

# Tennessee Baptist

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NO. 7.

## Selections.

### THE FIRST CHURCH IN PROVIDENCE.

Not the oldest of the Baptists in America, as shown by S. ADAMS, Pastor of the Church in Newport, R. I.

### II.

Reliable Tradition harmonizes with the preceding view.

That opportunity might be afforded for weakening the foregoing conclusion, I have left strictly within the bounds of the highest documentary evidence. I now add, that tradition of the most reliable character, generally, if not universally, as far as the founders and first pastors of the church are concerned, agrees with the preceding view.

Stephen Hopkins, signer of the Declaration of Independence, grandson of Wickenden, uniformly affirmed that Wickenden was the first elder of the existing church, and asserted this in his "History of Providence," published in 1763. Moses Brown, that venerable Nestor of Providence, as he is called by Knowles, always held that his ancestor, Chad Brown, was the first elder of the Providence Baptist church. John Angel, born in 1691, claimed the same honor for his grand-father, Gregory Dexter.

For is there any discrepancy in these claims. When the present venerable President of the Rhode Island Historical Society, John Howland, Esq., now over ninety years of age, told Moses Brown, with whom he was intimate sixty or seventy years ago, of the claims of Stephen Hopkins, which seemed to conflict with what he affirmed, Moses replied, "that there was no contradiction, for they were probably both elders at the same time." A statement undoubtedly true; and the same may be said of Dexter, co-temporary with them both. The fact appears to be that: C. Brown, Wickenden and Dexter, in withdrawing from Olney's and setting up the present church, labored for a while together. Chad Brown seems to have died first, Wickenden next, and Dexter, living to a great age, survived both. Under these circumstances it would be natural for the descendants of each, as they did, to claim for their progenitors the honor of being the first elders of that church.

For were the immediate descendants of these men the only ones of this opinion; in the early days of Providence it was the general belief it was the universal belief.

Callender in 1738, says, "The most ancient inhabitants now alive, some of them above eighty years old, who personally knew Mr. Williams, and were well acquainted with many of the original settlers, never heard that Mr. Brown, Mr. Wickenden or Wigginton, Mr. Dexter, Mr. Olney, Mr. Tillinghast, &c., were the first founders of that church."

This shows that the general opinion of Roger Williams being the founder and first pastor of that church is a modern theory; the further you go back the less generally it is believed; till coming to the most ancient times, to the men who knew Williams, they are such entire strangers to it, that they never heard that he formed the Baptist church there. The first, and the second, and the third, and almost the fourth.

generation must pass away, before men can believe that any others than Wickenden, Brown, &c., were the founders of that church. Two other things deserve a passing notice: 1st. The college in 1770 was built on its present site, "because it was the home of Chad Brown, the first minister of the Baptist church"; and 2d. On the bell used on the tablet Roger Williams is not mentioned as the founder of the church. There is reason to believe that if an attempt had been made to do it, it would have been steadily resisted by many in that day; and even by some of the leading men in the building of the house. Indeed there are many of the most aged and well-informed men of Providence at this day, who contend that Roger Williams was not the founder of that church. All this shows that tradition agrees with the documentary evidence before adduced. And yet all depends upon the founders and first pastors of the church; for Williams' church was founded in 1639, but Chad Brown's, Wickenden's and Dexter's not till 1652. The mistake lies in the existing church, taking not its own, but another's date.

### III.

The old Church, and the relation of the existing Church to it.

Having shown that the present separated from the old five principle church in the year 1652, we feel some interest to enquire concerning the fate of the original body.

Comer, Callender and Backus all agree that it remained under the care of Thomas Olney. As there is no difference of opinion on this, I shall only make one quotation, and that from Backus already given. "Mr. Thomas Olney, senior, died this year (1692) He was next to Mr. Williams in the pastoral office at Providence, and continued so to his death, over that part of the church, who are called five principle Baptists, in distinction from those who parted from their brethren about the year 1652, under the leading of Elder Wickenden, &c. Vol. 1, p. 505.

