

Mr. Eaton, the Clerk of Granville Street Church, tells us, no doubt with her approval, that the church asked for "advice" only, a mere "opinion," and not a "decree." In proof of this, Mr. E. gives us a garbled statement from the resolution of July 12th, which he intimates, expresses the view of the church as to the nature and extent of the work required of the Council—"Investigate subjects and report to the church." The passage in the Resolution reads thus: "Investigate the subjects in clause 2nd of the Basis hereinbefore mentioned, and report to the church their opinion in what degree, and which of the charges against P. have been established before them, &c. Observe the marked and palpable discrepancy. The former directs investigation and a report to the church; the latter directs the Council to "investigate the subjects specified in clause 2nd of the "Basis," and report to the church their opinion, in what degree any and which of the charges alleged against Dr. P., have been established before them." Does not this passage authorize and require the Council to act as the judges in Dr. P.'s case?—to decide the matter as between him and the church. The Council formed no "decree," and gave none. It will be seen that the Council kept strictly within the basis. They heard the case—the evidence and the arguments, and gave their opinion, which, under the circumstances in which it was asked, and in reference to the charges presented, was entitled to respect and acceptance of both parties. But to proceed. In the preamble to the Resolutions of July 12, the church says:—"And although as an independent church of Christ they are possessed of full and ample power to consider and adjudicate upon all matters whatever pertaining to the interests of the church, or to the conducting of its proceedings, yet in view of the high respect which they entertain for the Central Association, of which this church is a member, and for its opinions and acts in its associated capacity, be it therefore resolved—That this church cordially approve of the recommendation of the N. S., Central Association, to invite a Council to consider the charges that have been made against Rev. Dr. Pryor, and the action of the church thereon, &c." Does not this reference to the full and ample power of the church to consider and adjudicate upon all matters, &c.—show that the church felt that they were yielding something when accepting the recommendation from the Council? What was it? Was it not that, by consenting to commit the matters in dispute, to the judgment of a Council, they were yielding their claim to "adjudicate" in this particular case? What else under the circumstances can it be? Now if we find that the church has authorized another body—the Council—to "adjudicate" in this case, it will, I think, be apparent to every one, that she cannot retain the right to judge in it—because the church could not rightfully and honestly, give power for the purpose, and yet rightfully and honestly retain, and use the same power in the same case. The "Basis" proves, conclusively, that the church authorized the Council to "adjudicate." The 2nd clause reads thus:—"The subject for investigation and adjudication to be: [1], the charges of immorality, and all testimony having reference thereto, which has been, or may hereafter be adduced; [2], the charges of a pecuniary character in the accounts with Miss Vass [3], the action taken by the church in reference to each of the above cases."

Here we have it under the hands of the church, that the Council was called, not merely to investigate certain charges against Dr. P., but to ADJUDICATE on them. This, then, was the work assigned the Council. Such being the case, how can it be said that the church was not bound to abide by the decision? What! ask a Council of ministers and other christian brethren to adjudicate on charges of gravest import, and the church authorizing and requiring them to do so—regard itself as not bound to accept their decision! nay, as having a right to reject it! What an unreasonable assumption! What a monstrous claim!

Will Mr. Eaton tell us that "adjudicate" means give "advice," to express a mere "opinion," estimate of weight or force; a thing to be rejected or trampled down, as may suit the views, feelings or interests of either party? or that the party laying down charges for adjudication, and requiring submission from the other party can rightfully—because it happens to have the power—lay hands on the weaker party and inmolate him. The idea of adjudication does not admit a right in either party to set aside the decision of the chosen and accepted adjudicators; or a right in the other party to inflict on the accused but acquitted party, all the punishment it has power to inflict, either rightfully or otherwise, previous to accepting the adjudicators. Would this be "adjudication?" Would it not be an utter disregard—a shameful mockery of it? Surely Mr. Eaton cannot regard it in any other light; but if otherwise, I must say, I would neither wish to be his client, nor to have him for my judge. Far, far distant be the day, when such monstrous notions as to adjudication, and the obligation to respect it, shall disgrace courts of law, debauch public sentiment, and render strife and controversy interminable. It is painful to know, that from any cause whatever, a church could invite a Council to undertake the delicate, onerous and responsible task of adjudicating on charges most seriously affecting the reputation, usefulness and happiness of a fellow-being, once its pastor, and afterwards treat the decision with contempt. Thus violating a palpable pledge; and then to be told by one of her officers [one most active in the prosecution] with the approval of the church, that the Council was called only to investigate subjects and report to the church. By which representation it is, in effect, said, the Council had no right or authority to adjudicate in the case, though that is the very thing the church had authorized and directed to do! Else why investigate the case at all?

