REVIEW

OF

CORRECTIVE CHURCH DISCIPLINE.

BY

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INTRODUCTION BY N. M. CRAWFORD, D.D.

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trict of Tennessee.
I write this introduction for three reasons: 

First. The author of the Review, once my pupil, and always my friend, has requested me to do it.

Secondly. The author of Corrective Church Discipline, without mentioning my name indeed, has referred to my opinions and commented upon my positions. This he had a perfect right to do, and I do not complain of it. While his comments were contained only in the newspapers, I did not think it worth while to notice them; but as they are now embodied in a permanent form, I think proper, in a similar form, to reaffirm my positions.

Thirdly. Some who are looked upon as leaders, have publicly maintained that the matters involved in this discussion are just and even necessary causes of division among Baptists. While I do not concur in this opinion, I am willing to meet every responsibility which may, in any contingency, attach to my opinions or my positions; the more especially as the former are mature, and the latter deliberately taken. I, therefore, readily avail myself of the opportunity now afforded to re-state my opinions.
INTRODUCTION.

The author of *Corrective Church Discipline*, in his preface, says: “Multitudes in this country have been introduced, within a few years, into our Churches from Pedobaptist organizations,* who are but partially indoctrinated in those opinions which make us a peculiar people. Yielding to the force of argument on the subject of baptism, and instructed no further, they have brought into our Churches confused notions of Church polity, or have even retained, undisturbed, the views which obtained in the communions they have left. While we cordially welcome these brethren to our ranks, we should see to it that they are instructed in the way of the Lord more perfectly.”

Now, whether the author had me in his thoughts when he wrote the above, I do not know, nor is it material to inquire; but it is a fact that I was introduced, seventeen years ago, into a Baptist Church from a Pedobaptist organization. As to how fully I have been indoctrinated in the peculiar opinions of Baptists, I leave my brethren to judge. If in anything I am in error, I shall be grateful for being taught “the way of the Lord more perfectly;” and I should ill repay the kindness and confidence which, from the very beginning, my brethren have extended to me, by attempting to introduce false notions or to subvert correct usages. Yet I will say, that one who has been led by God’s word to renounce a Pedobaptist organization on account of human errors embodied therein,

* Is it through accident or design that, while the author in his work on Baptism calls Pedobaptist societies *Churches*, he here calls them only “organizations” or “communions?” Has he made progress?
will not be apt to be very reverential to human errors which may be asserted to be Baptist doctrine. Nor, it seems to me, will he be less likely to be a sound Baptist who draws his principles from the word of God, and is made a Baptist by the force of truth, than one who simply follows the example of his father, or receives instruction from his grandmother, though she may have been as faithful as Lois. Paul exhorted the Corinthians to follow him, even as he followed Christ.

It is not my intention to review Corrective Church Discipline. Professor Worrell has done that. I shall defend only the principles which I have heretofore maintained.

I have objected to the ascription of sovereignty to the Churches of Christ; and have maintained that Churches are not sovereign. But it is argued: "You maintain that they are independent, and they are as much dependent on Jesus Christ as subject to him." The term independent, by usage of the language, refers to the relations of Churches to each other. An independent is "one who, in religious affairs, maintains that every congregation of Christians is a complete Church, subject to no superior authority, and competent to perform every act of government in ecclesiastical affairs." While, therefore, Churches as well as individuals and all things, depend on Jesus Christ, the term independent, when applied to Churches, has a special technical meaning, which is well understood. The use of the language for two hundred years has settled it. No such application of the word sovereign is war-
ranted, and the idea which the word conveys is utterly alien to the true idea of a Church.

Independence has relation to things outside of that which is spoken of. Sovereignty relates to the thing itself; and, wherever it exists, is inherent, inalienable, and incapable of being transferred or delegated. It is, in its very nature, ONE AND INDIVISIBLE. God is a sovereign in himself, and can neither divide nor delegate his sovereignty. All will admit that God’s sovereignty is underived. Will any contend that it is divided? With whom? How? It can not be divided. But the author of Corrective Church Discipline contends that God has delegated sovereignty to the Churches.—Page 65. If the Churches do indeed possess this “delegated sovereignty,” does God continue absolute and unlimited sovereign? Or is his sovereignty divided? or multiplied? If he has given to the Churches part of his sovereignty, he is no longer sovereign in all things. If he has delegated to the Churches a portion of sovereignty, and still himself retains all sovereignty, then sovereignty is multiplied; it is no longer ONE, but many. Or, if he has delegated part and retains the remainder, then sovereignty is divided. On earth we recognize no such thing as a divided sovereignty, and without a new revelation we can recognize no such thing in heaven: and especially a division between Almighty God and his creatures on earth.

Let us come down to sublunary matters. Where does sovereignty reside? In the people. The sovereignty of Georgia is inherent in the people of Geor-
The author of *Corrective Church Discipline* defines the sovereignty of a Church thus: it "signifies her power to govern them [her members] under the laws of Christ."—P. 67. We must have, then, not only two sovereignties, [Christ's and the Church's,] but these two of different orders: an inferior and a superior. This is either an abuse of language or a distortion of things. A superior and an inferior sovereign over the same thing is an impossibility. The fact is, that Christ alone is king, and the Churches are His servants.

But we are told that this sovereignty [of a Church] is invested "with judicial and executive powers," but that "it has no legislative power."—P. 68.

In their good pleasure the sovereign people of Georgia have organized a Supreme Court, consisting of three judges. This tribunal is invested with the highest judicial powers, and so weighty are its decisions that they have the force of law until repealed by the Legislature. Is this court, therefore, sovereign? The man who would say so, would be laughed at. The people, in conferring judicial powers on the three judges, have not "delegated sovereignty" to them; and neither has Christ "delegated sovereignty" in conferring judicial powers on His Churches.

The Executive power of the United States is vested in the President; yet no one can be found who will say that James Buchanan in this June, 1860, is the sovereign of the United States. As we understand the
theory of government, the people alone are sovereign, and all government is but a trust; and power [not sovereignty] is delegated to various officers as trustees or stewards. Yet we are gravely told, that because Jesus Christ has conferred certain limited executive powers on his Churches, therefore they are sovereign! I can not receive this as the better way.

But we all agree that Jesus has conferred no legislative power on his Churches. "There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy."—Jas. iv: 12.

Blackstone says: "Sovereignty and Legislature are indeed convertible terms; one can not subsist without the other."—Comm. i: 46. This may admit of some question; for our Legislatures are not sovereign, being merely intrusted by the people with limited power for a limited time. But it is also unquestionably true that there can be no sovereignty where there is no power to make laws. Jesus Christ, then, THE ONE LAWGIVER, is a sovereign; but his Churches, which have no legislative power, are not sovereign.

Now, it might please the people of Georgia to invest the same tribunal with both executive and judicial powers; but this tribunal would not be sovereign. It would be inferior and responsible to the people, in whom the sovereignty resides. Yet we are to believe that the Churches, invested only with similar and limited powers, are, by some unexplained abracadabra, constituted sovereigns!

Further on, (p. 108,) the author of Corrective Church Discipline illustrates the independence of the Churches by analogy with what he first calls "our county courts,"
but immediately afterward the "circuit courts." Yet, surely, no one will say that either county or circuit courts are sovereign.

But if the Churches are sovereign, they must have subjects, for "sovereign as a term is the correlative of subject."—P. 67.

Now, a subject is "one that owes allegiance to a sovereign, and is governed by his laws."—Webster. This defines accurately the relation between the Christian and Christ. We do owe him allegiance, and we are governed by his laws; for he is our King and Lawgiver. But a Church has no legislative power, and, therefore, can make no laws. The laws which we ought to obey are not the laws of the Church, (for she can make none,) but the laws of Christ. And the allegiance which we owe is to Christ, our only sovereign. The Church herself owes allegiance to Christ, as she is bound by his laws; do I then owe allegiance to a body which itself owes allegiance to a superior Lord? Is allegiance divided? or multiplied? I recognize Christ alone as my sovereign; and my allegiance is due to him alone.

With these views of the nature of sovereignty in general, and of the power conferred by Jesus on his Churches, I reaffirm what I said last October: "That I think the term sovereign is utterly misplaced when applied to a Church, which, by all consent, is subject in all things. We may as well say that a justice's court is sovereign. Jesus Christ is the only King, the only Sovereign. But under Jesus I not only admit, but maintain the independency of the Churches."
hold that the powers which Jesus confers on his Churches are not sovereign powers, and do not constitute these tribunals sovereign; while under Jesus these Churches are independent both of each other, and of all earthly tribunals. They acknowledge neither pope, prelate, nor presbytery; neither king, council, nor Kaisar.

But, even if it should be admitted that Churches are sovereign, it by no means follows that a sentence of exclusion pronounced by one Church binds all others to regard the excluded as a heathen and a publican, and that no other Church should, under any circumstances, receive him into membership.

All Churches of Jesus Christ possess similar and equal powers and rights; and nothing can be claimed by one in contravention or disparagement of the equal rights of another.

Yet, because it is incorrectly claimed that a Church is sovereign, it is further contended that its act of exclusion must be regarded as valid by all others; and that it cuts off the excluded from all others as well as from itself.

All parties, however, admit that the authority of a Church is limited by the law of Christ. Whatever power the king has conferred may be legitimately used; but if a Church exercises a power not granted, she is guilty of usurpation, and her act not only is not legal, but is entitled to no respect whatever.

Now, while Churches are composed of fallible men, they will be fallible tribunals; and, therefore, they may, in ignorance or passion, violate their constitu-
tions and transgress the law of Christ. No one doubts or will deny this. A Church may exclude a member not only unlawfully but wickedly. No one doubts or will deny this. Yet we are told that this unlawful and even wicked act binds every Church on earth to regard the unlawfully excluded man as a heathen and a publican! Are we to receive this as the more perfect way of the Lord?

In questions involving the validity or legality of Church acts, it is admitted, on all sides, that there is no arbiter between the Churches. The common-sense idea in all such cases is, that each party must judge for itself. But, according to the theory of Church sovereignty which I am combating, we see the excluding Church,

"In full-blown dignity, like Wolsey, stand,"

and exclaim, "Hands off! sisters; that fellow is a heathen and publican: I have excluded him. Withdraw from him and let him alone!"

But may you not have excluded him unjustly? "That is my business! Am I not a sovereign? And you shall not interfere between me and my rebel subject."

Yet, some of the advocates of this dogma assert a principle which subverts their own position. A popular writer on that side says: "Outside or beyond the inspired record the Churches can not go. Such offenses only fall within the legitimate authority of the Churches. Contributions to missions, joining temperance societies, sending children to Sabbath schools, etc., are not proper
subjects of Church authority, inasmuch as they are not recognized as offenses by the great law of Christ.” According to this, if a Church excludes a member for holding a slave, (for instance,) another Church may rightfully receive him. Why? Because holding a slave is not an offense which “falls within the legitimate authority of the Churches.” But who is to decide this question? The excluding Church has decided it for herself, according to her judgment of the law of Christ; if another Church may, notwithstanding, do the same in this case, why not in all cases? And if it may decide upon the law (which is the greater) may it not also decide upon the facts of the case (which is the less)?

But then, we are told, you break up the fellowship between all the Churches. There is no necessity for this. If A and B fall out, it does not follow that I must be a partisan of either and fall out with the other. But if fellowship must be broken, does not the blame properly belong to the wrong-doer? Shall a Church who has violated the law of Christ call upon all others to sustain her, or else charge them with creating the rupture?

When a Church excludes a member, she deprives him of all rights which he possesses in that Church; and he has no rights in any other. By the exclusion he is disfranchised in the excluding Church. All are agreed in this. Allow then all Churches to be sovereign. Sovereign England disfranchises one of her subjects, and takes away all his civil rights. What then? May not the United States receive the dis-
franchised subject, and confer upon him all the rights of an American citizen? Yet the peace and friendship of the two nations are not disturbed by the transaction. Why, then, may not one Church bestow rights upon a disfranchised member of another Church without destroying peace and friendship?

But we are told that exclusion by a Church does more than deprive a man of the rights which he possesses in that Church. The writer before quoted says, "The judgment of expulsion by the Church at B does a great deal more than exclude the member from her fellowship and membership—it excludes him from the fellowship and membership of other Churches, and from the communion of all saints." (His italics.) There is some confusion of language, if not of thought, here. If exclude is used in its proper sense (thrust out, eject,) it is implied that membership in one Church is membership in all other Churches also; which, it is presumed, no one will maintain. If it is used as synonymous with preclude, (hinder from entering,) it implies that he had not been a member of the Church which excludes him; which is absurd. If it is simply meant that exclusion from one Church rightfully prevents any other Church from receiving the excluded members, those who seek truth will desire something more than assertion before they receive it as Gospel.

The object of discipline is the recovery of the offending brother. "If he hear thee thou hast gained thy brother." But we have supposed a case in which an innocent brother has been unjustly excluded. How can he be recovered who has not fallen? Your dis-
cipline may lead a transgressor to repentance: but when you have excluded an innocent man on a false accusation, do you expect him to repent? and of what? The object of your discipline is to correct; and you exercise it on one who has not erred! You design to heal; but have given your physic to a well man! And then you tell him that though the medicine can not have the effect designed, it will, at any rate, show that he has a good constitution, which even your treatment could not kill!

But the author of Corrective Church Discipline, in his effort to teach us "the way of the Lord more perfectly," undertakes to give us Scriptural authority. Well, nothing less than Scripture can sustain a dogma so monstrous as that a brother, no matter how unjustly or wickedly excluded, can have no remedy, except at the hand of the wrong-doers; as that all other Churches, cognizant of the wrong, must sit still, and, with folded arms, exclaim, "It is the will of the Lord. Let the injured brother be patient, and glory in his martyrdom. Let us all submit. So shall we grow in grace and humility." This seems rather akin to the indifference of the Turk, than the sympathy of the Christian.

The author undertakes to show, "by positive precept," that the New Testament teaches "that one Church can not receive to membership the excluded members of another; and that such excluded members can be restored only by the action of the Church expelling them." On page 100, he says, "We have a precept, first, as to what is to be done with the incorrigi-
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Having produced this single text, which clearly has no bearing on the point he undertook to prove, the author proceeds to give us the Scripture precepts “as to our feelings and deportment toward those who have received the penalty prescribed.” Here he is more liberal, and gives us four texts, which I will consider. This is the first: “Let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.”—Matt. xviii: 17. But the Savior addresses this to an offended brother in regard to one who is not yet excommunicated. It can not, therefore, be the fact of exclusion that constitutes him a heathen. Dr. Dawson, although he has indorsed Corrective Church Discipline in gross, has admitted that he agrees with me in the interpretation of this text. But, now, to show how an excluded member is to be treated by all the Churches, we are referred to a text which shows how an offended brother should treat one who has not been excluded!

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The author goes on to sustain his propositions "by inspired example." That I may not be suspected of unfairness, I will quote all that he says under this head.

"Scripture example shows that the excommuni- cating Church alone can restore to membership. But one example is given in the Scriptures of the exclusion and restoration of a member. The incestuous man at Corinth was, at the instance of Paul, excommunicated; and when he had given satisfactory evidence of repentance and reformation, at the solicitation of Paul, he was restored to membership by the same Church. There was a large number of others in existence at that time besides the Church of Corinth. Paul was not compelled, therefore, to apply to it, because it
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was the only one extant. Now, Baptists claim that inspired example is as binding as inspired precept. In this way alone do they discover the form and organization of a Gospel Church. Nowhere in the New Testament is to be found a precept containing a rule for the organization and government of a Gospel Church. For our ideas and our practices upon these subjects, we are dependent exclusively upon inspired example. And in no instance do we reason against our Pedobaptist friends more forcibly and conclusively than when we maintain the binding force of New Testament example. Now, can we be honest when we denounce others for disregarding inspired example in the organization and government of the Church, if we refuse to receive that same example as binding on any other subject? We ask: How can an expelled man be restored to membership? and are answered: *By New Testament example, that he is to be restored by the same Church that expelled him, after satisfaction rendered.* Now, if we decline to receive the answer, while we sin against God, we lay ourselves open to the retort from our Pedobaptist friends: *Physician, heal thyself.* Inspired precept and example, then, *forbid one Church to receive the excommunicated members of another, and declare that when a Church expels, her action is final.*

—Pp. 102, 103.

Besides the italics of the author, I have italicised in three sentences of the above, that the reader may see, at one glance, the argument. This quotation, I repeat, contains *all* that the author says under this head. It is worth while to examine it with some minuteness.
INTRODUCTION.

Is it not remarkable? that he now says: "Nowhere in the New Testament is to be found a precept containing a rule for the organization and government of a Gospel Church. For our ideas and our practices upon these subjects, we are dependent exclusively upon inspired example;" when he has just three pages before undertaken to establish a rule for the government of a Church "by positive precept," and when he has just quoted five texts as settling the question, saying "these precepts are enough." Is it not remarkable that he now says: "We are dependent exclusively upon inspired example," and just below adds: "Inspired precept and example, then, forbid one Church to receive the excommunicated members of another?"

But the example cited does not apply to the case which we have supposed of an innocent man unjustly excluded. There is no doubt of the Corinthian’s guilt. A Church excludes a guilty man; does this warrant a Church in excluding an innocent man? Whenever a rule is deduced from an example, we can apply it safely in similar cases only. In this example of Corinth, we are told the excluded member was restored "when he had given satisfactory evidence of repentance and reformation;" and, therefore, the rule is deduced that a member must be restored by the same Church that expelled him, after satisfaction rendered.” But as an innocent man can not repent of a sin he did not commit, either the rule does not apply, or the man can never be restored. He who has done no wrong, can render no satisfaction.

Now, does it follow, because the Corinthian Church
restored its own excluded guilty member upon his repentance, that, therefore, no other Church can receive an excluded innocent member at all? There is nothing common to the two propositions. We might as well argue that because Paul wore a cloak, we must not wear overcoats. If it is meant that a Church can do nothing but what Churches did (by recorded example) in the New Testament, it is unnecessary to refer to the case at Corinth at all; for it is freely conceded that we have no New Testament example of a Church receiving an excluded member of another Church. If our opposers, therefore, will prove that a Church now can do nothing for which example can not be shown, we submit.

But, then, we may go further and demand an example of a Church restoring one of her own excluded members. Where is the example recorded? I am referred to the case of the incestuous man at Corinth; but I ask, where is it recorded that he was restored? Some doubt whether he was formally excluded; but if the New Testament example alone is binding, we must see the Scripture which states that he was restored. Now, I believe firmly that he was restored, although the New Testament does not say so; but because Paul commanded the Church at Corinth to forgive him. "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise, ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest, perhaps, such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore, I beseech you, that you would confirm your love toward him."—
2 Cor. ii: 6–8. We have, therefore, no inspired example at all; but a sufficiently positive precept "to authorize a Church to restore a justly excluded member on his repentance." This is a question about which there is now no debate; but which, in the time of Cyprian, produced a long and violent controversy. But again I ask: Because a Church ought to restore her own excluded member on his repentance, does it follow that another Church shall not receive a holy man unjustly excluded? Neither logic nor Scripture warrants it.

The example adduced by the author of Corrective Church Discipline, as well as his precepts, fails to support the proposition sought to be established.

Some of the "general principles" which do bear upon the issue, have been discussed in my remarks on what is called Church sovereignty. I add but little more, for these principles are few and simple.

Every Church derives all its power from Jesus Christ. Every act of a Church which is according to Christ's law is authorized, and therefore valid; and every act not according to Christ's law is unauthorized, and therefore not valid.

Each Church is independent of all other Churches, and at the same time subject in all things to Jesus Christ. Every Church, therefore, is bound,* not by the action or opinion of other Churches, but by the law of Jesus Christ.

*The author of Corrective Church Discipline, following the South-Western Baptist, says, that this word contains a fallacy, but he has not pointed it out, and, as we have seen, he uses the same word himself. If I knew a less ambiguous word, I would use it, for I have nothing to gain by fallacy or by falsehood.
I can hardly conceive that any man will deny either of the foregoing propositions. In their application brethren appear to honestly differ. I proceed to point out what seems to me to be their proper application to the question in hand.

A Church is not bound to receive a member because another Church has received him. Usually, indeed, one Church does receive a member on a letter certifying his fellowship in another Church; but this is a matter of courtesy and not of right: and I have known such applicants to be rejected, and properly rejected. The Greensboro Church has, within my knowledge, acted twice on this principle; and no breach of fellowship or good-will occurred between the Churches on this account.

A Church is not bound to receive as a minister every one whom another Church so receives or ordains; but decides for itself whether it will receive him or not; and I have known more than one instance where Churches have refused to receive ministers recognized and received by other Churches.

Again, a Church is not bound to reject a member who has been rejected by another Church. If an individual applies to one Church for membership on experience, and is rejected because his experience does not satisfy them, he may, nevertheless, be received by another Church upon the very same experience. No one will deny this; for every Church must judge and decide for itself. These instances show that neither in receiving nor rejecting members can one local Church bind any other local Church. Each is inde-
pendent, in its widest sense, of all others. To its own Master it standeth or falleth.

Upon the same principle, one who has been excluded by one Church may be received by another. But it is said that this case differs from that of receiving a member after a simple rejection of the applicant's experience. In the one, we are told, there is a moral disability and a censure; in the other, none. But this certainly is a mistake. In the judgment of the rejecting Church, the applicant must have been considered deficient in Gospel faith; and that surely is a great moral disability, when the question is the propriety of admitting any one into a company of regenerated persons. In regard to the other point, a man may be laboring under charges from other tribunals than a Church. An individual may apply to a Church for membership while he is charged with crime; shall a Church of regenerated sinners reject him on that ground alone? Is it not more according to the spirit of the Gospel to examine the facts and reject him (if he ought to be rejected) on account of his guilt?

When a Church receives a member she confers upon him certain rights. What are those rights? Christ has established no great hierarchy; no universal Church visible; no grand confederacy of Churches, even, in which membership in one confers rights in all the rest. By admission, therefore, an individual obtains rights in the Church admitting him, and in no other. And when an individual is excluded from a Church, he is deprived of the very same rights which admission conferred upon him. I do not see how he can be
deprived of more, for he possesses no more. They
are rights in the particular, local, visible Church; not
in a Church general, nor in a hierarchy, nor in a con-
federated republic of Churches; for none of these
things exist by the authority of Christ. I, therefore,
hold that the phrases to admit a member into a Church,
and to exclude a member from a Church are correla-
tive phrases, and represent correlative ideas; which
are also coextensive and commensurate ideas. When
I stated this opinion some months ago, Dr. Dawson,
of the South-Western Baptist, said, with more candor
than courtesy, (I thank him for the former, and am
not ruffled by the lack of the latter,) that they were
"truisms, clothed in great swelling words," which, how-
ever, threw "no light on the subject." He has since
indorsed enthusiastically Corrective Church Discipline,
whose author boldly affirms that they are not "cor-
relative" nor "commensurate" ideas. The inconsist-
ency of an individual, however, is of little consequence
to a seeker for truth.

What strong reasons then are offered to disprove
my proposition? "Before he is received, he bears no
relation to the Church; but when he is expelled, he
sustains the relation of one who is the subject of its
reformatory discipline."—Page 107. But is it true
that, before an individual is received into a Church,
he bears no relation to it? I can not think so. The
Church and the world do bear certain relations to each
other, for Jesus has said: "Ye are the light of the
world," and again: "Ye are the salt of the earth."
Doubtless, an individual does bear some relation to a
Church before he is received into its membership. If, by the latter clause of the sentence quoted, it is meant that the excluded is a subject of the Church, there is a fallacy in the proposition. A few years ago Captain Ingraham released an American citizen who was a subject of Austrian discipline, though not a subject of the Austrian government. In like manner it may happen that one may be the subject of Church discipline who is not a subject of the Church.

To confirm his proposition, the author adds, that the expelled "can never be received again in the same way as he was from the world at first. Then, he was admitted by experience and baptism; now, he must be not admitted, but restored according to the Scriptures, by satisfaction rendered, without baptism." But the man may not have been admitted into the excluding Church at first from the world; he may have come from another Church, not by baptism and experience, but by letter. As he was not, therefore, admitted by baptism into the expelling Church, the manner of his readmission does not vary. But really this matter does not appear to me to touch the merits of the question. The member is not admitted by his experience and baptism in the first instance; nor by his letter in the second; but by the vote of the Church, based upon his experience or letter: and when he is restored, it is by a similar vote, based upon his repentance.

The author goes on: "Expulsion does not leave a man in the same condition that reception found him." Granted; what then? "Therefore, reception and expulsion are not commensurate ideas, nor correlative
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terms.” I must confess I do not see any connection between the conclusion and the reason from which it professes to be drawn. I suppose the terms reception and expulsion are used to mean what I meant when I said admit and exclude. Now, if receiving or admitting one into a Church, and excluding or expelling one from a Church, are not correlative phrases, I must confess myself ignorant of the meaning of the words. Because the man is not in the same condition as before, therefore the terms are not correlative! John leaves home, and, after an absence of six months, returns home. But he left home gay, and happy, and well; he returns dejected, miserable, and sick; therefore, leaving home and returning home are not correlative terms, nor commensurate ideas! “To gain a fortune,” and “to lose a fortune,” appear to me to be “correlative” and “commensurate,” although the man may be left in a very different condition. At first, he may have been young and strong, and industrious, and energetic; at the last, he may be old and infirm, and indolent, and enervate. The things spoken of in all these instances are correlative and commensurate; while the condition of the individuals are only incidental, and do not affect the thing itself.

The author concludes the paragraph thus: “Do you ask me, in reply: ‘Is every Church bound by the action of others?’ Without stopping to expose the fallacy contained in the word ‘bound,’ I reply: ‘Every Church is bound to obey the commands of the Master; and they prohibit it to interfere with the internal discipline of its neighbors.’”—P. 108.
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Only remarking that the word "bound" in the reply contains just as much fallacy as the same word in the question, we all agree that every Church is bound to obey the commands of the Master. But we have seen that when the author undertook to produce "Positive Precept" that "one Church can not receive to membership the excluded members of another," he failed most egregiously. And when he said—"Nowhere in the New Testament is to be found a precept containing a rule for the organization and government of a Gospel Church. For our ideas and practices upon these subjects we are dependent exclusively upon inspired example"—we have seen that his solitary example not only did not sustain him, but did not even exist. And now, again, he speaks of commands, which he has not produced, and does not produce.

Turn it, twist it as you may, the question resolves into this: Is the action of a Church, whether right or wrong, binding on all others? Take the case before supposed, where a Church unjustly excludes an innocent man; we are told that this unjust action is final; that there is no remedy except "from the Church expelling him;" that all Churches must treat him as a heathen; that the commands of Christ require this: but these commands are never produced.

The precepts of the New Testament and the recorded usage of the Apostolical Churches do furnish us complete instruction in regard to the organization of a Church. But in the government of a Church organized after the New Testament pattern, regard must often be had to general principles, drawn from
particular precepts and individual cases. It is of necessity so: for no book could contain special rules for every particular case.

I come back to recapitulate the essential principles of Church organization and government.

Every Church of Jesus Christ is composed of regenerated, faithful, and holy persons, men and women, who have been properly immersed into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Every Church is alike subject in all things to Jesus Christ; and therefore no Church is sovereign.

Every Church derives all its power from Jesus Christ; and is responsible to him alone for its use or abuse.

Every act of a Church which is according to Christ's law, contained in the New Testament, is authorized and valid; and every act not according to Christ's law is unauthorized and invalid.

Every Church is independent of all other Churches; and is bound, not by their action or opinion, but by the law of Jesus Christ.

Each Church must be the sole judge of the qualifications of its members; and should receive or reject, retain or exclude an individual, according as his character, in its judgment, conforms or fails to conform to the standard laid down in the New Testament.

If an innocent member is unjustly excluded by a particular Church, that exclusion does not make him an unregenerate, unholy, or unfaithful man; and therefore does not disqualify him for membership in any Church that obeys the Gospel.
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If one Church receives, or retains in its membership an individual deemed by another Church unfit to be a member, this does not constitute a breach of fellowship; for each is independent, and its right to judge for itself is indefeasible.

If one Church excludes one of its members, believing him to be guilty, and another Church, believing him to be innocent, receives him, this does not constitute a breach of fellowship. It is only a particular application of the preceding principle.

If the two Churches themselves get into a quarrel about the matter, there is no reason why other Churches should join in and swell the tumult. It can never be made an article of faith whether John Smith is or is not a bad man. Let those who know him form their judgment in soberness and charity.

These are my opinions, not lately adopted, nor now for the first time advanced. I do not cherish them because they are mine; but I have adopted them because I believe them to be true; and while I believe them to be true, I will cherish them. If I should be convinced that they are wrong, I will discard them as promptly as I adopted them; and will renounce them as publicly as I have maintained them. Brethren who profess to have written with reference to no particular case, have charged me with writing with reference to the Nashville difficulty. At the same time, strenuously opposing my views, they affirm that these views do not bear upon that difficulty. Be it so: then why should not these opinions be calmly considered and
soberly adjudged? I ask: What ground is there for
division in holding these principles or in reducing
them to practice? But the case has gone to the jury.
Let them decide.

N. M. Crawford.
PREFACE.

The Baptists of the South, generally, are aware that Professor P. H. Mell, of the University of Georgia, has written a treatise on "Corrective Church Discipline." This treatise, at first published in several Baptist papers, has recently been given to the public in "book form." On the other hand, the Baptists of the South do not, so generally, know that this treatise has been reviewed. The reason why many of them are unacquainted with the fact is to be attributed mainly to another fact, viz.: That a large portion of the Baptist press could not be induced, by fair means, to publish the review, though they published the series written by Professor Mell. Whether this fact can be said to the praise of those who have governed the press, I will leave it to others to decide. "Fair," "free," and "full discussion"—where, indeed, such a privilege has been allowed them,—had, as I had always thought, characterized Baptists; and though this
may be true as a general rule, yet the above forms one decided and unmistakable exception. But Baptists know how, if any people do, to appreciate such proscription.

The treatise above referred to, while names are not allowed to appear, seems to look to a well-known case of discipline (?), which has been agitating the Baptist mind no little of late. The review as cautiously omits all names, but discusses the principles attempted to be established by the author of Corrective Church Discipline, even at the expense of having it said, “He is writing for the defense of a certain party!” Why the reviewer should be thus censured for reviewing a work, the design of which is to establish principles condemning one party and apologizing for another, while both parties ignore names, it is difficult to see! For principles and not for men, has the reviewer contended. When principles vital to the Church of Christ are assailed, who would be so cowardly as not to speak forth his sentiments?

But what are these principles? I answer: They are principles that affect the foundation of right. The main question involved is this: Does the right to exercise discipline originate in the will of the majority of a Church? or does it take its origin in the will of Christ, as expressed in his word?

Those who advocate the former of these questions, run into a number of gross absurdities.
They destroy, or at least greatly abridge, the independence of all those Churches that think that all right to exercise discipline is derived from Christ's word. They think that a wicked act of discipline, performed by one Church, deserves the respect of all other Churches! The direct tendency of which is, to make wrong right and right wrong. The object of the reviewer has been to expose such monstrous fallacies, and present the claims and authority of Christ above all other claims; striving to show that an act of discipline is right and valid, not because a majority happen to vote for it, but because the act itself was done in accordance with, and by authority of, the laws of Christ; and that all acts of discipline, which are not authorized by, or in violation of his laws, are wrong—invalid—and hence deserve the disapprobation and disrespect of all other Churches and Church-members connected with the invalid acts.

The reviewer has tried, (with what success he will leave it to others to say,) to fairly and fearlessly expose these Romish peculiarities, defend the honor of Christ, and place the important subject of Church discipline on its proper basis—the word of God.

Induced by a love of the truth to write this review, and thinking it not amiss to add, as an
appendix, some of the most important principles of Church discipline, as taught in the sacred oracles, the author respectfully submits them both to all truth-loving Baptists.

A. S. Worrell.
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A number of articles, on the subject of "Corrective Church Discipline," have recently appeared in several Baptist papers, from the pen of Professor Mell, of the University of Georgia. Why these articles have been published simultaneously in so many papers, the author has not informed us. Possibly, by sending manuscripts to the different editors, their publications might be more certainly secured. Possibly, too, the design may have been to make a simultaneous impression. Certain it is, that some important end is designed to be accomplished. What that end is, the writer has not informed us; nor will time be unnecessarily consumed in guessing,
though the end seems to me to be very transparent.

The object of every writer should be to know and set forth the truth. Where this is not the case, an opportunity for the display of learning may be afforded, but the work does no credit to the heart of the one who performs it. The present writer has no "pet theory" nor partisan end to urge. To follow the truth, wherever it may lead, is his only object.

It is suggested by Professor Mell that all strictures be withheld until he shall have closed his series. But as no intimation is given as to the probable length of the series, and there is a considerable amount of labor to perform before reaching his "conclusions," it is to be hoped that he will not object to our commencing the work at once.