A melancholy interest invests the last notices we have of this ancient church. It continued till early in the last century, when it became extinct, leaving no records, and but few events in its history behind. The fullest information of it I have found is in a note by Callender, on the 115 page of his discourse. Speaking of this church, he adds below, "This last continued till about twenty years, when, becoming destitute of an elder, the members were united with other churches"; and further adds, "At present there is some prospect of their re-establishment in church order."

This was written in 1738. The church had then been extinct about twenty years; that is, it is its visibility about 1718.—Morgan Edwards says, that the church under Olney continued till 1715. So that it continued after the division in 1652 for more than sixty years, when, discouraged, they scattered, never to be united again.—And thus passed away the original church, and the waves of time have almost obliterated its remembrance from the minds of men. Callender, indeed, thought when he wrote that it might be re-established, and in this he would have rejoiced as it would have afforded him a church that would hold communion with him, and with the people under his care; but he was disappointed, and for more than an hundred and thirty years the old church in Providence is among the things that were.

existing church, for more than a hundred years, it is not too much to say, that it was in its communion, among the strictest of the strict; nor do I know of an instance, during that period, of an attempt to relax the rigor of their practice without producing a re-action, and drawing the bounds of church fellowship within narrower limits.

It sometimes happens that when a church is reduced low and in distress, another will come to its aid, but the old Providence church after having struggled for existence for more than sixty years, died unpitied and unwept. Has any one a right to take her date, and claim her founder? I know not. The only place for the inscription, "This church was founded A. D. 1639," is the grave of Roger Williams' church.

### IV.

Ancient history sustains the claims of the Newport church.

We have found that the proper date of the Providence church is not 1639, but 1652, and thus it cannot be the oldest of the Baptists in America. We now observe, that ancient history ascribed this priority to the age of the church at Newport.

Comer, the first, and for the early history of our denomination, the most reliable of writers, ascribes distinctly and repeatedly this priority to the Newport church. He had formed the design more than a hundred and twenty years ago, of writing the history of the American Baptists; and in that work, which he only lived to commence, but which embraces an account of this church, he says in one place, That it is the first of the Baptist denomination. And closing his history of it says, "Thus I have briefly given some account of the settlement and progress of the First Baptist church on Rhode Island in New England and the first in America."

This was written about 1730; and to those acquainted with Comer nothing need be said of the value of this testimony. For others I will extract from Benedict a brief notice of his character. He "began his education at Cambridge, but finished it at New Haven." He "did fair to be one of the most eminent ministers of his day; his character was unspotted and his talents respectable and popular; he had conceived the design of writing the history of the American Baptists, and for the purpose of forwarding it travelled as far as Philadelphia, [a great undertaking at that day] opened a correspondence with persons in the different colonies, and also in England, Ireland, &c."

This excellent man, who took unwearied pains to procure for his history the most correct information, was especially distinguished for the extreme accuracy of his dates; was, when he wrote the above, himself a six principle Baptist, was intimately acquainted with the church at Providence, and had advantages for knowing its early history, that no other historian has since possessed.

From the way in which he asserts it, the priority of the Newport church must have been a universally conceded fact. He was careful to record as certain, that on which any suspicion rested; and yet this father of American Baptist history, whose veracity has never been questioned, with 1644 as the acknowledged date of the Newport church, states that in age it is prior to any other Baptist church in America. It is true, and I was sorry to see it, some later hand has added in a note, "Excepting that of Providence." Who wrote this I will not say, but no one should touch Comer's writings, unless he is a more reliable witness, than that pains-taking and impartial man.

