusions as he may desire to reach. In his opinion, if we may judge from what he has published, various tribunals exist, any one, or all of whom may exercise the power in question. He, as you ~~say~~ <sup>very</sup> well ~~know~~ <sup>know</sup>, contends that the accused member on trial is authorized, and required to decide as to the constitution, the law, and the facts in the case, and if he shall conclude that the church is proceeding improperly, it is his right to arrest it at once, which he does effectually by protesting against it formally in the church and withdrawing from the church, thus depriving it of any power of action in the premises! This as you know he did in his own case, and has since earnestly contended for it as scriptural. Mr. Graves and his party, find

~~find~~ in a General Association (a mere missionary society of the same class with your state convention) a body competent to pronounce upon the disciplinary proceedings of the church. Hence, although he had as the accused party, before taken the case into his "own hand and decided against the church, dealing that the church no longer existed, and that he, and the dozen or two that adhered to him, were the church, he appealed to the General Association of Tennessee and North Alabama, while his case was yet before the church, pending and undecided. That organization entertained the appeal, threw the church out, and acquitted Mr. Graves and made him Moderator. Thus twice had he and his party decided his case, and that too before the church had reached its decision! They were however still dissatisfied and "appealed to the church at large." Very many of them, as we have before seen look up the case, and with no evidence but that of the accused, again judged it, acquitted him, and denounced the church. This was the third decision. Still it seems they are not content. He then called a very large council of his friends (ex parte) which sat in this city for several days. To this body his case was again referred with again only his own testimony. I was told that he speech before it, which he afterwards published in a book, occupied sixteen hours. This body of course acquitted him, and condemned the church. This was the fourth decision in his case, still they were not satisfied! He now "appealed to the Concord (District) Association which being

composed of very nearly the same men who had twice before acted, once in the General Association and once in his ex parte council, of course acquitted him and in disregard of the forms of its constitution, and instituting no inquiry into the case, expelled the church, not even allowing it a hearing! This was his fifth acquittal, all of which occurred before you interfered in his case, and with which you were so solemnly warned from several sources that you must not intermeddle! Competent tribunals, if Mr. Graves' present doctrines are to be received, are all around us. In his own case he has gone the rounds of them all. If all this is to be admitted, your State Convention brethren was wholly mistaken in its resolution before us. The individual church is not an "independent executive body;" it is not the only ecclestial authority having jurisdiction in cases of discipline; it does not of right construe the constitution and laws for itself."

You yourselves in the body of your resolution, assert the contrary in strong terms, and yet in the close of the same resolution you concede by implication that Mr. Graves is right! The church expels a member. Any one of these authorities, decide, or they all decide that he is not expelled. Therefore, he is not expelled. And this, Mr. Graves, Mr. Dayton and the rest, claim as Baptist doctrine! It is taught our young men at Murfreesboro by Mr. Pendleton as Baptist doctrines! Brethren, I may appeal even to you. Throw aside your anxiety to sustain Mr. Graves; forget his case; and tell me, is it Baptist doctrine? Mr. Graves and his partizans, did not themselves so

teach, five years ago. I have spoken of their present doctrines. They are now precisely the opposite of what they were then. Then they were scriptural and true, precisely those that we maintain. Now they are unscriptural and false. What were they then? What are they now? We will pause here until I shall have answered these questions.

Their doctrine five years ago we gather from several sources of unquestionable authority. In his "Great Iron Wheel" (not the late altered edition), p. 311, Mr. Graves says: "Each church • the congregated membership - call and dismisses its pastors; receives, dismissess, disciplines and excludes its members. Before the whole church the accused person is tried. The Bible alone is the criterion, it being the only rule of faith, or practice acknowledged. The decision of a majority is the ultimate verdict, and since the church is independent, there is no power above it, and consequently there is no appeal from its decision." This is certainly scriptural and conclusive. But this is not all. Again p. 552, he says: "Each particular church is independent of every other body, civil, or ecclesiastical, and receives its authority directly from Christ and is accountable to him alone."

Again p. 539, he says: "Each particular church, being independent and sovereign, is the highest source of authority and from its decisions there can be no appeal; it however can reconsider its own decisions whenever a majority is in favor of a reconsideration."

In one of his "Baptist Corrolaries" for a long time kept standing in his paper, but now rumored and substituted by a different one, he says: "A body of immersed believers is the highest ecclesiastical authority in the world, and the only tribunal for the trial of cases of discipline; that the acts of a church are of superior binding force over those of an Associational Council or presbytery, and no association or council can impose a moral obligation upon the constituent parts composing them."

In these extracts we have a fair statement made by Mr. Graves himself, of his doctrine on church Polity, five years ago. His friend and unscrupulous partizan, Mr. A. C. Dayton, then taught the same doctrine. In his Theodosia, Vol. 2, pp. 450,451, he says:

"A Baptist church in all that concerns its own members, is as independent of the associations, as it is of the Methodist Conference, or of the Grand Lodge of Odd Fellows. When a candidate applies for admission, it alone decides to receive or reject him. When a member has been guilty of some offence, it tries condemns and excludes him, and from its decision there is no Appeal, to any Association, local or general, or to any Convention, or other body outside itself. What it decides is the decision of the church, and ends the matter, unless it can be persuaded to revoke its decision, as Paul besought the church at Corinth to restore one whom it had cast out. The church is under no necessity to belong to any association and it is neither more nor less a church

when it does belong to one. Every Association and Convention in the land may be dissolved, and no single Baptist church will have more or less authority than it has today. It gives up no part of its authority, when it sends a messenger and it retains no more when it refuses or neglects to send."

These were the teachings of Mr. Graves and his party. They were then orthodox, but as it would seem they were orthodox simply because they had no motive to be otherwise. What are their doctrines now? This question can be answered with equal ease and certainly as the last. Brethren in Georgia and South Alabama, mutual friends of the parties, had proposed a committee similar to yours. Referring to it in his paper of the 3rd of September (1859) he says:

"The questions that have agitated the churches, (those you were appointed a committee to settle) have been settled, and settled too by those bodies (to which) the denomination concedes the right to determine them - the Council, the District and General Association. With the verdict of these bodies we are satisfied, and by their action we feel ourselves bound. Why should we by any act of ours cast a reflection upon the brethren composing the Concord Association or the General Association of Tennessee and North Alabama? We should be undeserving of their regard should we do it. A becoming self-respect and a respect for the brethren of our own state - of those who are perfectly acquainted with the facts - forbid the thought of new Councils, or new arbitrations."