On reading his first article, I was led to inquire, "What emergency has called out this long article?" "Is the New Testament so obscure on the subject of Church discipline as to need such an elaborate piece of composition?" Even after reflection, I am unable to see that Professor Mell's teachings, or expositions, are any more easily un-
derstood than those of Christ and his inspired apostles. The writer himself affirms that the great Lawgiver in Zion has left his people in no doubt as to the remedy to be applied in every instance—that "he has not left us to legislate on the subject," nor to resort to expedients to meet cases as they arise; but himself has classified offenses, and prescribed the course to be pursued in every case. Now, if the great Lawgiver "has left his people in no doubt as to the remedy to be applied in every instance," and if he has prescribed the course to be pursued in every case, what more can be desired? What need have we of additional light? Has there been any case of discipline which deserves approbation or condemnation? If so, why not measure that act of discipline directly by the Divine law, which is so plain as to leave no doubt as to what ought to be done? The verdict, in this case, could be easily made. But the articles are now in print, and I will proceed to notice them with all respect and kindness.
PRIVATE OFFENSES EXAMINED.

Offenses are divided into two general classes—"Private and Public." The former he defines thus: "A Private Offense is one in which the act is not essentially a crime against religion and morality, and the object affected by it is a brother."

With regard to this definition, I remark:

1. That an act which is a crime against neither religion nor morality, deserves not to be called a crime, in the sense in which it is used in the definition—it is an imaginary, and not a real crime. True, every crime is not committed with the view of reproaching religion or morality—indeed, crimes thus committed are very few; but it is also true, that no act ought to be denominated a crime which does not violate the laws either of morality or of religion.

2. The examples given to establish the rule, do not, in my judgment, sustain it. As specimens, here are three: "As when encroachments are made against individual rights, interest, or feelings." Will it be contended that an encroachment against an individual's rights, his interest, or
his feelings, is a crime against neither religion nor morality? The professor must be exceedingly strict in his notions of what it takes to constitute a crime, if he supposes a crime can be perpetrated which is not essentially a crime against religion or morality. There are crimes enough, essentially against morality or religion, without flooding the Church with this new species. The definition, to my mind, is entirely novel. The definition of "private offenses" ought to have been more explicit.

3. The definition does great violence to the Scriptures. The definition, be it remembered, is based upon Matt. xviii: 15: "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee," etc.

What is the Greek verb, which is translated "offend" in the eighteenth chapter and fifteenth verse of Matthew? Read, every one who can—it is ἀμαρτήσῃ, (Εὰν ὅσ 'ἀμαρτήσῃ εἰς σὲ ὁ ἀδελφός) literally, and if the brother sin into (against) thee.

Now the reader's attention is called to the following facts:

1. That the verb, translated sin in the New Testament is, invariably, ἀμαρτάνω in some one
of its forms. The verb, translated "offend" in Matt. xviii: 15, is 'αμαρτήσῃ, (the Aorist sub.)

The verb appears twice in the participial form in composition with the preposition, προ—once in 2 Cor. xii: 21, [προθμαρτηκότων] again, 2 Cor. xiii: [προθμαρτηκόσι.]

2. The lexicons all agree as to the meaning of the verb, viz.: in the classics, "to err from," "to miss the mark," "to err," "to sin;" in the New Testament it means to sin.

3. That the Greek adjective, corresponding, is 'αμαρτωλός—one who is a sinner. Οφειλειτι, translated "sinners," in Luke xiii: 4, means a debtor; hence, by implication, a sinner.

4. That the Greek noun, translated sin, is 'αμαρτία and 'αμαρτήμα, sin, or sinfulness.

These words all belong to the same family; all have a common root, and are the words which God selected to designate the act of sinning, the state of being a sinner, and the action of sin itself.

In view of these facts, I affirm:

1. That if the verb 'αμαρτάνω does not imply a violation of moral or religious law, there is no verb in the New Testament that does.
2. That if this same verb does imply a violation of moral or religious law, it implies as much in Matt. xviii: 15, unless there is something in the context to destroy this meaning. There is nothing in the context to neutralize its meaning, unless it be the phrase “against thee,” [if thy brother sin against thee.] But a sin is none the less a sin, because it is committed against a brother. The object of the sinful action can not, in the nature of things, destroy the elements of the act itself. Besides, here is one text which will forever settle the question: “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” It is impossible to sin against a brother, without violating, at the same time, this law of God. The verb ἁμαρτέω in Matt. xviii: 15, must have its ordinary meaning. It must signify to sin, or it does not. If it does not mean to sin, then Christ and his apostles were mistaken about the condition of the human family—supposing that they were guilty of having violated some moral or religious law, when such was not the fact! On this supposition, the human race has been cruelly and wantonly slandered; having been charged with unholiness, wickedness, and rebellion, when they have, all the
time, been holy, righteous, and obedient! Does any one believe that Christ did not use the verb 'αμαρτανω to denote the act of sinning? If he who showed himself, by miraculous works, to be God, did not thus use the word, he said nothing about the existence of sin. If the noun 'αμαρτία did not mean sin, and the verb 'αμαρτανω, to sin, in the days of Christ, there is no word that did.

And if sin did exist, and was spoken of, it must have been designated by some term. No terms were used for the purpose of denoting the action of sin, and the act of sinning, if 'αμαρτία and 'αμαρτανω were not. If, then, the noun 'αμαρτία did not mean sin, and the verb 'αμαρτανω, to sin, we must conclude that there was no sin, or if there was, no one recognized it. Why, then, was it necessary for Christ to die? Was not he, by his death, to "save his people from their sins?" If his people had not sinned, then the angel of the Lord lied when he said: "He shall save his people from their sins." Are we not compelled to believe there was sin in the world, and that it was designated by some term?

But if 'αμαρτανω does mean to sin, Professor Mell’s definition of private offenses must forever
fall. If the verb 'αμαρτήςθη, in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew, does not "essentially" necessarily denote a violation of some moral or religious law, then Christ and his apostles used no word that does. But we know that sin does abound; that it has, ever since the days of Adam's transgression; that the verb 'αμαρτήςθη does imply sin; that Christ so used it; and that, therefore, Professor Mell's definition is not correct.

It astonishes me beyond measure, and, I will add, pains me, too, that my old professor, and teacher of Greek besides, should have taken such a strange and untenable position!

Let us see how Matt. xviii: 15, will read, when literally translated: "And if (thy) brother sin against thee," etc. The common version, which renders αμαρτήςθη trespass, is not strong enough. The imperfection of King James's version has, in all probability, given rise to an erroneous interpretation of this verse, quite common of late. The author of the articles now under review is the professor of Greek, I believe, in the University of Georgia. Will he show that the above criticisms are wrong? Will he affirm that Matt. xviii: 15 does not imply a violation of religion? Will
any one who knows anything of the Greek dare to make such an affirmation? I here challenge Greek scholars, the world over, to show that the criticisms above made are not strictly correct. To place this point beyond dispute, I give the text again, literally translated: “And if (thy) brother sin against thee,” etc. If the word translated “sin” does not imply a violation of religion or morality, then may the human family be at peace; for, on this supposition, the Bible contains no threat against them; indeed, there would be nothing upon which to base a threat. Furthermore, if this doctrine be true, the Bible is a work of supererogation, and may well be attributed to the superstition and deceit of priests. But if the Bible be the word of God, and if that word be true, then the word (translated in the common version “trespass,” but properly rendered “sin”) does imply, and necessarily so, a violation of religion or morality.

If it does imply such a violation, then is Professor Mell’s definition of “private offenses” worthless; having nothing but the conjecture of man to rest upon. Let this definition, then, as containing the seeds of universal skepticism, be
rejected, and let one which harmonizes with the word of God, be given in its stead.

"And if (thy) brother sin against thee." Is there any specific sin here referred to? I answer, the term is wholly unlimited, except by the phrase "against thee." Thy brother may sin against thee in a great variety of ways, too numerous to mention. He may sin "against thee" either privately, or publicly. Hence, to call a sin, which may be private, or public, a "private offense," does not clearly designate the nature of the sin, or offense. If there is any word in our language by which this act can be properly designated, that word should be sought. There is no word that can perform this office better than the term personal. If thy brother sin against thee, the sin is personal to thee, and why not call it personal instead of private?

PUBLIC OFFENSES.

"A public offense," says the professor, "is one in which the act is essentially a crime against
religion and morality, or the object of it the Church in its organized capacity."

The objections to this definition are:

1. That unless religion and morality are co-extensive terms, it is possible for "public offenses" to exist, without being committed essentially against both religion and morality. If these terms are co-extensive, one of them is superfluous, and ought, therefore, to be rejected. Such distinctions ought to be noticed, especially in definitions of such important subjects.

2. I enter a philosophical protest against the latter part of the definition: "Or the object of it the Church in its organized capacity." Philosophers ordinarily give a definition, and then adduce their examples to show the applicability of principle or law defined; but never, till I read this definition, have I seen what might be an example under the rule, incorporated into the definition of the rule itself!

Arithmetic is the science of figures, or (it is) 2+6=8. Again: Grammar is the science of language, or (it is) boys love to play. The former, while it is an example in arithmetic, is, by no means, arithmetic itself. The latter, though a
sentence involving some of the principles of grammar, is, certainly, not grammar itself. Read his definition of public offenses, and compare it with the above.

The philosopher will be astonished, either at the carelessness of the author of such a definition, or at the ignorance which must attach to readers, if it is supposed that they receive, as valid, such a remarkable definition!

3. Still another objection is, that this same definition is as illogical as it is unphilosophical. Suppose it should become necessary to discuss the merits of some “act against the Church, in its organized capacity,” and Professor Mell should, in stating his premises, affirm “that an act against the Church in its organized capacity,” is a crime—“a public offense,” he might justly be required to prove his assertion. His opponent would say to him: “Sir, you have assumed as true what you must prove.” The question to be discussed is simply this: Is the particular act a crime—“a public offense?” You, sir, affirm that it is a crime—a public offense. But you must prove it. Your fault is called, by logicians, “Petitio principii”—a begging of the question.
It is true that some such acts may be crimes, or even public offenses; but it is equally true that other acts committed against the Church, even in its organized capacity, are not crimes, and consequently not public offenses in the offensive sense of the term. Numerous examples might be adduced. Here is a comprehensive one: A refusal, on the part of a member, to acquiesce in any violation of the Scriptures by the Church, can not be a crime, however offensive it may be to those who are called the Church.

Let us illustrate. Suppose a Church, “in its organized capacity,” should say to one of its members: “Sir, you must go to China, and preach the Gospel to the heathen,” and threaten him with exclusion if he refuse to obey; would it be a sin, public or private, for him to inform them that he could not obey their order? Yet it is a sin, if Professor Mell’s definition be correct!

An act against the Church is a specific crime, if a crime at all; but it is by no means self-evident that such an act is a crime, unless the Church is infallible. The only proper course for the professor to pursue was, first to have given a correct definition of a public offense, if the Bible is not
sufficiently plain; then, if there is any act against the Church in its organized capacity, he should have compared that act, taking into the account the facts in the case, with his definition; and had said act been found to contain the necessary elements of a public offense, then, but not till then, ought he to have asserted that that act is a public offense. Logicians will ever remain astonished at reading the professor's definition of a public offense!

4. This definition is objectionable in a theological point of view. As intimated above, his doctrine can be true only on the supposition that the Church is infallible. Will Professor Mell advocate such a Romish dogma? He does advocate it in the definition we are now considering, and will continue to do so, until he rejects from the sentence the clause "or against the Church in its organized capacity." Will he do this?

Would he impress his less intelligent brethren with the belief that whatever the Church does is right? Does he wish to be understood as teaching that a member is rightfully bound to do whatever his Church may require of him? If so, he need not modify what he has written. This doctrine, if language has any definite import, is
clearly taught in his definition of "public offenses." If, however, he desires to teach the doctrine that Churches, as well as individuals, may, and do sometimes sin, let him reject from his definition the phrase "or against the Church in its organized capacity."

Moreover, the term "public" fails to give the distinguishing characteristic of this class of offenses. Since thy "brother may sin against thee," in private or public, we see, at once, that "public" does not distinguish the act. Besides, some offenses which Professor Mell calls public, may be as private as his "private offenses," or even more so.

Since, then, some offenses which he calls "private" may be public, and some of his "public offenses" may be "private," the term "public" ought to be rejected, if a better one can be found. Is there any better term? If there is not, why not coin one for the purpose? But there is no necessity of coining a word. The word general, as opposed to particular, individual, or personal, is the term which is proposed. If any one will suggest a better, this will be readily withdrawn.

The characteristic difference between the two classes of offenses will then be denoted by the
terms personal and general; and this is as it should be. There is not, necessarily, any difference between personal and general offenses, other than this, viz.: That a personal offense is an offense against a brother; while a general offense is not committed against a brother.

There may be just as bad a moral element in the one as in the other, yet Professor Mell contends that the characteristic difference between them is, that private (personal) offenses are not essentially violative of religion or morality, and that public (general) offenses are! But there can be no real offense which does not violate either religion or morality. This definition, therefore, is objectionable.

1. Philosophically—since it has incorporated in it what may or may not be an example under the definition of general offenses.

2. Logically.—It assumes the thing to be proved.

3. Theologically.—It is based upon the absurd dogma of Church infallibility.

And 4. The term “public” does not characterize the act.

The foundation, thus far, must give way, and with it, the vast superstructure resting thereupon
MIXED OFFENSES.

Let us now examine, with accuracy, this new class, called “Mixed Offenses.”

It has been shown that a “private offense,” as defined by Professor Mell, is only an imaginary crime, since it does not essentially violate the laws of religion or morality; and that only the first part of the definition of “public offenses”—viz.: “A public offense is one in which the act is essentially a crime against religion” or “morality”—is at all admissible, inasmuch as the latter part, viz.: “The object of it, the Church in its organized capacity,” is not only unphilosophical and illogical, but also unscriptural, being based upon the absurd dogma of Church infallibility.

By “mixed offenses” is, of course, meant offenses which contain the “essential elements of private and public offenses.” In order, then, to ascertain what a “mixed offense” is, we have only to find the elements of these two classes, and form a “mixture” of them. In the language of the professor: “When the act is essentially a crime against religion and morality, and
the object affected by it is a brother, we have both offenses in combination."

Let us obtain the elements of the first class: An act not essentially a crime against religion and morality, and the object affected by it a brother. Inspiration says: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." A private offense, according to the above definition, is not essentially violative of this command; otherwise it would be essentially against religion. It is not an act against morality; then, if the act has any moral element, it must be a good one. To put the least favorable construction on the act, it does not contain a bad element. The first term we may consider as containing not a bad moral element. Let the moral element of the second, or public offenses, be found. It is an act essentially against religion and morality—taking the first part of the definition. This act, of necessity, contains a bad moral element. The two elements being found, let us form the compound. The mixture will be not a bad moral element, plus a bad moral element. Is not this a remarkable compound? An act possessing the very opposite elements of bad and good! A simple impossibility!
Suppose we find the element in the second part of the definition of public offenses—in the expression, an act against the Church in its organized capacity. Such an act may be bad, and consequently contain a bad moral element; or it may be good, and contain a good moral element. If the Church act in accordance with the spirit of the Scriptures—is acting right—an act of resistance to the Church in its organized capacity would contain a bad moral element. But if the Church act contrary to right, (which it sometimes does,) proper resistance to the Church, even in its organized capacity, would be a good act, and consequently contain a good moral element. Whether an act against the Church in its organized capacity is a bad or a good act, must always be decided by taking into the account what the Church has done, how she has done it, and the manner of the resistance against the given act, or position of the Church, as the case may be. But let us form the mixture. Taking the moral element of a private offense, and putting it with the moral elements found to exist in the latter part of the definition, we will obtain:

1. Not a bad moral, plus a bad moral element,
(in case the Church has acted right.) Here again we are greeted with an impossibility.

2. Forming the second "mixture," we have: Not a bad moral element, plus a good moral element, (in case the Church acts wrong, and the member makes proper resistance.) This, every one can readily see, is a possible "mixture." The elements are not antagonistic.

It is to be hoped that the professor will come back, and prepare such elements as will, if a "mixture" we must have, "mix." Moral, and even theological druggists, will never be likely, after proper examination, to receive the potion which he has prepared.

But the professor, after all, does not seem to attach much importance to "mixed offenses" as a separate class. For the sake of convenience, however, they will be termed here "mixed offenses." The phrase, I must confess, is, to me at least, a new one; and, so far as "convenience" is concerned, it would, it appears to me, be much better to leave it off wholly.

To sum up. The professor's definition of "a private offense" not being a crime essentially against religion or morality, is not, properly, a
crime at all; and, consequently, ought never to create any uneasiness in the Church; ought never to be presented to the Church, if known to be private; and, it may be added, ought never to "offend" a brother. Indeed, he acts the part of a very silly person, who becomes offended at the act of a brother, when the act itself is not essentially a crime against religion or morality. The first part of the definition of "public offenses" is the only part of Professor Mell's definitions that can stand at all. As a definition of a "public offense," it is very imperfect, since not every act against religion or morality is a public offense. The clause, "or against the Church in its organized capacity," I hope he will expunge.

"Mixed offenses," (except in the last compound noticed above, in which the elements are not a bad moral element, plus a good moral element,) are, as defined by the professor, impossibilities. There is not the least necessity, if private and public offenses were rightly defined, of having this new class.

It has been shown that a private offense is no offense any further than it is a violation of moral or religious law. If the professor intends to
teach the doctrine that a *private offense* may, in any case, violate the laws of morality or religion, he should have informed us to *what extent*. But it is to be presumed that no such design was entertained, for then his private and public offenses would not be distinct, but one and the same. Moreover, unless the characteristic distinction between these offenses is that one does not violate religion or morality, while the other does, there would be no possibility of forming his third class—mixed offenses. Accordingly, it seems that he is in a dilemma. Should he say that a private offense may violate some moral or religious law, there is no difference between a private and a public offense; and, furthermore, there could be no mixed offense. But, if he does make a difference between private and public offenses, he destroys his private offenses, since that is no offense which is not a violation either of moral or religious law; and the destruction sweeps away his mixed offenses, inasmuch as no act can be indifferent, (not bad,) and, at the same time good. Which will he take?

Will he allow such definitions to underlie a whole theological treatise? Only think! your *first class comprises such offenses as violate neither
religion nor morality. Marvelous offense, indeed!! Your second class comprises such offenses as violate religion and morality, or such as are committed against the Church in its organized capacity.

This latter clause, "or against the Church in its organized capacity," is strangely absurd, as already shown. The former part, such offenses as violate "religion and morality," does not distinguish, as we have already seen, personal from general offenses; and, as a definition, it amounts to merely nothing.

Your third class must be composed of the elements of the first and second classes; the result of which mixture is given above. Now, in all candor, I ask if such definitions can be made the basis of a respectable treatise? Will the candid reader be willing to adopt such a division of offenses? I ask again, do not Scripture and reason proclaim aloud against such groundless classification of offenses as Professor Mell has made? My work, at this point, might stop, because that on which the treatise of Corrective Church Discipline rests has been removed; but I will pursue the matter to the end, and give credit where credit is due, and reproof where reproof is deserved.
TREATMENT OF PRIVATE OFFENSES.

It should be recollected that private offenses, as defined by Professor Mell, differ from public ones in this, that “the specific character (of the former) is that the act is not a crime against religion and morality, and (that) the object of the act is a brother.” It should be further remembered that, unless this “specific character” of private offenses is strictly observed, there can be no characteristic difference between private and public offenses. Annihilate this distinction, and they become one and the same.

How, then, does Professor Mell recommend that private offenses (i.e., those acts, the “specific character” of which is that they are not crimes against religion and morality) should be treated? “In the treatment of private offenses,” says he, “the Savior, in Matt. xviii, gives the course to be pursued—commonly called ‘Gospel Steps.’”* I remark:

*Observe that these “Gospel Steps” should be taken, not by the Church, but by the offended member. Hence all this treatment should not be connected with Church discipline.
1. That if the "specific character" of the act has not been determined, then the advice above given is proper; but if it has, and the "offended" brother decides that the act is what Professor Mell would term a private offense, (i.e., an act against neither morality nor religion,) he ought not to "go and tell" his brother anything about it, unless he (the offended) has shown himself to be offended; in this case, he should apologize to his brother for having become needlessly offended, and pray to God to give him more magnanimity, and a less suspicious disposition.

2. I deny that Matt. xviii was designed exclusively or chiefly, as the formula for setting Professor Mell's private offenses. If one is in doubt as to the "specific character of the act," but is strongly inclined to believe that it is violative of some moral or religious law, he should then "go and tell" his brother, not his "fault," (for he does not yet know that it is such,) but of the act itself; requesting his brother to explain what he meant by it. If the act turns out to be a "private offense," then, perhaps, a mutual apology will not be amiss.

"Tell him his fault," is the direction next given.
PRIVATE OFFENSES EXPOSED.

Is it possible that you have ascertained that your brother has committed a "fault!" If so, what is the "specific character" of his fault? Certainly it is not an act which violates morality or religion; for then, according to the definition, it is no longer a private offense, and it is this class of offenses we are now considering.

At this point it is proper to state that there is no word in the Greek Testament corresponding to "fault," which occurs in Matt. xviii: 15. The literal would read thus: "And if thy brother sin against thee, go and tell him between thee and him alone." "Tell him" what? Not merely his "fault," but his "sin"—his ἁμαρτία, (which is the word to be supplied, if, indeed, it is necessary to supply any.) With this word supplied, the text runs thus: "And if thy brother sin against thee, go and tell him his sin between thee and him alone." It may be that the imperfection of the common translation has given rise to an erroneous interpretation of the text, quite prevalent of late. Every one can see that the Savior gave directions for the offended brother to deal with a brother who had sinned against him. The directions were, doubtless, designed to embrace not
merely imaginary but real sins; not only such acts as the offended believes to be sins, but such as he knows to be such. The Savior does not say what shall be the "specific character" of the act, only that it is a sin against a brother: "If thy brother sin against thee, go and tell him (his sin) between thee and him alone." Some may say, "This is a hard saying." "Who can hear it?" But, it may be replied, "These are the words of Christ, the only Lawgiver." Let his followers, therefore, hear them, and be silent.

In the next place, it must be apparent to every thoughtful reader, that Professor Mell is inconsistent with himself.

He says: "You may have misconceived him through misapprehension or misrepresentation. Your brother may be able to disavow, or, if he acknowledges, to explain, and thus remove all complaint." "Acknowledge" what? That he has committed an act, the "specific character" of which is, that it is not a crime against morality or religion? A strange acknowledgment this, truly!

Again: "You may thus be able to reclaim him." "Reclaim him" from what? From the state in which he has involved himself by an act whose
"specific character" is, that it is not a crime against morality or religion?

Next sentence: "He may repent and make reparation."

"Repent" of what? Repent of an act which violates no moral or religious law? A new species of repentance, indeed!

Finally: "When your brother trespasses against you, he trespasses against God also, and against his own soul."

And yet the act is one whose "specific character" is that it is not a crime against morality or religion!!

"A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."

We have now seen, in part, how Professor Mell would have his "private offenses" treated; we have furthermore seen that he prescribed treatment, not for what he defines to be "private offenses," but for his "public" ones. As when a physician pronounces a disease to be consumption, and then treats it as if it were typhoid fever! But, that the reader may see this for himself, I quote his definition, and one of his concessions made in his first article on the treatment of "private offenses." "A private offense is one in which
the act is not essentially a crime (note this) against religion and morality, and the object of it a brother." Again, in the same article: "The specific character (of a private offense; i. e., the thing which distinguishes it from other offenses) is, that the act is not a crime (store up this) against religion and morality, and the object of the act a brother."

Then, after he has advanced some distance in his treatment of "private offenses," as if forgetting what he had said before, we find this remarkable language:

"When (i. e., as often as) your brother trespasses (sins) against you, he trespasses (sins) against God also." (!) According to Professor Mell's way of defining, "the specific character" of a trespass (sin) against God, is, that it is not a crime against religion and morality! What is religion? and what is morality? Can there be any sin against God which is not a sin against religion? Will Professor Mell answer? There is but one possible way for him to escape a direct collision, and that is by throwing one, at least, of his trains off the track. In either case, the loss will be great. He must lose his "private" and "mixed" trains, or his "public" one. As passengers throng to the "public"
train, he certainly will prefer to lose both of the other trains, rather than hazard the lives of so many!

In writing for Baptists, especially on so exciting a subject as the one under discussion, it is important:

1. That the positions of the writer agree with the truth.

2. That the writer be consistent with himself. Both of these objections may be urged against the articles on "Corrective Church Discipline."

What Professor Mell says about "private offenses" is, for the most part, true, when applied to "personal" offenses, such as are spoken of in Matt. xviii. But it is to be hoped that he will throw aside his unscriptural, absurd definition of private offenses, and not make all this ado about an offense, (?) the "specific character" of which being this, viz.: that it is not a crime against either religion or morality! Sensible people will never follow his prescriptions in the treatment of what he calls a private offense, at least when they view it in the light of his definition; but, should they view it in the light of his concession— "When your brother trespasses (sins) against you,
he trespasses (sins) against God also”—much of the advice is good. Let us call diseases by their proper names, and then apply the proper medicine.

The reasons which Professor Mell assigns why “private offenses” should be settled privately, are, in the main, very good, if his “private offenses” were such as the offenses provided for in Matt. xviii. The substance of the reasons is as follows:

1. Such offenses can not be so amicably settled in any other way, as by the parties themselves. This reason commends itself to the good sense of every sensible man.

2. “He (the Savior) would save his cause from the reproach of brethren publicly worrying and devouring one another.” This reason is a good one.

3. “He would save his Churches from the adjudication of personal difficulties between their members, so that they may never be the arena for personal strife,” etc. This, too, is admitted. But how totally unnecessary are all these grave reasons, when it is remembered that the difficulty to be settled has grown out of an act, “the specific character of which is,” that it is not a crime
against religion or morality!! Everything that can be said, in the way of advice, for the settlement of such offenses, must appear ridiculous.

There is one objectionable phrase in the "fourth" consideration, where the offender appears incorrigible. Speaking of the advantage rising to the offended from the testimony of "the one or two," he says: "By their testimony, the 'one or two' disinterested brethren may afford protection to the innocent, and light to the Church, so that it may act with unanimity and unerring certainty." The words "unerring certainty" are those to which I object. When the offended brother, the "one or two" disinterested brethren, and lastly, the Church, have all acted, free from prejudice, and with the desire to save the offending brother, the probability is that they will act right; but "unerring certainty" belongs to God alone, or, at least, to those who are "unerringly" guided by the Divine will.

The idea of taking "one or two disinterested brethren" to see the offending brother, is a good one, when a real offense has been committed.

There is a thought in the "fifth" specification, which I heartily approve, viz.: that the prominent
idea with all concerned, is to reclaim the offending brother. If he has trespassed (sinned) against a brother, it is proper to try to reclaim him.

There is another point in direct connection with that just noticed, which must not be omitted. He says: "If he neglect to hear the Church, let him be to her as a heathen man and a publican." Is this the teaching of the inspired word? The Savior says: "If he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." It is not said that the Church is yet to abandon him. There is now only one other thing in this number of his article, to be considered. "It is," says Professor Mell, "imperative upon the Church, when a question of mere personal variance, involving no immorality, is brought before t, to attempt, in the first instance, to reclaim the offender." (My italics.) But suppose the "variance" does not involve "morality;" what then? Shall the Church make no effort to reclaim him? Professor Mell would, I suppose, say "No." But suppose the "variance" should involve religion, what treatment ought the offending brother to receive? Shall the Church make an effort to reclaim him? An answer to this question is re-
spectfully solicited. Is a sin against morality more offensive than a sin against God? Again: If a sin against a brother should violate some principle of morality, how did Professor Mell ascertain that such an offense ought not to be treated according to Matt. xviii? The texts “Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them;” and, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself;” are very comprehensive. Can there be a sin against a brother, which does not violate one or both of these texts? Every “personal” offense necessarily violates some law of God, and, therefore, is a sin against religion; and, being a sin against religion, it can not be comprehended under Professor Mell’s “private offenses.” It is not at all astonishing that, with such an erroneous definition “to start with,” Professor Mell should “cross his own path,” and nullify in one place what he has said in another.

TREATMENT OF PUBLIC AND MIXED OFFENSES.

The article now to be considered commences thus: “How should public offenses be treated?
When one has been guilty of open immorality, shall Gospel steps be taken? Is it demanded that a thief or a drunkard or a debaucher should be approached first in private, and then in company with one or two others, before he is arraigned in presence of the Church? Certainly not; *for no private reparation can atone for, or counteract the effects of immoralities!*" (Italics mine.) It is needless to multiply words unnecessarily. What does Professor Mell mean by "immorality?" There is a great necessity for an accurate and pointed definition of this term. Webster says, immorality is "an act or practice which contravenes the Divine command, or the social duties."

If this definition is accepted, I must enter my objection to Professor Mell's doctrine, by showing that some immoralities may be atoned for in a different way to the one he suggests. Every personal offense—sin against a brother—"contravenes the Divine command, "Whatever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them;" and, in the language of Professor Mell, "When your brother trespasses (sins) against you, he sins against God also." But "where there is no law, there is no transgres-
sion.” No one can sin against God without “contravening the command” or law of God. According to Webster, any harsh or abusive words spoken by A against his brother B, would be an immoral act. Should the act be regarded as an “immorality,” then, Professor Mell being judge, “no private reparation can atone for” it. The Savior seems to teach a different doctrine. He says: “If thy brother sin against thee, go and tell him (his sin) between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.” The great object is now attained—your brother is gained. Don’t trouble the Church, or any one by talking of it. “But suppose some of the members of the Church are cognizant of the difficulty; ought they to report the matter to the Church?” I answer, No. “But suppose all the Church know it, what then?” It would be, even in that case, as well for all to learn, from the parties themselves, or from their friends, that the difficulty has been amicably settled, and keep the matter out of the Church entirely; but when the Church, if as a Church she inquires into the matter, learns that the troubles have all been settled, she certainly ought not to pursue the matter any further.
I conclude, therefore, that, if Professor Mell accepts Webster's definition, some "immoralities" ought to be settled without being brought into the Church.

But it may be that this definition will be discarded. Another definition of *morality* is here appended: "Religion," says Dr. Dagg, (page 103, *Moral Science,* ) "implies love to God, and the attendant affections found in the sanctified heart. It has an external form, consisting of duties positive and moral. Positive duties are those for which no other reason can be given than the will of God, made known by express precept of revelation. Moral duties are those for which reasons may be assigned, derived from other manifestations of the Divine will. The chief concern of moral philosophy is with the latter class. To those, the name *morality* especially applies."

The same distinguished writer says, in the same connection: "We may as well seek for a universe without a God, as for a system of morality without religion." Again, he says: "As true morality begins with God, so it ends with God; and morality, in its relation to God, is nothing different from religion."
It is easy to deduce, from the above extract, what the amiable, learned Dr. Dagg would call an immoral act. As a moral duty is one “for which reasons may be assigned, derived from other manifestations of the Divine will,” an act which violates a moral duty is an immoral act, or an immorality.

According to this doctrine, if A becomes angry with B, speaks unkindly to him, and abuses him, A is guilty of an immoral act, or an immorality.

If this act is an immorality, would Professor Mell be willing for such an offense (sin) to be settled privately? Does not Matt. xviii: 15, clearly provide for such cases?

If he will accept either of the definitions quoted, will he be so kind as to define for himself what he means by “morality?”

The truth is, if I am able to comprehend his use of the terms, he has used morality as quite distinct from religion, and has made morality stand even higher than religion. In proof of this, I refer to the fact that, in his view, if an act violates God’s law merely, it may, according to one admission of his, be settled between the parties privately; but, from the latter part of the
quotation in the first part of the article, it appears that if the act may be denominated an immorality, it can not be atoned for by private reparation.

Religion contains morality, as a whole contains its parts. "We may as well seek for a universe without a God, as for a system of morality without religion."

Professor Mell shows considerable ingenuity, (if he will pardon me for kindly saying so,) in mentioning "the thief," "the drunkard," and the "debaucher," as the representatives of "immoralists." Why did he not use some other terms less criminal than these? May not many other acts be termed "immoralities" as well as these? But let this pass.

He says, again: "If the offender is proved to be guilty of a gross offense against religion and morality, he should be at once and without delay expelled." Here there seems to be some relaxation of the rigid rule. What is a "gross offense?" A great offense, or a palpable offense, it is to be presumed. Would he call all offenses against religion and morality, "gross offenses?" If not, then what treatment would he prescribe for such
as are not "gross?" He answers this question himself: "In public offenses, not involving gross immorality, a milder course may be pursued; and corrective discipline may be successful and complete, short of excommunication." This, I think, is sound doctrine, quite a modification, however, of that in the first extract. By gradual concessions, Professor Mell seems to be approaching the truth.

Throwing aside a large number of cases which would be included in his definition of a "public offense," a considerable part of what he says about their treatment may be readily admitted.

1. Not every act against religion or morality is a public offense. A very large number of such offenses are personal offenses, and should be settled privately.

