

accepted as true, must ruin him in this world for ever.

I am positively assured by a person present, that the church's agents did not decline before the Council to accept their decision as final. I have shewn they had bound themselves to accept it.

Of course Dr. Pryor would not require them to accept the decision if unfavorable to him. Why stuff the case with puerilities?

Yours affectionately,

E. A. CRAWLEY.

ERRATA.—In the 4th line of the above letter, omit "before." In the last line of 4th paragraph, 4th column, after "these in" read "Dr."

For the Christian Messenger.

Letters from Granville St. Church to the Baptists of Nova Scotia.

No. 6.

DEAR BRETHREN,—

Once more we are compelled to address you. Our reply to the foregoing letter will lead us, before we close, to speak of principles which are dear to you and us in common, and we crave your indulgence, and your patience.

As Dr. Crawley has so persistently urged his view of this painful controversy, and seems to be so possessed with prejudice as to be almost beyond the reach of facts and arguments, we will, for the time being, take his representation of the case. The first important thing he labors to establish is, that the Church, whilst engaged in the discipline of Dr. Pryor, indulged in an angry and vindictive spirit. He has also laboured much to prove that the church pledged itself to accept the decision of the Council as final.

Let it be assumed that both these statements are correct. Now, what was the decision of the Council so far as they recommended action for the church? They advised the church to "reconsider" the vote by which Dr. Pryor was suspended from church fellowship. "Reconsider" means here, says Dr. C., "rescind." To rescind that vote, then, was the extent of the council's recommendation. This done, Dr. Pryor would have been restored to good standing as a member of Granville Street Church. But what would have been his true relation to the church, and his position in the denomination had this been done? He would have been a regular member and an excluded pastor. "I helped exclude Dr. Pryor from the pastorate," says Judge Johnston. The moral force of this act, with the tacit yet significant endorsement of the Council would have been exclusion from the pulpits of the denomination. But how in the name of religion and reason could the church retain one in full fellowship as a member, whom, though a prominent preacher—a doctor in divinity—they had excluded from the pulpit, thus striking him down from the ministry? What is the straightforward and legitimate reply to this question? There is none, except such as is contained in the facts and statements already given in previous letters, pointing to dishonesty and impurity. These facts and circumstances could not be accounted for on the supposition of innocence, and the church were compelled to exclude him from the pulpit. How could he, we ask again, be retained as a member of a Christian church after being for such reasons excluded from the ministry? This is the true issue, the only conceivable point reached by Dr. Crawley's argument. We shall leave it for him to shew the consistency of such a state of things, and its harmony with Christian morals.

We will now consider as briefly as may be, the charges which for the sake of showing the result to which Dr. C's argument leads, we have treated as if true. It will be seen from our letter in the Messenger of March 3rd., that the assumption upon which Dr. C. charges the church with *fraud and falsehood*, is itself false, and must be abandoned by him. He in a previous letter, laid it down as a fact that the church had bound itself by a solemn engagement to accept as final the Council's decision; into this agreement he says the church entered and by it they bound themselves, not by word or writing, but by a silent understanding. We exposed this assumption before, but Dr. C. lays hold of it again, and once more endeavours to crush out our honor and our Christian name among the churches of Christ. He tells us that we have made like charges against Dr. Pryor, and he cannot see why such an "indignant flourish" should be made when he thinks fit to charge us with *fraud and falsehood*. We assure Dr. Crawley that when he produces an equal amount of evidence in support of his charge, which he has compelled us most reluctantly to furnish in order to show why we were obliged to consider Dr. Pryor's actions as we did, we shall acknowledge the charge and confess our sin. But let us remove beyond the hope of recovery the ground assumed by Dr. C. in order to make his charge.