In another place in the same paper, referring to this subject he says:

"These local questions have been scripturally and Baptistically determined by those whose province it is to determine them, and what need for new trials, councils, or arbitrations? We submit this to all, if these men be not manifestly the disturbers of the churches who are now laboring to influence a position of the denomination not to reorganize the members of the Spring Street Church as Baptists; (as the First Baptist Church in Nashville) nor to favor or fellowship those who recognize them? Is not this driving the wedge of schism? We say again the questions have been decided by those upon whom it was incumbent to decide them, and why not let them rest, and let the denominational mind rest?" Who are the men in the South, who have set their faces against the decisions of the Council, and the Concord Association and say: "We will disfellowship all those who approve the decisions of the Council and those bodies even if a division of the denomination follow? They are professedly conservative men, moderate, considerate, neutral men. They are influencing the denomination as far as they are able to take this position with them while they profess to weep over the evils of agitation and personal controversy."

What does Mr. Graves here teach? He teaches that the General Association of Tennessee and North Alabama, his Council, and the Concord Association had a right to sit in judgment, and pronounce upon the disciplinary acts of the First Baptist

Church in Nashville; that this right is conceded to these bodies by the denomination; that they had judged and decided that the acts of the church were not only null and void, but that in ~~daring~~ to act at all in his case, the church had positively destroyed itself, and was no longer a church had positively destroyed itself, and was no longer a church; that he himself approved and accepted the acts of these bodies; that he would agree to no other action in the case; that what these bodies had done was scripturally and Baptistically done; that all who opposed them were seeking to divide the churches; were hypocrites and personally his enemies. And these doctrines he has as you well know, since reiterated continually and in every form. He has even given expression to them, as you are aware since you finished your "mediating" labors here a few weeks ago. These are the present doctrines of Mr. Graves and his party. Compare them with their doctrines five years ago. They are the antipodes of each other. If they were Baptist then, they are not Baptists now. Yet you my dear brethren insist upon it, that without one word or action on their part, of any kind, this church and its pastor shall receive and recognize them as orthodox and orderly Baptists!!

A collateral consideration is involved in these extracts to which in passing you will allow me to refer. You see in what terms in September of 1859, Mr. Graves spoke of "Mediators" and "mediations." And you cannot but remember that when it was announced in May last year that the Baptist State Con-

vention of Mississippi appointed a committee to negotiate and arrange the controversy in Nashville, he spoke in like terms of you. He was surprised at the presumption of your Convention, he attributed the movement to malign counsels of Dr. Poindexter, who had then recently passed through your state; and he plainly told you that the whole matter has passed beyond the reach of committees, and negotiations; but he waited to hear the names of the committee. Your names were announced. He objected to only one member, the only one known to be favorable to the views of this church, and that member modestly retired from the committee. With most of the rest of you, probably all, Mr. Graves had freely mingled since his expulsion from the church, and you were known to be committed to his interest. He objected no longer, but "cordially invited" you to Nashville, and placed himself and his party entirely in your hands.

But I am trespassing on your patience, I beg to continue this review in another letter. Meantime, I am yours truly, etc., etc.

Letter No. 4

Dear Brethren:

We say in the preceding letter that the addendum to the first resolution of your Convention, implies the necessity of a Court of Appeals among Baptist churches and that this is the doctrine which Mr. Graves and his party now openly maintain. I desire here to record my testimony against that doctrine.

I perceive that in his new "Great Iron Wheel" Mr. Graves quotes me as having some twenty years ago endorsed it!

I have only to say that his whole statement is utterly untrue.

I have held from the day that I united with the church the very same doctrines which I hold now on this subject. Of this fact no one is more thoroughly apprised than Mr. Graves himself.

But I have long since ceased to be astonished at any statement which comes from him.

Let us look somewhat more closely into this matter of church government, guided by the light of the word of God. I need not remind you that certain great fundamental principles underlie the whole subject. I beg permission to recall some of them to your thoughts. They are axiomatical. Not one of them can be violated in practice, without confusion and disaster. of your elemency, brethren, I conjure you to hear me patiently.

The only visible ecclesiastical organizations recognized in the word of God are churches. Each church is an independent sovereign body. It is independent because it is subject to the control of none but Christ. It is sovereign because under Christ, it is within itself supreme in power and rule. No one may rule it, no one is above it but Christ himself, who is the head of all the churches. The churches under him are all perfectly equal. A bond of union is formed by their connection with Christ, their common head and sovereign, which connects them all with each other. Their union with each other is indirect and dependent upon their union with Christ. The churches have of themselves no original independence nor sovereignty. All they possess of both independence and sovereignty is given them by

Christ their sole rule and lawgiver. Whatever of authority which is possessed by each church is a delegated authority, and is possessed by each alike, and precisely to the same extent. No church has received from him any legislative authority whatever. The powers confined are judicial and executive only. The authority given by him to each church is for its own government only, and for no other purpose of any kind. To all these propositions - shall I call them axioms? - you are compelled to give, and I am sure you do give your full assent. I proceed therefore to state another series, relation having ~~relation~~ to another department of the subject.

It is characteristic of all delegated authority of whatever class that it cannot be redelegated by the part receiving it, without an express grant from the original power by whom it was bestowed. Each church having received from Christ power for its own government alone, can employ it for that purpose only. No church can dispossess itself of that power. No church can confer it upon another church, upon a body of churches, upon any person, or upon any body of persons, separate or assembled, or in any other capacity. No single church can do this. No combination of churches can do it. Christ, the original power, has given them in his word no right to do it. The independence and sovereignty of the churches are inalienable. If all this be true, and I feel confident that you do not doubt it, then it follows that no church has the power to convey to any other body, no matter what, authority equal to its own. Christ has given it no right to convey any such authority. It cannot do

so, however sincerely it might desire.

We now, brethren, take yet another step towards our object. A church as such is Christ's representative upon earth. No representative can appoint another representative. This belongs exclusively to the original appointing power. No church can transfer its character and rights, to any other body, making that body what it is itself. No combination of churches, can by representatives, or otherwise, create any such second body. Do churches undertake to create such a second organization as a Convention an Association, a Council, or any other similar body, with powers equal to their own, or above them, or indeed with any powers at all in the government and discipline of the churches? Then they are transcending their power; they are usurping the power that Christ has not given them; they are destroying the cause of Christ; they are committing a ~~re~~ sin against God.