The facts presented, fully sustain my position—that the church was in right and reason bound to accept the decision of the Council; and that in rejecting that decision, and excluding Dr. P., a grievous wrong was committed.

What can justify so flagrant a violation of right? It will not do to talk of the independence of the church; for independence does not touch the point; and cannot, therefore, relieve the church from a fulfilment of a plain, palpable pledge. Was not the church independent in adopting the recommendation of the Association; independent in laying down the "Basis," independent in requiring Dr. P. to agree to this "Basis," independent in calling the Council; independent in sending out beforehand a copy of the Basis to each

member; independent in accepting and recognizing the Council to try the charges on the "Basis" laid down; independent in conducting the prosecution! Surely, independence cannot now set her free from the obligation assumed by her position and conduct in the case.

By his acceptance of the Basis and the Council was not Dr. P. bound to abide by the decision? By laying down that Basis, and accepting the Council to try the case on that Basis, was not the Church bound in a similar manner? Who could imagine that the Church would repudiate her own "Basis?" Independence cannot now relieve her.

The most independent nation has no right to violate an agreement with the weakest individual within or without the realm especially when it lays down a "Basis" for him. If the party agreeing, almost on compulsion, to the Basis, is bound also? To talk of independence in justification of a breach of faith, or other wrong committed by a nation, church, or individual, is itself a wrong done to independence, an insult to the human understanding, and an outrage on right.

As Dr. Crowell has been adduced in support of the course pursued by the Church, I will in my next show that the course is first and last at variance with the view of the above well-known writer on "Baptist Policy." Respectfully yours,  
GEO. ARMSTRONG.

Bridgetown, March 23rd, 1868.

From the Christian Visitor, April 16

No. 4.

CROWELL AND COUNCILS.

DEAR VISITOR,—

Granville Street Church has quoted from Crowell's "Manual," to justify its course in rejecting and condemning Dr. Pryor in spite of the Council's decision acquitting him of criminality. Crowell, in his Church Manual, for which Dr. Ripley wrote an introduction, says when speaking of the discipline of a minister when a Council is called: "The investigation before the Council should be thorough, and a full record of all the facts proved should be entered on its minutes, with the names of the witnesses; and a copy should be transmitted to the Church, who may proceed to an original investigation, if not satisfied with that of the Council. If the offence is such as to require his exclusion from church fellowship, they can now proceed without embarrassment, in the same way as with any other member."

This passage does not apply to Dr. P.'s case, but a very different one; the doctrine of Crowell, instead of countenancing, condemns the course pursued by the Church.

It is to be regretted that, in her eagerness to gather up support for the course adopted, the Church should have overlooked passages directly opposed to that course, first and last; and seized upon one which only appears to favour her claim by having been presented apart from its connection, and in forgetfulness, or disregard of the circumstances of the case to which Crowell refers. Had the passages I shall present been observed by the Church, it cannot be supposed that Crowell would have been marshalled in support of a course at variance with the principles he lays down. In order to correct the improper, unwarranted, and almost unaccountable use made of Crowell, to justify the course referred to, and also in order, as far as possible, to remove the impression produced by such use, I will, for the sake of this and other churches, present the views of this author as to what he regards the proper mode of treatment in reference to a minister charged with grave delinquency, and as to the respect due to the decision of a Council in such cases. And as Granville Street Church has endorsed the views of Crowell, she will of course be the more willing and ready to accept as correct his statements on the points referred to.