The church did not pledge itself to receive the decision of the Council as final. The representatives of the church were not silent before the Council. The church emphatically declares that it did not so pledge itself. Four men at the least remember that this subject was spoken of before the Council. They do not remember different things, but all remember the same thing. Others present may not have heard—some may have forgotten, but it is absolutely impossible that four men should remember and relate what they heard or said on a certain occasion and these recollections all agreeing, unless the thing remembered was indeed said as recollected. The summary of evidence which puts this subject beyond all contradiction we quote from the letter in the last issue of the Messenger.

"From these statements it is evident that the church regarded it as fundamental in Baptist polity that in such a case as was then under consideration, it could not transfer ultimately the duty of deciding for itself; that the Councilors were invited to report their opinions to the church; that the representatives of the church not only had no authority to agree to accept a decision, not yet delivered, but had they so agreed would have knowingly done violence to the solemn convictions of the Church; that they not only did not do so but expressed their determination not to do so; that when the decision was delivered in the presence of the whole Council, the Church unmistakably indicated what they believed to be their duty on this point, and no surprise was expressed by any member of the Council at the same; that the decision itself points to the subsequent exercise of judgment on the part of the church; and that four days after the delivery of the decision, the Secretary (Rev. Mr. Armstrong) on learning that the church intended to exercise such independent judgment, expressed no surprise at such a course."

It is now made plain that Dr. Crawley has taken a fancy for a fact, that he fell unfortunately for his undertaking into a fatal error.—He has now no shade of just ground for withholding an admission in the first place that he has been so mistaken, and in the second place a confession of the groundlessness of his heavy charge against us, which he professes to have drawn out of his assumed facts. His charge is "fraud and falsehood" and conduct comparable to that of a lewd woman, and this not against an individual, but against a Church of Christ numbering about one hundred and fifty souls. Dr. C. would "awake us from our dream of innocence." What! defame a church in the public print with such charges—brand it with these black crimes simply to "awake it from a dream of innocence?" We would remind Dr. C. that *truth* is the only weapon ordained of heaven with which to reach the consciences of men. If ever a Christian man, was called upon, in view of all that is manly—and more especially in view of the claims of religion, to admit and confess an offence against his brethren, Dr. Crawley is that man. When he declared his conviction of Dr. Pryor's innocence we regarded him sincere, but that measure of sincerity which we believed him to possess will compel him, painful though it may be, to confess this great and enormous wrong.

We must notice the statements that the church has been guilty of "the petulance and inaccuracy of youth," and has throughout this painful case acted under the influence of heat and excitement. In order that you may not be misled by Dr. C's statement we may remark that the only one of the "old leaders" of whose counsels we have been deprived is Judge Johnston, and we are thankful to be able to inform you that brethren are left among us and are acting in harmony with us, ripe in years and Christian experience. The entire action of the church in condemning Dr. C., because among these upon whom the Church has from time to time imposed labor, in this matter, are, as he asserts, mere youth. But the fact is, the youngest of these brethren is over 30 years of age and others are men of grey hairs. This we think a sufficient reply to Dr. C's complaint against petulant and inaccurate youth.

In order that no possible means might be left untried of showing that Dr. Pryor had been unjustly condemned, (except that of explaining the evidence) Dr. Crawley has endeavored most diligently to make it appear that we acted under the influence of heat and excitement.—Judge Johnston undoubtedly made use of very warm language, and he has placed specimens of it upon record for the perusal of all. From your knowledge of the case, we think you have already seen that both Dr. Crawley and Judge Johnston have entirely failed to shew in what respect Dr. Pryor received injustice at our hands. Has it not been shewn that our proceedings were regular in all essential points?—When the nature of the case and the suddenness with which it was launched upon us are considered, how does the existence of so great a degree of order and regularity consist with the supposition that the church acted under the control of unholiness? Our action has, we believe been subjected to the most searching and powerful scrutiny that was ever brought to bear upon any of our churches, and we submit to your judgment whether the result has been such as to lend countenance to the statement that it was instituted and carried through under the guidance of rash impulse, heat, and passion. When it has been shewn that Dr. Pryor received an unjust condemnation at our hands, then it will be in point, we submit, to enquire and search out adequate causes for so fearful a course.—But until such has been done, does it not savor of heat, and passion, and prejudice to be thus persistently assigning the worst of causes for a course of action which for aught that has been established to the contrary was just and righteous. We should suppose that considerations like these would induce Dr. Crawley to pause. He does not, however. The charge seems to be one which he delights to reiterate. He quotes from the letter of Mr. J. Y. Payzant to the Rev. E. M. Saunders (printed "for private circulation only") in support of this charge; and states that Mr. Payzant was forced away from the church by his sense of our injustice to Dr. Pryor. If Dr. Crawley means that Mr. Payzant felt compelled to leave us because he believed we had condemned an innocent man, we must do Mr. Payzant the justice to correct Dr. C's misrepresentation. Here are Mr. Payzant's words on this point: "Whether these charges (against Dr. P.) were true or false is foreign to the purport of this letter, and remotely if in any way connected with my act of separation." The italics are ours. It will not escape your attention that Mr. Payzant in the quotation, added by Dr. C., says: "From an early stage of the proceedings which led to his (Dr. P's) exclusion from the church, I have had the