These brethren, are the true "Old Landmarks" which you must "Reset," or you are undone. If you can invest - and this as we have seen, has been done in their quarter - an Association, a Convention, a Council, with such authority, as the Gravesites claim for them in our case, what may you not do? You can create Presbyteries, Synods, and General Assemblies, and Presbyterianism is right; you can create Bishops, Diocesan Conventions and Conventions with an Upper and Lower House, and Episcopacy is right; you can create Quarterly, Annual, and General Conferences, and Methodism is right; anything, indeed, is right which churches may choose to do! Just clothe an Association,

a Council, or other like body, as ~~our~~ people here in Tennessee have done with governmental power, or, what is the same thing, the right to pronounce upon the order and discipline of the churches and there is no longer any limit to your license. You have left the scriptural platform; the landmarks are all erased; there is no place where the innovation may be arrested; ~~But~~ thank God, this cannot be done. No church can do it. No body of churches can do it, since it would require the alienation of powers which Christ has made inalienable; it would be to assume the power of original jurisdiction which Christ has reserved to himself; it would be an attempt to invade Christ's power, and an essay to exercise Christ's sovereignty; it would be most fearful and daring presumption. No church can, therefore, if it would, no number of churches can, however earnestly they may desire it, confer upon an Association, a Council, a Convention, or any other similar body, any right to govern it, or them, or in any way to interfere with their government, either by dictating their proceedings, prohibiting them, revising them, reversing them, approving them, or disapproving them.

From these admitted principles it follows, as you must plainly see, that the bodies in question are necessarily inferior to churches, and never by any possibility, can have any jurisdiction over them whatever. Christ has given them none. The churches cannot make them their equals, much less can they make them their superiors. What are these bodies really? For purposes of brotherly ~~love~~ counsel, mutual cooperation and assistance in preaching the gospel and to obtain a knowledge of our

general progress, District Associations have been organized among us. To combine the energies of our people in the great work of missions, state, domestic, and foreign, to foster education, to advance Sabbath Schools, and to aid in diffusing a sound religious literature, we formed the General Association, Councils have sometimes been invited by the churches to aid them, with their advice, but never for ex parte purposes, nor are they permanent organizations, nor clothed with a particle of power, or authority of any kind. Each of these bodies, the last wholly ex parte, has in succession arrogantly assumed to be clothed with authority by the church to pronounce and has in turn pronounced authoritatively upon the disciplinary acts of churches and has by force executed its decrees! When any bodies of such character attempt to exercise authority of this kind, they usurp the power of Christ, they commit a most daring sin against God, and upon the churches that uphold, countenance or permit it, they bring inevitably shame, and misery, and overthrow, all of which now sit like an incubus, upon the whole of Middle Tennessee and North Alabama.

Brethren, these are all great fundamental principles, immovable as the pillars of the throne of God. Not one of them even can be shaken. The individual church itself must pronounce in every case of discipline, or no authoritative decision is even made. When the church speaks its decision is final. From that sentence then there is no appeal. In the exercise of its legitimate rights, the First Baptist Church in Nashville expelled Mr. Graves, Mr. Dayton, and their insurgent associates.

The General Association, the Concord Association, the Graves' Council, the partizan editors, may clamor as they will (I mean no disrespect) but they cannot change the facts. These men are expelled, and no power on earth but itself, can ever reverse that sentence. This is your doctrine as embodied in your resolution before me, its contradiction by the proviso notwithstanding; it is our doctrine; it is the elective of all true Baptists everywhere; it is the doctrine of the word of God. Therefore no action in accordance with it can be "in violation of the word of God." Our action consequently is not "null and void," but legal, scriptural and upon all the parties concerned of full force and effect.

Having now seen that there is no tribunal to which the disciplinary acts of a church believed to be "in violation of the word of God" can be referred for a final and authoritative decision, and by which they may be pronounced "null and void," we are prepared to consider the other aspect; whether you intend by this addendum to your resolution, to intimate that the acts of this church expelling Mr. Graves and his party were "in violation of the word of God" and therefore "null and void," you yourselves being the tribunal of judgments. But, before I enter upon this branch of the discussions, I wish to refer to two methods by which of late certain persons seek to escape the practical effects of true, healthful, gospel discipline. It is now maintained in some quarters, that a member of a church may, if not actually under discipline, at any time withdraw from it, when he may choose to do so! This is one

of the methods and the other assumes that if when expelled, it can be made to appear that injustice has been exercised, the party may properly apply to a sister church, and without offence be received into its fellowship.

The former of these methods proposes, that a member, if not actually under discipline, may withdraw from the church at any time, when he may choose to do so.

The argument is stated thus: - Members of a Baptist church enter it by their own free will. Consequently, they have a right of their own free will to withdraw from it. You brethren will not incredulously ask me who they are that maintain this doctrine. You know very well who they are. The application of this claim - assuming that the other proposition is also true - to Mr. Graves and his party in this city, is made thus: -  
 No charges had been/<sup>made</sup>in the church against A. C. Dayton and the rest at the time they made their "Declaration," and withdrew from the church, on the 12th of October, 1859. They had therefore a right to withdraw and to form themselves into a church. And having done so they had also a right, as an independent and sovereign church to receive Mr. Graves. They did receive Mr. Graves, and thus restored him to his ecclesiastical position in the denomination." Shall we call this an ingenious device? Not a few of their friends satisfy themselves with it, and thus evade by a short process, all the defences that Christ has thrown around the government and discipline of his churches. Mr. Graves, as you know receives it heartily; and may perhaps be its author. Referring to it, in connection with his claim that associations have power to rule

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the church, he says in his paper of the first of the month of September, 1860, a week after your Committee had finished its labors, and left the city: -

"Was the minority, or any member of it ever excluded from the First Baptist Church? Ans. No. A division of the church upon a constitutional question took place on the 12th of October. The minority was duly constituted and organized (standing on the original ground as the First Church) as the constitutional church. The General Association (the Missionary Society before referred to) had recognized it as such, and dis-fellowshipped the dominant majority as disorderly, Sometime before it claimed that any of the minority was excluded. Had the exclusion taken place before the division the claim would have been reasonable, now it is false and absurd."

does

This new device by which evil ~~tax~~ propose to escape the jurisdiction and discipline of the churches is utterly repugnant to the word of God; and even were it not, the pretences upon which it is applied practically to Mr. Graves and his party, are wholly groundless.

This assumption of the right of a member, if not under charges, to withdraw at will from the church, is repugnant both to all the teachings of the word of God, and the reason of the case. May I respectfully ask, where you will find in the divine word the right granted to a member to withdraw from the church, at will, under any circumstances whatever? Need I tell you, brethren, that there is not a syllable in the Bible granting any such right, or if you please, such a privilege? You will not, I

know, contend that the Bible - "the constitution and laws" - grants any such privilege or right. What Christian man will dare to exercise as a privilege or right, a claim, that which God has never granted? Had it been lawful, it would have been granted. It is not granted, therefore, it is not lawful. He who attempts to do any such thing certainly acts in violation of the word of God." His acts are therefore "null and void." But this claim is also hostile to reason.