Besides his general carefulness, he was, when he wrote the above, on the most favorable terms with the Providence church, while a difficulty had occurred between him and the Newport church which caused him the most painful feelings. While pastor of that church he urged upon them the imposition of hands with considerable earnestness, which brought on discussion and alienation, till at last a separation took place, when he immediately passed under the imposition of hands and became a pastor of a six principle church. It is true that the breach was afterwards healed, and the account of the reconciliation, the church permitted him to make; the last of course his of his valuable entries in our records. And though the separation was unpleasant, Comer's name is still held in affectionate remembrance by the church.

only correct, but it was at that time generally, if not universally acknowledged to be so. He makes no exceptions to his remark, that he was too well acquainted with the history of the church in Providence to except that; for he well knew that it was not formed till 1652, eight years after that in Newport.

Should it appear strange, that if the claim of the Newport church was well founded it should suffer it to be taken away, and not reclaimed till within a few years; the solution is plain.

Soon after the church at Providence had affixed to itself a wrong date, the war of the Revolution came on; and in that great national crisis, no place suffered more than Newport. It was early taken and long held by the British forces; the property of its citizens was taken; its commerce crippled; its merchants, distinguished for enterprise, intelligence and wealth, fled, never to return. Amid the general distress note suffered more than the First church. Its pastor was forced from his charge; its members were scattered; its sanctuary, dedicated by the sainted and talented Callender, and where with so much sweetness he had preached the gospel, was seized, desecrated, mangled, for the use of the British soldiers; and when at last, a few returned and looked on the desolation of their beloved Zion, they wept; they were poor, long had they to struggle even for existence; and probably knew not, or thought not, that their building was about to be taken from them. A series of events occurred that left not the church at liberty to put forth her appeal for that distinction which she so fairly deserves, and which at first, we doubt not, every church freely accorded to her. But still the members felt, and with them the Island at large, an assurance that nothing could shake, that it was this church which first in America, raised aloft the Baptist standard, and that its founder and first members toiled and suffered, and knew what prison walls and scourges were, before our sister church at Providence had breathed the breath of life. Nor did they doubt but that at last they could make it appear. Dates they knew somewhere or somehow were wrong; and suspected their own; and while looking over the family title deeds to verify or correct theirs, they found that in some way or other their sister had mistaken hers.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

## Communications.

### For the Tennessee Baptist.

#### SEEK A HOME IN HEAVEN.

There is a calm for those who weep,  
A rest for pilgrims given;  
There's pure delight and comfort found  
By faithful souls in heaven.

Who has been grieved, or had his passions roused, yet, will not seek this calm? Who has been a traveler, or weary, and will not seek this everlasting rest? Who has been deluged with that which afterwards gave him pain and trouble, yet will not seek this pure, this never failing delight? Who has sought comfort and found it not, yet will not seek that comfort which is so easily found by the faithful?—Oh! 'tis strange! 'tis passing strange, that you continue to catech at the painted bubble which is out of your reach, but will not take hold of the blessed reality which is so near you!

Are you grieved because you cannot have every thing as you wish? Every thing shall happen for good to them that love the Lord. Are you grieved for the loss of property? Wait patiently upon God, and he will restore it a thousand fold. Have your friends forsaken you? Seek that friend who sticketh closer than a brother. If your friends are dead, and cannot come to you again, you can go to them. I you are weary, do not seek rest at the jilfer door; for he seeketh rest and findeth none. Envy not the rich man his lot; for, he assured, he rests no better than you do. Seek that rest which never fails in the rich and splendid palace of God.

Are you seeking pleasure? That is no where to be found, except in the society of friends, or in the peaceful presence of God. There seek a home in heaven. There is God and there are your best friends. Let us take a flight to that holy land, and view it for ourselves. We have a way-bill, which, if we follow, we cannot miss the way. The way is narrow and beset with thorns, and nothing aims, pruning knives, and blinding serpents; but keep in the way, and they cannot hurt you. Though we tread through a wilderness, we need not get lost, for we are led by the same pillar that led the children of Israel through the wilderness. If we know we have

