

suffer expulsion. Or, if it were a subject of belief, it leads a church to impose upon itself some teaching, believed by the church to be false. A council, called, might decree that the person, under discipline, should be excluded, when the church might be of the opinion that the member only deserved censure; or the council might decree that the person should still remain a member, while the church would be convinced that the person deserved excommunication. The same absurdity follows when the subject for adjudication might be doctrine.

This principle, dear brethren, of the direct and final responsibility of a church to her Divine Head, is the one which we have been holding sacred; and we supposed and still believe, that this is the principle, held distinctly and with unwavering firmness by Baptists all over the world.

Upon this principle we have taken our stand, and we are not less convinced now of its scriptural soundness than we have been heretofore. Now in our case, it was not a matter of minor importance, upon which we asked advice of a council. Had it been a question in dispute about some matters not touching the great principles of church discipline, we might have handed it over to a council for final adjudication. It was not a comparatively trifling affair of this kind. A subject of no greater importance could engage the attention of a church. Exclusion of a pastor from the ministry—and exclusion of a pastor from membership were not only possible issues, but one an issue *in fact*, for our pastor had been excluded from the pulpit before the advice of a council was sought. But Dr. Crawley and Mr. Armstrong affirm that a council should have absolute power to make a final settlement of whatever is submitted to them.

We would ask you to look upon the subject fairly, and in all its bearings; and mark what it involves. If we had committed to the council full power, what might they not have done? We will keep within the range of probability. They might have required us to rescind the vote which suspended Dr. Pryor as a member of our church; they might have asked us to have rescinded the vote by which he had been excluded from the Pastorate; and then required us to retain him in these relations; or, more probably, to have given him a dismissal as a member, and to have received his resignation as a pastor, in a regular way, as if his moral character had never been questioned.

Now see, what this claim, if admitted, would have involved.

1. The church would have empowered another body, if this is granted, to compel a (the church) to declare to the world that it man was innocent, whom in their hearts they did not believe innocent.

2. The church would have empowered the council to restore a suspended member whom they believed deserved exclusion.

3. It would have left it in the hands of a council, to compel the church to give a regular dismissal as pastor to a man whom they believed had rendered himself unworthy to fill that high office.

4. It would have involved the fact that a church could obey Christ in the most important act of discipline committed by Him to them alone, by delegating the same to others.

The council decides—the church accepts. The church holds the opinion which has been gathered from facts uncontradicted and unexplained as yet, that the Word of God requires that the man should be excluded from the church. The council advises otherwise, but no reasons are given to modify the opinion of the church. The church is required to cast aside their opinion, and take that of the council. That is, the church must do what they believe to be a great wrong—a wrong to the church of God, simply because they have been advised to such a course. A Baptist church cannot, dare not, do such a thing, holding, as it does, the belief that the whole church is responsible for the purity of the body.

We tell Mr. Armstrong that his teaching is "monstrous." Is his doctrine to be accepted by Granville Street Church? Then it has an equal claim to be accepted by the whole denomination. What do you say, dear brethren? Is not Mr. Armstrong's claim subversive of the fundamental principles of our church polity? It assuredly is.

Wrong inference. Mr. A. says, when referring to the recommendation for a council by the Association, "Is it not obvious that in the opinion of that body, the decision should be final."

We do not think that this inference can in any way be drawn from the recommendation of the Association for the following reasons:

1. The Association would not have committed itself to the possible necessity of setting the decision of an indefinite number of men above the decision of the church.

The recommendation did not specify the number of Councillors to be called. Three,—one from each Province—would have been in compliance with the recommendation. It is possible that these three might have decided contrary to the church. It cannot be possible that the Association would bind itself, without hearing either party, to accept the possible issue of having a church condemned and bound, contrary to their solemn judgment, by three men.

2. As an association of Baptists councils must have been regarded by them as advisory, and not as judicial.

3. The Association would not have violated one of the articles of its own constitution, which reads thus: "All power over the churches is disclaimed, so far as respects any interference with their independence and discipline."

Having now discussed the several points proposed in our third letter, we beg to ask you if Mr. Armstrong's arguments in support of the binding force of the decision given by the council, are sound? Sound! We say it in all sincerity, they appear to us to be unworthy of the man. Shall we, after what we have said, notice his laboured argument on the use of a single word by the church—"adjudication." Is it wonderful that in asking aid from men of standing in the denomination, the church should feel that whatever was done by them, the fundamental principles of our church government and discipline would be safe in their keeping? Who would have supposed that any Baptist man would dare to claim to bind us by giving an interpretation to a single word, which interpretation is not warranted by our principles of church government; and when facts in abundance lay all around him, to shew that his interpretation was utterly inadmissible? In whatever degree the church wished the council to "adjudicate," it is written all over the case as with a sunbeam, that they did not authorize, nor wish, nor expect that body to adjudicate finally upon the case which they submitted to them for their "opinion." How idle for Mr. Armstrong to give himself to special pleading on a case so plain.