Crowell says:—"If a minister is guilty of scandalous sin, the church has power to investigate the facts, and exclude him from fellowship. But this is not all that the case requires. For although it is plain that if he is unfit to be a church member, he is unworthy to be a minister. Yet, as the agency of the presbytery was called in to invest him with the ministerial office, it is equally necessary to divest him of it. One church may not undo that which properly required the consent and agency of many churches to do; and if a presbytery or Council, composed of pastors and Elders of other churches, is in any sense necessary to ordain a man to the ministerial office, it is necessary in the same sense, and to the same extent, in order to depose him from it. Other churches, also, and their pastors, have a deep interest in the removal from office of one who has sustained so important a relation to them all, as a public teacher of religion. A fundamental law respecting the conferring of office is, that the same power which makes may unmake. A Council should, therefore, be first called to investigate charges of delinquency against a minister. It is right that every man should be tried by his peers, when charges are brought against him relating to his official character. This sound, general principle is peculiarly applicable to the minister of the gospel.—And if he deserves to be deposed from the ministry, and expelled from the Church, the former steps should first be taken; and after he is divested of his official character, the Church may proceed without embarrassment, to his expulsion from fellowship. This course should always be taken, unless a pastor is guilty of scandalous sins, of which there is full proof, in which case the Church may expel him without delay, call a Council to depose him from the ministry, and thus the melancholy affair is ended. But such exception to the general rule rarely occurs, if ever.

Some persons who object to this view contend that the church to which a minister belongs is the only body by whom he can properly be tried and deposed, or in any way punished if found guilty. This, they suppose, is necessary to the preservation of church independence. But this is clearly an error; for by the same argument they may prove with equal conclusiveness that each church must ordain its ministers without the agency, or co-operation of other churches, or abandon its independence. The truth is, the calling of a council, or presbytery to investigate charges against a minister has nothing to do with the church's independence, nor with its right of discipline over all its members, the pastor included: because the jurisdiction of the council in such cases extends only to the minister's office, not to his church-membership. A council may depose him from the ministry, but have no right to exclude him from the church.

Much injury to religion might be prevented by strictly adhering to this rule, the propriety of which is so obvious. Whatever charges are made against a minister, they lie, first, against his ministerial character. The first question, therefore, is, whether he has forfeited that character.—The proper authority to settle this question is the same that invested him with office.

If the church proceeds first to exclude him from fellowship, he is still a regularly authorized teacher of religion. This office he holds not in virtue of being a church-member, but in addition to it. As he may be a church-member, yet not fit to be a minister, so he may be deposed from the ministry, though not unfit to be a church-member. If the charges against him relate to official improprieties, or irregularities, or to doctrinal errors, the necessity of a council to investigate them, composed in part of ministers, would be obvious to all. If accused of immoralities, it must be remembered that the charge is to be proved before he is condemned. Does not every one see that the investigation of such a charge could be performed with greater accuracy and thoroughness, and with less injury to the cause of morality and religion, by a council of ministers and elders selected from the churches than by a single church? Is it any surrendering or infringement of church independence to delay church disciplinary action till such investigation be had?

And is it not unwarrantable haste for any church to expel a minister from membership before the judgment of such a council has been obtained. The investigation before such a council should be thorough, and a full record of all the facts proved should be entered on its minutes, with the names of the witnesses, and a copy should be transmitted to the church, who may proceed to an original investigation, if not satisfied with that of the council. If the offence is such as to require his exclusion from fellowship, they can now proceed without embarrassment in the same way as with any other member. [See Crowell's Church Members' Manual, pages 253-256]. Crowell adds: "In receiving charges against a minister, great caution should be used. Against an elder receive not an accusation but before two or three witnesses," is a scriptural rule. As a minister is presumed to have stronger motives and greater advantages for maintaining purity of character than other christians, it is reasonable that stronger evidence of misconduct should be required. His office, too, exposes him peculiarly to malice and calumny, and the prosperity of religion depends so much on the reputation of its ministers that the church ought to guard their characters with scrupulous care and receive charges against them with caution." p. 256.

Deferring observations and other extracts till next week, I leave the above to the consideration of your readers. Respectfully yours,  
GEO. ARMSTRONG.  
Bridgetown, March 28th, 1868.

From the Christian Visitor, April 23rd.

No. 5.

CROWELL AND COUNCILS.