bread, far superior to that eaten by the children of Israel; for they did eat manna and are dead; but whosoever eateth of this bread shall never die. If we thirst, here is a fountain of pure water. It gushes out of a solid rock; but not the rock of Massah and Meribah. Whosoever will, may drink of this water; and he who drinketh or drinks of it shall never thirst again. If we have been guided by our way-bill, and the pillar which leads us, we may enter in at the straight gate, for it is open. It is never shut by day, and we have no night; it is always open. Here we are warmly greeted by our best friends. Trust them; they will not deceive you; for no hypocrite shall enter here. Here they are free from sickness and sorrow. Their faces shine with gladness. All is peace, and joy, and love. Did you ever dream that you and I were delighted? Were you not by the side of some clear brook, or river, or beneath the shade of some wide spreading tree, or in the society of those you loved, and those by whom you are loved, enchanted by the mellow sounds of music? Ah! here it is realized. Here is the friend who so loved you that he gave himself to die for you—View him seated upon his white throne. He is fairer than all the fair, and altogether lovely. He is exalted above all others, yet he is gentle as a lamb. From beneath his throne gushes a river of pure water, clear as crystal. In the midst of the streets of the city, or on either side of the river is the tree, or trees of life. Methinks there is a forest of them. Take a seat on the bank of this river, beneath the shade of one of these trees. Here your situation is delightful beyond the power of language to describe. Beneath your feet roll the living waters. Over your head are trees loaded with fruits and flowers; for these trees bear twelve manner of fruits, and yield their fruit every month; and the leaves are for the healing of the nations—No poisonous insect, nor viper shy shall annoy you here; for no unclean thing shall enter here. You have need of a candle near the light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth you light. Arise, and view the city. Here is John the Divine. Here him describe it. He has surveyed it and measured its pearly streets. Here are the angels, the cherubim and seraphim beauties bright and lovely. Here are the hundred and forty-four thousand who have their father's name written in their foreheads. Hear them harp with their harps, and sing the new song. Methinks I hear it echoed back by the crystal waters. It is soft and soothing. It will never cloy—Make no mention of the music which attended Cleopatra, or the lyre of Apollo, or Orpheus. This is a glorious reality, and it far exceeds them all. Ah! who would not seek a home in such a place, when it is offered to him without money and without price? On our dull earth we are troubled with sickness, and a fear of death. Come here, and drink this water, and you shall never die. Our God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes. You shall have no more sorrow nor pain. God says, I will give unto him that is athirst, of the fountain of the water of life freely. And the Spirit and the bride say come, and let him that heareth say come, and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take of the waters of life freely. Do not turn a deaf ear to such invitations. 'Tis madness to stay away, when you are so kindly invited. Seek a home in Heaven ere it is too late.

S. D. GUTHRIE.

But a road to Cairo would, in a great measure, supply the place of both. It could be built for half a million less than the Louisville road, and nearly as low as the Headeron road, except the bridge across Tennessee river. In extreme low water, the stage can carry all passengers either from Louisville or Henderson to Nashville. In such seasons Nashville is not so much destitute of dry goods that come via Cincinnati and Louisville as of groceries and heavy articles that come from New Orleans, and the river up to Cairo is always navigable. In high water, steamers would put passengers from Louisville to Cairo in about twenty-four hours,—then five more would bring them to Nashville by railroad.

Again: A road to Cairo would put us in connexion with St. Louis, the Missouri river to the Yellow Stone—with the Upper Mississippi to Minnesota, Iowa and Wisconsin—with the Illinois—with Chicago and the Lakes via Illinois Central Railroad and with Buffalo and New York by other railroads. A road to Cairo would be a thoroughfare for travellers to Charleston, Georgia, Alabama, and the means of conveyance of much produce from all the great West to the South Eastern States; it would also bear much of the merchandise from Charleston for all the western world, rather than send it around to New Orleans from the dangerous Capes on the Florida coast. This would greatly enhance the value of the Chattanooga road and raise the stock 100 per cent. St. Louis, will no doubt, soon construct a road to Cairo, and there would be a continuous route to Charleston and Savannah. The mercantile trade that Nashville gets from the East via Louisville will soon come via Charleston and Chattanooga; thus lessening the necessity of a road to any point on the Ohio except at the confluence of the two mighty rivers.