We think we have now said enough to show beyond all question that Mr. Armstrong has utterly failed to establish what he undertook.

Why call a council, then, if its decision was not to be final?—"Why did you call a council?" Why take so much trouble to place before them all the evidence at hand? Wherefore all the array of proceedings which were taken if after all the decision was not to be an absolute and final settlement of the questions submitted? This question was asked by Judge Johnston and it also underlies Mr. Armstrong's letter. Let us answer it now and fully. To most men we believe no answer is required. The reasons are plain.

Granville Street Church had decided upon a vast mass of testimony that Dr. Pryor ought to be suspended from church membership, and eventually (in the absence of explanation of certain facts) excluded. Before passing finally upon Dr. Pryor's standing the church invited a council; for what purpose? To aid them by their advice in the discharge of their most distressing and responsible duties. To come to particulars, what did the church want the Council to do? The church knew the facts that made against Dr. Pryor. They had drawn an adverse conclusion. They wanted the Council to take these facts and weigh them, and if they were of the opinion that they did not warrant our conclusion to show us our error. To show by a review of all the leading facts what conclusion ought in justice to be drawn. Did they do this? Not at all. They gave us their conclusion. The church wanted their conclusion certainly but they wanted also to see for themselves how that conclusion was reached. If the decision was according to the evidence that fact could have been shown, and if shown the church could not have resisted the decision. Neglecting to show how the decision accorded with the facts proved, the council neglected their great work. Their advice had a poor claim for acceptance when the reasons upon which that advice was given were withheld. When the decision was delivered the church could not and to this day they cannot see how in the light of the facts proved they could do other than exclude Dr. Pryor. Mr. Armstrong of course saw why the facts did not warrant exclusion. He could have shown how the multitude of facts which led the church to believe Dr. Pryor guilty could be accounted for on the supposition of innocence. He could have relieved the church from the distress which had weighed upon them for months because of their belief that one of their members, and he their pastor had been guilty of misconduct. He could have caused them to rejoice by showing them their pastor's

innocence. Mr. Armstrong was respectfully and anxiously asked after the evidence was all before him and before he gave his decision to explain the evidence to the church. How lamentable, how very lamentable that he left these things undone!

By order of the Church,
B. H. EATOR, Clerk

P.S.—Mr. A. says, "The highest tribunal had not then set up her claim." The highest tribunal—the church of Christ—set up her claim before Mr. Armstrong had an existence. It was set up 1800 years ago. This expression—"The highest tribunal"—is found in an editorial in the *Messenger*, and does duty in a criticism made by Dr. Crawley upon the principle propounded in the passage in which the phrase occurs. In that criticism Dr. C. attempts to degrade the expression by making it designate a single Baptist church, and one that might be composed of members not highly gifted nor highly cultivated, for whom as persons attempting to do church business he expresses a sneering contempt. Mr. A. goes to this unjustifiable and reprehensible deliverance of Dr. C. and takes the phrase, rolls it up into a taunt, and throws it into the face of Granville Street Church. But Mr. A., we are persuaded, was blind to what is really conveyed in this line. It really savors of contempt for the Church of Christ.
B. H. E.

No. 7.

Dear Brethren,—

It only remains that we examine the arguments adduced by Mr. Armstrong in support of his attempt to condemn the action of the church.

When Dr. Crawley censured us in the public press for daring to act upon our convictions of duty subsequent to the delivery of the Council's Decision, we replied that as a Church of Christ it was our prerogative to do so. In support of our course we quoted the plain direction of Scripture. We also appended extracts from the treatises of Haynes, Hiseox, Wayland, and Crowell.

We are not therefore bound to accept all that these authors teach. Because we quoted their opinions on a certain point we did not by doing so bind ourselves to accept all they teach. But Mr. Armstrong, on the assumption apparently, that we had thus endorsed all the views set forth by these writers, labours to condemn us by an indiscriminate application of Crowell's views to our course of action. We frankly inform Mr. Armstrong that we did, and still do, endorse the extract which we published from Crowell, but we do not accept *in toto* all the doctrines of Crowell; and we as frankly remind him that in his letter of September 9th 1867 to the clerk of this church, he himself said, "I do not, *in toto*, accept Crowell's doctrines." (*Reply*, p. 69). Mr. Armstrong has not, however, pointed out wherein he differs from this writer's views, but it would seem that it is not upon the matter of church councils. We shall in the course of this letter point out one particular in which we entirely dissent from Crowell.