No charges have been preferred against a member. He has therefore a right, at pleasure to withdraw from the church. If so, then any persons, quietly of no matter what sins, but those sins are not yet known, or have not been charged before the church, have only to withdraw, and they are beyond the reach of the church discipline. So Mr. Dayton and those with him, claim as you know, to have withdrawn, and Mr. Graves claims, that the assumption that they could be expelled by the church after that, is "false and absurd." Establish this as a principle of action, and no man unless he please, need ever be expelled. He has only to utter in time the talisman's words "I withdraw from the church." He has a right to do it. He is safe.

But if a member is already charged before the church, what then? He cannot withdraw, but he can do as Mr. Graves did. Indeed, what man is there, who when arraigned, could not induce a few relations, and dependents against whom no charge had been

preferred, to withdraw declare themselves to be the original constitutional church, and receive him into their number? He too, is unharmed and safe, by a process as easy as the other. Where is your scriptural church discipline? You have none. You may perchance manage a poor ignorant simpleton, but ~~xxx~~ <sup>an</sup> intelligent influential man, who has friends, commit what sin he may, is beyond your reach.

2. But it does not follow logically that because a man joins the church voluntarily and of his own free will that therefore he can withdraw voluntarily, and of his own free will, when he shall choose to do so. A man marries a wife, voluntarily and of his own free will. Can he therefore sever the marriage bond when he pleases? A man enlists as a soldier in the army voluntarily. Can he therefore when he prefers to do so, withdraw from the army? The truth of it is, that although in one sense men unite with the church voluntarily, it is not that volition exclusively that makes them members. They are received into it by a vote of the church. They can go out of it only by the vote of the church.

3. Even however, were there no such impediments to the doctrine as those which we have now seen, the pretences upon which it is practically applied to sustain Mr. Graves and his party, are utterly migatory on other grounds. Mr. Dayton and his party in his note through you to the church committee, dated the 20th of August, commence as you know, thus: - "Our action in withdrawing from your body (the church) was based upon the principles involved in the Protest, etc." They

therefore claim to have withdrawn from the church. Mr. Graves as we have just seen, referring to the same transaction, declares it to have been not a withdrawal of these persons, but a division of the church. He says: "A division of the church upon a constitutional question took place on the 12th of October." There these men did not withdraw but went off "in a division of the church" - a schism. Turn now to their famous "Declaration," a paper prepared by the whole party before the church commenced the trial, and held in readiness to be used on that occasion, and you will there find a representation of the case wholly different from both these. They claim that it was really neither a withdrawal nor a division. When then was it? They say: - "A majority of the body with which we are connected, known as the First Baptist Church in Nashville, has in its recent action repudiated the law of Christ. cast aside the word of God, as its rule of action and placed itself in open rebellion against the great head of the church." Therefore "We (the persons who signed the paper) declare ourselves the regular and spiritual church of our Lord Jesus Christ worshiping in this place, and in his name claim for ourselves as his true and proper church, all the rights, privileges, and authority, which are by the word of God confined upon his church."

Plainly therefore these men never pretended to withdraw from the church: no division or "split," as Brother Buck calls it, of the church upon a constitutional question ever took

place; they never were constituted and organized as the constitutional church; the General Association had no more right than any other Missionary Society had to pronounce them the church. All their pretences are therefore utterly groundless. This claim of a right to withdraw from the church at will, is unscriptural, fatal in practice, and afford Mr. Graves and his party, no aid or comfort whatever.

The latter of these propositions assumes that when a man is unjustly excluded, he has a right to apply to a sister church, and that that church may receive him into fellowship. This right is not claimed for those who are justly excluded, but only for those who are unjustly excluded. Here again the question comes up. Who is to decide whether the exclusion was just or unjust? It would seem that the church to which application is made is to do this. That church is therefore upon the plea, always ex parte, of injustice, to revise, and set aside the decisions of a sister church! As a matter of principle never was there a claim more groundless; and as a practice never was one more disastrous. It is surely unnecessary for me to restate the arguments to which we prove that Christ has committed the necessary action in such cases to the church itself and if so, that he has withheld it from every other body, will refer to these arguments merely.

1. In cases of private offences our Lord directs that the aggrieved party shall privately seek the reclamation of the offender. If he shall fail to do this by his own efforts,

and subsequently in a second attempt aided by one, or two brethren, he is instructed as a last resort, to tell it to the church, which must itself adjudicate the case, and pronounce an authoritative and final decision.

The church is thus recognized as the only tribunal competent to extend or to withdraw church fellowship.

2. The church at Jerusalem was directed to choose a successor in the apostleship to Judas Iscariot. That high function even the apostles themselves did not dare to exercise. That church, about a hundred and twenty being present, proceeded as specially instructed by Peter, and elected Matthias to that high office. The power that elects an apostle for Jesus Christ, is surely ~~power~~ the highest ecclesiastical authority upon earth. That power, Peter, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, recognizes as residing in the individual church.

3. When deacons were to be appointed for the church in Jerusalem, the twelve apostles all of whom were then in that city called together the multitude of its members, and guided by divine inspiration, instructed them to elect the men for that office. The appointment was consummated accordingly. This was the work of the whole church. The church therefore - the individual church - has this authority and it is entrusted to no one else.

4. The authority to admit members, to expel them, and to restore them resides in the church alone. That is presented in cases of private offence we have already seen. A member of the church at Corinth had committed a public offence of the gravest character. It was, as Paul affirms also, a

personal offence. He enjoined the church to expel him. It did so. He repented, confessed, and forsook his sin, and at the entreaty of Paul, they restored him again to fellowship. It is unquestionably true, therefore, that Christ has committed all government and discipline of each church into the hands of the church itself. With its decisions no power on earth has any right to interfere. When the church has expelled a member, he is expelled; and when it has restored a member, he is restored; and no power exists in any other church, or combination of churches, association council, or other body by which its decisions can be lawfully reversed.

But it is affirmed that some churches are "small and ignorant," that others are "prejudiced," and that others still expel members for joining the Masons, the Odd Fellows, the Missionary Societies, Temperance Societies, and similar organizations. If these are arguments at all they are against the principles of church independence. Did Christ establish this form of church government? If not then the argument is that we ought not to practice it. If he did, the argument is against him, since if it proves anything, it is that a form of church government liable to such abuses was unwise and improper. Shall we find fault with the laws of Christ, and essay to amend them? It is possible that churches may be "small and ignorant," and "prejudiced," and do many unwise things. But did not Christ know all this as well as we do? Yet he gave to each one independence and sovereignty. "See that ye despise not one

of these little ones." Every church of Christ is entitled to the respectful deference of every other church of Christ.