I would, were it necessary, offer proof for the above statements; but I presume my intelligent readers do not need them: the whole matter is plain to their comprehension. They will see, though now too late, that a connexion with the mouth of the Ohio and the railroads to concatenate there, would be of vast importance over any other point.

### SOUTHERN MAN.

For the Tennessee Baptist.

Brother Graves: Will you publish an account of some meetings, for the information of those who feel interested in the advancement of the kingdom of Christ?

We commenced a meeting at Poplar Grove Church, Gibson county, Tennessee, on Friday before the third Sabbath in August. The Church seemed to be interested for the success of the meeting, and all seemed ready to engage in the exercises and duties of the meeting, with a commendable zeal. The meeting continued six days, and resulted in the conversion of some six or seven persons. Baptism was deferred to another meeting. The ministers in attendance were brethren Gardner and Collins, part of the time. Brother Wateridge was with us most of the time. Brother Daws, and brother Wm. Fressan, (licentiates,) were with us during the meeting.

On Saturday before the fourth Sabbath in August, we commenced a meeting at Spring Hill Church, Gibson county, Tennessee, which continued 12 days and nights at that place. We had a very interesting meeting, which resulted in the conversion of some ten or twelve persons; and a deep feeling of solemnity characterized the meeting throughout its progress. And at its close, there was an unusual amount of christian feeling and brotherly love manifested while we gave each other the parting hand. There were six baptisms during the meeting, and at our next regular meeting two others were baptised. The ministers who labored with us during the above named meetings, labored faithfully. May God bless them, and give them abundant success in the Gospel ministry.

G. WRIGHT.  
Ministers' Report, Sept. 23, 1852.

man with an unparalleled harvest, providing thereby food and raiment for the needy; and still preserves the peace and prosperity of our beloved nation and country; and that he may stay his afflictive hand, which seems to be scourging our country: Be it therefore resolved, That this body unanimously recommend to the Churches, especially of this Association, as well as to our beloved brethren of corresponding Associations, that the first Sabbath in November next be observed as a day of humiliation, thanksgiving and prayer, to Almighty God.

And be it further resolved, That we cordially invite christians every where to unite with us.

And be it further resolved, That a copy of these resolutions be forwarded to the Christian Index and the Tennessee Baptist, for publication; and that other papers, religious or otherwise, favorable to the object, be respectfully invited to copy.

A. W. BUFORD, Clerk.  
For the Tennessee Baptist.  
ROCKY SPRING CHURCH,  
October 4, 1852.

Brother Graves: Knowing that glad tidings concerning our Zion, will give joy to you and the readers of your paper, I will state that I commenced a meeting of days at Rocky Spring Church, on the fourth Sabbath in September. Brother Levin Savage, a faithful, laborious servant, came to my assistance on Monday evening. We continued the meeting until the first Sabbath in this month. Ten professed to find peace in believing—some individuals were baptized with Christ in baptism, this morning, by brother Savage. Twelve individuals united with the Baptist Church in Bolivar, seven by experience and baptism, four by letter, and one from the Campbellites; the wife of our worthy brother, A. T. Robertson.

Yours,  
E. H. OSBORNE.

For the Tennessee Baptist.  
CAZZICOVILLE, Bathurst Co.  
Tenn., Oct. 4, 1852.

Brother Graves: We commenced a protracted meeting with the New Hope Church, Bathurst county, on Saturday before the third Sabbath in September, which lasted sixteen days, during which time the Lord revived his cause in a powerful manner, and many sinners were cut in the heart, and came forward for the prayers of Christians; and before the meeting closed, there were some thirty persons who professed to have found the Lord in the pardon of their sins; and on Saturday, the fifteenth day of the meeting, I baptized sixteen willing converts into the fellowship of the New Hope Church. To God be all the glory.