Mr. Armstrong versus Mr. Armstrong.—Let us place side by side Mr. Armstrong's opinion as contained in one of his foregoing letters, and his opinion as contained in the decision of the late council. To each of these documents he has subscribed his name. In his letter he quotes from Crowell: "A mere advisory council which leaves all parties to accept or reject the advice given at pleasure, is a mere farce. Advice comes better from individuals. But a council should never be called except to decide something." In letter 5 Mr. A. endorses the extracts quoted by him. It is clear, then, that the above is not one of the points on which he differs from the learned author.

When as a member of the late council convened in Halifax, and called upon to say distinctly whether Granville Street Church was blamable for not seeking the assistance of a council at an earlier period, Mr. Armstrong, as a member of that body, said: "The Council are not able to decide upon this particular question. But * * * an advisory council will generally be found desirable and * * * in harmony with the practice of the churches in these Provinces." (*Reply*, p. 67). Mr. Armstrong is indignant that we should defer to our own convictions after the council had spoken; but he does not scruple to proclaim over his own hand a conviction which is not only flatly at variance with that solemnly given as a member of the late council by himself to this church in September last, but also calculated to throw discredit upon the entire decision:—

Sept. 1867.

Mr. Armstrong thinks an "Advisory Council" desirable, and in harmony with the practice of our churches.

April, 1868.

Mr. Armstrong thinks "A mere Advisory Council * * * is a mere farce."

Into such lamentable contradictions as the above has Mr. A. fallen in his great eager-

ness to multiply accusations against the Church.

Crowell and the Church.—Mr. A. says "The doctrine of Crowell instead of countenancing, condemns the course pursued by the Church."

Crowell, in the quotations given by Mr. A. teaches, that a Church should commit a delinquent pastor to the absolute jurisdiction of a Council to deal with him as a minister, and to reserve to themselves the duty of dealing with him as a church member. Then, in case he is acquitted, the council alone pronounces upon his ministerial standing, and the Church holds him up as a member of their body;—and in case he is condemned, it is the Council that deposes him from the ministry and it is the church that excludes him and terminates his membership with them. The work is divided: he is known and tried by the Council only as a minister, and he is known and tried by the Church only as a member. This is the plain doctrine of Crowell in that portion of his treatise by the use of which Mr. A. seeks to overwhelm us with condemnation.

But, what are the facts? What were Dr. Pryor's relations, ministerial and otherwise, to the Church, when the late Council entered upon the labours assigned them? The character of Dr. Pryor had been assailed from two different quarters. In the one case the reports pointed to impurity; and in the other case the character of his own accounts and absence of vouchers indicated dishonesty. The first of these charges had received the patient attention of the church, and after due investigation it was decided to exclude him from the Pastorate. Then the character of his business transactions with Miss Vass was carefully examined, and such was the nature of the facts, that a resolution was passed suspending him from the church as a member. This had all taken place before the Central Association met in Canning. At this stage of proceedings we received the late Council.

What was the plain duty of Mr. Armstrong, according to Crowell, as a member of that Council? The special teaching of Crowell which Mr. A. regards as so important, is, as has already been made plain, that Dr. Pryor should have been dealt with by the Council as a Minister and by the Church as one of its members. When the late Council came together in Halifax, its special work was trial and decision upon Dr. Pryor's ministerial relations; and all that remained to be done, according to Mr. C.'s doctrine, must be performed by the church. For trying and deposing Dr. P. from the ministry the church unquestionably transgressed Crowell's law; but this transgression preceded the calling of the Council. What was done afterwards was all in harmony with this author's teaching. But the church did not quote Crowell to justify them in what they had done previous to calling a council, but to sustain them in what took place afterwards. The controversy with Dr. Crawley was, on his part, that all independent action of the church should have ceased at the point where the council came in to participate in the matter; but on the part of the Church, it was argued that the church had a right, which she could not, according to Baptist polity, and had not, surrendered, to enter upon further investigation and take, "unembarrassed," independent action, subsequent to the deliberations of the Council. To support their argument the church quoted Crowell. Here we say, and emphatically say, and it will be an outrage upon reason and facts to deny it, that Crowell condemns what the church did previous to calling the council, but he justifies all that the Church did after the Council was called; and it was for the sustaining of the latter alone that Crowell was cited.

In departing from the teachings of Crowell in dealing with Dr. Pryor as a Minister, unaided by a council, the church only did what has been done, by Baptist churches repeatedly, in this Province.

And his deposition from the Ministry by the Church alone, although unsanctioned by Crowell, was sanctioned by Dr. Pryor's connections who were members of the Church, and indeed they participated in his expulsion. "I agreed to the resolution excluding Dr. Pryor from the Pastorate," says Judge Johnston. (Letter to Granville Street Church, page 12.) As Dr. Pryor's own connections were in part responsible and in fact agreed to this part of the discipline, it makes the censure of Crowell fall very gently upon us. But we do not think Crowell sound in this special rule as we shall endeavour to demonstrate in another part of this letter. And the concurrence of relatives ought to be an additional evidence to the public that although Crowell's rule