But this right of one church to receive into its fellowship the expelled members of a sister church, is claimed as necessarily belonging to this very independency. If it may not do so, it is, they tell us, not independent forgetting what has been before said, that no church has any independence, except what has been given it by Christ, and its exercise must in every respect be governed by his laws. If he has given the church no such right and you must admit this, then it has no such right, and dare not pretend to exercise it. It is plain that you must either be governed strictly by the word of God in these cases and leave the matter wholly in the hands of the church where Christ left it, or you must have a Court of Appeals of some sort, and I regret exceedingly to find so many of our brethren decidedly inclined to this latter alternative.

But I perceive that I shall be obliged to continue this subject in another letter.

Meantime, I am yours truly, etc., etc.

Letter No. 5

Dear Brethren:

We proceed with the investigation of the inquiry whether when a member is expelled from one church, he may under any circumstances apply to a sister church, and by that church be received into fellowship. If such a course is lawful, it is taught in

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the word of God. And is it taught there? Can you find any authority for it in that holy book? Not one word in the form either of a command, of precept, or of example. No, brethren, divine revelation is as silent on that subject as it is on infant baptism; one of these is fully as legitimate as the other; and I can see no reason why he who can find authority for the former cannot also find authority for the latter. All that the Bible teaches on church government is hostile both in its character and spirit, to any such claim, and forbids any inference from it by which it can be sustained. This much we have fully seen. We have proved that the individual church is the only authority having power to act at all, and that what it does cannot be revised, reversed, or annulled by a sister church, much less by any organization unknown to the word of God, such as Conventions, Associations and Councils. This principle embraces of course its decisions regarding expelled offenders. These conclusions are as we saw, supported by the instructions of Christ regarding offenders, by the action of the church in Jerusalem, in the choice of an apostle; by the proceedings of the same church in the appointment of deacons; and by the teaching of the apostles regarding the authority of the churches with reference to their membership.

The question before us must be decided according to these great principles of Church Comity, which are made known in the word of God. Church government embraces the whole subject of Ecclesiastical Polity. Church Comity extends only to those principles which regulate the intercourse of churches with each other. Let these principles be stated as clearly and as

succinctly as possible. To me, it appears certain, that bodies possessed only of delegated authority have no powers by those expressly confined. Our churches possess only delegated authority. Therefore they possess no powers by those expressly confined. The conclusiveness of this argument, I am sure you will not dispute. Point me then if you please, to the text in the word of God, which gives one church authority to receive into its membership the excluded offenders of a sister church. No such text exists. That power is therefore withheld. You will not assume to infer it from the independence of the churches, since in such a case mere inference is insufficient. You must have an express grant. Nor can even such an influence be legitimate, for another reason. Church independence like church sovereignty is not absolute, but limited. Independence in its absolute sense is complete exemption from control, or the interference of any power whatever. In this acceptation independence cannot be predicated of a church, since every church owes full allegiance to Christ. No church has any power but that conferred by Christ. He has conferred no such power. Therefore the power does not exist. To attempt to infer it is illegitimate, because the independence of the churches is in its nature not absolute, but limited by the powers given. Nor can you claim that you receive such an applicant as if he had never before been a member of any church since this would be palpably untrue. Do you require him, as you would others, to be baptized? Certainly you do not. But recognizing his former baptism, you recognize his former membership. It is not true therefore that you receive

or that you can receive a person expelled from a sister church, as if he had never been a member Before of any church.

Allow me now to show you that it is impossible that Christ could ever have ~~conferred~~<sup>conferred</sup>, either directly, or by inference, upon his churches the power claimed. Bodies coordinate and having concurrent jurisdiction, and which derive their authority from a common source, cannot in the exercise of their legitimate powers come in collision with each other. All our churches coordinate bodies, having concurrent jurisdiction and all derive their authority from a common source. Therefore our churches cannot in the exercise of the legitimate powers come in collision with each other. When one church receives the excluded member of another, they are in collision. They have ~~therefore~~ therefore passed the coundaries of power granted to them by the King in Zion. The receiving church is exercising power which it does not possess. It is daring to do what Christ has not permitted.

We are warranted in carrying the matter still further. In all cases in which power is granted to one church to perform an act, the right to cancel that act is withheld from all other churches. Power is certainly granted to each one of his churches to expel, for causes considered by it self-sufficient, any one of its offending members. The sister church which receives that expelled member into its ~~membership~~<sup>fellowship</sup> cancels the act of his expulsion. Therefore it exercises a power distinctly withheld

by our Lord Jesus Christ.

These are some of the principles of Church Comity taught by reason, and the word of God. We learn from them that the power of one church to receive the expelled members of another church is not granted by Christ, by whose lawes all churches are governed, and that it cannot be legitimately inferred from the nature of church organization, nor from any other power they are at liberty to exercise; that when one church does receive the expelled member of another, its act is in collision with the act of the other, and not sustained by Christ, and that in such a case it is exercising a power which Christ has certainly and plainly withheld. The church therefore, that receives into its fellowship an expelled member of another church, commits an offence against God, and against the brotherhood, by which it justly forbids the fellowship of the whole fraternity of churches. Our brethren who come to conclusions different from these, base their argument on the groundless assumption <sup>are</sup> that the churches ~~are~~ independent in the absolute sense; many proceed in every act as if no other church existed; and were not coordinate bodies, having concurrent jurisdiction, deriving their powers from a common source owing fealty to one common superior. Their whole argument is spurious; because it rests upon false premises.

We may now if you please, look into the practiceal results of the measure under consideration. When an expelled member of one Baptist church applies to another Baptist

church in fellowship with it for membership, and upon no matter what plea, that church receives him, the first effect is the infliction upon the party so expelled and received, of an irremediable injury. It fixes in his mind the impression that church membership is of but little value. It confirms him in his self-will. It withholds him from any conciliation which otherwise he might be disposed to make. Had he been beforehand well assured that if expelled from his own church he could be received into no other until he had sought and obtained restoration to that, he would have been much less careless of consequences; he would have been sedulous to escape expulsion, and if expelled he would have been much more likely to take the necessary measures to secure a restoration. The knowledge that he can recover his position in spite of his church, has a demoralizing effect upon all his feelings. Instead of submitting to the laws of Christ, and seeking to satisfy his church, he defies them all and strengthens himself in his sins. He says to his church, "Turn me out if you choose; I do not care; I can join another church." He does join another church and scoffs at the impotent proceedings of his own church.

Another practical result is that the feud between him and his church is now incurable. He never will retrace his steps. How can he retrace his steps? Brotherhood in any proper sense is thenceforward out of the question. It is lost irrevocably.