2. Not every "act against the Church in its organized capacity," (a part of his definition of public offenses,) is a public offense. Some such acts are public offenses; others are even praiseworthy. The former should be treated as public offenses; the latter should receive praise. Many of this latter class have occurred in the history of the Churches.
I disagree with Professor Mell on another point. He says, "No one should be condemned without a hearing." The murderer, the man well known to be living in incest, and many such like cases, form exceptions. What is the use of citing a murderer, whose black crime is known to the whole community, to appear before the Church? Would his acknowledgment prevent his exclusion? When a Church-member's guilt has been established beyond doubt, in the mind of the Church, and the crime is such as can not be atoned for, his presence before the Church is not at all necessary. The Church should exclude him without any formal trial.

MIXED OFFENSES.—It has already been shown that "mixed offenses" are absurdities; of course any treatment for such offenses is itself absurd. To think of suggesting treatment for an offense which does not violate religion and morality, and which, at the same time, does violate religion and morality, is, to my mind, superlatively ridiculous and absurd! It would be simply to begin with an absurdity, and end with an absurdity intensified. What Professor Mell has said on this subject deserves no further notice.
QUESTIONS SUGGESTED BY THE PREVIOUS DISCUSSION.

The article which deserves our attention next, commences with the question: "Suppose the aggrieved attempt to bring strictly private offenses into the Church without taking 'Gospel steps,' what should be done?" Answer: "It is the duty of the pastor or other moderator to inquire whether the Savior's directions have been followed, and if he finds that they have not been, he should rule, as out of order, the introduction of the case. If the pastor should fail to discharge this duty, then it will be competent for any one to raise the point of order, and to appeal from the decision of the chair, if it be in violation of the Savior's rule. This is said of offenses exclusively that are purely personal—when the act is not a crime against religion and morality, and the object affected by it a brother."

An end that must be established, if established at all, by such violent interpretation of God's word, such unwarrantable infringements upon
logic and common sense, and by attaching such folly to any Church-member, pastor, or Church, as is implied in the entertainment of such an offense as is not a crime against religion or morality, deserves to be abandoned at once and forever! I but repeat what I have previously affirmed and proved, viz.: That Professor Mell’s “private offenses,” based upon Matt. xviii: 15, can not be sustained without cruelly torturing the words of Christ; that if Matt. xviii: 15 does not imply a violation of religion or morality, there is no word in the Greek language of the New Testament that does. As to “morality,” the reader will recollect that it is nothing distinct from religion—that a sin against morality is necessarily a sin against religion.

In the above extract the same absurdity, so often heretofore noticed, of a brother’s becoming offended with another for an act which does not violate religion or morality, greets us again. The writer is heartily tired of using the terms “religion,” “morality,” etc.; but the excuse which is offered for doing so is to be found in the fact that the chief error in Professor Mell’s series is connected with the use of these terms. His error
runs through every article thus far noticed, and, of course, deserves to be pointed out.

As advice seems to be cheap, I will venture to offer a little myself. Then,

1. To the Church-member of so little discrimination as to prefer a charge against a brother for an act which violates neither religion nor morality, or simply religion, I would give the following advice: “Beware, sir, lest you lay yourself justly liable to the charge of being a slanderer or a lunatic!”

2. To the Church having such a member, I would say: “Watch that weak brother. Nurse him carefully, or he may become an inmate of the lunatic asylum.”

3. To the pastor who would entertain such a charge, I would say: “Go study your Bible, and pray God to give you powers of discrimination to enable you to understand what a trespass (sin) against a brother is. Then, if you are still unable to make the discrimination, leave the sacred work of the ministry, and direct your attention to some simpler occupation suited to your capacity.”

4. What shall be said to the Church that would entertain such a charge? Do they not deserve
the pity of all who know them? Their condition, if not hopeless, is certainly very lamentable! Yet, perhaps, their condition is not so bad after all; for only of those to whom much has been given much shall be required. So little has been intrusted to them, their responsibility must be very slight.

Professor Mell very ingeniously introduces his "mixed offenses" at this point. He says: "In 'mixed offenses,' where the act complained of is a gross immorality—as theft, slander, seduction, fraud, personal violence, and libel—it will not be out of order for the Church to entertain the charge, though no Gospel steps have been taken; since, as has been shown, these and like gross offenses against religion and morality, are 'public offenses,' though they may have been committed against a Church-member."

If "these and like gross offenses" are the only ones that violate religion and morality, then is there much less sin in the world than I had supposed. Every sin against a brother, is a sin against God—against religion. As to "mixed offenses," I will merely say, the name ought never to be mentioned again.
Now, the "ingenuity" to which I allude consists in this: Professor Mell argues, in the main, according to his definitions of the different classes of offenses; then, lest his positions should appear absurd to even the common reader, he weaves in the terms "gross offenses," "gross immorality." This is unfair. If he wishes to defend his position by confining himself to merely "gross offenses," or "gross immoralities," let him confine his argument to the legitimate scope of such offenses. But if he desires his argument to be coextensive with his definitions, let him do so. His "private offenses" he defines to be such as do not violate religion and morality; while his "public" ones do. The position he has assumed makes it obligatory on him to construct his arguments to suit his definitions—to treat not merely "gross offenses," but all offenses which violate morality and religion. It is improper to bolster a position by taking none but extreme cases. Again, in answer to the question: "May not the arraigned himself raise the point of order?" he replies: "Most assuredly." Then, again, to the question: "And if raised by him, (the arraigned,) how is it to be decided?" he replies: "By the
ruling of the moderator first, and if this be appealed from, by the vote of the Church; and the decision of the Church is final."

Let us not forget that the arraigned is brought before the Church for a "private offense," i.e., for an act, the specific character of which is, that it is not a crime against religion and morality! Arraignment, and even exclusion from a Church that would entertain such a charge, I should not consider a very great hardship. The consciousness of having done no wrong, and an equivalent admission on the part of the Church, would amply sustain me. I should not feel moved to rage, but to pity. Membership with them would not be desirable, nor would a letter of dismission from them be appreciated.

As to the "finality" of Church action, I have but little to say now, since but little need be said. The action we are now considering is admitted to be wrong, inasmuch as it ought to have been "ruled as out of order." If every wrong decision of a Church is final, and must be submitted to, then Church-members, in those matters at least in which the Church takes action, are responsible not to Christ, but to the Church.
makes a willful departure from the authority of Christ, (and the departure must, it seems to me, be willful when the Church mistakes for a public what is only a personal offense,) there is no law, human or Divine, that requires the accused to submit to, or acquiesce in, such departure. Any Church has a right to discipline her members for real (not imaginary) sins, but her right to do even this—moral right, I mean—is restricted to the manner expressed, or implied, in God's word. No Church has the right to try a member in a manner different from the Divine direction. Where the charge has been entertained by the Church contrary to the teachings of Christ, especially (as is sometimes the case) where "the verdict of guilty" has been made out before the trial, and members have been drilled to vote, in such a case the arraigned, whether guilty or not, is under no obligation to submit to the trial. To submit to the trial would imply the right, on the part of the Church, to try him contrary to God's law; but the Church has no right to act, except in accordance with God's law; therefore, it would be wrong —sinful—to submit and become a party to any such trial. Where the end is to save and not to
destroy the accused, and the Church is ignorant, and not intelligent, the crime of improperly entertaining a charge would be much less. The range of possibility in such cases is very wide. A personal offense, such as is provided for in Matt. xviii: 15, may be forced into the Church without the offended's having taken "Gospel steps;" the Church may entertain the charge on the plea that it is public, knowing that if "Gospel steps" should be taken, the member would, probably, be saved; the Church may have pre-determined the overthrow of the member; she may have prejudiced the minds of the ignorant, young, and inexperienced members against him; she may have sent copies of the charges to others at a distance, with the view of crushing the member and of prejudicing the public mind against him, before furnishing the doomed man with a copy of the charges—in such a case, would not a refusal to submit to trial by such a Church be allowable? Would it not be his duty to withdraw from the Church, and take no part in the proceedings? So I think.

"Strictly private offenses, however, should be ruled out of order when attempted to be brought into the Church without previous 'Gospel steps
BY THE PREVIOUS DISCUSSION. 89

having been resorted to ineffectually. * * *
If he (the complainant) acts thus with willful dis-
regard of his obligation, he should be reproved and
compelled to follow the Savior's rule."

I heartily indorse this sentiment. It is wrong
to treat a personal offense as a public one. And
should the majority of a Church act thus with will-
ful disregard of their obligations, they should be
reproved, and should have the disapprobation of
all acquainted with their act.

There are a few other points in the article which
might be noticed, but they have been virtually
discussed in previous numbers, and some of them
will be called up again.

The offended acts the part of folly, to think of
accusing his brother for Professor Mell's "private
offense." The Church entertaining the charge,
deserves pity, if ignorant; strong reproof, if in-
telligent. If they willfully violate the Savior's
direction, in order to crush the member, the lat-
ter is under obligation to take no part in the
wicked action.

What law, human or Divine, demands that a
man should assist in killing himself? What rea-
son or Scripture can be adduced to show that a
worthy man should not resist, in a proper way, that power which is illegal or unscriptural, and aims to destroy wrongfully?

THE CHURCH.

A local Church is defined by Professor Mell to be "A local society, composed of those, and those only, who profess regeneration and faith in Christ, and who have been immersed on a profession of that faith; who are able to meet together in one place, and who observe the ordinances and maintain the worship of God. This is the only external organization which the New Testament designates by the term Church." A little further on, it is said that baptism is an indispensable pre-requisite to membership in the Church. (Italics mine.)

I am glad to see that Professor Mell is becoming so nearly Baptist in his definition of the Church. The above certainly teaches that all those sects, be they many or few, that have not been immersed, are not Churches in the New
Testament sense of the term. But on page 175 (Mell on Baptism) he seems to teach a slightly different doctrine. He says: “The organized body ‘at Antioch’ (a Baptist Church) is a Church, and so is the organized body at Center a Church, though my Methodist brethren deny it, and maintain that it is a society in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.”

The reader will perceive that these views are not “identically the same,” yet the change is all for the better; every such change should be welcomed.

The definition, as I conceive, lacks one thing. In speaking of persons being immersed on a profession of their faith, he should have have added the phrase, “by a properly qualified administrator.” This is especially important in the case of Professor Mell, since he elsewhere teaches that a Methodist may baptize, when the Church can not find an administrator better qualified! In answer to the question, Would it be valid baptism if a Methodist minister (the one in “charge at Center”) should immerse a believer, he says: “Yes, if he and the Church meant to express the belief that the immersion of a believer is alone baptism, and
the administrator had himself been baptized; or if not, and the Church and the subject could not find an administrator who comes up more fully to the Scriptural requirement." (My italics.) It is to be hoped that the above suggestion will not be rejected. Let us not, as Baptists, holding the truth of God, make any concessions which conflict with the word of God, or bring into disrepute the teachings of our blessed Savior. Let us count it an honor if we are censured for following strictly the doctrines of our only Lawgiver.

Let us now take a glance at his next article: "The feelings and actions appropriate to a pious man who has been unjustly accused."

This article contains nearly a column of introductory matter, designing to show that "innocence" and "piety" do not always screen a Church-member from slanderous and bitter persecutions at the hands of his brethren; also that "jealousy and envy" may lead them to the same unholy—yea, wicked work. "Where such a lot as this befalls a pious man, what will be his feelings and deportment?" The answers to this question deserve a brief notice.

"1. He submits himself to the Divine will, and
patiently accepts the position assigned him. He acknowledges the providence of God in all things," etc. It is true that the child of God ought to submit himself to the Divine will, even in sore persecution; but he ought, at the same time, to distinguish the human from the Divine will. Acquiescence in, and submission to, the Divine will, does not imply a tame submission to the malicious purposes of those who seek to destroy the innocent and pious.

"2. He will, in all proper ways, defend himself against the charges alleged against him," etc. Certainly he will defend himself in "all proper ways."

"3. He will be careful to refrain from an indulgence of the spirit of his persecutors, and from a resort to the means employed by them."

The pious man thus wantonly assailed ought to refrain from the malicious spirit of his persecutors. It is exceedingly difficult, however, to do this—it is human to err.

In the same paragraph it is significantly asked, "Shall he (the accused) make an appeal to the public through the newspapers, or by advertisement set up in conspicuous places, or by letters missive to all the neighboring Churches, to be
read in open conference? Shall he, in advance, assail the motives of these men, wicked though they be?"

To these questions it may be answered:

These persecutors, by the supposition, are evidently under the influence of Satan; else they would not strive to destroy an innocent, pious man.

If, in connection with this fact, the persecuted member and other pious brethren in and out of the Church of which he is a member, should know, certainly, that these wicked persecutors have a ruling influence over the majority of the members—*with the knowledge of all these facts*, who is prepared to affirm that an *early disclosure of their wicked plans is wrong*? I can conceive of circumstances which would justify a disclosure even through the newspapers! Such a disclosure might be one of the "proper ways" of defending himself. The character of the *accused* and that of the *accusers*, together with the facts and circumstances connected with both parties, should be taken into the account, and should decide, in a great measure, *how* and *when* the defense should be made. Who will contend that the wicked de-
signs of those who are under the guidance of Satan ought not to be frustrated and exposed? Whenever it becomes apparent that the evil spirit has taken possession of a majority of a Church, the plans, counsels, and actions of this majority do not deserve to be respected as if performed by those who are ruled by the Spirit of God. It by no means follows as an inevitable consequence, that the “innocent” and “pious” man who, under the above circumstances, exposes and thwarts the destructive designs of such wicked men, “has no defense to make for” himself.

“4. An innocent man arraigned is anxious that God’s cause and Christ’s Church should suffer as little as possible, preferring to be immolated himself rather than principles dear to his own heart should be subverted. He values his reputation as dearer than life, but he is not willing that this should be vindicated at the sacrifice of the principles and the forms that Christ has prescribed to be operative in such cases.” This (if Professor Mell will pardon me) is strange theology! It is assumed here that a God’s cause” is one and the same with that of these wicked men! Suppose the nefarious plans of such wicked conspirators
should be frustrated, disconcerted, and wholly disappointed, would "God's cause" suffer? Would truth and justice receive any detriment? The prosperity of "God's cause" is not promoted "when the wicked prosper." Nor does the fact that these wicked men have a controlling power in the Church, make it a sin to resist their well-studied plans for his destruction. The Church of Christ suffers no disgrace when such wicked purposes are exposed and thwarted. Who will say that it does? The absurdity of this doctrine will be more fully exhibited hereafter. Let it suffice, for the present, to say Christ has not submitted the interests of his cause to any but those who are willing to be governed by it; wicked conspirators act neither with the authority nor with the approbation of Christ. He may permit, but never approves such wickedness.
Comparatively little objection would be urged against this article of Professor Mell, did not that same radical error, growing out of his improper classification of offenses, make its appearance again. By throwing aside his "private (imaginary) offenses," and substituting "personal" (real) ones, most that is said may be admitted. But it should be observed that the above correction will reverse the order of procedure in a large number of cases, since thousands of cases which Professor Mell would call "public," are "personal offenses," and should be settled according to Matt. xviii.

I agree with Professor Mell that when the pastor has been trespassed (sinned) against, he has the same means of redress as a private member. This is true, when the pastor's membership is in the same Church with the "offending."

It is well, too, as Professor Mell contends, for the pastor not to "take sides," unless the innocent man is likely to suffer, or the guilty to tri-
umph. In this case, if the Church will not administer justice, the pastor should, in the proper way, strive to have justice done all parties. This would be his duty as a member, but not as pastor of the Church. Such occasions test the nerve of his soul; but he must not remain silent when he sees justice trampled in the dust.

That the pastor has “entire control of the principles that are operative in the case,” is not the happiest phraseology. In what sense is the above true? The pastor has access to the principles of discipline as taught in the New Testament, and he has access to the Church; but the Church, and not the pastor, must “control,” “under Christ,” “the principles that are operative in the case.”

Again: “He (the pastor) has nothing to do with the facts, or with the guilt or innocence of the parties; and he should keep profoundly silent on these—giving no occasion to infer what his opinions are.” This is all good advice so long as the Church is inclined to do right, and has all the necessary evidence before her. But when the Church is about to decide a case of discipline contrary to “the facts,” the pastor should, not in
his official character, but as a private member, express his “opinions,” either publicly or privately, as circumstances and “the facts” in the case require. If the Church is not inclined to act as “the facts” justify, the pastor, as a member of the Church, should strive, in the proper way, to influence it to do what is right.

Once more: “In serious difficulties he (the pastor) should direct his attention to the accomplishment of two objects: First, to prevent the formation of two parties in the Church, etc.; and second, to make the combatants themselves ashamed and tired of their relations.”

The former suggestion is a good one. The latter is a good one in some instances, viz.: where both the offended and the offending are wrong. But “serious difficulties” sometimes arise when but one is in the wrong; in this case, the one in the right has no occasion to feel “ashamed,” nor is it the pastor’s duty to try to make him feel so. With these strictures the present article may be allowed to pass.

We now come to matters of more vital importance. “Deductions from previous principles. Church sovereignty and independence.”
Since "Church sovereignty" and "independence" have, of late, been discussed by older and wiser pens, and has been, as I suppose, settled in the mind of the denomination, very little need be said on these subjects. Let this explain my brevity.

As the article now claiming our attention is quite lengthy, the points will be discussed briefly.

1. "Local Churches have exclusive jurisdiction over their members." Again: "Under Christ, every local Church has supreme jurisdiction over its members." This latter proposition is preferable, since it marks the origin and extent of the "jurisdiction" a Church has over its members. The Church at A can not try the Church-member at B as to his standing in his own Church. I suppose this is what is meant by "exclusive jurisdiction." There is a sense, however, in which the Church at A may try a member of the Church at B, viz.: where the privilege which the member at B claims is to be obtained from the Church at A. Suppose Mr. Smith, a member of the Church at B, is guilty of some misdemeanor, or is engaged in some business for which the Church at A would exclude one of her own members; the Church at
B must refuse to admit to her communion Mr. Smith; and, in doing this, she virtually decides that he, in her opinion, ought to be excluded from his own Church. This decision, be it remembered, can have no direct influence on his standing in his own Church.

No Church ought to allow a minister to preach in her house, when this minister is guilty of conduct for which she would exclude one of her own members. “Under Christ”—i.e., under the laws of Christ, and no farther—each Church has jurisdiction over her own members.

Church “comity” or “courtesy,” should never be so much respected as to receive to the communion table, or to any other Church privilege, a member of a “sister Church” who is thought to be unworthy. This is as true of ministers as of private members. Yet the right to exercise “jurisdiction” is confined to the Church of which one is a member; but “jurisdiction,” as exercised by one’s Church, is by no means arbitrary. No Church can exercise jurisdiction even over her own members, unless she exercises it just as Christ has commanded. Let the reader bear this in mind.

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2. "Church sovereignty marks the relation the Church bears * * * * to its own members; and signifies her power to govern them under the laws of Christ."

So far as the theology of this quotation is concerned, there is little objection. If "sovereignty" is the proper word to use, to denote that each Church has the power to govern her own members under the law of Christ, there can be no objection to the term. But is this the proper term to use? Can sovereignty be applied to any body which is wholly devoid of legislative power? Again: Can that be a sovereign body which receives all its laws from another? Once more: Can that be a sovereign body which is bound to execute, in a certain way, the laws given by another? If sovereignty is applicable to such a body, it is not the common word sovereignty, which signifies, "Supreme in power; possessing supreme dominion; superior to all others."—Webster. It would certainly be better not to use a term, unless that term conveys a definite idea; and, surely, a term ought not to be used when it conveys an idea opposed to that designed to be conveyed!

Moreover, will Professor Mell inform his readers
what difference he designs to make between the terms "jurisdiction" and "sovereignty?" He says: "Under Christ, every local Church has supreme jurisdiction over its members." Again: "Church sovereignty marks the relation the Church bears * * * * to its own members; and signifies her power to govern them under the laws of Christ." Now, what is the difference between these two propositions? Jurisdiction signifies "The legal power or authority of doing justice in cases of complaint; the power of executing the laws and distributing justice."—Webster. I contend that "sovereignty," as quoted above from Professor Mell, contains nothing more nor less than what is denoted by jurisdiction. If it does not convey a different idea, why multiply terms to no profit.

The truth is, jurisdiction, as above defined, and not sovereignty, is the word which should be used in the above connection.

Sovereignty is the proper term for the Church of Rome and some other organizations to use; but it has no connection, proper, with the Baptist Church. Christ is the sovereign of the Baptist Church, and the Church is his executive on earth.
3. "The sovereignty of a Church is subverted when her members successfully rebel against her authority; as when a member under charges refuses to be tried, and successfully tears himself free from her jurisdiction."

Of course, if the term sovereignty is inapplicable to a Church, it is improper to speak of her sovereignty as "subverted." It is impossible to subvert that which does not exist.

If he had said the jurisdiction of a Church is subverted when a member successfully rebels against her authority, the thought would have been more in unison with the fact in the case. But has a member the power to "successfully rebel against the authority" of his Church? Suppose a member under charges should refuse to answer to those charges, would that prevent the Church from exercising all her authority in the premises? Surely not. The Church is not deprived of the slightest jurisdiction even if he should refuse to appear and answer to the charges. She can exclude him anyhow, i.e., whether he attends or not, if she wishes to do so. When she has done this, she has done all that her jurisdiction allows her to do. She could not do more if
he were to attend and answer to the charges; there is no power to force her to do less, should he treat her authority with contempt. This is "the long and short" of the whole matter.

It should be remembered, however, that the jurisdiction which a Church has over her members is just that which her Sovereign has made it. She has no right—moral right, I mean—to exercise her jurisdiction contrary to the prescribed law. When she does this, all her acts are null and void; just as the proceedings of a county or district court, are illegal, null, and void, when the court transcends the bounds of her authority—the state laws.

Accordingly, all this ado about the "subversion" of "Church sovereignty," is nothing more than an empty parade of words. Sovereignty, a Church does not possess, and, therefore, it can not be "subverted;" her jurisdiction she possesses in such a way as that, in a free country like ours, it can never be "subverted" by the rebellion of any of her members.

4. "Church independence marks the relation that the Church sustains to other Churches, and signifies her freedom from their control."
I urge no objection to this definition of "Church independence." The definition, though short, is quite comprehensive. Church independence signifies the freedom of one Church from the control of another. Very well. A Church, then, is free to do, among other things, the following:

1. To receive into her fellowship, every applicant who applies to her. When an individual presents himself to a Church for membership, other Churches have no right to forbid her receiving him. Any Church, therefore, may rightfully receive into her membership, any applicant whom she may deem worthy. If other Churches have the right to disappoint and thwart her wish to receive an applicant in any one case, then, according to Professor Mell's definition of independence, the Church thus disappointed and thwarted in her purpose, is not independent, but subject, in part at least, to the will of other Churches. No one is so blind as not to see this.

2. Each Church has the right, so far as all other Churches are concerned, to expel any one of her members whom she may wish to expel.

The Church at A has no right forcibly to prevent the Church at B from expelling one or any
number of her members. If the Church at A has this right, then the Church at B is not independent.

But in this, as in the preceding case, each Church, while independent of all other Churches, is not independent of Christ. The Church at A may receive into her fellowship an individual whom the Church at B regards as wholly unworthy of membership; and the latter dare not force her to reject him. So, too, if the Church at A should arraign a worthy member contrary to the law of Christ, with the view of excluding and disgracing him, the Church at B can not forcibly prevent it. The one is just as broad as the other. But let it be remembered that, while both these things are true, the real right to receive or expel a member has a definite limit, viz.:

1. To receive such, and only such, as present all the Scriptural qualifications for membership;

And, 2. To exclude such, and only such, as, according to the word of God, ought to be excluded.

This doctrine all the learning and talent of earth can never refute. Each Church is accountable to Christ for her action both in the reception and exclusion of members. But there is another
important matter implied in the idea of independence.

3. Each Church is free, so far as all other Churches are concerned, to think for herself; to interpret the word of God for herself; to judge of the worthiness of every one applying to her for membership; to form her own opinion respecting the merit or demerit of every act performed by any other Church, and decide whether, in her opinion, the act is right or wrong, valid or invalid.

The Church that is deprived of any one of these privileges, is not and can not be independent. If she dare not form an opinion relative to the “faith and practice” of other Churches around her, then is she deprived of “liberty of thought,” that inestimable blessing of which we so much boast. And since “freedom of conscience” is inseparable from “freedom of thought,” that Church which is restricted in any of the above particulars, can not enjoy full “freedom of conscience.” Furthermore, as “freedom of action” is indissolubly connected with “freedom of thought,” that Church which is deprived of the latter, is deprived of the former also. And since by universal agreement, one Church is as independent as
another, it follows, if the above supposition be true, that, after all that has been said, there is no such thing as Church independence! But all are agreed that Churches are independent, not of Christ, but of each other; therefore, each Church must have the right to form her own opinions of every act of every other Church that in any way concerns her.

Now, by a similar process, if each Church has the right to think for herself, she must have the right to act for herself. Each Church is amenable to Christ for her “manner of thinking,” as well as for what she does. But if the action of one Church is to be examined into by other Churches, then are the Churches accountable, in some things, not to Christ, but to some other Church or Churches, or else, in some things, they are not accountable at all. It is needless to pursue this argument further. Elaboration can not make it plainer.

Let these necessary elements of Church independence be carefully stored away; for we will need them again in this discussion.

5. “The independence of a Church is infringed upon when other Churches, associations, or coun-
cils, either voluntarily or at the instigation of her recusant member, interfere with the discipline, or otherwise attempt forcibly to control her."

It may be inquired: What is it for one Church to interfere with the discipline of another?

This will be noticed in a future article, as Professor Mell brings up the subject again. Suffice it for the present to say, that the independence of a Church is never taken from her, so long as she is unrestrained in her action. The reception of an excluded member into one Church, does not destroy the independence of the excluding Church. The latter may pass a thousand votes of excommunication on the same member even after the former has received the excluded; or she may pass resolutions censuring the Church that received the excluded member. Her independence remains unimpaired so long as she has the liberty of voting. True, a Church may, and sometimes is disappointed as to the results of her (so-called) discipline. She may, from jealousy or envy, desire to crush a member by unscriptural means; and, to effect this, exclude him from the Church. Other Churches, seeing her tyranny, may offer the persecuted man a place with them. This would
be an *interception of the design* of the discipline, but no interference with *the discipline itself*. But more of this anon.

The following propositions are fairly contained in the same article:

I. A member can not innocently refuse to be tried by his Church.

I suppose that this proposition will embrace an *individual* member, or any number acting with him in the minority.

Is it true that a member can not, *under any circumstances*, innocently refuse to be tried by his Church? No; otherwise it becomes a *sin for him not to participate in sin!* The Church may wish to try a member for murder, when she knows that he is not guilty of the charge; she may have made out the verdict of guilty before the citation to attend Conference; shall the member *dignify* the meeting by his presence; or the Church, by conceding it the right to try him under such a charge? As shown in a previous article, *submission to trial implies the right to try*; but it is sinful to concede a right, as coming from Christ, which he has never given, and which does not exist. Besides, submission to trial seems to me to imply submis-
sion to the consequences of trial. But shall an innocent man acquiesce in his own condemnation! The idea is absurd!

Professor Mell's analogical reasoning falls very far short of proving his doctrine. The case of a man's refusing to be tried by the laws of his country, is not, as he states it, precisely analogous in the essential points, to that of a member's refusing to be tried by his Church.

1. There is a power to force a man to the trial by the laws of his country; but in the Church it is wholly voluntary on the part of the accused. If the trial is designed for the overthrow of the slandered accused, he acts the part of folly to co-operate with his enemies for his own destruction. This destitution is fatal to his analogy.

2. The case supposes that the accused is, in fact, a proper character to be accused, and that the executive power is proceeding in the case within the bounds of the laws of the state; but the Church-member may be known to be innocent, and the Church may proceed contrary to the laws of Christ. Is not the analogy radically wanting here?

Let us suppose that a number of citizens meet
together, and agree to destroy the reputation of a neighbor, (whose stand in the community they envy,) usurp the forms of law—summon the doomed man to trial with certain indefinite charges, against him; ought the accused to heed the citation? Should he dignify them by even attending? Neither ought the Church-member to submit to trial by his Church, when the object is to destroy him, contrary to justice and the laws of Christ. I conclude, therefore, that there may be instances in which a Church-member may innocently refuse to be tried by his Church. Professor Mell’s doctrine can be true only on the supposition of Church infallibility.

The case involving "minorities" will, if necessary, be discussed in a future number.

II. The Church must decide as to the nature of the offense and the law to be applied in the case.

Certainly, let the majority decide in what way they will proceed; but does this deprive one of the right to interpret for himself? There can, it seems to me, be but one opinion as to the law to be applied, where all parties are willing to do justice. Does not a man know when he has "sinned against a brother?" Does not the offended brother
know that he has been offended? Can not everybody of the least discrimination determine when an offense is personal, and when it is not? The New Testament is remarkably explicit on these points; so much so as to leave us "in no doubt as to the remedy to be applied in every case." Whenever a Church mistakes for a public, what is merely a "personal" offense, it leads all unbiased minds to conclude:

1. That the Church is one of astonishing ignorance, or,

2. That it has some wrong end to accomplish, which can be more certainly attained by reversing the laws of Jesus Christ.

We come next to the doctrine from which some of Professor Mell's deductions are made, viz.:

III. That "No error in the application of the law in Matt. xviii, or in any other way, can annihilate the Church."

If there is no such thing as Church annihilation, then the Church of Rome is the true Church. If that be the true Church, then all other denominations, the Baptist not excepted, are false Churches. But Professor Mell does not believe that the Church of Rome is the Church of Christ. Some
act or acts, proceeding from a corrupt faith, or disobedience to Christ, must have caused the Church of Rome to cease to be the true Church. It is not necessary here to argue the exact nature of that faith or practice, which annihilates a Church. It is enough to say that that act of a Church performed in direct violation of Christ's authority, deserves the censure of every loyal subject of the Lawgiver, and is not binding on any other Church, or Church-member.

From the foregoing, I conclude:

1. That every Church has a right "under Christ," to discipline real offenders in the way laid down in the New Testament; but that the jurisdiction of a Church over her members ceases when she uses it for the purpose of destroying, or willfully departs from the Divine directions in the exercise of jurisdiction. Hence a Church justly forfeits her jurisdiction, when she follows her own in preference to the laws of Christ.

2. The independence of a Church is never destroyed so long as the Church is permitted to vote as she pleases. The interception of the design of wicked discipline does not destroy the independence of a Church.
3. There are circumstances which justify a refusal on the part of a member, to be tried by his Church.

4. There are some decisions of a Church which a member is bound not to respect.

Professor Mell, it will be observed, makes no provision for the Churches rejecting Christ's law. What would he say a member ought to do, when the Church is planning his ruin, when she knows that the member has done nothing worthy of exclusion; when she casts aside the laws of Christ, and makes laws to suit herself, that she may crush him; ascertains the strength of the Church; learns about how many can be induced to vote against him; has trained the minors in the Church to vote with promptness against him? Add to this the fact that the programme has been made out by bitter enemies of the accused, and that for months before the trial the dread voice, "We will expel him;" "Will soon place him where he belongs;" "He shall be disgraced in the eyes of all Baptists," has been heard; suppose such a trial should be inaugurated, what would Professor Mell say the accused should do? From all that I can infer from his writings, he would say:
1. "He must go into trial."

2. "He must meekly submit to the degradation his enemies (for they can not be his friends) have planned for him."

3. "He can seek no redress except from his enemies."

4. "No other Church ought to receive the persecuted man into her fellowship."

Some of these points will be discussed hereafter.

"DEDUCTIONS FROM PREVIOUS PRINCIPLES—CHURCH SOVEREIGNTY AND INDEPENDENCE."

The points in the article now to be noticed are as follows:

1. That "there are cases in which a minority may pronounce the majority no longer a Church." As "when a Church, not only in fact, but _ostensibly_ and by _profession_, departs from the faith and order that Christ has given; * * * * if it denies that the immersion of a professed believer is alone baptism, and avows and practices infant sprinkling; * * * * if it should, by resolu-
tion, deny Church sovereignty.” These are a few of the “cases” in which Professor Mell concedes that a minority would be justifiable in pronouncing “the majority no longer a Church.”

2. That “a Church has the right, if it think best, to take into consideration the conduct of her offending member, even though the case may have been irregularly, and, if you please, wickedly brought before her.”

3. That there is no escape from expulsion, even though the charge be “wickedly” preferred.

4. No error in discipline can justify a minority in pronouncing the “majority no longer a Church.”

Some other positions will be noticed incidentally. Let us examine the above fairly and dispassionately.

The first proposition—that a minority may, in some cases, pronounce the majority no longer a Church—is readily admitted.

The second—that a Church has the right to entertain a charge irregularly and wickedly preferred against a member—is what may, it seems to me, be justly styled a THEOLOGICAL ENORMITY!

1. The accuser acts “irregularly”—i.e., brings
into the Church a matter which ought not to be introduced. The Church sees the *irregularity*, and makes it her own by entertaining it. Yet *she has the right* to do this!