We had the labor of instruction H. Miller and E. Grede, at the first of the meeting, and of brother Marchbanks, a separate Baptist, soon of the time; also, brother Young, at the close of the meeting.—Twenty members were added to the Church during the meeting, and there are others that I think will join soon.—There are many other things which I would like to write had I a taste for those lengthy epistles.

Yours,  
A. J. McKABB.

For the Tennessee Baptist.  
EUREKA, Tenn., Oct. 8, 1852.

Brother Graves: On the 31st August a protracted meeting of eleven days was held at Shaver's School House, three miles from this place, the result of which was the hopeful conversion of 46 persons, and 42 additions to the Church by experience. I am informed that several who joined were from the Methodists, but lest I should throw Rev. Mr. G. W. Alexander, (late of Jonesboro' Creek,) into another paroxysm, I forbear further remarks about their case.

'Twas a most peaceful and glorious meeting, and held in the midst of a strong hold of anti-ism and wickedness, where the most determined, proud and desperate opposition to the missionary cause has existed for years.

But the tall ones of wickedness were brought to low and cry for mercy; and anti-ism received a check from which it will not soon recover, perhaps a death-blow.

Several Churches united them in the fruits, but Watson's church.

W. C. KEWELL.

It is not poetry of pretence, but the adoption of the expression to the idea that clothes a writer's meaning—as it is not the size or glister of the materials, but their being fitted each to its place, that gives strength to the truth.



The importance of united efforts in the Domestic Mission cause.

The following, written by Dr. Jeter, was read in the Western Convention.

Several Associations in this State, we learn from their Minutes, conduct Missions within their own bounds. This is praiseworthy. We have no objection but that such efforts have resulted, and may again result, in much good.

First. By this limited and unconnected system of labor, the most desirable and promising Mission seems are likely to be overlooked or neglected.

Secondly. By this system the most able and efficient ministers may fail to be called into the Mission field.

Thirdly. The judicious direction of a Missionary enterprise, even on a small scale, requires a degree of attention and sacrifice, which, in fact, is rarely found in a Committee of a District Association.

There cannot be a greater mistake than to suppose that ungodly disciples to be contented. There is often a violent opposition of opinion, with cries of "shame, shame!" when a young female missionary is to be called twice in a year.

There is no man so great as to be called twice in a year. It is a great advantage to be called twice in a year.

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Commentations.

For the Tennessee Baptist.

Do you love the People of God?

A short time before his commission the Saviour said to his disciples: "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another."

Christian love does not originate in nature. It is a gift of God. It is a love that is pure, that is true, that is lasting.

Christian love implies that we make the people of God the objects of our affection. We love them because they are the people of God.

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Special Notices.

The subscriber takes this method to remind the brethren in whose hands he has left lists of subscriptions for the Foreign Mission Board.

There will be a protracted meeting held with the Baptist church at the head of Cedar Creek, to commence on Saturday before the 4th Sabbath in October, 1852.

General Association of Tennessee and North Alabama. The next session to be held with the Church at Athens, Ala., commencing 1st of October next.

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Letters Received.

A. W. D. Atkinson and remittance. "A Subscriber," the editor is not at home.

W. W. Burnett and remittance. W. F. Bradford and remittance. J. D. Barnes and remittance.

W. F. Browning and remittance. M. Ball. C. W. Case and remittance. D. Carr and remittance.

C. L. Case and remittance. J. H. D. Case and remittance. S. K. Daniel and remittance.

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Agents for the Tennessee Baptist.

Alabama. Rev. J. Hale, Athens. Rev. D. R. Hale, Athens.

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Queensware, Glass and China.

AT "HICKS" CHINA WARE. NOW in stock a full and heavy stock of crockery.

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