A third inevitable result is the destruction of fellowship between the churches. When one church receives the expelled members of another church, the act amounts to a declaration of

nonfellowship with the church that expelled them. You brethren know, and I know, that this, whatever may be said to the contrary, is always the result. When the persons involved in the transaction are of no esteem or importance in society no special disturbance may arise from it. But if they are persons of intelligence, and position in society and in the church, the destruction of church fellowship between the churches is certain. This, you may say, need not be the case. But whether it need be the case or not, it is the case. When is the instance in which a man of high standing, has been expelled from one church, and received into another and the fellowship of the churches have remained unbroken? I know of no such instance. Such an act ought to destroy the fellowship of the churches, because of its disregard to all the laws of Christ, which govern the Church Comity, as well as irremediable injury which it inflicts upon all the parties concerned.

A fourth practicable effect is equally as lamentable. Now the war is no longer between the church, and its refractory member, but between two churches which are henceforth more or less hostile to each other. Fellowship and <sup>harmony</sup> ~~learning~~ are out of the question. But the evil does not stop even here. If the belligerent parties are influential, the excitement finds its way into other churches, some of which sympathize with one, and some with the other party, and the conflict increases in intensity. Next it finds its way inevitably into the association and then becomes still more portentous and alarming, since its discussion is very likely to divide that body, and even if it does not, it

is sure to demoralize and cover it with reproach and shame. Would to God the evil could be averted even here. But in our day it cannot. The case finds its way into the newspapers and thenceforward the calamity is beyond control. Partizan editors for interested purposes agitate the subject, and the churches throughout the whole land are by the ears! These editors are responsible to no one; they make money by the discussions; and the demoralization goes on. Thus one spark which might have been extinguished by simply laying your hand upon it, has been roused into a blaze; brands have been lighted by it, and distributed everywhere; the conflagration desolates the whole land. Fellowship and love exist no more!

A fifth result and the last I shall now mention, is the overthrow of all healthful church discipline. Let this practice obtain among our churches, and be admitted as legitimate and government is no longer practicable. If it is the right of one man who claims to be unjustly dealt with in his own church, to be received into the fellowship of a sister church, it is the right of all who set up that claim. And where is the corrupt man, who when expelled does not set up that claim? If he be dexterous, cunning, unscrupulous, and especially if he make money by his connection with the church, as some men we know of do, he is sure to do it. The practice may of course be carried to any extent. What now are your circumstances? Your church expels

a man today; tomorrow he joins another Baptist church; the day after, he comes back as full a member of the Baptist church as you are! Your church and the church which received him, remain in fellowship. As a part of that church, he is restored to fellowship in your church! In such a case what would be the value of your discipline? You would have no discipline; certainly no discipline that you could enforce. Why expel a member at all? He would not remain out of the church unless he preferred to do so. No church would have any power of discipline. And what church would be in fellowship with any other church. This confession would reign universally!

We have now seen as much at length as the brevity of these letters will permit, that members of a church cannot evade its discipline by withdrawing from it, nor by being when expelled, received into the fellowship of a sister church. Both these subterfuges utterly fail, and your proviso notwithstanding, it remains true that "The church is an independent, executive body; the only ecclesiastical authority known to the inspired word of God; and must of right construe the constitution and laws for itself." From its decision there is no appeal. No organization exists, or ever can exist in which authority is vested to pronounce the acts of a church "in violation of the word of God; no man, nor body of men, either collectively, or individually, officially, or unofficially, dare pronounce them "null and void," or treat them as if they were so; no right is lodged anywhere, to rescue a man from the discipline of his church, or to restore him, when expelled, to his ec-

clesiastical status.

This, you perhaps exclaim, is a hard case! There must be, you contend, some remedy for a brother unjustly expelled! A hard case! Jesus Christ made all the laws. It is our business to execute his laws, and not to abrogate them, or substitute in their place, laws of our own. If in their administration hard cases arise, your censures fall upon Christ, not upon those who administer his laws. He has made every member of the church subject to its discipline; he has given his church power to expel its members when it is believed to be necessary; he has withheld from members the right to withdraw from the church, to appeal to a sister church, a council, an association, convention, or any other body, as an expedient to evade its discipline; he permits no sister church to cancel its act of expulsion, and destroy its moral effect, by receiving him into its fellowship. This is a hard case! Your censure falls upon Christ himself! There must be, you repeat it, some remedy for a brother unjustly expelled. That churches may act hastily and unjustly, is readily admitted, since they are all made of imperfect men, and liable to err. And when they do err, there is a remedy, a safe, a scriptural, a certain remedy in every case. It is found not in quarreling with the church and its members; not in attempting to carry measures by browbeating; and overawing the church; not in essaying to withdraw from the church; not if expelled, whether justly or unjustly, in obtaining membership in a sister church - all which must make the case infinitely worse, but the

remedy is found in sincere and unaffected brotherly love; in the consecration of soul and body, and estate, to the service and glory of Christ, in an earnest, prompt and cheerful obedience to all the requirements of the gospel; in a full appreciation of all the privileges, responsibilities and duties involved in the membership of a church of the Redeemer; in a word, in earnest, heartfelt, fervent, humble religion. Such church members as I have here described will find in the practical workings of the love of Christ no hardships; nothing severe; no need to hunt up remedies against injustice and unholý treatment of the church. Only the disobedient, the proud, the worldly, the covetous, the ambitious members of the church - and that not a few are of this class we will readily admit - find the laws of Christ severe. To them his laws ought to be severe. No church retaining many such in its membership, can permanently prosper. If they are persons of high position wealth and influence, so much the worse, since they will be the more difficult to expel, and the more certain to destroy the church, if they are retained; such as these are the men of whom you hear so much about being unjustly expelled, who essay if impeached to withdraw from their churches; and who when expelled find their way into the fellowship of sister churches. Suffice brethren, before I close this letter, two or three additional considerations in this connection.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the first place remark, never intended that membership in his churches should be esteemed of little value; should be easy of acquisition; or retained

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by unworthy persons. How is this matter now regarded by multitudes in our own ranks!! Do not very many put on church membership, and put it off just as it may happen to suit their fancy, their ambition, or their interests? Who looks upon it as of any special importance spiritually, to be a member of the church? Your friend tells you that he feels as if he "ought to be a member of some church." What, which, or why he has probably not inquired. Do you never meet men who evidently think they would be doing your church an honor should they condescend to join it? They would be amazed, if you thinking them unfit, should place any barrier in their way. Should the applicant be distinguished for his wealth, talents, learning, or position, social, professional, or political, would you dare to do it? Are you not but too happy to receive such persons on almost any terms? Do you regard church membership in the same light in which it is represented by Jesus Christ? Brethren, the doors of our churches must be guarded with sleepless vigilance against the admission of the corrupt and unworthy. If unhappily such persons have found their way into it, when that fact is made apparent, they must at once, whether they be ministers or laymen be expelled. On these subjects the church has no discretion. The commandment of Jesus Christ is perpetually sounding in our ears: "Put away from among yourselves that wicked persons."