2. The accuser "wickedly" prefers a charge against a member. The Church sees the *wickedness*, and makes it her own by entertaining the wicked charge! The inquiry here arises, whence does a Church derive this right? From the Scriptures? In what chapter and verse? Please be specific. There is no such record in God's word. A license to propagate wickedness comes alone from Satan and his emissaries. If the doctrine is recorded it can be pointed out. Let those who teach such doctrine, find the Scripture that contains it. If they can not do this, let them condescend to give a reason to support it. To receive such theology without Scripture, or even reason, to sustain it, is too great a tax on credulity!

In opposition to this doctrine, I affirm that for a Church to entertain a charge "irregularly" and "wickedly" preferred, is *sinful*.

1. Because it is contrary to the spirit of the New Testament. "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh
the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them.”—Eph. v: 6, 7. “Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men’s sins.”—1 Tim. v: 22. “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”—2 John: 10, 11. Now, whatever else these passages teach, no one will deny that they teach that it is sinful for a Christian or for a Church, to become a partaker in other men’s sins; which must be the case whenever a Church entertains a charge against a member, “irregularly” and “wickedly” preferred.

2. Because it is contrary to common sense.

Suppose a citizen should “irregularly” and “wickedly” accuse his neighbor before the bar of his country, and the Court should, with a full knowledge of the facts, entertain the charge, would not the Court become a party to the wickedness? Would it not sanction the wickedness, indorse the guilt, and be justly chargeable with the whole? Such are the teachings of common sense. Analogy, taken from all correct human governments,
sustains this view; and not only so, but teaches us that the man wishing to plant a suit "irregularly" (i.e., contrary to law) and "wickedly," would be "non-suited"—the charge would not be entertained.

A Church, therefore, has no right, religious or moral, to entertain a charge "irregularly" and "wickedly" preferred.

Professor Mell, it appears, does not wish openly to sanction this monstrous doctrine; yet it will be seen, from a careful examination, that his conclusion can not follow without admitting it. After stating that some writers believe the doctrine, he says, "In all this these writers may be mistaken." He then speaks of the matter (of entertaining the "irregularly" and "wickedly" preferred charge) as merely an "error" of the Church! He then says it has been shown that an "error unintentionally committed, does not annihilate a Church; nor does it afford ground sufficient for a minority to unchurch the majority." If we are to take assertion for proof, Professor Mell has "shown" this; if not, not. But let us present his argument in few words: "Some writers contend that a Church has a right to entertain a
charge 'irregularly' and 'wickedly' preferred; but in all this these writers may be mistaken; if they are, the decision of the Church—to entertain such a charge—would be but an error, which could not annihilate it; (therefore,) so it will be seen, that a member under, dealing can not escape expulsion by retiring with the minority of the Church; and that such minority, so far from shielding him by their rebellion, subject themselves to the same penalties he endures."

If sophistry knew any blush, her cheek would crimson now! What connection has this conclusion with the premise? None, necessarily.

This conclusion can follow, with logical certainty, 1. Only when it has been established, as a rule without exception, that a Church has the right to entertain a charge "irregularly" and "wickedly" preferred. But this, we have already seen, can never be the case. Professor Mell himself admits that, "in all this these writers may be mistaken."

Or, 2. When it shall have been established, as an invariable law, that a majority are incapable of committing a fatal "error" in discipline. In his intermediate steps, before reaching his con-
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clusion, he says, "an UNINTENTIONAL error" can not annihilate a Church; but in his conclusion hear what he says: "So it will be seen, that a member under dealing can not escape expulsion by retiring with the minority of the Church; and that such minority * * * * subject themselves to the same penalty he endures!!" Can you, sir, be in earnest? Would you take advantage of the ignorance of your readers? Your argument, fairly stated, now runs thus: "No un-

intentional error in discipline can afford sufficient ground to justify the accused and the minority in retiring from the majority. A has retired with the minority of the Church at B: therefore they ought not to have retired, and deserve exclusion for so doing!!" I commend this syllogism to the consideration of all logicians. If your "major premise" had read thus: "No error in discipline, whether intentional or unintentional, can justify the accused and the minority in retiring," etc., your logic would have been correct, however bad your theology might have been; but your "major premise" says, "No UN-intentional error." Now, please tell us what conclusion ought to be drawn, if we make the "major pre-
mise” run thus: “Every intentional error,” etc.? Would you affirm that no intentional error in discipline can justify the minority in retiring, with the accused, from the majority? What say you? If you say Yes, you declare that the Church is infallible; but this you, in so many words, deny. If you answer No, you must give up your conclusion above. Your conclusion, when properly modified, reads thus: “So it will be seen, [it follows,] that a member under dealing can not [justly] escape expulsion by retiring with the minority of the Church, provided the Church, in arraigning the accused, has committed only an unintentional, unimportant error; otherwise it may be the duty (and sometimes it is) of the accused to retire with the minority,” etc. Your error above consists in drawing your conclusion from your major premise, as if it were universal, embracing both intentional and unintentional errors, when it is particular, (including only unintentional errors.) An unintentional departure from the law of Christ may be denominated an error; but when the departure is intentional, treason or rebellion much more properly designates the act. A full discussion of the subject before us involves
the use of the terms error, treason, rebellion, etc. Then we may frame as many independent questions.

1. Should the accused and the minority submit to the will of the majority, when the latter commit merely an "unintentional error?"

*Answer.* If the error involves the misapplication of the law in accordance with which the particular case ought to be treated, the minority ought not to submit. Why? Because it would be sinful for them to intentionally misapply the law of Christ. In this case, they would be far more criminal than the majority. The error must be unimportant before they can acquiesce in it with impunity.

2. Ought a minority to submit to the will of the majority, when the course of the latter, in trying a member, places them in the attitude of traitors or rebels against Christ?

*Ans.* No; unless they "ought" to become traitors or rebels themselves. It is hardly supposable that any one who believes in Christ will, in so many words, say that it is any Christian's duty to become a traitor or rebel against Christ!

But perhaps the clause, "If it (the Church) think best," (i. e., to entertain a charge "irregu-
larly" and "wickedly" preferred,) was designed to modify the general proposition! Yet how can a Church, in her proper mind, think it best to be a rebel against Christ? If the majority should so think, would her *thinking it so make it so*? Would her *phrensy* constitute a *reason* why the minority or the accused should participate in her madness? Sensible men would say No, if they were reasoning on anything besides Church discipline; and they would not be so reckless even on this subject, but for the *emergencies* of the times.

Perhaps it is the *vote and record* upon which depends the dire consequence of annihilation!

Professor Mell says that should a Church, by *vote and record*, resolve "that it would disregard * * * Matt, xviii, * * * it would resolve itself into an infidel fraternity."

But suppose a Church should, without *vote and record*, resolve to disregard Matt. xviii, still professing to be acting in strict accordance with it, what then? Is the "vote and record," in reality, the *offensive* thing? Which is the worse, a fixed determination to disregard the Divine record, attended with the avowal that they are strictly acting out this same record; or, the determination to
disregard it, accompanied by a formal vote and record, showing that they do reject it? Who will decide? But if the vote and record are indispensable to this fatal result, what would Professor Mell say of a Church that practices sprinkling, or pouring, instead of immersion, denies Church sovereignty and “the faith once delivered to the saints,” yet without any vote and record on the subject? Would the vote and record, in such cases, be necessary to their condemnation? Surely not. Then why are the vote and record so important in the case we are considering? “But there is a difference,” some one says, “between one act of departure, and a series of acts—or rather, an established practice.” Grant it; but suppose a Church should only once sprinkle, instead of immerse, would a vote and record be necessary to her condemnation? Would not the Churches everywhere denounce the invasion as soon as the rumor reached them? Why should they be required to act with so much more leniency when a Church violates, knowingly and willfully, Matt. xviii? Why should we demand a vote and record, if the act itself is known to be violative of this Scripture? Is it because there is room for an
honest difference of opinion with regard to the meaning and applicability of the law in Matt. xviii, or as to the propriety of a Church's entertaining a charge "irregularly" and "wickedly" preferred? It may be answered: Matt. xviii is as easily understood, and the cases of discipline to be treated under this law are as specifically defined, as the meaning of *baptizo*, and the persons to be baptised; at least, so it seems to me. An argument, based upon the plea of obscurity in God's word in those cases where great perspicuity is needed, is an argument which I should fear to use. Professor Moll does not use precisely this argument, but he does affirm that "On a question whether a Church can entertain a private offense, prematurely and irregularly introduced, 'honest differences of opinion may be tolerated.'" If such a difference may be tolerated on this subject, I see not why they may not be on any other. There is as much ground to justify an honest difference of opinion on baptism, or any other part of God's word, as on this. Arguments must be scarce when they have to be based on the doubtful (?) supposition that it may be right for a Church to do wrong!!
But it may be that a license to violate Christ’s law in regard to discipline (for this is the proper English) arises from the fact, as some suppose, that discipline is much less important than faith, it being all important that a Church’s faith be correct, but a matter of comparative indifference as to her order or discipline! Did not the same God give both? Ought not his people to receive both as of Divine origin? Should not that part of revelation pertaining to discipline, receive as warm a place in our faith as any other part? Who would insult Jehovah, by disparaging any part of his revelation? Or who would regard as unimportant that part of revelation which was designed to guard the purity and independence of the Churches of Christ? This plea is certainly one of the last that ought ever to be used. Professor Mell does not use it directly.

It should never be forgotten that, in an act of discipline, as well as in every other important act of a Church, the number voting for or against a measure makes the act itself neither right nor wrong. Conformity to the law of Christ makes the act right, whether one or a thousand vote for it; while, on the other hand, if the act be viola-
tive—either in *purpose* or *manner*—of Christ's law, the unanimous vote of a Church, or of all Christendom, can not make it right. There is no *inherent right* in the circumstance of a majority's voting for a measure. Right depends, not upon the caprice of human beings, but upon the laws of the Eternal.

Professor Mell's logic in the present article, reminds me of a definition of "prudence" I read a short time since. Said the writer: "Prudence consists in acting differently under different circumstances." Your logic, sir, leads you to different conclusions, owing to what you wish to prove. It acts finely in one case; but only let your circumstances be changed, without at all affecting the premises, and it has such pliability as to act in precisely the opposite direction! It has been well said that your reasoning in this article has more to do with fallacies than any other part of logic.

We come now to the third point:

3. There is no escape from expulsion, even though the charges be "wickedly" preferred. We have already seen, in a previous article, that a member thus "irregularly" and "wickedly" charged, ought not to submit to trial; since, in so
doing, he would concede jurisdiction to the Church which Christ never gave her, and which she does not possess. Yet I am inclined to the opinion that there is no escape from expulsion when a Church thus "irregularly" and "wickedly" assumes the reins of discipline! Such Churches rarely stop short of expulsion. But what of such expulsion? It is, like the charge upon which it was based, a wicked expulsion. No pious member should feel ashamed, however much he may regret the occurrence of such expulsion.

Let us now consider the fourth proposition:

4. That no error in discipline can justify a minority in pronouncing the majority no longer a Church. We have seen that both Scripture and reason alike condemn the wicked principle. Minorities are not only bound not to take part in such wickedness, but they should oppose it, even though they should be compelled to pronounce the majorities no longer Churches. This the former should do whenever they perceive that the latter usurp discipline (so called) for the purpose of destroying a member, or when majorities knowingly disregard the laws of Christ. But if, as Professor Mell contends, a minority should take
sides with a member "irregularly" and "wickedly" arraigned, they should all be excluded, then they ought to be excluded because they refuse to acquiesce in and become a party to the wicked trial! Their connection with the Church in this case is made to depend upon their participation in sin! But membership in the true Church of Christ depends upon no such absurd condition. Will Professor Mell, or any one else, prove that it does?

Professor Mell, to cap the climax, says: "There is not a Church in Christendom, true to the Master and to herself, that would not, in these circumstances, expel her recusants." How absurd is it to speak of being "true to the Master and to herself," when, by the supposition, she repudiates the authority of her Master!! Upon such absurdities depends most of his remarkable science of "Church Discipline."

Again, in the next sentence he says: "And if the revolters should afterward, with or without organization, call themselves the Church, whatever else they may be, they are not a Baptist Church, which we consider to be synonymous with a Gospel Church."
Now, according to this doctrine, a minority that faithfully contends for the authority of Christ in discipline—that dares to oppose their brethren, rather than Christ—that, in fact, follows the law of Christ strictly, deserves to be styled “revolters!!” Yes, they must be called “revolters,” though they have never revolted from Christ! Let them bear the odious title, though, instead of revolting from Christ, they, out of deference to him, have separated from those who have revolted from him!

Does Professor Mell mean to teach that the minority that separates from the majority, because the latter stubbornly rejects Christ's law, should be called revolters from Christ? If such persons are “revolters” from him, how did you ascertain the fact? You did not get it from his word; for that explicitly commands his followers to obey him in all things whatsoever he has commanded them. Have you received a new revelation from God? Then, give us the unmistakable evidence by performing some miracle, and then you can lay some claim to our credence. But until you do this, don't imagine that anybody will believe you, when you affirm that a minority that follows
Christ, are "revolters," if you mean to attach any odium to the term! But if you mean to say that they are "revolters" from rebels—from those who renounce the authority of the only Lawgiver, then I urge no objection to the use made of the term. If such a minority deserves the offensive title—"revolters"—then is it an evil thing to obey God, and those who disobey deserve praise!!

Once more: "Whatever may be their pretensions or their claims, they are excommunicated Baptists, and should be so regarded and treated by all who reverence the authority of the King in Zion." This, doubtless, is the thing which "Corrective Church Discipline" was and is designed to establish. But the proposition must be assumed, for it can never be proved. For such characters to speak of "reverencing the authority of the King in Zion" is downright mockery; since they have excluded the minority because of their refusal to join them in disregarding the authority of Zion's King! The loyal subjects of the King should frown upon and discountenance the majority who would presume to discipline a member "irregularly" and "wickedly" arraigned. This article will be closed with the following requests:
1. Will Professor Mell, or any one else, inform us why it is that one voluntary, premeditated act of rebellion against Christ's authority annihilates a Church, while another act, equally subversive of his authority, does not have the same effect?

2. Will he tell us why it is that one act of palpable departure from Christ's law deserves the righteous indignation of all his loyal subjects, while another, equally palpable and flagitious, deserves the indorsement, respect, and hearty approval of his followers?

When he answers these questions satisfactorily, he will be at liberty to draw such conclusions as some of those already drawn.

"TRIALS OF MINISTERS."

"Can a minister be tried and expelled without the intervention of a Presbytery or Council?"

I agree with Professor Mell in giving an affirmative answer to this question. The proposition, however, is susceptible of clearer, stronger proof than that adduced by the professor to sustain it.
As it has been my determination to admit as many of his positions as truth, logic, or Scripture might require, it is not at all necessary to notice his method of proof. He grants that a Church, in trying a minister, has the right “to call in the aid of a Council;” and that “in many instances, it would be highly judicious to do so.” In this, too, we are agreed. The propriety of “calling in the aid of a Council,” should, it seems to me, be decided by reference, mainly, to two facts:

I. The nature of the offense; and, II. The character and standing of the minister accused.

1. The nature of the offense.—If the minister is known to have committed murder, theft, or such like offenses, there can be no necessity of a Presbytery or Council. But if the crime be such as those ordinarily preferred against ministers, it would certainly be well to “call in the aid of a Council.” Such, I think, has been “Baptist usage.”

2. The character and standing of the minister accused should have some influence in inducing a Church to call upon sister Churches to aid in settling so serious a difficulty. If the minister has little or no influence in the denomination, the
necessity for *assistance* will not be so urgent as if he were a man of *much influence*. Admitting that the Church is equally competent to decide the merits of the case in both instances, it requires little sagacity to see that the expulsion of the latter would create a much deeper sensation in the mind of the denomination than that of the former. When a common lieutenant falls, a few mourn; but when the general falls, a nation weeps. It is readily conceded that the reputation of the most obscure minister should be dealt with tenderly; but the minister whose reputation is national, can not be so easily deposed as an obscure one. The denomination, generally, may have a sort of claim to one of the former class, and when he is charged with a *doubtful offense*, the people will not be content to see him deposed unless it should be done in accordance with "usage." If the minister of wide-spread reputation is charged with unsoundness in some article of faith, or with some ordinary offense, it would be very judicious "to call in the aid of a Council" before excluding him. In the trial of such a minister, the Church that refuses to call in the aid of a judicious Council—especially if those who might compose the Council are
as well acquainted with the facts in the indictment as the Church itself—justly lays itself liable to the charge of unfair dealing. If her design was to deal fairly, why not pursue the ordinary steps? Why not invite a Council to assist her? The masses will suspect that this unusual procedure was resorted to for the purpose of destroying, rather than saving the minister. They will have little respect for the motives of a Church that would not heed the advice of members of other Churches, cognizant of all the facts in connection with the accusation. And since the Church in trying such a minister without the aid of others, shows no respect to their advice, monitions, etc., she ought not to complain, seriously, if they are not inclined to respect her act of expulsion—especially if they believe it was instigated by jealousy, or any kindred cause.

There will always be a disposition to take sides with a popular minister, when his brethren out of his own Church think that he has done nothing worthy of death or of bonds. Hence the great propriety of "calling in the aid of a Council."

It could not be expected, however, that a Church, after determining to degrade her minis-
ter, should desire the assistance of a conscientious Council. If she could know that a Council would co-operate with her in her work of destruction, it would certainly be called; but when it is believed that the Council would sustain the accused, of course she would prefer acting alone. The fact of a Church not calling in a Council to assist in trying a minister of high standing, is strong, very strong, evidence that she has determined to ruin him. Her act will be regarded with suspicion.

Should a number of leading members in a Church avow their purpose to exclude a minister belonging to her membership; should they admit that they would turn him out, whether they could prove anything against him or not; should the brethren in the vicinity make repeated efforts to dissuade them from their purpose; should the members be admonished, after it is seen that the Church must arraign him, then to call in a Council to aid them—if, in all these circumstances, the Church refuses to accept the aid and counsel of her brethren, and madly rushes to the deed of destruction, her motives will be impugned, her honesty questioned, and her act of expulsion will be regarded as wicked usurpation of power, since
all discipline is wicked which is designed to destroy a member. In a case like this no one can question the propriety of calling a Council to assist. I mean, of course, if the minister accused is guilty of some common-place crime; but if he is innocent, and known to be so, the Church has no right to try him, either alone or assisted by a Council. When a minister has been guilty of some ordinary crime for which he ought to be tried, his Church, if it desires to do him justice, will certainly call in wise and judicious brethren to assist them by their counsel, prayers, etc. On the other hand, if the minister accused is innocent of any crime, and the Church desires to crush his influence, whatever else she may do, she will not call such a Council. Why? Because her measure would probably be defeated—her victim might escape—a circumstance which she would greatly deplore.

When such means are resorted to, to destroy a minister’s influence, the expulsion will be regarded by those who think properly, as a mere farce, and they will treat him as if he had never been excluded.

In any particular instance of such expulsion,
we must, therefore, in order to ascertain the merits of the exclusion, inquire—

1. With what has the minister been charged?
If he has been guilty of murder, theft, or the like, the Church need not call in the aid of a Council. But if the charge pertains to some doctrine or faith, or to some difficulty of a personal nature, a Council of judicious brethren should be called, consisting, if possible, of those best acquainted with all the facts in the case.

2. What is the character and standing of the minister?
If he is a man of great popularity, and the charges preferred against him are common-place, a Council should, by all means, be invited to assist in the trial.

Where a Church refuses, in such a case, to invite a Council, the strong presumption is—

1. That she wishes to destroy rather than save him.

2. That she fears the result, if a Council of judicious brethren should be called to assist her. This is a tacit admission of the weakness and injustice of her cause. "Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."
"DEDUCTIONS"—"CHURCH INDEPENDENCE."

The present number of Professor Mell's series is quite lengthy, and contains several points which deserve a careful examination. But as all these important positions are made to depend upon one, and must fall, if it falls, our present task can be quickly dispatched. The great foundation principle of his article is this:

"The decision of the Church is final."

To substantiate this proposition, it is claimed that the Scriptures sustain it.

1. "By positive precept."
2. "Inspired example." And,
3. "By general principles laid down in the Scriptures."

Another proposition, which must stand or fall with the above, reads as follows: "The reception of an individual into the membership of a Church, and his expulsion from that same fellowship, are not 'correlative' or 'commensurate' ideas."

I remark: That if "the decision of the Church is final," in the sense in which Professor Mell claims, then I readily confess that most of my
criticisms must fall; that the Baptist mind, with a few rare exceptions, must have been mistaken in regard to one of the most vitally-important doctrines connected with the existence of Christ’s Church; and that fountains of deepest gratitude should, henceforth, arise from every Baptist heart to Professor Mell, in view of the great service he has done the cause of truth. “Honor to whom honor is due,” is my motto. If, therefore, it turns out that the author of Corrective Church Discipline has established the finality of every act of expulsion from a Church, be the meed of honor henceforth his. He has done a work which none other has ever done!!

But what does he mean by the “finality” of a Church’s decision?

1. “That one Church can not receive to membership the excluded members of another;” and,

2. “That such excluded members can be restored to fellowship only by the action of the Church expelling them.”

There is no need of dodging the point. If this doctrine is true, Churches are, and must be, Infallible, so far at least as discipline is concerned! I understand Professor Mell to teach
that every act of expulsion, right or wrong, done in accordance with the Divine law, or in direct violation of it, for the purpose of honoring Christ and his cause, or with the malicious design to destroy, it may be, one of his most obedient, pious servants—however, or with whatever design the expulsion may be done, it matters not—the act is final!!! Such is the theology of Professor Mell! If he does not intend to teach such monstrous doctrine, let him answer this simple question: Can a Church rightfully receive into her membership a member excluded from another Church when it is known that he has done nothing worthy of exclusion, and when it is known, too, that his Church excluded him "wickedly" and with the design to destroy him? Please answer this question by "Yes," or "No." Avow or disavow it. If you answer "Yes" you should not grumble at taking the consequences along with the doctrine itself; many of which are momentous indeed!

1. This doctrine can not be true, unless the Church is infallible in her discipline. If the Church is infallible in discipline, why not in everything else? Will you please inform us.
But you say the Church is fallible. It devolves on you, therefore, to show that the discipline of a Church is not essential to her existence, or you must modify the above concession, and say, “The Church is infallible in her discipline.” Choose between them.

2. If you persevere in the advocacy of this doctrine, you must not expect your Baptist brethren to sustain you. You must find your sympathizers among the Popes and communicants of the Church of Rome. Elder Dawson and the strenuous advocates of the “finality” of a Church’s decision, disavow, if I understand them, the above Romish dogma; yet it appears that Elder Dawson indorses, in all important particulars, the entire series on “Corrective Church Discipline.” This dogma of Church infallibility is radically important in Church discipline; will Elder Dawson both disclaim and commend it at the same time! It appears to me that he now stands in this unpleasant attitude before his readers. It would rejoice me for him to explain away the matter.

But to return: Professor Mell can not expect Baptists to sustain him in this. A few may do it, but the masses will not. Baptists of America
appreciate their liberty too highly, to voluntarily submit to be bound by the chains of Popery.

3. This doctrine, if true, would, if carried to its legitimate result, well-nigh extinguish the Church of Christ. Let us see. Suppose the Church in Athens, Georgia, should “wickedly” exclude one member, then another, and another, until but two members are left in the Church—suppose every Church in Georgia should wickedly pursue the same course; then as there are, I believe, but 765 Churches in Georgia, the membership, by this process, might be reduced to 1,530. Subtract this number from 67,722, (the sum total of the membership,) and there will be left 66,192 members in Georgia who could never enjoy the privileges of Christ’s Church, except at the pleasure of their wicked excommunicators! How preposterously absurd must that doctrine be which leads (when carried to its fullest extent) to such results! What would become of Christ’s cause on earth, should every Church adopt this wicked policy, and the excluded be compelled to submit to Professor Mell’s doctrine!! Is it said, “These results will never be realized?” I reply: There is nothing in the doctrine itself to prevent such results; and if
they never should be “realized,” no thanks to the principle, which would permit it.

The age is too far advanced to spend much time in discussing this exploded doctrine. Let Rome and her subjects advocate it, but let Baptists be governed by the Bible. But Professor Mell attempts to establish this position from the Bible.

Is it true that the Bible teaches by “precept,” “example,” or by “general principles,” that a worthy, pious member, who has been unjustly and wickedly excluded from a Church, can never become a member any more, except at the option of his wicked accusers?

Examine the record and see. I now affirm that those texts which Professor Mell quotes as containing “precepts,” “examples,” and “general principles,” have not the remotest bearing upon that wing of the subject which he is discussing. The Bible says nothing by “precept,” “example,” or “general principles,” respecting the finality of an unjust exclusion. Where is the verse? But this question can be forever settled by a very short process. You say that each Church is independent. Very well. What is implied in this? Among other things we have seen that independ-
ence implies the Right for Every Church to receive into her fellowship every applicant whom she may deem worthy. You cannot, I suppose, deny this? Well, then, may a Church not consider that individual who has been "wickedly" and unjustly excluded from another Church, worthy of membership? Why not? Suppose that the individual was once a worthy member, that he always lived as a worthy member, but his Church, without any just cause, expels him; has the excluded done anything in all this, to render him unworthy? Do the wicked acts of others make a just man unworthy? What do you say to this? Now, if the Church applied to is convinced that the applicant (though he may have been expelled from another Church) is a worthy Christian, it is not, and can not be independent, unless it is at liberty to receive him. What now becomes of your boasted independence? It is a mere dream—an empty, sounding word! You must abandon the idea of "Church independence," or this monstrous dogma one. Which will you do?

In conclusion on this point, let no one slander Baptists, stultify common sense, or misrepresent the word of God, so far as to imagine that the
absurd dogma—"that a wrong action of one Church can be binding on any other"—receives, from any one of these sources, the slightest sanction.

But if Professor Mell should answer this simple question by a "No," what must follow? Simply this: That one of the main pillars in his "Discipline" must fall. This pillar, erected in his definition of "Public Offenses," has sustained a large portion of his fabric, and its fall must be attended by the destructive crash of all that rests upon it.

Let us notice the second proposition—that "the reception of an individual into the membership of a Church, and his expulsion from that same fellowship, are not 'correlative' or 'commensurate' ideas."

When a certain writer advocated, a few months ago, the doctrine that the reception of a member into, and his expulsion from a Church, are "correlative" and "commensurate" ideas, Elder Dawson replied: "What the doctor says about 'correlative terms,' 'correlative ideas,' 'co-extensive ideas,' throws no light upon the subject; as Smith says, they are 'truisms,' clothed in great swell-
150 DOCTORS SOMETIMES DISAGREE.

ing words.”—South-Western Baptist, December 8, 1859.

Here we see again that these two leaders in Israel are disagreed. One says the doctrine is not true; the other affirms that it is a “truism.” It is a little remarkable that two learned men, on the same side of the question, should differ so widely. But still more remarkable is it that Elder Dawson should regard the point we are now considering as a truism, and, at the same time, should indorse Professor Mell’s “Discipline,” which regards this same doctrine as an UN-truism! He says, in a recent issue of the South-Western Baptist: “We have examined every position (of Professor Mell’s series) with care, and analyzed every argument diligently; and, without claiming for the articles absolute perfection, they present the most faultless view of the question we have seen.” I leave Elder Dawson to reconcile these positions. For my part, I must say that the “reception” into, and “expulsion” of a member from a Church, seem to me to be “co-extensive” or “commensurate” ideas, and susceptible of as clear illustration as any “truism.”

If these “ideas” are not “commensurate” or
"co-extensive," why not? It must be because one of them is greater or less than the other. It must be because the reception of a member into a Church contains a broader or more contracted meaning than his exclusion from the Church. No one contends, I believe, that reception implies more than expulsion. Does it imply less? Let us see. Reception can confer such privileges, and only such, as the receiving body possesses. It can confer no more. Does one Church possess the right to give privileges in any other Church? If so, then Church independence is a farce! No one can fail to see this.

There is another argument which demonstrates the same position. If a worthy member has been wickedly and unjustly excluded, and if said excluded member is rightfully shut out of all other Churches, then it follows that the wickedness of some debars others who may be entirely worthy from entering Christ's Church; that the wicked may exclude the just and pious, and that their wicked act shuts out the righteous from the kingdom of Christ; in other words, that Satan, the father of wickedness and lies, has the right to keep some of the saints out of the Redeemer's kingdom!!!
Who does not see that such a position argues great deficiency in the laws that govern the kingdom of Christ? Who can fail to see that, if this position be true, Christ is not independent of Satan, but that his kingdom is subject, in a greater or less degree, to the will and dictation of the great adversary of souls? Is there a man who professes to love Christ, that can believe such doctrine!

But to return. Unless membership in one Church amounts to membership in all other Churches, exclusion from one Church is not exclusion from all others. This is self-evident. And if a member in one Church ordinarily enjoys some privileges in other Churches, it is not because the Church which holds his membership gave him those privileges, but it is purely of courtesy. Such privileges can not be demanded by the members of one Church of other Churches.

“But,” says one, “when a worthy member has been unjustly and wickedly excluded, are not all the privileges which he formerly enjoyed in other Churches withdrawn from him? Does it not, then, amount to the same thing as if membership in one Church were the passport to privileges in other
Churches?" This argument, if it deserves the name, has already been answered above. Courtesy, and not right, concedes those privileges. True, while the excluded individual is out of the Church, those acts of courtesy are withheld from him; but this is done, not because of any unworthiness on his part, but because he is not formally connected with any Church. But he is worthy to be received into any Church, and should be received on application. When thus received, he as much deserves those acts of courtesy as any other member. He need not, therefore, of necessity, be deprived of Church privileges one week; and certainly not longer than it is necessary for the Church to which he applies for membership, to ascertain that he was unjustly and wickedly excluded. So we see that this objection falls to the ground.

Professor Mell says: "The excluded man is still (i. e., after his expulsion) the subject, in a sense, of the Church expelling him." But he does not inform us clearly in what "sense." True, he says, "the excluded man sustains the relation (to the Church) of one who is the subject of its reformatory discipline!" The weakest plea (if he will pardon me) I have ever read!
If the excluded man is a subject of the Church at all, it must arise from the fact that his expulsion was only partial; in which case he is partly in and partly out of the Church, or else the Church may have a subject who is not within it, and, therefore, the Church has jurisdiction outside of itself!

This has more resemblance to infant membership than anything else I can now think of. This partial membership and partial exclusion are subjects unknown to Baptist polity! It must be made plainer, else they will never adopt it!

Professor Mell tries to strengthen this position by the circumstance, as he says, that the excluded man is not "received again (into the Church) in the same way as he was from the world at first. Then he was admitted by experience and baptism; now, he must not be admitted but restored." The man was received "at first" by the "vote" of the Church; if expelled, he must be expelled by the "vote" of the Church; and if restored to the same Church, he must be restored by the "vote" of the Church. This quibbling about terms avails you nothing.

But he is still the subject of the Church's "re-
OTHER FALLACIES EXPOSED.

formatory discipline?" But what, my dear sir, will you say when the excluded "is still the subject," not of her reformatory, but of her destructive discipline? You say "Every Church is bound to obey the commands of the Savior." So say I. But has the Church obeyed? This is the question. If she has, all right; but if not, do not try to make it appear that other Churches ought to sustain her in her wickedness. Let the advocates of the Romish Church have such honor!

You say again: "The design of Corrective Discipline, even in its highest censures, is not to injure, but to reform," (my italics.) Then, I suppose, you would not call that "discipline" at all, which is designed to "injure." If you would not, then we are not so far disagreed on this point after all.

But suppose a Church should arraign, try, and exclude a worthy member with the view of "injuring" and destroying him, what, sir, would you call this? Please answer.

You contend that the reception of an excluded member into the fellowship of another, without the consent of the Church excluding him, is an "interference with its discipline; * * * *
since it is designed to prevent the intended effect of that discipline."

It is strange that a man of Professor Mell's position, should not distinguish between discipline and the intended "effect" of discipline! To forcibly prevent a Church from excluding a member whom she wishes to exclude, or to force her to exclude a member whom she does not wish to exclude, would be an interference with her discipline; but so long as a Church is left free to exclude, or retain her members, it can not be said, with any degree of reason, that her discipline is "interfered with." Should a Church exclude a member justly, and should another Church receive the excluded, even in this case there is no interference with the discipline of the former Church. Still, it is not claimed that a member who has been justly excluded, should be received into any Church, until he has rendered reasonable satisfaction for the wrong done. Every just act of one Church should be respected by every Church acquainted with the fact. Every such act should be regarded as valid by all who respect the authority of Christ.

But suppose a worthy, pious member should be unjustly and wickedly excluded, would it not be
right to paralyze, if possible, the wicked "intended effect" of such discipline? You surely do not intend to teach that other Churches are bound to sanction the wicked act, and co-operate in the "intended" wicked "effect!!" Is this the morality you teach? I now affirm that that Church to which an unjustly excluded member applies for membership, indorses the wickedness of the Church unjustly excluding him, and becomes virtually guilty of the same crime, if she rejects him, believing him to have been unjustly excluded. Each Church is the executive of Christ's laws, as well in the reception of members, as in other particulars; and that Church that refuses membership to an applicant whom she deems worthy, acts treasonably toward her Master if she refuses him. When such an applicant presents himself to a Church, the Church has no choice left her; she must, if she would obey the will of Christ, receive him.