In my last article I furnished from Crowell's Church Member's Manual extended but interesting and highly instructive extracts, which point out distinctly the course a church should take towards a minister charged with grave misconduct. From careful perusal of these extracts, embodying as they do principles of prime importance and of universal application in such cases, ("for the exception mentioned," Crowell says, "rarely if ever occurs"), the intelligent and unprejudiced reader cannot fail to perceive the course which, according to this learned and judicious writer on Baptist Polity, should be taken in reference to charges touching the character and standing of a minister of the gospel.

- 1st. Great caution should be exercised in receiving such charges
- 2nd. A minister so charged should not be condemned till the charges alleged against him have been proved.
- 3rd. That "as a minister is supposed to have stronger motives and greater advantages for maintaining purity of character than other christians, it is reasonable that stronger evidence of misconduct should be required."
- 4th. A minister so charged has a right to be tried by his peers.
- 5th. That the proper tribunal to try such minister is a presbytery or council, composed of the pastors and elders of other churches.
- 6th. That such councils should always be first called by the church to deal with grave charges against a minister before the church performs any disciplinary action in the case.
- 7th. That when such charges against a minister have been proved before such council, said minister should be deposed or set aside from the ministry.
- 8th. That it is unwarrantable haste for any church to expel a minister from membership before the judgment of such council has been obtained.
- 9th. The council may evidently dispose of the case in one of three ways:

(1). It may acquit the accused minister; and if so, the church should desist from further proceedings against him.

(2). On proof of guilt, the council may simply depose him from the ministry, or declare him unworthy of the ministerial office, and accordingly withdraw fellowship from him in that capacity, and so report to the church; though at the same time the council may, perhaps, regard him as not unworthy of membership in the church.

(3). In addition to this declaration of his unfitness for the office, and this withdrawal of fellowship from him as a minister of the gospel, the council may regard him as utterly unworthy of membership in a christian body, and may, accordingly, recommend the church to expel him from its fellowship. The church may possibly think that the above case (2) required not only deposition from the ministry, but expulsion from the church; and could properly enough institute an original investigation touching this aspect of the case. But it is plain that this would not be, according to Crowell, in opposition to the finding of the council, but to reach a point not embraced in their decision, and perhaps not in their enquiry. It having been declared that, in the opinion of the council, such minister has forfeited his ministerial character and standing, and that he should not be recognized in that capacity, the church may, of course, on such judgment rendered by his peers, now proceed to deal with him simply as a member, without having regard to his previous ministerial position; and can, therefore, if the nature of his offence demands this course.

It is evidently to such a case as this that the passage quoted from Crowell by the Granville street church applies, and not to a case so dealt with by a council as was Dr. Pryor's. From what has been said, it is plain that this church, in dealing with the charges against Dr. P., ignored the established Baptist usage generally observed in similar cases by the churches of our denomination, and pursued in-

stead a course which has created much dissatisfaction, embarrassment, and irritation. It is a debt she owes to truth and justice to the Brotherhood and to herself, to acknowledge that she has misapplied Crowell, and to remedy as far as possible the injuries resulting from her proceedings in Dr. P.'s case. The following quotation from the same author shows decisively that in his opinion the decision of a council called to investigate charges against a minister should be respected and adhered to by all churches and ministers:—

"Individuals may, of course, meet for consultation at any time; but a council is a body composed of pastors and delegates, appointed by several churches. Councils derive all their authority from the churches who have delegated their members to act in a given case as representatives of their views, each church being regarded as present in the presence of its delegates. Councils, therefore, have no inherent power. They have no authority over any church, and no right to interfere with church discipline. They have power to examine and decide the question committed to them and nothing more. A council called to ordain, install or depose a minister, should be composed of ministers and brethren; in other cases, the presence of ministers is not indispensable. When a council is called to ordain a candidate to the ministry, the question whether he ought to be ordained is submitted to them; they have the right to decide on his fitness or unfitness for the work, and their decision should be respected and adhered to. This being the only question submitted to them, is the only one which they have power to decide. So, if a council is regularly called to investigate charges against a minister, they have power to call for proof, examine witnesses, decide whether the charges are sustained, and if so, whether he ought to be deposed from the ministry; and their decision should be respected and adhered to by all churches and ministers.