deepest conviction of his innocence and moral rectitude." This you will remember is parallel with Dr. Crawley's own avowal. We solemnly affirm that we are not conscious of having been under the dominion of heat and unholiness as alleged by Mr. Payzant. As we have so fully exposed this charge in our "Reply" to Judge Johnston, we think it unnecessary to adduce here the statements of many at least equally well qualified to testify on this subject with Mr. P. to show that he, like Dr. C., has allowed his early and deep convictions on the case, to warp his mind, and that his charges on this point are equally groundless with Judge Johnston's and Dr. Crawley's. It is with deep pain that we are compelled to write thus, and we believe that no one will, hereafter, more deeply regret than Mr. Payzant himself that he has been led, from any combination of influences, to defame those who ever esteemed him a friend and brother. The fearful power of prejudice, even over able Christian minds, has been already suggested. It has appeared in this correspondence that Dr. C. formed his opinion of Dr. Pryor's case at an early stage in its history, and that his usual calmness, self-restraint, and age have not prevented him from being betrayed into the use of language as strong and stronger than Mr. Payzant's; and this early conviction, formed as he tells you, without seeing even the reports of the Committees, has continued to betray him into the making of the gravest charges and statements against us which we have conclusively shewn are without any foundation whatever, in fact; and yet we believe Dr. C's statements are entitled to as much respect as Mr. Payzant's. Such deplorable results, you have doubtless observed, almost invariably follow, when men surrender themselves to the guidance of convictions formed so early in the history of any matter as to exclude the corrective influence of evidence. Their early and strong convictions render it almost impossible that, when evidence is adduced, they should so profit by it as to modify their views or correct their judgments. On the contrary, the presentation of evidence which makes against their strong convictions, only irritates their minds and increases their impatience. That others should regard certain facts as important, they consider nothing more than "eagerness to clutch at trifles;" while the manifestation of a straightforward determination that knows no denial, to learn the true merits of certain alleged facts which make the other way, is characterized as a "disingenuous evasion of facts," a want of honesty, forbearance, and Christian spirit, sneering, deafness to the voice of reason, humanity and religion." In short, no language is too strong to express their abhorrence of the searching attitude of impartial minds, which they surrendered as they are to the control of convictions prematurely formed, necessarily misunderstand and misrepresent.

"Spiteful and vindictive" are words which Dr. C. says he no where uses; and complains that they are attributed to him. Let us see. Judge Johnston in his letter, (page 6.) pointing to Granville Street Church uses this language. "When the members are lifted up with self conceit, inflamed by pride, obstinate in self will, irritated . . . into a vindictive and spiteful temper." At the close of Dr. Crawley's first letter this pamphlet of Judge Johnston is endorsed and recommended. To shew that this is correct we point to what Dr. C. says in his fourth letter. Here it is:—"The true solution of this extraordinary conduct is I conceive the disturbing influence of pride, or prejudice or ill-will such as Judge Johnston testifies he continually saw." Dr. C. endorses Judge Johnston's language in his first letter; he used it in his fourth. It is now his own. "Spiteful and vindictive" are charged upon us. We did not say they were Dr. C's words. He and Judge Johnston, we conceive, are joined together in accusing and aspersing the church of Dr. C's first love. We mean no taunt by this quotation, neither did we in instances where we have already used it.