But you say further that the reception of an excluded member into another Church would destroy Christian union. Admit it. But suppose the man has been unjustly and wickedly excluded, is "union" with such a Church desirable? "Union" on truth and justice should be sought at
all times; but "union" in or on error, never. Let "Christian union" never be mentioned when it must be purchased at the sacrifice of truth; let it cease to have a name, if it can be obtained only by participating in wickedness!

Would you, sir, desire "union" with a Church that renounces the authority of Christ? Baptists, I am sure, will be slow to court or perpetuate "union" at such an enormous price!

Professor Mell's three "pleas" or objections to the doctrine of the finality of Church action, he does not and can not answer. They must fall, when it has been once established, that a wicked act of one Church is not binding on all others. The absurdity of this dogma has already been exposed.

His third "plea," however, will be further considered, since it involves some side issues.

There is one other matter to which allusion will be made. I am informed that under Professor Mell's pastorate an excluded member was once received into his Church. The man, if my information is correct, had been excluded from an antimissionary Church for his opposition (I believe) to "Beebeeism." The excluded man presented himself to the Church of which Professor
Mell was, and now is pastor, and was received into the fellowship of the Church without any consultation with the Church that excluded him. Now it is supposable—

1. That the Church believed that the man had belonged to a Church. If not, he could not have been received without baptism.

2. That Professor Mell and his Church believed the man to have been unjustly excluded; else they did wrong in receiving him.

Now, if the body excluding him was a Church, (and it seems that they must have thought so,) and if Professor Mell’s Church did receive the excluded member, it appears that Professor Mell once sanctioned a deed which he now sorely condemns! How is this? If there is anything incorrect in the above, the writer will gladly receive the correction. The facts are available.

While on this point, another statement will not be out of place. It has been, so far as I know, the custom of Missionary Baptist Churches to receive into their fellowship members excluded from antimissionary Churches, for attaching themselves to the Masonic fraternity, temperance societies, and the like; it has also been customary, I
believe, for missionaries to receive into their fellowship those presenting letters from antimissionary Churches. If these two things have been customary, it has been customary, according to Professor Mell’s doctrine, for missionary Baptists to “interfere with the discipline” of antimissionary Churches. Yet I have never heard of the antimissionaries complaining that their “independence has been destroyed.”

Is it possible that their independence has, for so long a time, been disregarded, and even “destroyed,” and yet they have not had sense enough to see it? Or have they been so much oppressed as not to venture to raise the complaint? Your position reflects great discredit upon those antimissionary bodies. I do not say that you designed it.

“THIRD PLEA.”

The “plea” reads thus: “Suppose a Church expels a member for joining the Masons or Odd Fellows, or another should expel its members for favoring the missionary cause, or, if he is a min-
ister, for maintaining that the Gospel is to be preached to sinners; will it be lawful in these cases or in either of them, for a neighboring Church to receive the excluded? Now, if you answer in the affirmative, you, in effect, give the principle up; for you acknowledge that, for a sufficient cause, one Church may receive the expelled of another.” He then says: “To answer this question, it must be analyzed and the parts classified under different heads.”

The result of his analysis is the resolution of the above into two classes—

1. Those who have been excluded for joining the Masons or Odd Fellows.

2. “The other Church expels its member for practicing that which he and we believe to be taught in the Scriptures.”

This last “part,” though its terms are general, is made to include such as have been expelled for those things in which antimissionaries oppose missionaries. Hence be it observed that the above two classes do not exhaust the cases that may occur. Many other cases of expulsion might arise for different causes, equally as violative of the Scriptures as the exclusion of a member for

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"favoring the missionary cause." A careful reasoner can see nothing more offensive in excluding a member for the above cause, than for the advocacy of other Scripture doctrines. It is by no means self-evident that an expulsion for things about which missionaries and antimissionaries differ, are the only things that will justify the reception of the excluded. More of this anon.

Professor Mell takes the position that those who have been excluded for "joining the Masons or Odd Fellows," ought not to be received into other Churches. The discussion of this subject is not at all material to the point in hand; yet I ask, why does Professor Mell advise this course; seeing that those who have been excluded for this reason do not belong to true Churches? The antimissionary Church is, (if I understand him,) in his view, not a Church. Now, why, I ask—

1. Does he recommend the reception of those who have been excluded for "favoring the missionary cause," when, according to his teachings, those excluded for joining the Masons or Odd Fellows, ought not to be received into our Churches? Is it because these bodies are not Churches, when
they exclude members for "favoring the missionary cause," and yet remain Churches if they exclude them for joining the Masons, etc.? This doctrine, besides being strange in itself, is quite fatal to a position formerly assumed by the professor. In what? Simply in this: it proves that a Church may cease to be a Church of Christ, by an improper usurpation and exercise of discipline. I wish the reader to note this especially.

1st. That none but antimissionary Churches exclude members for joining the Masons or Odd Fellows.

2d. That members excluded, by these bodies, for joining the Masonic or Odd Fellows' fraternity, ought not to be received into missionary Churches.

3d. This ought not to be done, because it destroys "Church union."

4th. That members excluded for "favoring the missionary cause," ought to be received into missionary Churches.

5th. Because the bodies expelling them "cease to be Baptist Churches" when they expel a member for this cause.

Now, every one can see that his argument pro-
ceeds on the supposition that these bodies are Baptist Churches until they exclude a member for "favoring the missionary cause," or for something pertaining to the differences between the antimissionaries and missionaries. It follows, therefore, that the exclusion of a member for this cause makes a Church no longer a Baptist Church. It is difficult for error to keep out of its own way.

But to return, I ask—

2. If these antimissionary bodies are not Churches, why are those bearing letters from them received without baptism into missionary Churches? All such, if these bodies are not Churches, should be baptized and received into the Church as though they had never belonged to any Church at all. Why was it that Professor Mell allowed his Church to receive a member, excluded from the antimissionaries without baptism, if he did not regard the body excluding him as having been a Church before passing the act of exclusion? It is to be hoped that he will explain this.

Let us notice the second proposition.

"2. The other Church expels its member for
practicing that which he and we believe to be taught in the Scriptures."

If this class had been made more comprehensive in his application, there would be much less objection to it. But it will be seen that it is made to contain only those who have been excluded "for favoring the missionary cause." Why did not Professor Mell show why it is (if indeed it is so) that those expelled for the above cause, (or for their opposition to Beebeeism,) are the only expelled members who ought to be received into our Churches? Why did he not tell us why it is that we are not at liberty to receive into our Churches such as have been excluded for "practicing" something else (besides "favoring the missionary cause") which he and we believe to be taught in the Scriptures?

But let us notice the grounds on which such as have been expelled "for favoring the missionary cause, or for preaching the Gospel to sinners," should be received into our Churches. He says: "When a Church expels a member for this reason, it is clearly of a different denomination from us, or has so departed from the faith, as to authorize us to withdraw fellowship from it. In
that case, Church sovereignty* is not violated if we receive those who are martyrs to the same truth we conscientiously hold ourselves. The principle here is that which I avowed in a previous article, that when a Church ceases to be a Baptist Church, we may withdraw fellowship from it. * * * * The Church must not only appear to us to act in opposition to what we consider the law of Christ, but it must avow that to be its intention, before we can be authorized to withdraw fellowship from it, and afford a refuge to its excluded members.” (My italics.)

Observe with reference to this extract—

1. That a Church, professedly Baptist, that excludes a member for the above cause, does not belong to the Baptist denomination.

2. That the reception of their excluded into our Churches does not violate the independence of their Churches.

3. That we cannot receive the excluded of other Churches unless they avow it to be their purpose to act in opposition to the law of Christ.

* Independence is the proper word to use—hence it will be substituted instead of “sovereignty.” The change does not affect the argument.
With regard to the first I remark, that such Churches are either true Churches of Christ, or they are not. If they are true Churches, they have independence as well as any other true Churches; if they are not true Churches, Professor Mell ought not to refuse to receive those who have been excluded from them for joining the Masons—not, however, on the ground that the excluded ever were members of the Church, but just as other members are received from the world; nor ought he to receive those who have been excluded from them “for favoring the missionary cause,” without first hearing their “experience of grace” and baptizing them. Why? Because nobody but a true Church can administer valid baptism. It seems, therefore, that Professor Mell’s theory and practice both oppose his “Corrective Church Discipline.”

Let us look into the next:

2. That the reception of their excluded does not violate their independence as Churches.

If the reception of the excluded of one Church into the fellowship of another, does, in any instance, violate the independence of the former, then does the reception of such as have been excluded
“for favoring the missionary cause,” violate the independence of the Churches excluding them, provided these bodies have any independence. They must have independence if they are Churches. Therefore, the reception of such excluded persons does not violate the independence of the Churches excluding them; because these bodies are not true Churches. But if they are not true Churches, why should Professor Mell receive their excluded without baptism? I ask this question on the strength of the fact stated in my last. If Professor Mell’s Church baptized the individual referred to, before admitting him into the fellowship of the Church, then is this question out of place; but if his baptism was omitted, the question has peculiar force. But whether the Church received the individual with or without baptism, Professor Mell is in a strait. The refusal to receive into our Churches those who have been excluded for joining the Masons, on the grounds that such reception would destroy "Church union," is an admission that the Churches excluding them are true Churches. Now, if antimissionary bodies are true Churches, with all their avowed opposition to the "missionary cause," and continue to
be Churches, whose "union" (with us) ought not to be severed for expelling a member because he joins the Masons or Odd Fellows, but cease to be Baptist Churches when they expel a member for "favoring the missionary cause," there is no escape from the conclusion that the act of expulsion, for the above cause, unchurches them. But this is, as we have already seen, a death-blow to one of the leading principles of Corrective Church Discipline, viz.: that no error in discipline can annihilate a Church. But if these bodies are not true Churches, then it follows:

1. That those who have been excluded from them, for any cause whatever, ought to be required to tell the Church their Christian experience and be baptized just as if these things had never been done. And—

2. Those excluded for joining the Masons ought not to be denied a place in the Church, for the sake of preserving "Church union;" since there can be no true Church union where there is no true Church. Of course, missionary Churches do not wish to perpetuate Church union with the antimissionaries, unless the latter are true
Churches! We see, therefore, that Professor Mell is in a dilemma.

The last proposition—

3. That a Church excluding a member wickedly, must "avow" it to be her intention to act in opposition to Christ's law, before another Church can receive the excluded of the former.

It astonishes me that a man of Professor Mell's intelligence should plant himself upon such an absurd position. If his doctrine be true, then it follows that we ought not to receive into our fellowship those who have been excluded "for favoring the missionary cause," for preaching the Gospel to sinners, for believing that the immersion of a believer, by the proper authority, is baptism—it matters not for what cause—unless the Church excluding the member or members, "avows" it to be her intention to act in opposition to the law of Christ!!! But what Church, or what body professing to be a Church, ever avowed it to be her intention to act thus? An instance of such avowal would, I suppose, be very difficult to find!!

But if it is meant that the Church, body, or assembly, that expels a member "wickedly," does not avowedly act in opposition to the law of Christ,
but avows it to be its intention to act as it does act; if that act, in our opinion, does violate the law of Christ, must we receive their excluded? If our interpretation of the law of Christ is not to be made the basis of our action in such cases, then it is evident that missionary Churches have always done wrong whenever they have received the excluded of antimissionary Churches, whatever may have been the cause of the exclusion. This part of Corrective Church Discipline Professor Mell ought, for the sake of consistency, to expunge.

Moreover, if we are not to take our own interpretation of God’s word as the basis of our action in regard to the reception of those who we believe have been “wickedly” excluded, then why should we make our interpretation of God’s word the basis of our action in anything else? Will Professor Mell tell us why? If a man who we believe has been unscripturally baptized, i.e., has been immersed by a wicked man, (who, however, does not avow himself to be such,) should apply to the Church in Athens for membership, and should inform that Church that he had not “avowedly” submitted to be baptized by one who he thinks is unqualified, but affirms that he believes his bap-
tism to be valid—would the Church in Athens receive him without baptism? (!!) The absurdities of this position are too numerous to be even numbered.

I am prepared to conclude that Professor Mell's analysis does not help his cause in the slightest. I will close this review by giving a summary of the important points discussed, so that the reader may have a condensed view of the discussion.

I. The basis of Corrective Church Discipline is radically wrong, being made to rest, as it does, upon an erroneous classification of offenses.

1. Professor Mell's definition of the sin in Matt. xviii: 15, is intensely wrong, since he makes it an offense which does not violate morality or religion. His interpretation of this part of the sacred word contains the seeds of universal skepticism, since, if Matt. xviii: 15 does not imply a violation of God's law—hence of religion or morality—we have no evidence that the Bible takes any note of sin. If it takes no note of sin, it is a work of supererogation, and does not even deserve the respect of immortal beings.

2. His definition of "public offenses," is, in reality, no definition at all; since a "private"
offense violates "religion or morality" as well as a "public" offense. Moreover, the latter part of the definition, "or against the Church in its organized capacity," is wrong.

1st. Philosophically, it incorporates into the definition what may or may not be an example under the definition.

2d. Logically, it assumes the thing to be proved. The error is called "petitio principii,"—"a begging of the question."

3d. Theologically, being based as it is upon the absurd Romish dogma of Church infallibility.

3. His "mixed offenses" are great absurdities, since the same act can not, in a moral point of view, be indifferent and bad at the same time.

These classes of offenses are made the basis of the treatise, and since the basis is rotten, the whole fabric must fall.

II. The second generic error in the treatise consists in the great absurdity of prescribing serious treatment for "private offenses," etc., etc.

1. It is the height of idleness, not to say of folly, to prescribe any treatment for an offense which does not violate any religion.

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2. Professor Mell destroys his own position by calling the act (a “private offense”) a “fault,”—speaks of “reclaiming” the offender—and especially when he affirms that “when your brother trespasses (sins) against you, he trespasses (sins) against God also.” As if there could be any “fault” which does not violate religion! or any “reclaiming” of an offender, when the offender has done nothing that violates religion or morality!! or as if there could be a sin against God which is not a sin against religion!!!

3. He holds that “private offenses” may be treated as “public” ones. This position effectually nullifies, so far as it is followed, the commands of Christ in Matt. xviii. The objection to this view is as strong as the obligations to obey Christ. I can conceive of none stronger.

4. His conclusion forces upon him to adopt the following monstrous doctrine, “That a charge irregularly and wickedly preferred against a member may be entertained by the Church—which, indeed, is about this, that the Church has a right to perpetrate wickedness!

5. Professor Mell holds that the decision of a Church, right or wrong, is final. That a member
wickedly excluded, ought to be restored to no Church but the one excluding him!

III. The third general error relates to Church independence. This error contains several particulars.

1. He has an incorrect notion relative to the universal law of receiving members into the Church. An individual personally worthy of membership, should not, according to his view, be received by any Church, if he has been excluded from another Church, however wickedly. This circumscribes the right of a Church to receive members—narrows the scope of Church independence.

2. He has incorrect ideas about the laws of excluding members. He extends the law of Christ by giving to the Church the right to exclude worthy members, provided they have been "irregularly and wickedly" accused. I say "the right," because, if the Church has no right to try a member thus accused, the member is under no obligation to be tried, nor are other Churches under obligation to respect the wicked expulsion; but Professor Mell says that the member thus accused ought to submit to trial, and that other Churches are under obligation to respect his expulsion, (if
he is expelled.) It follows, therefore, if Professor Mell is correct in this, that a Church has the right to try and expel a member "irregularly" and "wickedly" accused.

3. Professor Mell contends that it is a violation of Church independence for one Church to receive the excluded of another. We have clearly seen that this can not be.

4. He holds, by necessary inference, that it is not an infringement of a Church's independence, when she is denied the privilege of receiving all whom she think worthy and desire to receive to her fellowship.

These are the prominent points of difference between Professor Mell and myself. If I have not reviewed his positions fairly, it has not been because I have not desired to do so. Furthermore, if any "harsh language" has been used, it has been directed at the principles, and not at the author of Corrective Church Discipline.
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To write a treatise on Church Discipline was least of my expectation, until since my review of Professor Mell's series was completed. What I originally undertook to do was to expose what appeared to me to be hurtful fallacies in Professor Mell's treatise. But since some are disposed to complain that I have attempted "to destroy," and have made no effort "to built up," I have thought it not amiss to give, in a brief way, what seems to me to be the teachings of the New Testament on this all-important subject. In doing this, I shall have to repeat some things already written in my review. This I shall do with as little incumbrance as possible, giving only a brief outline of the most important reasons for my positions. One of the radical errors in Professor Mell's treatise consists, as the reader will remem-
ber, in his improper classification of offenses. The effect of his definition of "private offenses" is to render null and void Matt. xviii: 15–17. Any treatise which dispenses with the Divine record must, to that extent, be seriously objectionable. But to the work before me.

Offenses may be divided into two general classes. This division is by no means arbitrary, but is clearly marked in the volume of Inspiration. From a careful study of this volume, we find that there are offenses (sins) spoken of, which are connected directly with two or more members of a Church, and that others are not directly personal to any member, but affect the cause of religion generally, and concern one member of a Church as much as another.

While this classification exhausts the subject, it must be remembered that the particular nature of these offenses is not otherwise defined. Both imply a violation of some one or more of the commands or injunctions. The moral quality of the act is not specified.

We have one class referred to in Matt. xviii: 15. The passage reads thus: "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee," etc. The
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Greek, literally translated, would appear thus: "And if the (thy) brother sin against thee." This translation is very important to a clear understanding of the text. In common language, we ordinarily attach a much less offensive meaning to "trespass" than to "sin." Hence, it is natural that those who can not read the Greek, should conclude that Matt. xviii: 15 does not refer to any but very slight offenses; while, in reality, it may refer to crimes of almost any grade of wickedness.

Observe the reading of the text once more: "And if thy brother sin against thee." May not "thy brother sin against thee" by refusing to love you? "Love one another," says Christ. May he not "sin against thee" by speaking evil of thee, by treating thee unkindly, by abusing thee, by cheating thee, by beating thee, by stealing from thee, or by attempting to murder thee? It would be a difficult task, indeed, to mention all the ways in which one member may sin against another. Note, also, that thy brother may sin against you privately, so that none but your brother and yourself may know it; or he may sin against thee in the presence of any number.
What term, now, should be used to designate this class of offenses or sins? We certainly ought to use "private." Because the offense may be public—a thousand may witness it. Then, too, the text itself seems to suggest the term to be used. "And if thy brother sin against thee." Here the sin is committed against "thee" personally; hence, personal is the term appropriate. A personal offense, then, is an offense committed by one member against another.

The manner of treating such offenses is prescribed definitely by the Savior himself in the same connection—verses 15–17, Matt. xviii. This we will notice in its proper place.

An example of the second class of offenses is to be found in 1 Cor. v: 1–7. The sin here spoken of is that of incest. We must not conclude, however, that this is the only sin belonging to this class. Unsoundness in "the faith," profanity, drunkenness, debauchery, and a large number of such offenses—indeed, any act which violates the teachings of Christ, and brings reproach upon Christianity; any act or practice which palpably violates the spirit of religion—belongs to this class of offenses, provided the act itself is not per-
sonal to some member. If it is personal to any member, it belongs to the preceding class, “personal offenses.” We can now see the precise difference between the two classes, viz.: The former is a sin committed against a member, while the latter is a sin committed, not against any particular member, but against the whole Church, and is such as to affect the cause of religion generally.

An offense of the second class, therefore, is a sin committed, not against any particular member, but against the cause of religion in general, and affects especially the Church in which it is committed. The incestuous member was a reproach to the Church of which he was a member, and to Christianity in general. What is the appropriate name for such offenses? “Public,” is the name usually applied; but this is objectionable,

1st. Because some personal offenses are “public.”

2d. Because some offenses of the second class may be comparatively “private.”

The term “public,” therefore, does not distinguish one class from the other. The term general, as opposed to particular, individual, or personal, is the most appropriate of any I can
call to mind. If any one will suggest a better, it will be gladly received. The terms *personal* and *general*, at once suggest to which class any particular sin belongs; and *these* are the terms that we need.

Before proceeding to notice the treatment for offenses, it is proper to look a little further into personal offenses. The New Testament abounds in exhortations to the effect that Christians should be obedient to the "powers that be;" that magistrates are to be respected, and everywhere inculcates the idea that Christians should be *good citizens*. Indeed, there can be no *antagonism* between the Church of Christ and a *virtuous government administered by just and virtuous laws*. *Principles of right and justice, wherever or by whomsoever observed, can never clash.* This being the case, some *personal* offenses may be such as to violate the *just laws* of one's country, in such a manner as to *injuriously affect correct public morals*. Such offenses are not merely *personal*, but have also a *general element*, that injuriously affect, when known, the *cause of religion and correct public morals*. *Most of such offenses can not be atoned for* by any private reparation. In such
offenses, the offending brother can not, in the fullest sense of the term, "hear" thee. The clause, "If he shall hear thee," signifies, as I suppose, not only a disposition to listen to the offended brother's complaint, but an acknowledgment of the wrong done, and full restoration and satisfaction rendered. But personal offenses may arise, as before stated, for which satisfaction can not be rendered, though the offended might be induced to forgive the wrong. This he may do so far as the act affects him, but he can not pardon for the State.

Hence, personal offenses may be divided into two classes:

1. Those that violate some principle of the Bible, but are such as may be atoned for by repentance, etc.; and,

2. Those that violate some principle of the Bible, and some just law* of the land, in such a manner as to affect correct public morals.

* Such offenses are restricted to the violation of just laws, because there may be unjust laws—such, for instance, as regulate the forms of religious worship, by prescribing when, where, and how citizens are to worship. All such laws are unjust, because they interfere with individual liberty of conscience, and thus come in between individual duty and God. Such laws should never be respected, though the Christian's life should have to pay the
It should be further remembered, that the first class of personal offenses is not subject to the discipline of the Church, until the law for reconciling such offenses has been ineffectually applied. Matt. xviii, strictly speaking, is not a law of Church discipline, but the law in accordance with which individual members should adjust their personal difficulties. Read the 15th, 16th, and 17th verses, and see if this is not strictly so: "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass (sin) against thee, go and tell him his fault (sin) between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the Church: but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." No one can fail to see that this is a command directed to each member who has been offended by his "brother," and is to become the law to him for settling personal wrongs. No command or law is here given to the Church. Hence, this portion of forfeit. Obedience to laws that are just, and laws indifferent, is all that can be expected of Christians.
Scripture contains no law of Church discipline, as before said. The personal difficulty concerns the Church only after the directions of the Savior, to the offended members, have been followed ineffectually. But after this has been done, it is not even intimated how the Church should proceed with it as a matter of discipline. The record closes by saying: "Let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican."

Accordingly, in the "treatment" of the first class of personal offenses, we must notice the law to be observed, not by the Church, but by the offended member.

How the offended should proceed in the settlement of such difficulties.

First step.—"Go and tell him (his sin) between thee and him alone." This command is so simple that the commonest mind can easily comprehend it. Don't let others know anything about it, unless they know it already. Keep the whole matter a profound secret. Go tell your brother his sin, and do this in the spirit of brotherly kindness and Christian forbearance. But the text is sufficiently plain, and comment is wholly unnecessary.
"If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." The prevailing desire, on the part of the offended, is to "gain" his brother. "If he shall hear thee"—i.e., if he listens to you in the proper spirit, confesses his sins, shows signs of proper penitence, and repairs the wrong—"thou hast gained thy brother." Thou hast reclaimed him from his sin, and restored him to thy Christian affection and fellowship. And at this point the difficulty ends. The Church, as such, should not be informed of the existence of the offense; and if any members were cognizant of the offense, it will be all-sufficient for them to be informed that the difficulty has been amicably settled. By this means the Church is kept free from those personal broils which too often sever it into factions, and bring shame upon the cause of Christ.

"But if he will not hear thee," then comes—

The second step.—"Take with thee one or two more." The "one or two" should not be partisans, but those who are competent to look into the merits of the case fairly and dispassionately; who will be most likely to cause the erring member to see his wrong and make reparation. The design of the offended, in taking the "one or
two,” should be to *gain* his brother; and the design of the “one or two” should be the same. This is the *primary design, the earnest prayer,* on the part of the offended in taking “one or two more” with himself, *that they may reason the case* further with him, and establish his wrong in his own mind. The *secondary* design may be that, in case “he will not hear them,” he may have the benefit of their testimony, “that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.”

But should he hear the “one or two,” the difficulty is ended, the offending member is saved, and the two members, formerly at variance, are now restored to brotherly love. The difficulty, thus settled, should be kept from the knowledge of the Church as such.

“And if he shall neglect to hear them,” (the “one or two,”)—

*Third step—“Tell it to the Church;”* tell it yourself. Don’t employ some one else to do it for you; *tell it yourself.* Relate the whole affair to the Church, as a Church, and not privately, as individuals.
Should he "hear the Church," the offending is still saved. His hearing the Church would, of course, consist in his confessing his wrong done to his brother, in rendering full satisfaction for that wrong, and, in doing this, he would certainly feel the necessity of rendering a general apology to his "one or two" brethren and to the Church, for his persistence in his sin and the trouble he had caused the Church.

Not until you "tell it to the Church" does it become a matter to be considered by the Church; indeed, the Church, as such, is supposed to be wholly ignorant of it until now.

"But if he neglect to hear the Church"—i.e., when the Church can not prevail on him to see and repair his wrong, then, as a consequence of all these unsuccessful efforts to "gain" your brother—"Let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." Do n't have any further familiar or Christian intercourse with him. This is said, perhaps, in allusion to the Jewish custom of having little to do with the heathen and publicans. It was regarded by some as a disgrace for Christ to eat with publicans and sinners.
But if, at any time, you should see in him a disposition to relax his stubbornness, you should rejoice at the prospect of yet reclaiming him.

The record stops at this point without telling the Church, in this connection, what to do. But as the Church is vested with authority to discipline offenders, it is clearly implied that she must exclude the offending, unless he repairs the wrong.

The clause, "Whatever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven," refers, I suppose, to the exclusion of such offenders as the one just described. But so long as there is a reasonable hope of saving the member, he ought to be retained.

The course for the Church to pursue, in such case, is not materially different from that to be pursued in other cases of discipline. When such cases are reported to the Church, she should always inquire, whether the offended has obeyed the directions of Christ. If he has obeyed, then the difficulty is thrown into the hands of the Church for settlement; but if he has not obeyed Christ's commands, he should be required to do so, and the case should not be entertained. If the offended should refuse to obey the Divine command,
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he himself becomes a violator, subjects himself to the discipline of the Church, and, if he persists, to exclusion.

A charge, thus irregularly preferred, should never be entertained by the Church, because, in doing so, the Church would indorse the violation, or, at least, would give her sanction to the act, and encourage its violation by others.

COURSE TO BE PURSUED IN THE SECOND CLASS OF PERSONAL OFFENSES.

While offenses of this class are comparatively few, they may be very diversified and complicated.

The following considerations seem to me to dictate, in most cases, the course to be pursued by the offended:

1. The nature of the offense.
2. The character of the offender. And,
3. The circumstances of proof.

That these three considerations should mainly dictate the course to be pursued by the offended, can be made readily to appear.

1. The nature of the offense.

Let us suppose that your brother A. goes into your orchard, and takes your fruit without per
mission. This may be called *stealing*. Does it not violate the law of God, which says, "Thou shalt not steal?" as also the law of our land, which punishes theft by imprisonment, fine, or, in some instances, with death?

Suppose, again, that your brother B. comes, breaks into your house, and steals all your money. Here, again, the law of God and the law of the land are both violated. But do you not regard these two offenses in a very different light? Is not the latter a much more aggravated crime than the former? Take any extreme cases of acknowledged theft, and you can not fail to see that the *nature* of the offense should have something to do in determining what should be done. Or take any other extreme cases which violate the law of God and the law of the land, and you will see the same thing.

2. **The character of the offender should have some influence in determining what the offender should do.**

Let us suppose that one character has always sustained a good reputation, and that his *sin* was committed under circumstances calculated to palliate, in some degree, his crime. We have strong
reasons for believing that he never committed such a crime before, and believe that, if proper steps should be taken, he might never do so any more.

On the other hand, let us suppose that another member, who commits a much worse crime of the same general class, has long been suspected of dishonesty and meanness in general, but has never before been detected. You have every circumstantial proof that he is a confirmed scoundrel. Add to all this, the circumstances that the former is a youth of tender years, while the latter is now growing gray with age; and that the former committed his crime through excitement, but the latter after long deliberation: now decide whether the character of the offender has not an important bearing in prescribing the line of duty.

3. The circumstances of proof, have, perhaps, a still greater influence.

Where no one witnessed the offense but the offended, what could he prove, should he try? But where other competent witnesses saw it, the guilt of the offender could be established, and the criminal could be brought to justice.

When such an offense has been committed, the question arises, What ought the offended to do?
I. When no one witnessed the offense but the offending and the offended, shall he go and tell his brother his sin? In some cases he should; in others, I think, he should not. Where he has reason to believe that the guilty would confess his wrong, and that he might be benefited by his visit, it would be well for him to go and tell him, plead with, and admonish him. Of course, much would depend, in this case, upon the character of the offender. But if you are sure that he would not confess his wrong, but would deny it and charge you with slander, it would be, perhaps, better to say nothing to him of the offense. You could not prove it, if you charge it upon him, and since evil rather than good would be effected by telling him his wrong, it would be better for you to wait until some circumstance may disclose his guilt.

But if you should think best to go and tell him his sin, and he should penitently confess it, knowing that you could not prove it, and should render all the satisfaction in his power, ought you to disclose the matter?

1. Remember that you can not prove his guilt before a jury.
2. That the public, not knowing anything of his guilt, can not be seriously injured by it. And,
3. That the offended has made all the restitution in his power, and, by a voluntary confession of his guilt, has demonstrated deep penitence.

Since, by the supposition the public know nothing of the offense, you ought to act with reference to the good of the offender. You should, I think, keep it a profound secret. In doing this, you do not violate either the spirit or the letter of the law, either of God or of man. If you are the only one offended, and your brother convinces you of his penitence, and says, “I repent,” you should forgive him. The highest end of human law, in its most perfect state, looks to the highest good of each individual subject of the law. Now, the question arises, Is the offending brother more likely to be benefited by keeping his crime from the public or by disclosing it? There can be but one opinion on this subject, I think, and that is, that the crime should be kept secret. This may be given as a general rule.

II. But where others witnessed the crime besides the offended, what should be done?

He may, if circumstances will allow it, go and
tell him his sin, and strive to make as good an impression on his mind as possible. "But suppose the act is such as can not be repaired, can the matter be settled privately?" Of course not. Though he may satisfy the offended, yet the personally offended can not receive satisfaction for others who were offended by the same act, i.e., by seeing a just law of the country violated. In this case, the public good requires that the criminal should be punished. The general rule, in cases where the offense violates the law of God and a just law of the land, and witnesses can be produced to establish the guilt, the crime should at once be disclosed, and the Church should exclude such members with as little delay as practicable.

There may be some exceptions, though very rare, to this rule. Where the offense is not of the worst character, the offender one who would very probably be reclaimed, and the witnesses few, the latter might, viewing all the circumstances, and especially looking to the good of the offending, agree among themselves never to speak of the matter. In this case, public morals would not be affected by secreting the offense. A few such cases have been reported to the writer; but
such cases are very few. When any such case is known to the Church, she should, without exception, exclude the offender. It is better for one guilty person, however hopeful his prospects of recovery, to suffer the penalty of the law, than that the Church should be branded with the charge of concealing crime.

Thus have been considered some of the more difficult cases of such personal offenses, and the general principles for settling them.

TREATMENT OF GENERAL OFFENSES.

General offenses, as we have already seen, are such sins as are not committed against an individual member, but affect the whole Church and the cause of Christ generally. We have also seen that some personal offenses, viz.: such as publicly violate some just law of the land, are offenses which subject the offender to the discipline of the Church. These and general offenses come under the notice of the Church directly. Personal offenses, when the law of Christ in Matt. xviii has been complied
with to no effect, subject the offender to the discipline of the Church. *Church* discipline now properly comes in.

The question now arises, Is there any *uniform rule* prescribing the precise manner in which the Church is to proceed in every case of discipline?

I answer, No. *Some cases require more time than others.* The Church should cut off some offenders at her first meeting, and with but little ceremony; with others she should labor for a longer time. There are two considerations which should mainly decide the manner in which the Church should proceed.

1. *The nature of the offense.* And

2. *The character of the offender.*

1. The nature of the offense. That the *nature* of the offense has much to do in deciding the course to be pursued by the Church, every one can readily see.