The Savior, I observe in the second place, did not design

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that excommunication should by anyone, or under any circumstances, be regarded with indifference. But is it not now so regarded by very many of our people? From its great frequency it has almost lost its effect. Outside of a very small circle, who thinks the less of any one for having been expelled from the church? Excommunication is a solemn and awful sentence. By how much union and fellowship with visible churches upon earth, and the enjoyment of gospel ordinances are worth, by so much is it a fearful transaction. How can he who does not shrink from it in alarm, cherish in his heart the love of Christ; of the people of Christ? To what extent does such a man esteem the house of God? To preserve its own purity, and to guard the honor of religion, the Savior has clothed each of his churches, with the power for good cause, to pronounce this sentence against any of its own members. But the power to pronounce this sentence, implies the power to execute it. The execution however of the sentence is impracticable without the concurrence of sister churches. Why pronounce it at all, if some other church is immediately afterwards to reverse it by ~~receiving~~ <sup>receiving</sup> the excommunicated into its membership, or which amounts to the same thing, if many churches may ignore the sentence and continue afterwards to treat him precisely as if he never had been expelled? It is exactly against this power of the church to execute its sentence, that war has been waged in this quarter for the last two years, and which has produced among us "the extraordinary state of things which your Convention so much deploras and which we all so pro-

foundly deprecate.

I observe, thirdly, that while our churches and people are thus latitudinarian in their principles, and reckless in their administration of the laws of Christ, we can never successfully defend ourselves against the attacks of surrounding denominations. We have said to our Pedobaptist brethren, Show us scripture authority for your Courts of Appeals, and for the claims you exercise in revising, reversing, and otherwise directing the discipline of your individual churches. They could not answer because they had no such authority. Now the case is charged. Grant, they respond, that there is no scripture authority for appellate tribunals of higher jurisdiction, to reverse, and revise the action of the churches, you cannot rebuke us, since while professing differently, you do the same thing. The power of revision, which, say they, are granted to a chosen body of our wisest men, you confer upon all classes of bodies, upon your associations; upon your councils; upon your sister churches; and upon even your missionary societies! Show us your authority for all this, and we will show you our authority for every tribunal among us. What can we answer? We are dumb. We are confounded. We can defend ourselves no longer.

It remains only that I remind you, in conclusion, that the remedy, and the ample remedy for the excluded member, is, as before intimated in the church itself, by which he was excluded. By the laws of Christ, the doors of that church are always open to him. Its members are those who of all men on earth know him best. If he is indeed an humble, and sincere

Christian, they of all others, they of all others will be most ready to sympathize with him. He can there at any time obtain a rehearing. You very well know that in all such cases the tendency of our churches is rather to too much levity, than to any unnecessary severity. You have probably never known an instance in which application for restoration to the church by an expelled member was made, that he was not either restored, or you were convinced that he ought not to have been restored.

I have detained you a long time in the consideration of inquiry the ~~inquiry~~ whether the proviso of your resolution does not demand a Court of Appeals among our churches. Our discussion upon this point have shown us that anything of this kind is unscriptural, and wholly inadmissible. In our other letter which shall close our correspondence, I will consider the other feature in your proviso to which I have referred.

As ever yours truly, etc., etc.

Letter No. 6

Dear Brethren:

As intimated in former letters, it may after all be possible that in affixing this addendum to your resolution - "Nevertheless any act of such church (done either by a majority or unanimously) in violation of the word of God, is null and void," - you lost sight of the inconsistency in principle which it involves, and which I flatter myself. I have now thoroughly exploded, and intended by it only to intimate your opinion

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that in the trial, and expulsion of J. R. Graves and of his associate recusants, this church acted "in violation of the word of God," and that therefore its action in these cases especially was "null and void." Was this the idea, brethren that was in your minds? If so the question is a simple one, and I assure you, it can be settled in a few words, by accounting the law and the facts, to the entire satisfaction of every intelligent and impartial man, whatever may be his prejudices, or party affinities.

1. The church certainly had full jurisdiction in these cases. This fact I suppose you do not question. Mr. Graves was a member of the church; he acknowledged its jurisdiction by obeying its summons, and appearing at its bar; the discussion had proceeded for some hours, a motion of one of his own party, to remand the case, was lost, and the church divided to proceed with the trial; at this point Mr. Graves pronounced the church no longer a church, and no longer possessed of any right to try him. Did Mr. Graves' simple denunciation destroy the church, and the jurisdiction of the church, in the whole case, was full and unquestionable.

2. We shall now consider the law governing in the case. One class of the offences and which amount to "immoral and unchristian conduct," and for which if not adjusted the church is obliged to call a member to its bar is denominated "private." These were called private offences, not in the sense of secret offences, but in the sense that they concern a brother; and

concern him only in a private personal acceptation, such as encroachments upon his feelings and rights, his interests, or his honor, by words, or by actions, or in any other manner. These are private offences, and are all to be adjudicated by the law recorded in the 18th chapter of Matthew.

Another class of offences which amount to "immoral and unchristian conduct" has been called "public offences." They are public, not in the sense, that they are publicly committed, but that they are offences not only against persons individually, but especially against gospel morality and religion. Some of these are personal and some are impersonal. The sin, for example, of the incestuous man expelled by the Corinthian church was a "personal offence." It is so stated by Paul himself, who, when in his second epistle in which he enjoins his expulsion, he says: "I did it, not for his cause that he done the wrong nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear to you." Some however are impersonal; such as a departure from gospel doctrines, a refusal to perform his duties as a member of the church, a rebellion against the lawful authority and government of the church, attempts to create schism; and general unscriptural conduct. The law governing in these cases is recorded in 1 Cor. 5; 2 Cor. 1; Titus 3:10, and Romans 16-17-18.

Many of the offences which our churches are called upon to adjudge, partake of both these characteristics. They are partly

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private, and partly public, combining both crimes against morality and religion, yet affecting the feelings, rights, interests, or honor of a brother. They are such as, wilful and malicious slander; the utterance of known falsehoods; violent slanderous or libellous publications; public or private denunciations; and other like injuries inflicted or attempted to be inflicted upon him. These although against persons are also against morals and religions; they cannot be repaired by private adjustment; but come under the laws that govern in cases of public offences. This is a sufficient statement of the law. That it is a correct statement you will, I have no doubt, readily grant.