A council should not be called to interfere in the dismissal of a pastor, unless the church and the pastor agree to abide by their decision. 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. (See "Manual," pages 263-5.) The italics in the extracts given from Crowell are mine. It may, perhaps be insinuated that Crowell does not correctly represent Baptist usage on the points referred to; but it must be conceded that as a student at the Baptist Theological Seminary, Newton, Mass., under the tuition or with the companionship of such men as Dr. Chase, Dr. Ripley, the sainted Knowles and others, as Editor of a Baptist paper, as pastor of a Baptist church, &c., he had abundant opportunities to ascertain the views and usages of Baptists in the United States, and this he professes to give; for, after other remarks on councils, Crowell adds: "Such, it is believed, are substantially the doctrines of Baptists concerning councils." It must now, I think, be apparent to every one that in first dealing with Dr. P.'s case without a council—having neglected to call one on the first charge, and refused the proposal made by Dr. P.'s friends to call one on the second charge,—Granville street church violated ordinary Baptist usage in such cases. It is apparent also that in rejecting the decision of the council which, on the recommendation of the Association, was called to adjudicate on the matters in dispute, Granville street church violated Baptist usage a second time; and this too, in addition to violating a plain and palpable pledge, growing out of the arrangement made with Dr. P. for a council, and the acceptance of that council by the church.

The Council was unanimous in its decision—each member having, without dissent or qualification of any kind, signed that document. Mr. Selden indeed intimates that though the Council was unanimous as to the wording of their decision, yet the members understood different things by it! This is unsupported, and indeed is unwarranted, no matter on what authority the statement may have been ventured. But if, unhappily, it were true, into what depths of dishonour would such unfaithfulness, dishonesty and double-dealing sink the parties who could agree to disregard, in no common degree, the claims of truth, righteousness and love! and to grossly deceive those who had chosen them to act truthfully and honourably in the whole matter! If such duplicity was practised, it was wholly without my knowledge; and I cannot believe that any member of the council could be guilty of acting a part so mean and unmanly. I have now done what I designed; shown that Granville street church was bound to accept the decision of the council; and that in rejecting that decision the church failed at the same time to carry out Baptist usage, and to fulfil what must be regarded as a solemn pledge. I am not judging Dr. P.'s case again, and therefore omit reference to points which some may wish to have explained. The council has been blamed for not finding Dr. P. guilty of the crimes alleged. But it should be considered that to condemn any man, and especially a minister of the gospel, and moreover an aged minister, to disgrace and expulsion from Christian society and usefulness without sufficient evidence, involved great responsibility, and it may be, guilt, on the part of those who thus judge; as in this way an innocent person may be grossly and, perhaps, irretrievably injured; and moreover, countenance be given to a course by which other innocent parties may, in like manner, be injured in their reputation, standing, and usefulness.

By "sufficient evidence," I mean evidence clear, positive, decisive; such, indeed, as can leave on the mind no doubt as to the guilt of the accused party. Such evidence was, in my opinion, wanting in the case.

The readers of the Christian Messenger have indeed been inundated with details put in the most objectionable form—details that minister neither to edification, peace, love or purity; details which by a sad mis-judging, Granville street church thought it would seem necessary in order to defend her conduct from the able and searching review given it by Judge Johnston, and the similar review on which Dr. Crawley entered in the Christian Messenger, but was not allowed to complete in that paper—details which, after all, fail to justify the conduct of the church; for notwithstanding this out-flinging of the suspicious circumstances which, it is alleged, point only to guilt, the church is constrained to substantially admit that she has not proved Dr. P. guilty of the crimes charged against him. What! not prove guilt, and yet pronounce the man guilty, and punish him accordingly! I will not ask is this charity; but surely I may properly enough ask, Is it justice? Is it? But I stop! This admission from the church fully justifies the council in their decision; but it certainly leaves a heavy condemnation on others—whom? I need not say, as it is sufficiently evident from the points which have been established. Having thus far discharged what I felt to be a duty in the matters referred to, I leave the whole disposal of the case to God's providence and people.

Thanking you, Mr. Editor, for the space allotted my communications when they seemed shut out from the denominational organ in Nova Scotia, and regretting that I could not otherwise gain access to my Baptist brethren in this Province, and that so few of them can be reached by the Christian Visitor.

I remain respectfully yours,  
GEO. ARMSTRONG.  
Bridgetown, N. S., April 8th, 1868.