Let us suppose that *one* member has, in the presence of a large number of his brethren, killed a fellow-citizen without any just provocation; suppose the *fact to be well-known* by the Church and community. Suppose, again, that *another* member, when much provoked by a wicked and lawless
man, used improper language, and manifested an improper spirit. Is it not apparent that the Church should pursue a different course with these offenders? Again, suppose that one member has publicly declared that “believer’s baptism” (immersion) is no better than “infant sprinkling;” that the Church of Christ is no better than the Church of any other man, has “denied the faith” generally; on the other hand, here is a member who has much of this world’s goods, but will not contribute anything to the cause of Christ; to support the Gospel, to “relieve the necessities” of the poor saints, etc. Should the Church pursue the same course in both these cases? Should she not exclude the former at her earliest convenience, and labor to reclaim the latter?

2. The character of the offender should have some influence, in some cases, in deciding the course to be pursued. If the offender has rarely exhibited any of the spirit of Christ in his life; has conformed, in general, to the spirit of the world; has committed various other offenses; the Church should deal with him more promptly—i. e., should not labor so long to reclaim him—than with one
who has been a uniform and consistent Christian, whose light has been conspicuous to the view of all, but who, in peculiar circumstances, has committed one offense similar to that of the former.

Another consideration to be taken into the account, and which, perhaps, should have some influence in determining the action of the Church, is the circumstances under which the offense was committed.

A willful, deliberate offense is, certainly, of a much worse "moral hue" than a hasty, unpremeditated and provoked offense.

I repeat: There is no uniform rule laid down in the New Testament, for the treatment of all offenses; but the general rule which, it seems to me, should be pursued, is this:

The Church should look to the nature of the offense, the character of the offender, and in some cases, the circumstances under which the offense was committed; and then pursue that course which, in her judgment, will contribute most to the glory of the cause of Christ, and the good of the offender.

It will be perceived that this rule supposes the Church to have some intelligence, and that she is
to use all the lights afforded, in order that she may so dispose of offenders as to promote the glory of the Savior, and the good of his erring subjects.

Are there any specific rules for specific offenses? "If a member has committed an offense for which any acknowledgment could not atone, should he be summoned before the Church?"

Before answering the question, it is necessary for us to inquire, What kind of an offense is that for which no acknowledgment can atone? It is an offense which publicly violates a just law of the land. When such an offense is committed, one of two things happens. 1. Either the offender elopes, or, 2. He is seized by some civil officer. In the former, it would be impossible to summon him to appear before the Church; in the latter, if he were confined in prison, he could not well appear before the Church. But, as a rule to be observed with great caution, the following seems to me to be the proper one in such cases.

When the offense is such, and is well-known by the Church to be such, as can not be atoned for by repentance on the part of the offender, the Church should exclude him at once without his presence.
The only exception to this rule is where the offender can appear before the Church, if he will. In this case, though the Church might not be able, as a Church, to forgive the offense, she might give the offender some valuable instruction, and thus promote his spiritual good.

The above rule is founded on the principles:

1. That the Church must act for the glory of the Redeemer's cause; and, 2. That she must have in view the highest good of the offender. Where the offense is such as can not be repaired by penitence, the individual must be excluded; and where there is no reasonable prospect of benefiting the offender, his presence before the Church is not needed. Besides, if he is at liberty to attend the Church, and is in a state of mind favorable to the reception of good impressions, he will be very likely to attend without any summons.

I remark again, that great caution should be exercised in the practice of the above rule. The Church, according to the supposition, is supposed to know that the offense has been perpetrated. She must not take merely circumstantial evidence, or indefinite rumor; but there must be no reasonable doubt as to the guilt of the member.
HOW TO PROCEED IN CASE THE OFFENSE MAY BE ATONED FOR BY PENITENCE AND CONFESSION.

Here, again, reference must be had to the general rule previously given. The nature of the offense, and the character of the offender should not be overlooked. The general rule is this:

The offender should be cited to attend and answer to the charge.

How should the summons be served?

The least objectionable way is, for the Church to appoint a committee of faithful brethren to visit the offender, tell him what has been laid to his charge, ascertain, as nearly as possible, his state of mind, and cite him, by authority of the Church to appear before her.

Should he appear, of course, he will have an opportunity for showing the fallacy of the charge, if it be false; or of stating to the Church his feelings, if the charge be true.

Should he establish the falsity of the charge, the Church must acquit him; should he "plead guilty," and render full satisfaction* by the exhi-

* It may, in some cases, be impossible for the offender to "render full satisfaction" to the Church; as where he has been
Of General Offenses.

Bition of true penitence, etc., he should be forgiven and retained in the Church.

But in case he should own the charge, but confess his inability to see its criminality, the Church, looking to the nature of the charge and the character of the accused, might, with propriety, spend some time in laboring to convince him of his error. If all her efforts to convince him are fruitless, she should, if the offense is radical*—i. e., such as to sever Church fellowship—exclude him.

guilty of repeated drunkenness or profanity, or has persisted in any course of conduct which brings reproach upon the Church. Where the proof against a member who has been guilty of such repeated immorality is perfectly satisfactory to the Church, the offender need not be dignified with a summons to attend Church. The Church should not suffer by any unnecessary lapse of time.

*At this point the writer's mind is directed to the circumstance that there is a great diversity in the standards of discipline, as erected by different Churches. For instance, one Church will not allow her members to attend circuses, theaters, balls, sell spirituous liquors, etc., while another tolerates all these. Again, some think that individual members may be permitted to commune with other denominations, and not thereby rightfully subject themselves to the discipline of their Churches; while others think that all such, if they persist in the practice, should be excluded. Some few, moreover, think that "pulpit communion" (between Baptists and others) is quite as offensive as communion at the Lord's table, and that, if one affects the vital
Thus have I hinted at some of the general principles which, as it seems to me, should govern a Church, in the exercise of discipline. The writer may have erred in some points; if so, will some one be so kind as to point out the error?

elements of Church fellowship, the other does too. Furthermore, some Churches, in their "abstract of faith," hold the doctrine of "eternal and unconditional election;" while others not only do not have such creeds, but do not believe the doctrine itself. Some think that the greatest latitude should be allowed each member in his interpretations of the doctrines, precepts, and principles of the Gospel; while others are much less "liberal" in their views. Now, the question arises, What has given rise to so many different standards? But the question of greatest importance is, Where must the true standard be erected? What, "in faith and practice," are those points vital to Church fellowship? What ought the Church of God to require of her members? and where ought her requirements to stop?

Should the Church take note of all the offenses enumerated in the New Testament, and make them subject-matter of discipline, perhaps not more than one in ten of those who belong to the Baptist Church would be retained in her fellowship. And if, on the other hand, some offenses should be "winked at," who will tell us where to stop "winking" and commence the work of punishment?

Here is a subject profound enough for the profoundest, and one, too, upon which much might be said to profit. The writer has not time at present, nor does he boast of the ability to solve these questions. Who will do it? The opinion of the writer is, that a careful study of the New Testament would throw more
There is one remark which, though it has nothing to do directly with Church discipline, deserves to be made. It is this: When any member has committed a general offense, it is the privilege of any other member of the Church to go and see the offender privately, and labor with him to the best possible advantage. Tell him his grievance in the spirit of Christ, and often he may be the means of reclaiming him "from the error of his way." Nor would this remark be out of place in reference to some personal offenses.

There is a number of questions very closely connected with the one we have been considering, which, in a treatise on Church discipline, ought not to be omitted. These involve—

light on this subject than anything else. What the New Testament does not, in spirit, condemn, can never be made—properly, I mean—a subject of discipline by the Church. One other thing would, perhaps, drive away much mist from the mind of the Church, viz.: the abolition of all creeds except the New Testament. The appeal should be made directly to the will of the only Lawgiver, in every case of discipline. Pastors and members should be so familiar with the Divine code, that, when a case is presented, they may know whether it is such as is recognized in that code or not; and then they would not be likely to be so much confused, or commit such blunders as are sometimes committed.
1. The right or duty of the Church to exercise discipline. Each Church has the right to exercise discipline. This right is conceded to her, not directly, as it seems to me, by Christ, but by his apostles. Matt. xviii is not, as already stated, addressed to the Church, but to the members that compose it, and it is taught only by implication, that, in this connection, the Church is to exercise discipline. But numerous passages, such as 1 Cor. v: 1–7, the instructions to the seven Churches in Asia, show that it was, and is the will of Christ, that his Church should exercise this right. But since Christ has intrusted discipline to the Church, it becomes her duty to exercise it. Nor is this duty to be omitted. Read the objections urged against and threats made to the seven Churches. When a Church knows that one of her members is guilty of any offense which disgraces the cause of Christ, she becomes guilty of, and indorses the sin, unless she takes proper steps to bring the offender to see his wrong and render satisfaction, or puts him away from her.

2. The responsibility of each member in the exercise of Church discipline.

The question here arises, Have female members
and irresponsible minors the right to vote? The former question has been discussed at different times, and to some length. Of the latter, comparatively little has been said. In regard to the former question, plausible arguments may be adduced on both sides.

It may be urged—

1. That if they have not the right to vote, they are not responsible for the purity of the Church; that as they have no voice against crime, they can not be blamed for the existence of crime in the Church.

2. That as women have no right to vote, a number of believing women, however many or pious, could not, of themselves, constitute a Church; for each Church must have the right to exercise discipline, and, by the supposition, woman can not exercise it.

3. That the withholding from women the right to vote, on the plea of their incompetency, destroys the great principle of equality, of which Baptists so much boast, and tends directly to Presbyterianism.

On the other hand, it may be contended:

1. That it is, as a general law, repugnant to
woman's feelings to vote in the Church; that the circumstance that she must often be urged before she, as a general rule, will vote, and that many of them can not be induced to vote even then, proves that they **ought not to vote.**

2. That women, as a general rule, are constitutionally unfit to vote; that being more easily led away by their feelings, prejudices for, or against, they would not be likely, as a general thing, to cast their votes intelligently; in other words, that they would vote as others would dictate.

3. That, owing to the above defect, the Church would be much more likely to commit blunders, than it would, if none but men should vote. Hence that the purity of the cause of Christ is better preserved, when they are not allowed a vote.

4. That it subjects man to the government of woman, the opposite of what was designed by their Maker; that where the Church has a majority of women as members, they could rule everything at pleasure, and man, who is the head of the woman, would be subjected to her sway.

5. That if woman is competent to vote in "Church," she is none the less competent to
vote in "State," and that if her right to vote should be established in the Church, efforts should be made to establish her right to vote in "State:" hence, a change in the Constitution of the United States ought to be made, in order to secure her this right. And that as every intelligent voter is eligible to any office in the government, she should have the liberty of filling any office to which she may be elected!

6. That since man is, by nature, every way better qualified to vote, and could not have any motive presented for voting so as to injure "the weaker vessel," even her own good requires that she should not vote.

Without stopping, at present, to inquire into the merits of these arguments, let us at this point inquire: What does the Bible teach? All arguments amount to merely nothing, when our Lawgiver and King speaks.

What says the word? "Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence."—1 Tim. ii: 11, 12. "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands." "For after this manner in the old
time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands.”—1 Pet. iii: 1, 5. Again, Eph. v: 22, 24: “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church, and he is the Savior of the body. Therefore, as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.” Once more: “Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.* And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.”—1 Cor. xiv: 34, 35.

These passages among other things teach:

1. That women are subject to men; which could not be the case, if women may rule and govern men by voting in the churches.

2. That women ought not to speak in the churches. If they ought not to speak in the churches,

* Read the references to the law, Gen. iii: 16; also Numbers xxx: 3–15.
they certainly ought not to vote by speaking. As a vote, by rising or by raising the hand, is virtually and only another way of speaking—speaking, too, with the most potent voice with which it is possible for any one to speak—their voting, in any way, must violate the spirit of the text. Besides, were woman entitled to vote, she must be permitted to speak in the church, in order to gain the necessary information to enable her to vote intelligently; in other words, she must have the right, if she choose, to enter the arena of discussion, and contend on an equality with man; all which is contrary to her nature and sphere. Moreover, if women be entitled to vote, there could be no necessity for them to learn of their husbands at home, as Paul directs. Once more: It was always, and is now the custom of the Jews, as also of the Greeks, that women should take no part in governmental affairs. Now, as this was the custom of the Jews in all their religious meetings at the time Christ's Church was established, we would, even if Inspiration said nothing against it, naturally expect some Divine teaching to abrogate this long-established custom.

As to the arguments, based upon those passages
of Scripture which represent the Church, or the whole Church as acting, I have this to say:

1. It is a figure of speech so commonly used as to create no obscurity. The whole is used for the part, i.e., the voting part of the Church voted, and all concurred, in feeling, with the vote.

2. The same form of expression is common among us now. I know of but few Churches where it is customary for any considerable number of females to vote, perhaps in the majority of our Churches they do not vote at all; yet we say "The Church did this, or that;" "The Church unanimously called Brother A. to the pastorate," etc. Thus the difficulty at once vanishes. History, so far as I have examined it, goes to prove that the Churches have not, to any great extent, departed from the teachings of Paul. In all this, "woman's rights" are not invaded; for it never was her right to vote. Of course, her rights are not infringed upon, when she moves within her own legitimate sphere.

As to the "tendency" of this prohibition "to Presbyterianism," it may be replied: Whatever the "tendency" may be, it never leads to this result.
As to the objection, that, on this ground, "women could not, of themselves, be constituted into a Church," it is enough to say in reply, that where there are women there are men, as a general thing; also, that where there are not as many as "two or three" converted men in a community, it is evidence that the time has not yet come to establish a Church in that community, and that the practical observance of the Divine order can never retard the cause of truth.

That "women are not responsible," if not allowed to vote, "for the purity of the Church," must be taken in a very limited sense. "The purity of a Church" is not preserved alone by voting. A pious walk and godly conversation—the letting of their lights shine, (which must be the duty of every female member,) have as great an influence, perhaps, as anything else in preserving the "purity of the Church." But the results of voting or of refusing to vote, should not be attributed to women, unless they, in their private (home) capacity, have withheld from the men such information as they alone may have had. While women may not vote in the Church, they may furnish such information as will make it obligatory
on the men to vote. The influence of woman, in preserving the purity of the Church, is, therefore, by no means insignificant. It would be improper, in such a work as this, to discuss this subject fully; yet enough, it would seem, has been said to show that it is not woman's sphere to vote. But the word of God settles this question beyond all reasonable doubt.

I. Ought irresponsible minors to be allowed a vote? The previous discussion excludes minor females from voting; the question, therefore, respects minors of the male sex. The question, too, does not respect minors merely, but irresponsible minors. By an irresponsible minor is meant one who is not responsible in law for what he says or does. His father or mother must answer for what he does. Ought such to vote? is the question. I can now call up no Scripture directly for or against this question; but, from the following considerations, I must espouse the negative.

1. The age of such persons renders it almost certain that, in nearly every instance, they would vote just as their parents, or others who have the rule over them, or, in other cases, as others might suggest.

2. That they would vote, not because they un-
derstood the facts in the case, or perceived what justice required, but because their parents, or some one else, voted a certain way, and of course it would not be either natural or expected that they would vote differently. Now, the moral force of such a vote amounts to nothing—it is purely numerical. It amounts to about the same as if the Church should vote the horses of her members—they would help to swell the number, and that is all the others do.

Should it be said that “there are many men who do not think for themselves, and that they, too, ought not to vote,” it may be replied:

1. That though there are some who will not think, yet if the capacity to think and decide what is right, is peculiar to any class, it is to those who have age—wisdom is to be looked for in age rather than in tender youth.

2. That while, so far as each adult male is concerned, it is true that those who will not think sufficiently to know what they ought to do, have no moral right to vote, yet the general rule, I suppose, is, that this class do think enough, in most cases, to act intelligently, and if they blunder it is an evil for which they are responsible to God. There must be
somebody to act in the Church, and as it would be impossible, without a continued revelation, to designate these characters by name, they are designated by class, viz.: male members whose age renders them responsible for what they say and do.

At this point I reaffirm that it is sinful for any adult male to vote in the Church, unless he has a sufficient reason for doing what he does. He who casts an important vote without sufficient examination into the merits of the question, acts unreasonably and sinfully. Nor is it enough that one should know how Deacon A or Deacon B will vote; he must think for himself, or he sins if he votes. If one has not mind enough to grasp the merits of a question, he should decline voting; if he has sufficient mind, he sins if he does not use it (in important matters, I mean) in ascertaining his duty. Let Baptists ponder this well.

II. Irresponsible minors ought not to vote, because it is in violation of all correct notions of government. That those who rule should be responsible individuals, is, in all free countries, a governmental axiom. No one should have the right to depose others, when he himself is not subject to law.

"But is not the 'minor' subject to the Church?"
MINORS NOT TO VOTE IN CHURCH.

Yes; but is it not also true that Churches may do things which violate even some just law of the land? In this case, minors would not be amenable to that law. And should there be a majority of such minors in the Church, the Church might be driven, by her rash youths, against the strong arm of the civil authorities, then who would come to rescue? The gray-headed fathers in the Church might protest, but all in vain! If minors are competent to vote in "Church," why not in "State?"

It was never designed that children should rule the Church any more than women. Let them spend their minor days (at least until their testimony would be received in a court of justice*) in studying the laws of Christ; then when they become old enough, there will be reason in their ruling; but a minor incapacitated by age to think, and irresponsible for what he does, ought not to be allowed to vote in a Baptist Church.

The same may be said of servants, unless they form a separate congregation among themselves. Of this, I believe, there is no question in the South, and I will not, therefore, discuss it.

* This time varies, I believe, from fourteen to sixteen years.
We are now prepared to discuss the original question, *What is the relation sustained by each member to the discipline of the Church?*

1. If any adult female member knows that a member is living in palpable violation of the laws of God—is performing anything calculated to disgrace the cause—she should report it to some male member. This is a general rule, subject to some modifications.

2. *Irresponsible minors* will rarely know of any wicked act or practice which will not be known to some older members. Their testimony should never be received, except as circumstantial testimony. Such offenses as they might observe, might be mentioned to a parent, or some prudent elderly member.

3. Those who are entitled to vote, are individually responsible for the general sins (some exceptions already noticed in some rare cases) which they allow to pass unnoticed. The high position of the offender, or the influence of the family to which he belongs, should never screen him from the discipline of the Church; and, it may be added, he who winks at his wickedness, is guilty of indorsing the crime. Each member should feel his own
responsibility in this important matter, and act in view of his obligations to Christ. He should never report a case out of malice, or with the view to injure the offender. Nor should he ever be looking to see if he can detect any inconsistency, or wrong in others, that he may present their cases to the Church; each one has enough to do to look into his own heart, and examine his own actions; but offenses will force themselves upon his observation. When this is the case, and he sees the cause of Christ suffering, he should not remain silent.

III. Over what offenders may a Church exercise discipline?

Over her own. She has no right to discipline any offenders, however vile they may be, unless they belong to her own membership. It may, and sometimes does happen, that one Church denies certain Church privileges to individual members of other Churches, where said members are known to have done things for which the former would exclude her own members. This is more likely to arise at the communion than at any other time. It is "customary" for a Church to invite the members of all other Churches, "of
like faith and order," "who know themselves to be in good standing in their respective Churches," to commune. But as different Churches have, in some respects, a different discipline, it is not at all astonishing that a member "who is in good standing in his own Church," might be regarded as worthy of exclusion by a sister Church. In such a case, the Church should debar the unworthy member of her sister Church from her communion. The principle can not be denied as a correct one: that a Church should never admit, to her communion, a member of another Church, who is guilty of anything for which she would exclude her own members." No Church can preserve the purity of the ordinance without doing this. This, however, does not at all affect the standing of members in their own Churches, but is equivalent to saying that the Church that debars them from the communion on this plea, would discipline them if she had the right to do so. But each Church is independent of every other Church, and can not be disturbed in her own private matters. If one Church wishes to keep even a robber in her fellowship, no other Church can forcibly prevent it. A Church, then, has the right, nay,
it is her duty, to exercise discipline over offenders within her own number.

"But," says one, "are women and minors subject to the discipline of the Church, seeing that they have no right to vote? Is it not unreasonable that one should be subject to law, when he has no voice in the execution of law?" I answer: They are subject to the discipline of the Church, and yet have no vote in the execution of that discipline. Nor is this any more strange than another fact, complained of only by a few fanatics, that this is precisely what women are subject to in the government of the United States. They are subject to law, and yet have no voice either in making, or executing it. As to the minors of whom we speak, they are not subject to the law.

If it is "strange" that this should be so, that God has placed woman in this sphere—it is by no means the only "strange" thing. The world abounds in mysteries!

Woman, though she occupies this "strange" position, has, I suppose, rarely fared the worse for it. There could be nothing gained by doing her injustice either in "Church" or "State," but, on the contrary, much to lose. She will rarely
suffer any wrong in the Church of Christ, while she moves in the sphere which God has assigned her.

IV. From whom does a Church derive the right to exercise discipline?

From Christ, the head of the Church, her only Lawgiver. No convention of members, preachers, bishops, popes, or kings, has any right to determine what discipline a Church shall adopt, or make any laws respecting discipline. To assume any such authority, is to set themselves up in the stead of Christ. The New Testament is the book of discipline.

V. With what design should a Church discipline one of her members?

With the design, if possible, to save her erring members. When a member does anything, calculated to disturb his standing in his Church, the Church should feel deeply sorrowful. As the whole body is pained when “one of the members” is injured, so should the Church be grieved when one of her members suffers injury. It is no more unnatural for a man to rejoice because one of his limbs must be amputated, than it is for a Church to rejoice at the exclusion of one of her members.
VI. Has a Church the right to discipline members contrary to the law of Christ? This is the same thing as to ask, whether a Church has the right to sin. If Christ has given a law, or laws, in accordance with which Churches should exercise discipline, it is equally as sinful to disregard these laws as it is to disregard any other laws pertaining to the existence of his Church. If the laws for excluding may be violated with impunity, why may not the laws for receiving members be violated with as slight punishment? Why may not a Church receive members without any profession of faith? Or without baptism? Why will not sprinkling, or pouring answer as well? Why not be as scrupulous to observe the laws of exclusion from the Church, as the laws of admitting members into the Church? Is it because the former are less important than the latter? Who will dare to assert this? Who will bring into disrepute the authority of Jehovah!! Zeal for Christ's cause, and love for the membership will preserve his laws, and vindicate his glory.

A Church to be obedient to Christ, must strictly observe his laws; not the least important of which are his laws for excluding offenders. She can not expect the approbation of Christ, or of his loyal subjects, unless she follows his laws in this particular.
VII. When a Church excludes a member in accordance with the law of Christ, how is the excluded to be regarded by other Churches?

When a member has been justly excluded, he should be regarded by other Churches acquainted with the facts in the case, as an excluded man. The law of Christ, properly executed by one Church, deserves the sanction of all other Churches concerned in the matter. When Christ's law has been observed in the exclusion of a member, the act of exclusion deserves as much respect as the act which receives a member into a Church according to Christ's law. As it would be sinful for one Church to disregard the immersion, by the proper authority, of a believer, so to disregard a righteous act of exclusion would not be less sinful. An act of a Church, performed according to the Scriptures, is valid, and should be so regarded by all who respect the authority of Christ.

VIII. If a Church should, contrary to the law of Christ, exclude a worthy member, how should the Church excluding him, and the excluded, be regarded?

1. How should the Church be regarded?

A correct answer to this can not be given with-
out taking into the account all the important facts in the case. If the Church is a very ignorant one, and exhibits a desire to be governed by the law of Christ, her act should be regarded with much more leniency than if she is:

1st. Very intelligent.

2d. If she violates the spirit of the law—usurps authority for the purpose of destroying a member.

3d. If she violates the plain letter of the law.

When a Church is merely ignorant of her duty, and desires to do it when known, it will be but a short time, in most cases, before she will rescind her illegal action, and seek to be restored to the affection and fellowship of her sister Churches.

But in the latter case, there is much less hope. Her intelligence implies that she knows what the law of Christ is; and the course pursued implies that she has determined to disregard that law, that she may crush one of her members. Such a course clearly evinces the fact, that her hatred to one whom she ought to love, though an erring brother, is so strong as to overbalance her love for, and respect to, Christ's authority. Such a Church stands in the attitude of rebellion against Christ, and
ought to be so regarded by all other Churches acquainted with the fact. Should other Churches knowingly uphold her in her rebellion, they would become rebels themselves. When a Church thus rejects the authority of Christ, other Churches should have nothing to do with her, as a Church, until she rescinds her wicked acts, and again acknowledges the authority of Christ. The argument offered above is equally conclusive here: As it would be sinful for Churches to respect that body which admits an applicant into the Church without a profession of faith, or without baptism, so it would be sinful in them to respect that act of a Church which excludes a worthy member contrary to the law of Christ.

2. How should a worthy man, improperly excluded, be regarded?

I answer: He should be regarded as a persecuted man, and not at all disgraced by the wicked act of exclusion. Does Christ regard such a man as disgraced? Surely not. Neither should those who love Christ's authority. Do justice and truth regard him as disgraced? No. Then neither should those who love justice and truth consider him disgraced.
IX. What relation does an excluded member sustain to the Church excluding him?

Precisely the same that he sustained before he attached himself to this Church. Before he became a member, he had no rights in the Church. When he became a member, the Church conferred upon him all the rights of membership in her body. On his exclusion, she takes away that which she had conferred—no more, no less. A Church can not possibly bestow that which she does not possess; she does not possess the right to bestow privileges in other Churches, but the right is limited to her own body. Therefore, when she excludes a member, she does not deprive him of rights out of her own body. Hence, exclusion from one Church is not exclusion from all other Churches. After exclusion, the Church excluding a member has just the same jurisdiction over the excluded that she has over any one else who is not a member; and this amounts to nothing at all.

X. How is one who has been justly excluded, to be restored, if he is restored at all?

The answer to this question, also, depends, in some measure, upon circumstances.
1. If the excluded resides in the vicinity of the Church that excluded him, it would be better for him, and certainly less trouble to all concerned, to make the proper acknowledgments to the Church that excluded him, and make application to it for restoration. This is a general rule with few exceptions.

2. If he has left the vicinity of the Church which excluded him, and feels that he is willing to make amends for his wrong, and desires membership in a Church of Christ, it would be well for him to inform the Church of which he was once a member, of his feelings, desires, etc. This Church can then either restore him to fellowship in her own body, or else she can inform him and the Church of which he wishes to become a member, that the unfavorable record against him has been blotted out, and commend him to the Church to which he has made application for membership.

Little difficulty will be likely to arise in the restoration of applicants who have been justly excluded. At this point are introduced two articles entire, from the pen of Professor T. F. Curtis. These articles will doubtless be read with profit by all interested on this subject:
The Michigan Christian Herald has called attention to some three or four cases in which it supposes Baptist Churches in the neighborhood of New York have deviated from their former usages, and received members who have been excluded by other Baptist Churches without their being first restored by the body that excluded them. Into the details of particular cases it is unnecessary to enter. But an article or two on the principles involved may be useful.

The custom, as we have always understood it, has been as follows: Where a person is excluded from one Church he should not be received into any other except by the advice of some Council, (unless, perhaps, where a mutual Council having undertaken it should have failed to give any advice within a reasonable time—a case we need not here discuss.) If the individual thinks himself unjustly excluded, he may ask for a mutual Council. This the Church, it is supposed, will usually grant if there is reason to suppose the case admits of any doubt. They may, however, refuse, if they see fit. But in that case the individual is not without this remedy: he may seek the advice of an ex parte Council. Such a Council may consider that he has been unnecessarily or unjustly excluded. But then the Council can only advise; it has no power to restore the person to the Church of which he was a member. It can, however, give him a certificate recommending him to the fellowship of any other Church, which, if it sees fit, may receive him on this, as if regularly dismissed. In such case, the independence and discipline of no Church has been violated. None have
a right to feel aggrieved. Such is the well-established usage of the Congregational Churches, whose form of government is precisely the same as our own.

If this usage has been, in any instance, deviated from, it is clearly a breach of the understanding upon which our Churches associate, and in consideration of which the members of each Church receive many privileges in other Churches, which might but for it be abridged or withheld. All parties are bound to abide by these arrangements for the general welfare which they have impliedly entered into. Either the arrangements must be set aside, or they withdraw from the association, before they are free.

While, however, this seems clear on the one hand, it must also be remembered that this is only a matter of custom and tacit agreement, not a rule enjoined in Scripture—not a Divine authority. It is a custom derived from very ancient usage, one often of much practical value, yet sometimes attended with great inconveniences, and the origin of which is really very questionable. A breach of it would, therefore, be the breach of terms of voluntary association, but it would be a mistake to suppose that it involved any defiance or despite of the authority with which each Church is endowed by Jesus Christ; that it was a subversion of principles necessary to the existence of a Church, or calculated to destroy its discipline.

Certainly no Church can produce any Divine warrant to excommunicate a person from all other Churches besides its own; as, in consequence of their independence, the individual is a member but of the one visible body. Strictly speaking, then, a Church excludes from no other body but itself. But when this is done, of course all the special privileges which the excluded individual had derived from his membership as to communion in
other Churches fall to the ground, and he stands out in
the world where he stood before he made a profession of
religion. But so far as the New Testament goes, this is
all. The Bible recognizes no tie as now subsisting be-
tween them. He is to them "as a heathen man and as a publican." And, like any other heathen man, if
he should afterward see his sinfulness and repent, any
other Church where he might be would, on proof of this
latter, have a right to receive him into its fellowship.
Everything which restricts a Church from this, and in-
duces them rather to send him back to the body which
excluded him, may be a matter of expedience and com-
ity, but certainly cannot claim Divine authority. We
are not aware that more than two passages of Scripture
have ever been appealed to as bearing on this point, and
it is almost idle to allude to them as proof-texts. The
first of these is 2 Cor. ii: 7, 8, where the apostle Paul
charges the same Church which excluded the incestu-
ous man to restore him. This case, however, only proves
what all admit, that the Church which excluded has a
right to restore a penitent on due application. But it
does not prove that any other Church besides would not
have had the same right as well as that from which he
fell, had he been so circumstanced as to apply elsewhere.
The other passage is Matt. xvii: 18: "Whatsoever ye
shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and what-
soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."
From this it seems to have been urged that "the same
body that is here said to bind is also said to loose." To
us it seems that this passage might more plausibly be
quoted as conferring on every Christian Church authority
to bind, and on every Church the authority to loose;
that is, to give each Church the abstract right to restore
all offenders. But, it is urged further, that here "the
Church is supposed to exercise the highest authority without having its proceedings subject to any review upon earth." But this would not annul the rights or the action of any Church, which can, as we have seen, exclude simply from its own membership. No other Church can restore a person to membership in that body of which he was a member, and therefore does not annul its act. Certainly none will suppose our Savior here to declare, that, in every case where a person is excluded from some one visible Church below, he is, at the same moment, cut off from all fellowship with the Church above, or on being loosed from such sentence, is restored in all cases to citizenship in the invisible Church. The authority of each Church is Divinely ratified within its own limits, but no further.

Let it not, then, be pleaded that this interferes with the right and duty of each Church to administer the laws of Christ in the discipline and excommunication of her own members. About this there can be no question. But the real point is, whether there is any Divine rule—any reason, in fact, beyond expediency, custom, and mutual agreement, why a person excluded by one Church might not, upon making proper acknowledgments, be received by any other Church to which he should apply, as well as by that alone from which he was expelled. Or, in other words, if one Church has terminated all connection between itself and an individual, and put him out again in the world, are not the abstract and Scriptural rights, not to say duties, of all other Churches to reclaim him from the world, and then receive him into its fellowship, the same as in regard to other persons who have never been Church-members? Where is the Divine law for placing him under this additional ban; for putting him further off, sometimes, and in some respects, than the
heathen man and the publican, so that but one Church in the whole world can receive him, while any Church can receive the others? There is no Scripture for it. It is a custom of our Churches, having, as I believe, reasons of sound utility in its favor, and adopted so generally as to be in fact an agreement, and binding as all other agreements are among honest and honorable people, but no further. The objects of it are obvious. It effectually prevents persons from being restored without the original ground of their exclusion being sufficiently examined, and it prevents one Church from putting any slight upon the discipline of another by receiving its excluded members without all proper acknowledgments; a thing which, once suspected, would greatly impair, if not destroy, the heart-fellowship of Churches. Whether any other means could be adopted by which these ends could be better attained, we will not here discuss. But until some better plan of clear and safe actions securing these ends is set forth, and the change generally agreed to, we should all mildly, and in a reasonable, Christian, and forbearing spirit, aid in carrying out the customs of the Churches. (1 Cor. xi: 16.) It may, however, be well to bear in mind that a very small proportion of our excluded members ever are restored according to our present mode of discipline, as a reason for some caution and distrust as to the perfection of any one system of expediency to meet all cases. In another number I will examine the history of this custom.

NO. II.

We will now examine a little into the history of that custom by which the excluded must be restored by the same Church which expelled them, and by no other. This was indeed never a rule without many exceptions in ancient times. The whole action of the Church might be
revised by a Synod, and a person excluded in one Church, but suddenly, in dying circumstances, in a distant place, might be received back by any minister usually, and receive the last tokens of peace.