Here we may discuss the important question: What authority may be delegated to a Council by a church governed by the congregational principle, so as not to ignore or violate this fundamental principle of New Testament church polity?

We are laboring under a great mistake, if our views on this point are not in harmony and identical with those of Baptists everywhere. We believe that the government of the church is committed to the whole body—officers and members—who are assumed to be believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, consequently under such restraints and guidance individually and collectively, as spring naturally from the religion which they possess, and such as are imposed upon a church by the Scriptures—their rule of practice. The pastors especially the aged, are "worthy of double honor;" Deacons are to be respected for their office, which they magnify. The aged are to be treated according to their piety and years. With relations thus modified, all the members of a church are required to bear an individual responsibility in executing the laws of Christ, their divine Head.

The most important duties which the church has to perform are, the admission and excommunication of members; the election and removal of pastors; and the defence of sound doctrine.

We believe it is sometimes expedient and scriptural to seek the advice of Councils; and while we admit that there are some subjects the peculiar character of which would admit of their being handed over to a Council for final settlement, yet, for the security of the congregational form of church government, it would, we think, be better for the churches always to request Councils to *advise* and not *decree*. It might, for example, be a dispute between two brethren about matters of money which

did not involve the question of dishonesty, or any question which would not involve the execution of any of the fundamental laws of church discipline. We conceive that any matter of this kind might be given into the hands of judicious and pious councillors for final adjudication, for whatever their conclusion might be, there would not necessarily be any violation of scriptural law, and no violation of trust reposed by Christ in a church. But with regard to the defence of sound doctrine, the admission and exclusion of members, the election and ordination and removal of ministers, involving as these acts do fundamental principles, a church is not at liberty to transfer to others the trust which has been committed to it alone in relation to these matters. Upon the hypothesis that these duties could be scripturally given by a church into the hands of a council, for final settlement, it would follow:

1st. That a fatal blow would be struck at the root of the congregational principle of church government:

If a church could commit a most important matter to a council, it certainly would follow that matters of minor importance might be given into the hands of the same body. From this it would follow that the church is at liberty to employ a council to decide *any* matter that is for church adjudication; then the congregational government is not binding—it is optional with the church to practice it, or to transfer the responsibility to another body! Why not then, for convenience, have a standing body to which all matters may be referred? This would be Presbyterianism, Methodism or Episcopacy or something of the kind, and destructive to the congregational form of government.

2. To grant that a church can give up to a council, for final decision, a case of discipline, involves a release from an obligation to Christ to which every Baptist has bound himself. Our system takes it for granted, that each member of a church is bound to form and express an opinion upon the worthiness of a person to obtain or hold membership. He, on joining the church, pledges himself to Christ and the church, to be ready to forego any personal considerations, and give his opinion and suffrage in all these important matters for church adjudication. But if these matters can be handed over to a Council, every member in the church is released. But by whom? By their Divine Head? By any one appointed by Him? No. Did He give any permission of this kind? The teaching of Holy Scripture answers, No.

3. The hypothesis that a church can commit the discipline of a church member into the hands of a council for final settlement involves the startling fact that a church can allow a person to remain a member of the church, whom the church believes worthy of excommunication, and whom she should have excluded; or it might allow that a person who should be retained in fellowship, might suffer expulsion. Or, it 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 affirms that a Council should have absolute power to make a final settlement of whatever it submitted to them, or at least, he says in our case, that we ought to have bound ourselves.

We would ask you to pause here, and look upon the subject fairly, and in all its bearings; and 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:

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

2. Upon this hypothesis, 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