3. We now proceed to state the facts in the case.

Mr. Graves was arraigned before the church, the jurisdiction of which was unquestionable, under the laws now set forth charged with "Grossly immoral and unchristian conduct." The several counts and the specifications with their proofs are known to you all. He refused to be tried by the church upon this charge; and on what ground? Upon the plea that all the specifications were, if offences at all, merely private personal offences, and therefore to be adjusted by the law of the 18th of Matthew; that the persons professing to be aggrieved, had not waited upon ~~him~~ <sup>him</sup> privately, as that law directs; and that therefore the church had no right to proceed in his trial. And now, dear brethren, with the laws of Christ before you, in relation to the offences to be tried by the church, and the offences themselves, for which Mr. Graves was tried, I

ask of you, which of them was strictly a private personal offence? You are compelled to answer, Not one. Not one of them therefore was to be adjusted by the law in the 18th of Matthews. As well might you in one of your courts, insist upon trying a man charged with murder, by the law governing in cases of petit larceny. The First Church in Nashville adheres as firmly as does Mr. Graves or any one else to the law in the 18th chapter of Matthew. But it cannot therefore stiltify itself by applying it indiscriminately in every case of offence which may arise, and especially in those cases for the decision of which the Savior has himself enacted other and appropriate laws. To have applied it in Mr. Graves' case, would have been to have abused and perverted the laws of Christ. Had the church submissively complied with the inconsistent and outrageous demands of Mr. Graves, it would perhaps have avoided his wrath, and the wrath of his party; but it would have justly brought upon itself the displeasure of the Redeemer and the contempt of all intelligent Christians.

The sins for which Mr. Graves was tried and expelled, were all of a public character, or of that mixed class, which come under the laws which govern in cases of public offences.

These facts you are obliged to admit, as must every other intelligent and impartial brother in the land. The case is too plain to admit of any reasonable doubt whatever. The church could not mistake its duty. Because he denounced the church as no church, was it therefore no church? Because in the progress of his trial, he pretended to withdraw from it, and de-

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clared that the church had no longer jurisdiction over him? Because he defied the decision of the church, was the church to be deterred from making any decision? You brethren, will not, I am sure, defend any such preposterous propositions. Firmly, and calmly the church obeyed the commandment of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This, dear brethren, was not the first time since its organization, more than forty years ago, that the faithfulness of this church had been put to the test. Its fidelity was sorely taxed in 1828, when it separated from the "Current Reformation," and in 1837, when it separated from the Anti-missionaries. But it did not waver. It was Christ, who, by his Apostles, said to us: - "Now I beseech you brethren, mark them that cause division and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned and avoid them. For they that are such serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own lusts, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." Such was J. R. Graves. He was expelled. He was justly and legally expelled. No man who understands the law and the facts, can ever say that this act of the church was "in violation of the law of God." It is on the contrary in strict pursuance of all the divine provisions for the maintenance of a just and healthful government in the churches of Christ. The church is now more than ever, if possible, satisfied with its decision. It will unwaveringly adhere to that decision, convinced that its legality

and justice can never be successfully impeached.

It is proper that I should here refer more particularly to Mr. A. C. Dayton, and his insurgent associates. They stood on grounds before the church, very different from those occupied by Mr. Graves. This fact, both your committee and the Spring Street party very properly recognized during your negotiations in this city. Mr. Graves' position we have seen. Mr. Dayton and those with him committed sins in some respects unlike his, but in the sight of God not less criminal. They were charged before the church with flagrant sins. That they did all that was charged against them, they never pretended to deny, but they sought to justify themselves on the plea that when they did it, this church was no church at all. They affected I hold - and if we understand them, they do so to this day - that on the night of the 12th of October, 1858, it ceased to be a church, and that upon this ground, they themselves became on that night, have been ever since, and are now, really the First Baptist Church in Nashville; that therefore the offences charged against them were no offences at all, since sinning against this body, was not sinning against a church; and that consequently they are now, and have been all along, members unimpeached in the First Baptist Church in Nashville!

Is it necessary that I should stop to refute these absurd pretensions? Surely not. All whose opinions are of any value, will at once see their absurdity and folly. Their foundation - their only foundation - upon which they rest all their claims is simply and plainly a false assumption. To you, this fact

must be obvious. It must also be further obvious to you, that since their allegations against the church were wholly false, since the jurisdiction and authority of the church over them were unimpaired and full; and since they did commit the revolting sin with which they were charged; and since they made no other defence than that which has been noticed, which indeed itself was an offence of the gravest character; they were necessarily legally and justly expelled. They consummated their schism. On the very next day, the 13th, the church entered proceedings against them. They scoffed at all its entreaties; they denounced and defied it. They were necessarily expelled. To Mr. Graves it was said two years ago, immediately after his expulsion, that the doors of the church were open and that any time when he might desire it, he could return, and if he satisfied the church he could be restored to fellowship. The same things were said to Mr. Dayton and his fellow schismatics. To gain for them any Christian position whatever, they must return to the church, withdraw their protest and Declaration, renounce their errors, repent of their sins, make suitable reparation, and acknowledgements and then obtain restoration to its fellowship. If they continue to refuse to do this, as they have up to this time, your "mediation" notwithstanding, and persist in maintaining their present attitude, it will be their fault and not the fault of the church. They must meet the consequences. Mr. Dayton and the rest took this ground to sustain Mr. Graves, which they avowed their determination to do at all hazards. They knew that this church was the only tribunal to which they

were ecclesiastically responsible. They attempted a desperate and impossible project. They sought to save their partizan by striking down the church. That they failed most signally ought not to have surprised them. It surprised no one else who was informed of all the facts, and was capable of understanding the subject.

They had the means of misleading the public mind and they did so, for a season. Meantime, they procured illegal and unauthorized as it was, the endorsement of their acts, and the condemnation of this church, as we have seen, by various bodies and numerous churches. The results are unhappily before the world. They were unwise enough to permit themselves to be used for Mr. Graves' partizan purposes. They have overwhelmed themselves with shame and confusion. This church standing firm in the consciousness of its own integrity and uprightness, and justified by the pious and intelligent throughout our whole land, has lived on, and prospered, and multiplied, more than at any former period of its existence. We make no pretensions to infallibility in any sense. We are all liable to err. But upon a careful review of this whole case, having now had ample time to consider it in all its bearings, and relations, we feel conscious that we have done our duty, and we are ready to abide the verdict of the last day.

Yours truly, etc., etc.