From the most primitive times, of course, an expelled person would necessarily have lost all privileges in every Church, until regularly brought back into fellowship with some one. And where Churches were, as at first, bound together by the ties of a very close mutual fellowship, no Church would ordinarily receive a person excluded from another body, without manifestations of penitence, and, if practicable, such previous satisfaction rendered to the offended body as would be sufficient to satisfy its members. But there is no proof, that I remember, of positive law or established custom, that he must be restored by the Church excluding him before about the middle of the third century. Perhaps the earliest attempt to make it a universal law was the thirteenth apostolic canon. The custom probably originated in Rome. Bingham intimates that one object and effect of it was, to make all the Churches as it were one Church; in a word, to destroy independence. It was, he tells us, "to preserve the unity of the Church in its well-being." And says that "he who was legally excommunicated in one Church, was by the laws of Catholic unity, and rules of right discipline, held excommunicate in all Churches, and no Church could or would receive him into communion before he had given satisfaction to the Church whereof he was a member," . . . "except it were by the authority of a legal Synod, to which there lay a just appeal, which was allowed to judge in the case."—Christian Antiq., xvi: 11, and ii: 10.

The same author quotes Optatus, A. D. 370, or about one hundred years later, to the effect that, "the whole Christian world was united together in one common society, or
society of communion, by the mutual commerce of those canonical or communicatory letters.” These letters, he says, gave “a title to communicate in any other Church,” and if a man was legally excommunicated for his crimes by his own Church, no other Church would receive him until restored by the Church that excluded him. “Such a perfect understanding and harmony was there among all parts of the Church catholic.”

It must, however, be borne in mind, that in no age has it ever been esteemed right that any one individual Church should have the power to excommunicate its members from all other Churches as well as from its own body, without having its proceedings subject to some review or appeal. This would obviously have subjected, not only all individuals, but all Churches, at times, without redress, to the tyranny of each one. Just in proportion, therefore, as we find the letters and discipline of each Church acquired the power to bind the action of every other, Synods, Councils, Metropolitans, Patriarchs, and Popes assumed, as a natural consequence, an appellate jurisdiction, one above another. Thus were the ancient liberties of the Churches lost, and thus was Popery established. The fifth canon of the Council of Nice, A. D. 325, will well illustrate the first stage of this usurpation over the rights of the Churches: “Concerning those, whether of the clergy or laity, who have been excommunicated by the bishops in the different provinces, let the sentence of the canon prevail, which pronounces that those persons who have thus been cast out by one bishop are not to be received again into communion by any others. Inquiry should, however, be made, whether they have been excommunicated through the peevishness or contentiousness, or other such like bitterness of the bishop. And in order that this inquiry may be conveniently made, it is decreed to be proper that Synods should be assembled
twice every year in every province, . . . that so those who have confessedly offended against the bishop, may appear to be with reason excommunicated by all the bishops, until it shall seem fit to their General Assembly to pronounce a more lenient sentence."

About twenty years after this, a higher appeal from the Synod developed itself in this form. In A. D. 347, the Council of Sardica, canon 4, declares, "A bishop deposed by the Synod of the province, who desires a new decision, must not be expelled his see until the bishop of Rome has determined whether the cause ought to be examined anew." This is said to be "for the honor of the memory of St. Peter."

It is easy now to trace the process by which liberty was overrun.

1. The discipline and letters of each Church having become absolutely binding upon all, individuality was lost, and all the Churches uniting became in fact but one Church.

2. The obvious injustice of allowing one body to excommunicate from all others without redress, naturally led to the formation of Synods, to which appeal could be made. These Synods undertook to control and bind the action of the individual Churches, confirming, nullifying, or modifying their sentence at pleasure.

3. The Synod being not always impartial, the bishop of Rome became ultimately a universal umpire.

Among us at the present day, letters communicatory or dimissory do not give "a title" to communion or reception elsewhere, except by mutual consent. Each Church is at full liberty, in every such case, to receive or reject without cause of complaint. Thus far the spirit of Church independence has with us, properly modified a very ancient usage, so as to prevent us from all being again swallowed up in one visible Church universal. Practically, we thus
obtain all the benefits of intercommunion, without taking this part of the first step to Popery.

But it now becomes us to inquire how far it is safe and wise for us to retain the custom of allowing one Church to exercise the power of excommunicating in such a way as to debar from all other Churches. Unquestionably each Church has a Divine and inalienable right to exclude from its own body. But all beyond this is a matter of custom and expediency; a power that always has been, and must be subject to some appeal and restriction, if admitted at all.

It has been suggested, and as such I state the proposition, without, however, coinciding in it myself, whether it is not altogether an artificial and erroneous arrangement by which, after a person has been entirely set aside from a Church, it should be supposed to have still some sort of proprietorship over him. The most simple, natural, and Scriptural idea upon which to act, it is urged, would be to regard excommunication as severing all relations between the body and the individual, so that he is to them and to others literally “a heathen man, and a publican,” and as such to be reclaimed to penitence and Christian communion by any Church that can effect it upon proper principles in their own judgment; a judgment which should be trusted in this case as much as any other. The idea of a latent thread of connection still subsisting, of no force to restrain while impenitent, but which often does hamper all parties, and prevent the excluded from being reclaimed, should, it is urged, be altogether set aside. An excluded member from Illinois may wander to California; but there, if, after a penitent life of years, amid surrounding impiety, he seeks restoration, instead of seeking it where his penitence and life are best known, he has to satisfy a body three thousand miles off, that has had no means of judging of his walk for
ten or twenty years. They may not be convinced by the only proofs he can offer—letters; while they would be if they only saw his life. And they weary him out of heart with delays and denials. Or they may be easily imposed on, and not feel sufficient interest to be careful in action. If restored, it is understood to be a mere form to get a letter and join some Church near him. How much better to let the Church most interested in his future course, judge of his fitness to be restored in all cases. It may be said we should have persons excluded from one Church at once applying to others. Suppose it thus: if strict in discipline, those applied to would naturally write to inquire and insist on full acknowledgments and reparation for all wrongs done. Or, if lax, the Church that received him back, not that which excluded, would suffer by the admission of an unruly member. And, in any case, the person restored, coming under suspicious circumstances, would be more closely watched than where, restored by his former Church, he had come with a clean and regular letter. If it had the effect of making our Churches trust more to personal observation, and the manifestations of character, and less to letters, or if the degree of credit attached to letters depended more on the character of the Church issuing them, all this would do no harm, but good. It would ultimately save councils, contentions, and heart-burnings.

Unquestionably such a course as this would be infinitely better than that of allowing one Church to have the power of debarring from all others, without any appeal. And it would be worse still for councils to have such an appellate jurisdiction as should have power to reverse the action of a Church without its consent, so far as its own jurisdiction is confined.
XI. *How is an individual to be restored, who has been unjustly and unscripturally excluded?*

In such a case as this, there is but one condition on which he can, with justice to himself, be restored to the fellowship of the Church that excluded him; and that is, *that the Church shall repent of her act, rescind it, and make full amends for the wrong done.* Until this shall have been done, the excluded can not reasonably apply for restoration to the excluding Church. The circumstance of his restoration to the same body without a retraction of the wrong on her part, would imply his indorsement of his own condemnation; which, according to the supposition of the Church’s guilt in his exclusion, it would be sinful for him to do. Restoration in this case should be sought by the Church; for she alone needs it.

XII. *Can another Church rightfully receive a member thus excluded?*

It can not be denied, with the appendage of anything like a reason, that each Church has the right to receive into her fellowship, every applicant that presents the Scripture qualifications. If, therefore, an excluded member presents himself to any particular Church, that Church is at
liberty to receive him, provided she thinks him worthy. Of course, she would think him worthy, if she knew him to have been unworthily excluded. To know this, it will be necessary for her, on some occasions, to investigate the grounds on which applicants have been excluded. Where there is a suspicion that the member has been "irregularly" and "wickedly" excluded, the Church applied to, can not, in justice to her King, refuse to investigate the matter. Should she find that the applicant ought not to have been excluded, she has no choice left her; she is bound by her allegiance to her sovereign to receive him. Each Church, as the executive of Christ's kingdom, is bound to receive into his kingdom every one who presents all the necessary qualifications for membership. She sins, if she fails to do this. There is no exception to this rule, whether the applicant be an excluded person, or any other character for the first time applying to the Church.

XIII. How is such an excluded person to be received?

Must he be received "by experience and baptism?" No. If the Church to which he applies for membership believes that he was wickedly
excluded, she believes that he was once a member. But he could not have been a member "without a profession of faith and baptism." One such profession of faith, (if one's life has corresponded to the profession,) and one baptism, are all that can be required. Hence, she is at liberty to receive him by simply extending to him the right hand of fellowship, and bidding him welcome to all the privileges of the Church.

XIV. Suppose a minority of a Church should protest against the wicked effort of the majority to exclude a worthy member, and should withdraw, because the majority refuse to abide by the law of Christ—which is the Church, the majority, or the minority?

I answer, the minority. Upon what is this conclusion based? It is based upon the facts:

That the minority are right, and the majority are wrong. The former are anxious to obey Christ, the latter reject his authority. The question arises: Can that body be a true Church that knowingly and willfully rejects one of his laws? Again: Can that part of a Church cease to be a Church, because it follows the law of Christ fully? Let him who would answer these questions affirm-
atively, tell what it takes to constitute a Church, and what is necessary to annihilate a Church.

Does he answer, "It is the majority that constitutes the Church?" I reply, It is not right, obedience to Christ, and reverence for his authority, that constitute a Church, if this position be true; but the accidental circumstance of a majority's being on one side!!! Who that has any love for truth, or for Him that said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life," can dare to reason in this way? Every one can see that if this monstrous doctrine be true, those who reject Christ's authority and boldly set his commands at naught, may constitute his Church; while those who have strictly obeyed him can lay no claim to be his Church!!!

A strict adherence to the law of Christ constitutes a minority or a majority the Church; the rejection of his law, whether by the majority or minority, destroys their claim to be his Church. The question, then, in all such cases of separation is simply this: "Which has followed the law of Christ?" The question of numbers has nothing whatever to do in deciding the merits of the case. The majority may consist of ten thousand, and
yet be wrong; while the minority may consist of only one, and be right. The majority is the Church, if it has followed Christ’s law; but if the majority have set aside that law, and the minority have followed it, the latter must be the Church, provided the majority consists of two or more. Why may not the one who is obedient to Christ constitute the Church? He, indeed, is the only worthy element of the Church that now remains, but as a Church must consist of more than one member, this one by himself could not be the Church. What, then, has become of that Church in which but one member is obedient to Christ? I answer, It has resolved itself into a “disorderly faction,” and can not properly be recognized as a Church of Christ, until it has rescinded its “wicked” act, and manifested a willingness to obey the commands of Christ.

This position is undeniable, unless right is made to depend upon numbers; but no one will, in so many words, affirm this.

XV. Has a minority the right to withdraw from a majority, when the latter, in order to degrade a member, entertains charges against him, “irregularly” and “wickedly” preferred?
This question has been virtually answered in the preceding section. If the minority, after separating from the majority, do really constitute the Church, (which, in every case, must depend upon the minority’s being right,) they certainly had the right to withdraw. The existence of the Church—I mean in its orthodox form—depended upon their withdrawal. And where interests of such vital importance are at stake, who will say that they have not the right to preserve those interests?

But the question of right, in such cases, does not exhaust the subject. Duty comes in and swallows up right. The question is not “What have I the right to do?” but “What OUGHT I to do?” “What does DUTY REQUIRE me to do? No question of expediency, or policy can meet the weighty obligations of such an occasion. The strength of the obligation to protest against, and withdraw from a majority that denies the authority of Christ, can be measured only by the obligations on the part of Christians to save the Church, of which they are members, from apostasy and ruin. The minority, therefore, must, in such circumstances, have the right, nay, more, it is their duty to withdraw.
At this point I insert a part of a series of articles, on this subject, from the pen of Elder A. C. Daytón. Let the reader ponder them well. After his introduction, he says:

**HAD WE THE RIGHT TO DO IT?**

**NO. 1.**

It is granted, then, that the charge was "irregularly and wickedly brought," and unlawfully and sinfully entertained. Whether this was so or not, I need not now stop to inquire. Professor Mell says a Church has the right to entertain a charge thus "irregularly and wickedly brought before her." And thus supposes she has the right "wickedly" to go on with the trial thus "wickedly" begun; and if she has the right "wickedly" to begin and wickedly to go on with it, she must have a right "wickedly" to enforce the wicked decision, in which such a wicked beginning is almost sure to end. I do not believe that any Church of Christ has any right to begin such wickedness, or continue such wickedness, or complete such wickedness. And I believe that the Lord has, in his system of government for his kingdom, made ample provision for the safety of his people against any such wicked, and tyrannical, and unlawful proceeding.

Let me try once more if I can make it plain.

The instructions of Christ to his people to withdraw from those who cause divisions, and from those who are guilty of other offenses are given not merely to majorities, but to ministers, and even to individual Christians. It is the solemn and bounden duty of every Church-member, just as much as of all Church-members, to obey these injunctions. Each must search the Scriptures for himself,
and decide for himself, and act for himself as one accountable to God. No one may do a wicked thing as a Church-member any more than as a man. If a majority of my neighbors turn thieves, or, like the Mormons, become polygamists, this does not justify me in following their example, or silently acquiescing in their wickedness. I must do right, though all the rest do wrong. If this rule holds good in the world, much more in the Church. Though every other member determines to do a wicked thing, I may not do it, on the peril of my soul. I may not be partaker of their evil deed. I must resist it. If I can't make my resistance effective, I must, at least, disown it and those who engage in it. This is as much my duty, when the majority goes wrong, as it is their duty to disown me and my deed, when I go wrong. If this is not so, the majority is more than my master; it is my infallible Pope, and Christ has commanded me to submit to it my conscience, and obey its dictates without inquiry. If majorities can never err—if majorities are always the true exponents of the will of God—then I must always quietly submit; but our argument supposes that they have proceeded irregularly—that is, unlawfully and wickedly—and whatever Professor Mell may teach, it is certain that the word of God has never taught that Christ's people have the right wickedly to set aside his laws.

But now, if a majority has unlawfully and wickedly determined to go on with a charge which had been unlawfully and wickedly brought before the Church, what is the remedy? Is there any power on earth which can prevent the commission of the wicked deed? Let us see. Every Church of Christ is just as independent of every other Church as though it stood alone in the whole wide world. Every Church is built upon the Jerusalem model. That was once the only Church; and whatever authority and immunities that Church, or the members of it, had, every
Church and its members have now. This is self-evident, unless it can be made to appear that Christ gave to other Churches, when they should be organized, some control over that Jerusalem Church, or gave it some control over the others. If he did, no one was independent. If he did not, every one is equally independent, and stands as if it were alone in regard to its own rights and those of its members.

It is a constitutional body, organized upon a specific plan, and only for a specific purpose. IT IS TO EXECUTE THE LAWS WHICH CHRIST, AS KING, HAS GIVEN FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF HIS KINGDOM. It has a right to execute Christ's laws; it has no right to violate them.

These laws relate mainly to two great objects.

1. The extension of the kingdom by the preparation and reception of new members.

2. The preservation of its unity and purity by the exclusion of those who do not conform to the oneness of faith, or the holiness of life which those laws require.

Now let us suppose that in the Church at Jerusalem, before there was any other, a majority had decided that faith and baptism were not sufficient qualifications for membership, but that circumcision must be added. The minority protests, and falls back upon the law of Christ, and votes to receive the uncircumcised, and begs the majority not to make terms of membership which Christ had not made. The majority persists. The minority protests; and appealing to Christ, as King, declare non-fellowship with the majority, and say to the uncircumcised applicants, Come to us, we will receive you. Christ's Church was organized to execute HIS LAWS. We dare not make new terms of membership. Our brethren in the majority have done so, and we disown them as the executive of his laws, and claim for ourselves that we are such.
Or suppose that the majority had determined to dispense with baptism, and had substituted sprinkling and marking with the sign of the cross in place of immersion in water, which sets aside the law, for the execution of which the Church was constituted?

One of two things is certain. Either the minority must be regarded as the Church, or it must be admitted that Christ has no Church at all. For that body which makes new terms of membership which Christ did not ordain, or dispenses with the old ones which he did ordain, is not HIS Church; that is, the executive of HIS laws. It is the executive of its own whims, or the traducers of men. None of our brethren would recognize such a body as a true Church of Christ, and its members as true Church members, equally with themselves entitled to all the privileges of the kingdom of Christ. And why? Simply because they rejected the laws of Christ in regard to the reception of members.

It appears, therefore, that the only thing the minority could do in case any Church was the only Church in the world, or in its part of the world, and should set aside the law of Christ in regard to the reception of members, would be to withdraw from it, disown its unlawful proceedings, and go on for itself as the Church to execute the law. If a minority has the right to do this when it stands alone, it has equal right to do it when surrounded by other Churches; or else a Church thus surrounded is not as independent of other Churches as though they did not exist. But we have seen that it is thus independent.

And now, if a minority may do this, and, under certain supposable circumstances, must do this, or the Church lose its existence, when the majority violates or sets aside the law of Christ in regard to the reception of members, those which were intended for the extension of the kingdom, the
same rule must hold good in regard to those laws which relate to the preservation of the kingdom—or, in other words, to its discipline. The Church is the same body acting under the same authority, and bound by the same constitution in the one case as in the other.

No. II.

In my last I proved that each Church is as independent of every other Church as though it was the only Church in the world, or the country where it exists. And if so, that it has, and its members have, the right to do whatever they might do or must do if it stood thus alone.

Then I showed that if the majority of a Church standing thus alone should set aside the law of Christ instead of enforcing it in regard to the reception of members, there would be no other way to preserve the existence of the Church but for the minority to obey those laws, and also those other laws which require them to withdraw themselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not according to the teachings of God's word, and which are just as much binding on minorities as on majorities.

But if a minority in any supposable case must thus or may thus reject the majority, and itself go on and receive members as the executive of the laws of Christ, intended for the extension of the kingdom, or those laws which relate to the reception of members, which tell who may and who may not be received, and by what ceremony they shall come in, it is certain they must or may, with equal propriety, withdraw from or disown the majority when it sets aside or violates the laws designed to guard the unity and purity of the kingdom, or which dare tell what persons must be excluded, and how it must be done. There is no conceivable reason why a majority should have any more right to set aside the law in the exclusion than in the reception of members, or why the minority holding the true
faith and order of the Gospel must not or may not withdraw from or disown them for doing so.

Our question is one, not as to what may be expedient, but of abstract right. We desire to ascertain the relative rights of majorities and minorities in any Church of Christ—and for this purpose we suppose it to be the only Church in the world. It would then, of course, have all the authority that any Church could ever have, and its majority as much as any majority could ever have under similar circumstances. If a minority is ever bound to submit to the majority, right or wrong, it would be in such a case. If the illegal, and therefore unauthorized act of a majority is ever binding on all, it is in such a case. But even in such a case, I showed that if the majority should dispense with the laws of Christ and set up new rules for the reception of members into the visible kingdom, it would be not only the privilege but the duty of the minority to withdraw from them, disfellowship their work, and themselves go on as the true executive of Christ to receive members according to law. By any other rule those who should substitute sprinkling for baptism, or dispense with faith, and receive babes instead of believers, would be the true Church if they were the majority, and the minority who should insist on a strict compliance with the law of Christ, and be cast out for doing so, would be not only no Church but no Church-members, and incapable of becoming Church-members, until the majority should repent of its wicked rejection of the laws of Christ, and do its first works. They lose their membership, not for any sin of theirs, but for the sin of the majority. This cannot be. Common sense and common justice forbid it, even if the word of God were silent.

But now if the minority may, and under certain circumstances must, either be unfaithful to the law of Christ and permit his Church to be destroyed, or else disown and
withdraw from the sinful majority, it surely has the right
thus to withdraw. If it has the right to withdraw when
the majority violates the laws which Christ has given for
the guidance of a Church in the reception of members, then
it has equal right to withdraw when the majority violates
the law of Christ in regard to retention of members. Let
me illustrate. Here is a Church standing alone. It is in
its own region, or, if you please, in the whole world, the
sole executive of the laws of Christ.

A talented, and plausible, and eloquent minister becomes
unsound in the faith. He persuades them that baptism is
for the actual remission of sins and that unconverted men
are not to be exhorted to pray, but to reform and be bap-
tized unto salvation. A good and faithful old deacon com-
plains, and insists that this is false doctrine. A large
number of brethren agree with him. They request the
minister not to preach such soul-destroying heresy. He
knows his strength. He has a majority. The faithful
cannot exclude him. His followers would outvote them
two to one. The deacon calls upon the Church to take
such order as will secure the faithful preaching of God’s
word. The majority refuses. It is satisfied to go on as it
is going. What can the minority do? It must do one of
two things, either obey the law of the Lord requiring it to
reject heretics, and those who depart from the faith, or it
must, if it protests and disowns the doctrine, be itself re-
jected as a disturber of the peace of the Church. If the
majority is the Church of Christ, then Christ’s Church has
gone over to the Reformers. If the Church has not gone
over, then the minority is the Church of Christ, and as
such not only has the right, but is bound to withdraw from
and disown the majority, and do whatever else is needful
and right to preserve the purity and unity of the doctrine
of Christ.

When this very thing substantially occurred in the city
of Nashville some years ago, under the pastorate of Mr. Fall, there was no question among Baptists as to whether the faithful little minority, then not more, perhaps, than one to twenty, had the right to withdraw, or as to whether it was their duty to disown the majority as a true Church of Christ. If the Church in Nashville had been the only Baptist Church in the world, either the little minority was the Church, or else there would have been no Church. It was not only the right but the duty—the solemn and bounden duty—of the minority, as the representatives of Christ, as those to whom he had given charge to preserve the purity of the doctrine, the soundness of faith in his kingdom, to disfellowship Mr. Fall and his majority; nor did they lose their Church-membership by doing so, nor could they lose it by any act of exclusion which Mr. Fall and his majority might have passed upon them for so doing. Why? Because the majority had departed from the faith of the Gospel, and refused to execute the laws of Christ given for the preservation of the purity of faith and doctrine. If the majority excluded the others for retaining the truth and attempting to secure the execution of these laws of Christ, their act was not only null and void, but it was an act of treason and rebellion against Christ, by which they vainly endeavored to cast out of his kingdom his own faithful subjects, for no other offense than for an earnest attempt to secure the purity of his Churches.

I do not think that any of our brethren will deny that the minority, in such a case, must do, or at least may do, as the faithful brethren of the old First Nashville Church are supposed above to have done.

It follows that if a majority shall go into heresy, and refuse to silence or reject those who teach it, the minority must withdraw and disown them, and may go on to perform the duties and enjoy the privileges of a Church, just as truly as if they had been the majority. Why?
Because the majority departed from the law of Christ by retaining heretics.

It seems, therefore, that if a majority shall depart plainly and persistently from the law of Christ, either in the reception of members, or in the retention of members, it is not only the privilege but the duty of the minority to disown and withdraw from them, unless it can induce them to repent and do their first works. Nor is a minority out of the Church of Christ when it has so withdrawn. It does not lose its Church-membership by the withdrawal, nor can it be deprived of it by any subsequent act of exclusion by the majority. If it were otherwise, then those who forsake Christ, and dishonor his word, and reject his truth, may rightfully exclude from his Churches, and deprive of all the privileges of Church-membership, those whose only crime was opposition to their wickedness, and having excluded all the true people of Christ, would still be the Church, while those who held the truth were given over to Satan and made as heathen men and publicans.

But now, if a majority may be, and in some supposable cases must be, rejected and disfellowshiped by the minority, because it sets aside the law of Christ in regard to the reception and the retention of members, is there any reason why it should not, or why it must not be so, when it sets aside the law of Christ in regard to the exclusion of members. Has the majority any more right to exclude a man in open violation of the law of Christ, than it has to receive one without baptism, or retain a heretic? If so, where does it obtain the right? In all its official acts the Church acts only as the executive of the laws of Christ. It has no right to make a new law, or dispense with an old one. It must do just what Christ says, and only what Christ says. If it may not receive babes or seekers when Christ says believers, no more may it exclude those who are not condemned by the law. If it may not dispense
with the law in the mode of receiving them, no more may it dispense with the law in the mode of trial and exclusion. If a majority does, or determines to do so, the minority has the same duty to perform as in the other cases, where it officially ceases to be the executive of the laws of Christ and becomes the instrument of men.

But how can this be reconciled with the fact that Christ has given to every Church the right not only to execute the laws, but to interpret them, and made it the duty of the Church to enforce them, not as strangers or outsiders, but as it may understand them? We will see in a future number.

**NO. III.**

In my former numbers I have shown that every official act of a Church must be done as the executive of the laws of Christ. And that if a majority of it should dispense with or violate those laws in the reception of members, the minority would be bound to withdraw from and disown it. So if the majority, even of twenty to one, should determine to retain members unsound in faith, or guilty of open and notorious wickedness, it is manifest the minority must be partakers of its evil deed, or else withdraw and disfellowship the majority. Nor would the members, thus withdrawing, lose their Church-membership by doing so, nor could they be deprived of it by a subsequent act excluding them for withdrawing or opposing the wicked acts or doctrines of the majority before they withdrew.

So far as the reception and retention of members is concerned, I do not think my positions have ever been seriously contested among Baptists. I have never heard of a Baptist Church that would contend, or even admit, that where the majority should determine to set aside the law and receive non-professing or unbaptized persons to mem-
bership, seekers or infants, and the minority should abide by the law and withdraw and disfellowship the others, declaring that they, as observers of the law, were the Church. I say, I have never heard of any Baptist Church in any age or any country of the whole world that would contend or admit that the majority was the Church, simply because it was the majority, and the minority the faction, simply because it was the minority. There is, to say the least, the very strongest historical probability that our Baptist Churches have been propagated only or mainly through such minorities, which either withdrew or were excluded, or who first withdrew and then were not only excluded, but anathematized by the majorities. If the motion had been made to receive a little infant by baptism into the First Baptist Church, and a majority had voted for it, and a minority however small, had protested and entreated them not to do this great wickedness and sin against God, by setting aside the requirement of his law in regard to the reception of members; and when the majority would not yield, had declared it would have no fellowship with the deed nor with those who engaged in it, and had withdrawn and claimed to be the Church which had been the First Baptist Church of Nashville, there would have been no question as to the propriety of its course. Yet it could be justified only on one ground, and that is, that the majority had determined to violate the law of Christ in regard to the character of persons to be received into his kingdom.

Well, suppose the motion had been to receive a person by sprinkling, instead of immersion. No question would have been raised as to the right or duty of the minority. Every Baptist in all the world will say they were bound to disfellowship the majority and continue the Baptist Church in Nashville. No one would have dreamed of imagining that they lost their Church-membership by their
declaration of non-fellowship, or by any act of exclusion that the sprinkling majority might pass. So that they must either be restored by the sprinklers, or go and obtain membership in some other Baptist Church. Yet there would have been no ground on which to justify the minority or regard them as Church-members still, only this one, viz.: that the majority had determined to set aside the law of Christ in regard to the manner of receiving a person into his kingdom and Church.

I say, therefore, that it is an established and indisputable fact that no Baptist would deny, that it was not only the right, but the DUTY of the minority to claim to be the Church and act as the Church, and expect to be recognized as the very Baptist Church of which it had formerly been a part, if the majority should violate the laws of Christ in regard to the extension of the kingdom by the unlawful reception of members.

And just so in regard to the retention of members. Suppose a Baptist minister preaches infant baptism, or that sprinkling is valid baptism. A motion is made to bring him to trial. He has in the Church a large number of relatives and personal friends, and is a popular and influential preacher. A majority vote to permit him to go on unrebuked, and thus give the sanction of the Church to his errors. The minority withdraw, and claim to be the Church. Is there a Baptist in all the land, who would call in question either their right or their duty to do it? Yet they could have no other plea but that the majority had refused to execute the law of Christ by retaining one that should have been excluded. Suppose the preacher had stolen a horse, and had been convicted of the crime, the majority determined not to exclude him. Such a thing might be. Would such a majority be the Church of Christ and the minority who contended for the exclusion of the law, and disowned them, would they, by doing so, lose their
membership—or could it be taken away by any act of the sin-approving majority? No Baptist would raise a question about it. We would all agree that if the majority will not execute the law of Christ in regard to the reception or the retention of members, the minority not only may, but must, disown the majority, and continue the Church in its purity.

Well, if this is so in regard to the reception and retaining of members, I ask again, why is it not so in regard to the exclusion or expulsion of a member? Is not the Church in this as much as the other the simple executive of the law of Christ? Is she not bound in regard to the person to be cast out, and the mode of doing it, to observe the law just as much as in regard to the person to be taken in? Who has found the chapter and verse which authorizes a departure from the rule in one cause more than the other? By what rule of logic or common sense can we discover the difference? Let any man show it. I have tried hard to discover it. But I cannot even imagine any conceivable reason why a majority may set aside or override, dispense with, change, or violate a law of Christ in the process of casting a member out, any more than in taking him in. I can think of some good reasons why she should be even more careful, if possible, to observe not only the very letter, but the most kindly spirit of the law. For he who is once in is her own child, and the brother of all her members, and has rights and privileges expressly guaranteed to him by that law, and, therefore, grievous personal injury may be done in addition to the general evil of violating the law.

But now, if a Church may no more dispense with or violate the slightest provision of the law in excluding than she may in receiving a member, and if its violation by a majority in the reception of a member justifies and sometimes requires of the minority that they withdraw from and disfellowship the majority, it follows, of necessity, that
a similar violation of the law in excluding justifies a sim
ilar course on the part of the minority.

Try this by the strictest reason. Test it by the most
rigid logic. See if there be in it any fallacy, any error.
I can see none.

I have proved that if a majority violates the law in the
reception of members, the minority may, and sometimes
must, in order to control the pure Church, cast off the
majority and go on themselves to execute the law. I have
proved the same thing in regard to the retention of mem-
ers.

I have proved also, that the same rule must govern the
Churches in the exclusion as in the reception of members.
And hence, since that the right and duty of the minority
is the same when the law is violated in the exclusion as
when it is violated in the reception or retention, the rela-
tive rights and duties of minorities in a Church of Christ
are the same in regard to the reception, the retention, or
the expulsion of members.

If a majority violates the plain law of Christ in the re-
ception or retention of members, it is the right and duty
of the minority to disown it and continue the pure Church
in its own body.

This is conceded, as has been the common practice of
Baptists in all ages; and now it follows of necessity, that
if a majority violates the plain law of Christ in regard to
the trial and exclusion of a member, it is equally the
privilege and duty of the minority to disown the majority
as in the other cases, and to continue the Church in its
own body.

The only question, therefore, which can arise in regard
to those forty brethren who compose in part what is now
called the Spring Street Church, and who were the mi-
nority in the First Baptist Church of Nashville, is, whether
the majority of that First Church had determined to vio-
late the law of Christ? That question rests again on this, whether the offenses charged were, by Matt xviii, personal offenses, and whether the object of the majority was to save a brother and purify the Church, or to destroy one who was the object of envy and hatred to certain persons in their number? In one case the letter, and in the other the object and spirit of the law was set aside.

I will not pause to discuss this question. The argument of my brother, to which I referred in the beginning of these articles, does not require it. It took for granted that the law was violated, both in the spirit and the letter, but contended that the minority had no duty but to protest and then submit, and that by disfellowshipping the majority act and withdrawing we lost our Church-membership, or else we lost it by the confessedly-wicked and unlawful act of exclusion which followed.

We who knew all the facts and saw the spirit with which the evil deed was begun, felt sure that the law was to be violated in both the spirit and the letter of it. We waited till an earnest protest had been presented and received. We then asked, in the name of Christ, that the Church would regard the law. A majority voted that it would not. It consequently became not only our privilege but our duty, our solemn and our Bible duty, which we could not set aside, and dared not neglect or refuse to perform, to declare our non-fellowship, and our intention for ourselves to see that the laws of Christ were executed as truly and faithfully in regard to the casting out of a brother, as all Baptists expect them to be in the reception of a stranger.

We may have been mistaken in regard to the requirements of the law, but there is no room for mistake in regard to what was our right and duty, if the law was really violated, as our dear brother said he firmly believed it to have been.

Was there no other course which we might have adopted?
I have shown, in previous numbers, that on the supposition that the majority had determined to violate the law of Christ, and could not be reclaimed, it was the right and the duty of the minority to withdraw and disfellowship the deed and those who should engage in it.

If this had been the only Church, they must, having done this, go on by themselves to perform the duties and claim the rights which belonged to the Church. They would have none but Christ to whom they could tell their trouble, and none but him to whom to look for counsel or support. They must, as his people, continue to execute the duties of a Church. Only then could there be continued upon the earth a true executive of his laws.

But the First Church in Nashville did not stand alone. There were other Churches all around us—another in the city. And some of our brethren have thought that instead of acting as though there had been no other, we should have gone to some other Church and asked for membership there.

It has been said that this has been the custom in similar cases. Whether it has or not we need not stop to inquire. The custom has been otherwise when a majority has violated the laws in regard to the reception of members, and if it has been different when the laws relating to trial and exclusion have been violated, I see no reason why it should. And a custom not founded in reason nor required by Scripture may be more honored in the breach than the observance of it.

It is true that every other Church was with this a co-executive of the laws of and equally with it bound to see those laws executed; and, so far as lay within its constitutional limits, bound to do all in its power to pre-
vent or remedy the mischief which may have been done or attempted by the unlawful and wicked act of the majority. It is true also that as an independent body having exclusive control over its own conduct, subject only to the law of Christ, it was at perfect liberty, if it regarded us as true and faithful men worthy of membership in its body, to receive us, either with or without having consulted with other Churches. (I speak not of what is expedient, but of the abstract right of a Church.)

It is true, furthermore, that when we declared non-fellowship with the majority, we might have said to some other Church, We have fellowship with you, and desire membership in your body. This was proposed by some of our number. There was a time I thought it would be best. But after careful study of the Scriptures in regard to this whole subject, and earnest prayer to God for guidance, it was determined in a meeting for prayer and mutual consultation, that we should not adopt this course; and the following are some of the reasons why I now believe that we did well and wisely in acting as we did:

1. To have united with another Church for the purpose suggested by my much-loved brother, in the conversation more than once alluded to, would have been to sacrifice a great and vital principle. His suggestion was, that we should have united with some other Church to obtain Church-membership, in order that we might at once withdraw and organize a new Church.

Now, we are reasoning upon the supposition, or rather the admission, that the action of the majority was in violation of the law of Christ. And I have proved that an official action of a Church to be valid must be in execution of the law of Christ. If it dispenses with the law, or violates the law, it is null and void. In contending for the observance of the law, we were but performing our sworn duty as Church-members. We could not forfeit our
membership by doing our duty, or by doing this duty, any more than any other. We might as well have forfeited it by partaking of the Lord's Supper, or offering a prayer in a meeting of the Church for prayer. But to have gone to another Church to be restored to membership would have been to admit that the act of a majority excluding us for doing our duty was a lawful and valid act, and that we had lost membership—or, rather, that we ourselves resigned or abandoned our membership by protesting and declaring non-fellowship with the evil deed of the majority. This we had not done. We had never lost our Church-membership any more than if the act of the majority had been the baptism of an infant or the adoption of a Church session to govern them, or had gone over to the faith of Alexander Campbell, or by any other official act had violated the law of Christ, and we had withdrawn rather than sanction or partake of the wickedness. It is admitted that if the violation of law had been in the reception or retention of members, as before shown, we would not have lost our membership; and, as we have shown, the same rule applies to the violation of law in the trial and exclusion of members. We did not dare, therefore, to admit, and thought best not even to seem to admit, that we had ceased to be Church-members.

If we had asked for membership in another body it would have been not as persons excluded, but as those who had never forfeited our claim to membership, because we had done only what was our bounden duty, and which we must have been unworthy of membership had we not done.

2. Another reason why we thought best to stand alone was that we did not desire to involve others in our difficulties. We have been accused of striving to distract the denomination and disturb the peace of the Churches. Those who make the accusation must either be very ignorant of the facts, or reckless of the truth.
Our great desire was to avoid such distraction; and we were unwilling that even a single Church should be directly involved with us. We knew that on the part of our oppressors there was power. We knew there was intellect and energy, and a stern determination to crush those whom they had endeavored to ruin. If they succeeded while we stood alone, we alone would fall. If any Church were with us, it must fall with us. We were sure of the justice of our cause, and were willing to stand upon the truth, and commit our way to God.

3. We wished to occupy no doubtful position before our brethren. The law of Christ either did or did not require a certain course to be adopted by the majority. We believed that it did require it. We insisted that it should be obeyed. This was our sin or else it was our duty. On this we must stand or fall, and we thought best to stand or fall together. If we had not continued the Church of which we had been members, some would have gone perhaps to the Cherry Street Church, some to Mill Creek, some to other places, and, it may be, some would have gone nowhere. Some Churches might have received and some rejected. We would have ceased to exist as a body, and, as a body, could offer no forcible and effective testimony for the law of Christ. In regard to some of us, at least, it might have been claimed that even the "irregular," that is unlawful and "wicked" act of a tyrannical majority acting under the influence of a vicious spirit, seeking to destroy and not to save, and in confessed violation of the law of Christ, was yet a valid act, and must be so regarded by all the Churches. If it be true that a majority, though it may not dispense with, or change, or violate the law of Christ in the reception of a stranger, may do it in the exclusion of a brother, it is time the Church and the world was acquainted with the fact. If it is true that a minority that insists upon the observance
of the letter and the spirit of the law in the trial and exclusion of members, does by that act forfeit its Church membership, it is time that all who love the law shall know on what conditions they may continue members, and be careful henceforth not to do right until they have inquired whether the majority will permit it.

If it be true that the majority, in the language of Professor Mell, indorsed, as I suppose, by the Southern Baptist Publication Society, "has the right to entertain charges irregularly and wickedly brought against a brother,"* it is time all people knew it, so that before union with a Church of Christ, each one may be aware, that by doing so, he places his character and peace of mind at the disposal of any wicked member who may choose to bring a wicked charge, not according to Christ's law, but without law, and against law, not for a good and holy purpose, but wickedly and for wicked ends.

If there was need for any to become a sacrifice for the exhibition of that wonderful truth, the bringing to light this great discovery in regard to authority of majorities, it was perhaps as well for us as them to be the victims. Our position is such as to attract, perhaps, as general attention as could have been expected of any, and the testimony will be more effective when we all fall together. But if, on the other hand, a Church has no right to entertain charges unlawfully and "wickedly" brought, and no right to set aside, or change, or violate the law of Christ in the trial or exclusion of a brother any more than in the reception of a stranger, it is time the Churches knew it; and we have been, in the providence of God, called to suffer for the exhibition and illustration of this great truth. But is this not dangerous doctrine?

* I quote from memory.
IS OUR EXAMPLE DANGEROUS?

NO. V.

That same good brother to whom we have so often alluded, thought it was a dangerous precedent which had been set by the minority of the First Church. He said, in substance, that if this were recognized as the lawful course, we should have a split in the Church on almost every case of discipline. That the friends of the excluded would be almost sure to say that the law of Christ had been violated, and would therefore withdraw, and set up for themselves.

In regard to this, I have to say: That I am not responsible for consequences which flow from a recognition of any great principle. They may seem to us to be evil, and yet may be good. It has been proved by Pedobaptists so as no Baptist can logically resist the conclusion, that if immersion only is Christian baptism, Baptist Churches are the only Churches of Christ, and Baptist ministers the only authorized ministers, and Baptist Church-members the only Church-members. They urge us to look at these fearful consequences, and assure us that the premise which drives to such a terrible conclusion, cannot be true, and, therefore, immersion cannot be the only baptism. They can make and have made the same argument in regard to infant baptism. But an intelligent and thinking Baptist is not moved by these fearful consequences. He goes to his Bible and examines again to see what God says, and when he finds it to read in the original, "He that believeth and is immersed," he leaves God to take care of the consequences, and sits down quietly on the word.

So in this matter. If God has given laws to his Churches they are binding, not on the soulless corporation, but on each individual member of it. Each man is bound for himself to do what he can to secure the execution of those
laws. In any case of doubt, he must yield to better informed and larger number among his brethren, but to say that he must always sanction the act or submit to the act of the majority, is simply to take away his duty to obey Christ, and put on him the duty to obey the majority. The law which commands us to cast out or reject a heretic, is binding on a minority as much as on a majority. The law requiring to withdraw from those guilty of certain offenses, is as much binding on every member as on all the members, or else it follows that there is no such thing as individual conscience or individual responsibility in a Church of Christ. All personal obligation is lost in the will of the majority. But this is an absurdity into which no Baptist will run. It follows, therefore, that when the majority officially sets aside or violates the law of Christ, and thus becomes guilty of producing divisions and wrongs, the minority is bound to withdraw from it, and whatever evil may result from it is to be charged upon the law, not on those who execute it.

But what is the evil feared in this case? It is not that where the law has actually and notoriously been set aside by the majority, a division will take place, but that where the law has been really enforced, some may claim that it was violated, and so without law and against law resist the majority. If this should occur, they forfeit their membership, and are lawfully excluded. If they claim to be the Church, their claim is rebellious and treasonable. The true Churches of Christ who regard his law will disown them, and refuse to recognize them as a Church, or their members as Church-members. They will thus stand alone till they repent or die out. The evil is not so great after all. It simply puts out of a Church some members who would not submit to a majority enforcing the laws of Christ, and who therefore ought not to be in.

Here is the whole thing in a nutshell. A Church is the
executive of the laws of Christ. It is to enforce or execute, not violate those laws in its official action. The part of the Church which enforces, or strives to enforce it, is the true executive of Christ, and, therefore, the Church. The part that violates, or determines to violate those laws, is rebellious, and when separated from others, is not the Church.

But is not the majority in every case to judge, both of the law and the facts, and to decide according to its own convictions of right? Has not Christ intrusted the power in the hands of the majority, and while he holds it responsible for its exercise, left the minority or the oppressed without a remedy?

I answer, that he has no more done this in regard to the exercise of discipline, that is to say, in the exclusion of a member, than he has in the reception of a member. Now if the majority should claim that Christ has made it sole judge of the law and the facts, and authorized it to receive whom it saw fit, yet should, in the exercise of that authority, dispense with or violate the law, receive an infant or seeker or other known non-professor of faith, or receive him by sprinkling or by sign of the Cross, or by the laying on of hands instead of baptism, those who could not sanction the violation of the law must withdraw, and when they come out they bring their Church-membership and Church authority with them. If this is not so, the Churches of Christ were once Baptist Churches—but when the majority adopted infant baptism and sprinkling they became Pedobaptist, for the authority and Church-membership continued with the majority. But now, if the majority has no more authority to violate the law in excluding than in receiving, then, in case of such violation of the law, the authority rests in the minority, as in the other case. Is not this plain?

If the minority mistakes the law and the facts, it is rightly excluded. If not, the majority is the faction. All turns upon this one point.

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But who is to decide. If there was but one Church in the world, the appeal could be to Christ alone. As there are others, the appeal is, of necessity, to each of them, and can be made only by leaving them to decide which they will recognize as the Church, as the coexecutive with themselves of the laws of Christ: in other words, the official acts of which they will recognize as valid, and the members of which they will recognize as Church-members equally with their own members. This is what we mean, and all we mean, by an appeal to Christ and our brethren. If the Church at Murfreesboro' should be persuaded by Elder Pendleton to violate the law, as above stated, in the reception of a member without profession of faith or baptism, Deacon Fletcher and a few others would be sure to protest and withdraw, and though Elder Pendleton and his majority should fifty times declare them excluded, and anathemize them as heathen men and publicans, they would be just as good men, just as good Baptists, and just as truly members of the Murfreesboro' Baptist Church as they are now, and every Baptist Church in Tennessee would so regard them. And, so if he should persuade them to violate the laws of Christ in excluding a member, those who saw and knew that it was done, would take the same course with the same result.

The difference is that the application of the law of trial and exclusion is not so easily and certainly understood. There may be room for doubt, and therefore, great care must be exercised: 1st, by the opposing minority, and then by the approving or disapproving Churches. But this need of caution does not affect the principle. The right is somewhere, though it may not be so easily seen, and it must be looked for, and recognized when found, just as truly as if, as in the other case, it lay upon the surface. I am now done with this argument. I should not have it here and now, but for the information that some brethren held aloof from
our Sabbath-school enterprise, on the ground that we had lost our Church-membership, and had failed to unite with another Church to get it restored. I might have discussed the principles involved without allusion to ourselves, but it would have been believed that they were intended to apply, and so they were, and hence I thought best to make the application as I went along.

I am not conscious of any fallacy in the reasoning or any error in regard to the facts. I invite the closest scrutiny of the best thinkers in the denomination. I call the attention especially of my good brother who suggested the doubts. He is one of the best reasoners we have, and as his previous opinions have differed from mine, he will be stimulated to find the error, if it exists. If he will discuss the matter publicly, we will easily agree upon the terms, for we both seek the truth. If he prefers to write me privately the points of difficulty or doubt, I will try to reform my argument or change my opinions, before I prepare them for publication in a permanent form.

XVI. Has a worthy member, who has been "irregularly" and "wickedly" accused, for the purpose of expelling and crushing him, the right to withdraw without trial?

This question has excited no little discussion and feeling, but, like all such questions, there is a right and a wrong side to it. Without elaborating to too great a length, I affirm that he has the right to withdraw—to refuse to be tried.

1. The principles established in the fourteenth
and fifteenth sections give him this right. If it is right for a minority to withdraw from the majority when the latter show a determination to disregard the authority of Christ, it is a right which belongs to them, not as a minority, but as INDIVIDUALS. The right of one to withdraw does not depend upon the desire of another to withdraw; but the right is an individual, personal, absolute right. If the minority, supposing it to consist of ten members, has the right to withdraw, if it consisted of but nine, eight, four, or two, no one will deny them the same right to withdraw. Now, if this be so, who will doubt that one may do the same thing? He may do it, unless right depends upon numbers! It is not only his right but his duty to withdraw. This follows from the principle that it is the duty of the minority, consisting of any number greater than one, to withdraw.

2. The falsely accused and slandered member ought to withdraw, in such circumstances, because the accusers have no right to "wickedly" arraign and try him. Christ has established his law, in accordance with which offenders are to be tried and excluded; but to suppose that he has conferred the right on a Church to try and exclude
members “wickedly” is blasphemy!! If Christ has never conferred this right, it must be a right inherent in the Church, if the Church has such a right. But if the Church has any such inherent right, Christ can not be her only Sovereign and Lawgiver. He may be partly Sovereign and partly not. In some matters he might give laws; but in others the Church, from her inherent right, excludes his authority! But this is neither Bible nor Baptist doctrine. Let the Church of Rome and her progeny advocate it. But if a Church has no right to try and exclude a member “wickedly,” then I contend—

3. That it would be sinful in the accused to submit to trial. Why so? Because:

1st. Submission to trial implies the right to try. But has his Church the right to try him thus? We have seen that she has no such right. If, then, the Church has no such right, and if submission to trial implies the right to try, it follows that the member thus arraigned ought not to submit himself to trial, unless he ought to do that which bears upon its very face a FALSEHOOD. If any man will contend that the member thus accused ought to act out a falsehood, such a man ought to
be reasoned with (if indeed he should be reasoned with at all) on the first and simplest principles of morality.

2d. If the said accused member ought to submit to a wicked trial, he ought also to submit to the wicked consequences of that trial. In this case, however wicked the act of exclusion, he would have no right to complain! He conceded to the Church the right to try him thus; and if she had the right to try him thus, she had the right to exclude him thus. If, again, she had the right to exclude him thus, the exclusion itself is right, yea, a righteous act!!! Of course, no one should complain at a righteous act. It would be sinful to do so. Even if the members voting the exclusion should have "conscientious scruples" at what they have done, they dare not question the righteousness of the act!!! Who does not see that this is no more nor less than reversing the entire order of the moral universe—that it makes right wrong and wrong right?

"But what should he do?" "Should he not answer to the charges, and show them to be false?" I answer: He should, after he finds that the Church has determined to proceed in violation
of the law of Christ, go away and let them alone. He should pay them no more attention than Christ did, when his wicked accusers falsely charged him with many grievous crimes. "And when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing."

This little volume will close with the following article, taken from the April and June numbers of the Southern Baptist Review, 1860, from the pen of Elder A. C. Dayton. The article is written in his usually lucid, logical, and happy style, and contains an elaborate discussion of some important principles contended for in my Review, and some other matters of interest besides.

Let no one fail to read it carefully, and weigh his positions well.

ASSOCIATIONS AND CHURCHES.

When Jesus Christ was upon the earth, he set up a visible kingdom, of which he became sole King and Law-giver.

This kingdom consists of all those who have come out from the world—made a credible profession of their faith in Christ, and taken the oath of allegiance to him in the ordinance of baptism.

To this kingdom he gave laws, the object of which was
to extend its bounds by the reception of new members, and to preserve the purity, and consequent unity, of the kingdom, and its subjects in faith and practice, by the exercise of discipline.

But laws are of no force, unless there is some power to carry them into execution.

The power which enforces and carries out laws made by another, is very properly called his executive.

When Christ ascended to heaven, he provided an executive for his kingdom of a very peculiar character.

He intrusted the execution of his laws, not to a king or bishop, not to councils or synods, not to conferences or general assemblies. But he ordained that such of the members of the kingdom, as could conveniently meet together, should form themselves into congregations or societies, in which each member should be the equal of every other; and that they should choose their own officers, and make whatever arrangements were needful to carry out his instructions. This society he calls his "Ekklesia," or assembly. "The assembly of Christ and God." In our version it is commonly, though improperly, called the Church.

To this assembly, Christ, as King, was pleased to delegate the power and authority to execute his laws. He gave it to this body and none else. He alone makes laws, and these assemblies alone have the authority, in his name, to execute them.

The Church, then, is the executive of the kingdom of Christ. The Church is to extend the kingdom by the reception of members, and to preserve its unity and purity by instructing and building them up in the faith, admonishing and reclaiming those who err, or by casting out those who show themselves utterly unworthy.

In regard to all this, however, her authority is delegated and limited by her instructions. She must use it only
for those objects, and only in that way which her King
has appointed. She is simply his agent, and like any
other agent, if she violates or departs from her posi-
tive and specific instructions, her act is invalid, null, and
void. It can not receive the sanction either of the King,
or of any loyal subject of the kingdom. She is supposed
to be the executive of his laws, and while she executes
them, she has his full authority. If she departs from
them, or acts in violation of them, she is not his executive,
and has no authority from him. Her claims to act in his
name are a wicked mockery; and her deed must be dis-
owned and disregarded, not only by the King himself, but
by all those who love the law, and desire to see it honored.

Let us illustrate this. Among the most important of all
the instructions given to the Church, are those which
relate to the extension of the kingdom by the reception of
new members; over this business she has exclusive con-
trol. No power on earth can say to her, you must receive,
or you must refuse to receive, this or that person. Whom
she will she accepts, and whom she will she refuses. But
though thus above all human law, she is “not without
law to Christ.” She must be governed strictly by her
instructions. If the King has said who may be received,
and who must not, she has no other duty or right but
simply to decide whether the applicant is of the desig-
nated character.

Her instructions require that he shall be a believer, and
not a little unconscious babe, and that he shall be received
by immersion, and not by sprinkling, or marking him with
the sign of the Cross.

Now what if she sets aside her Lord’s instructions, and
receives those who make no profession of faith—mere
“seekers” of salvation, or little puling babes, is her act
valid? Are all the members of the kingdom bound to
sanction it, and regard those thus received as true mem-
bers equally with themselves? Must every other Church in the kingdom regard and treat that "seeking" unbeliever, and that unconscious babe, as Church-members, because a Church had received them as such, and declares them to be members?

Not at all. She violates her instructions. The act is invalid. They are no more members than if they had not been received. She was not executing the law of Christ in that act, but she rejected and dishonored it. The act was one of rebellion or sedition. It has not the sanction of the King, and must not receive the sanction of any true subject of the King. Every other Church, and every Church-member in all the land, when the facts are known, is bound to regard the act as null and void. No one of them, if faithful to the King, will treat as members of the kingdom, those thus admitted, any more than if they had never been received.

Suppose a Church should see fit to dispense with the law in regard to the manner of reception, and substitute some other ceremony for baptism. No power on earth can compel a Church to baptize those whom she chooses to receive. She may sprinkle them, anoint them with oil, cause them to taste of salt and honey, or make over them the sign of the Cross. What if she thus receives a man, a true believer, every way worthy and well qualified for membership? Would he be a member? Or must she, not only in regard to the character admitted, but in the mode of admission, observe the law of her Lord?

There can be no question about this. Wherever the facts are known, every other Church and every Church-member would be bound to repudiate the unlawful act, and regard the man as no more a member than if he had never been received. He must not only have the needful qualifications, but be lawfully initiated, or else he is not within.
Am I not safe in saying that there is not a Baptist Church, or a Baptist Church-member, who would not repudiate and disown the act of a Church which should thus set aside the law of Christ in the reception of members? There is none who would not feel bound to disown the deed, and declare non-fellowship with the Church that did it. To regard such acts as valid, and accept such persons as members, would be treason.

Nor would the case be any way changed if the offending Church should plead that it was honest and sincere—that it had not erred intentionally, but had designed to carry out, and had carried out the laws of Christ as it understood them.

It might plead that Christ has made every Church independent, and constituted it the sole judge of the requirements of his law in regard to the reception of members. If, therefore, it thought best to receive these persons in the way they were received, and all other Churches were bound to regard the act, and treat them as Church-members, and that to refuse to do so would be to destroy the independence of the Churches, the other Churches would reply: You stood as we do to execute the laws which the King has made equally binding on us all; but instead of executing, you have set aside the law. Had your act been lawful, it would have been valid, and we must have given it our sanction, but we can not sanction treason and rebellion. We may not be partakers of your evil deeds.

But who made you Rulers or Judges over us? Is not every Church sole judge of its own duties? May we not receive whom we think best? and in that way which we think right?

No, you may receive those only who are by the law of Christ to be received, and you may receive them only in that way which that law has designated.
But are we not sole judge of what the law requires?

Not at all. Every other Church in all the land is bound to judge of the meaning of the law as well as you. And when you, in its opinion, have departed from the law, it is bound to disown and repudiate your act.

It can not, indeed, come to you and say you must cast out these persons, unlawfully received, but it can say, when it shall have occasion, that this was an unlawful deed. It can say, these persons, not having been admitted according to the laws of the kingdom, are not members of the kingdom, and we will never regard or treat them as such; and it can do more than this. It can say to you: "A Church of Christ is the executive of his laws. While you continued to execute those laws, we regarded you as a Church, and your members as Church-members; but now you have become the violator and rejecter of those laws, you are no longer their executive, and we, therefore, can no longer recognize you as one of his Churches. Henceforth we disown you and your works, until you shall have repented and returned to stand upon the law."

Every other Church, not only may, but must, so far as the facts are known to her, and she has any occasion to act upon them, treat the offender thus, for it is only thus that the purity and unity of the whole kingdom can be preserved. If any Church may set aside the laws which Christ has given for her official or Church action, and still claim the fellowship and co-operation of other Churches, then the official acts of every body which has once been a pure Church, must be recognized as lawful and valid to-day, no matter how far she has departed from the faith or the order of the Gospel. A Baptist Church may employ a Pedobaptist minister, receive infants or other unconverted and non-professing persons to membership, and yet, because it was a Church, it must still be se
regarded, its members as Church-members, and its official acts as valid Church acts.

We see, therefore, that when it shall please any Church to change or set aside, or violate the plain and specific laws of Christ in regard to the reception of members, it is not only the privilege, but the duty of all the other Churches, first, to regard her act as null and void, those thus received as though they had not been received, to treat them not as Church-members, but as strangers; second, to disown and withdraw Church-fellowship from the body which shall have thus unlawfully abused her power as a Church.

Thus far, I suppose, there are few if any Baptists in all the world who will disagree with me. What I have said is but an expression of what has in all countries, and in all ages, been the practice of true Baptist Churches. I am sure, at least, those Baptist Churches must be very rare which would continue to fellowship a sister Church, after it had received a little babe in violation of the law which requires believers; or administered sprinkling, in violation of the law which commands immersion.

But why? What reason can we give? There can be only this. She has, in her official acts, refused to be governed by the law of Christ.

We are now prepared to take another step in our argument. If Christ has given laws to his Churches in regard to the reception of members, he has given them equally in regard to the administration of discipline, or the trial and exclusion of members. A Church is just as much bound to regard his laws in this as in the other case. It may no more try and exclude a brother in violation of Christ's law than it may receive a stranger. If, therefore, the other Churches are bound to regard one as not a member who has been received in violation of law, they are equally bound to regard one as not excluded who has been cast
out in violation of law, and if they are bound to disfellowship the Church that receives as members those whom the law does not permit, or in a way the law forbids, are they not equally bound to disfellowship the Church that casts out those whom the law does not condemn, or by a process which the law forbids?

If they must disfellowship the body which receives members in violation of Christ's instructions, must they not disfellowship the body which excludes members in violation of those instructions?

A Church is no more independent of other Churches in the exercise of discipline, than in the reception of members.

As other Churches can not compel her to cast out those whom she has unlawfully received, no more can they compel her to take back into her bosom those she has unlawfully cast out. But as in the first case they can and must regard the unlawfully received as not received at all, so in the other case they may and must regard the unlawfully excluded as not excluded at all. The act, in both cases, is null and void. And, as in the first case, they must disown the offending Church for its official violation of the law it was bound to enforce, so in the other they must pursue the same course for the same cause.

There is no conceivable reason why the rule should not hold in regard to the trial and exclusion of members, as well as in regard to their reception. In one as much as the other, the Church acts by authority delegated to her by the King, and strictly limited by his instructions, and in one as much as the other it acts simply as the co-executive with every other Church of the laws of Christ. If it has the right to exclude whom it will, and all other Churches are bound to regard its acts as valid and binding, without regard to its lawfulness or justice, it is certain it has equal right to receive whom it will, without
regard to the law of Christ, and all other Churches are bound to regard the act as valid, and the person so received, though he be an infant or an atheist, as a Church-member, equally with their own. If it may dispense with the requirements of the law in regard to the mode of proceeding in the exclusion, it may do so in the reception; and so may substitute sprinkling for baptism. And because it is an independent Church, and has exclusive jurisdiction over the matter of receiving members to itself, no other Church may disavow the deed, or disown the Church which did it.

This is so plain as to be self-evident. It needs no proof. It follows, of necessity, from the simple fact that in one case, as much as the other, the Church acts as the independent executive, and yet the co-executive with every other Church of the laws of Christ.

There are, indeed, some reasons why the law in its letter and its spirit should be, if possible, more carefully regarded in the exclusion than the reception, and hence why the Churches should be more careful to disown and repudiate the unlawful act. The subject of exclusion is a brother. He has rights which the law was given to protect. He came in with the understanding that the law would be enforced. To depart from it is, therefore, not only rebellion against Christ, but a grievous personal wrong to the accused.

If the accused is a minister, or one largely known and greatly loved, or one who has been, and, if not unlawfully dealt by, may continue to be a very useful and successful worker in the kingdom, then a wrong done to him is felt by the whole kingdom. Not the members of his Church alone, but of all the Churches where he is known, will feel, and ought to feel, a very great interest in the result. The whole kingdom may be distracted by it. Every Church, therefore, is interested in seeing that the very
letter, and the whole loving spirit of the law, is most strictly regarded.

But if a Church receives a babe, or sprinkles a believer, no injury is done to the personal feelings of the received, and the mischief is not likely to extend beyond the one Church. Surely if there is any official act in which a Church should be held strictly to the law, it is that by which it tries and excludes a brother whom it received to love and cherish, with whom it entered into a solemn covenant to keep the law, and to whom its violation may work irretrievable injury.

But what if a Church disregards all this. What if she violates the law for the very purpose of working his ruin?

In all well regulated human governments there is some provision made for righting wrong, committed in violation of the laws by those who should enforce the laws.

If it were certain a Church could never err; if, as some seem to think, it is infallible, there would be no need of any such provision in the kingdom of Christ.

But sad experience has proved, in every age, that Church-members are fallible men. Churches have sometimes mistaken the law. Churches have become the tools of designing and wicked men. Churches have been under the impulse of prejudice or passion. They have sometimes retained the wicked and cast out the good. They have not only entertained charges unlawfully and wickedly brought, but they have unlawfully and wickedly consummated the wicked beginning in a more wicked ending.

They have done, and, therefore, may do, most fearful wrong. I do not say that Christ might not have left such wrong without a remedy had he so chosen, but I say he did not chose to do so. He did not leave such tyranny and injustice, committed in his name, and professedly by his authority, without a remedy. Of all governments on earth,
we might expect his to be the most carefully guarded. He who would not break the bruised reed, has surely not authorized the executive of his government on earth to trample on the rights of his own dear, loving, faithful children, and permitted them to be cast out of his kingdom, deprived of the privilege to observe his ordinances, or associate with his people, treated as heathen men and publicans, not for any sin, but for their very faithfulness to him and his laws, and that without any effective remedy. He may leave his dear people to suffer at the hands of the world, but does he leave them at the mercy of the evil passions of a Church acting in his name, and by authority from him?

Let us admit the doctrine recently contended for so earnestly, and see where it will drive us. That doctrine is—

1. That the majority is the Church in such a sense that the act of a majority is to be regarded as that of the Church.

2. That when one has been cast out unlawfully and wickedly, he is as truly cast out as if it had been lawfully and righteously done.

3. That all other Churches and Church-members are bound to sanction the wicked deed, and regard and treat the excluded as a heathen man and publican.

4. That no other Church has a right to receive such a one to membership, though he believes him to be every way worthy and well qualified. The apostles organized a Church at Rome. In the course of time that Church adopted serious errors in faith and practice. There were a few who held the faith once delivered to the saints, and obeyed the word which charged them to contend for it earnestly. This condemned the majority. They were accounted as disturbers of the peace of the Church. As they differed from the majority, they were accounted as heretics. The majority excluded and cursed them. The majority was the Church. It had the authority of Christ. Those cast out
were none but heathen men and publicans. They had no Church-membership, no right to remember the Lord in his holy Supper, as he commanded. They had no right to organize anew as a Church. No other Church has a right to receive them. They stand in the ranks of Satan, and must stand there till the wicked Church of Rome repents and calls them back. But she never repents, but goes on from bad to worse. This minority being out of the Church, has no ministry or ordinances, and no authority in the kingdom of Christ!

If they receive members, they receive them not into a Church of Christ, but into the synagogue of Satan; for to Satan the majority consigned them. The wicked body that excluded them is the Church of Christ, and those who desire to enter Christ's kingdom must apply to it.

What I have said of Rome was substantially true of a large majority of all the Churches in the third and fourth centuries, and if the Churches of Christ were continued at all, it was in the excluded anathematized and persecuted minorities. But as these were as truly excommunicated as if it had been righteously and lawfully done, they were, of course, no Churches, and the Church of Rome, to-day, is the true Church of Christ. She has always had a majority, and we and our fathers were truly, and in fact, excluded members, though we were excluded for obeying Christ.

Their membership and right to Church privileges did not depend at all upon their purity of faith, their holiness of life, or their zeal for the truth, but on the will of the majority. They could only retain their Church privileges by proving themselves unworthy of them; could continue in the kingdom of Christ only by turning traitors to their King, and that they did not dare to do.

There is but one way to get rid of this conclusion, and that is to admit that those who are unlawfully and wickedly cast out in violation of the law, are not cast out at all; but
that the act is null and void. They bring their Church-
membership out with them, and are just as truly members,
and as really entitled to all the privileges and immunities
of Church-membership, as though the unlawful and wicked
deed of the rebellious and sinful majority had never been
performed.

There is a short, but very ancient, document on this
question. It is a brief epistle addressed by the apostle
John to a man by the name of Gaius. From this we learn
that there was in the Church of which Gaius was, or had
been, a member, a certain person called Diotrephes, (3 John:
9, 10,) who refused to receive an epistle from the apostle
John, and prevented the Church from doing it. Furthermore,
he refused to receive and entertain certain brethren
who came there, and whom Gaius had received. Not only
so, but he had managed to secure a majority in the Church
to aid him in his wickedness, and had actually “cast out
of the Church” those who were willing to receive these
messengers. I infer that as Gaius was one who received
them, he had himself been cast out. This was a Baptist
Church. The theory we are considering supposes its act
was valid and binding upon all the Christian world.
Gaius and his brethren who had been cast out for receiving
those who had gone forth among the Gentiles for the name
of Christ were excluded Baptists. Every other Church,
and every Church-member, must regard the action of the
oppressors as final and decisive. To every one they must
be as heathen men and publicans. They could not even
have the privilege which every other heathen man possesses,
of uniting with a Church as they might prefer upon giving
evidence of their worthiness. They were shut out forever
from the visible kingdom of Christ, and from all Church
privileges, unless it should please the proud and wicked
Diotrephes and his majority to repent of their wicked deed,
and permit those whose only sin had been obedience to
the injunction, not to neglect to entertain strangers, to return to their company.

Did the Lord Jesus provide no remedy for such a case of wicked oppression, and perversion of his laws? Some persons say no. What says the apostle John?

He addresses Gaius a letter, in which, so far from calling him a heathen man and a publican, he calls him the "well-beloved" whom he "loves in the truth." He writes the letter for the express purpose of commending him for the very deed which had led to the exclusion of those members from the Church. He told him (verse 5) that in this act he had done well and faithfully, and encouraged him (verse 6) to do the same thing again. Not only to entertain such, but to bring them on their journey after a godly sort, or in a manner worthy of God and his cause. He told him that he had written, or, as some render it, would have written to the Church, but that Diotrephes would not receive him.

So far, then, from teaching that the wicked and unlawful exclusion was valid and binding on all the kingdom, he encourages the excluded to do again the same deed for which they had been disciplined. He takes no other notice of the act of exclusion, but to condemn it, and threaten to punish those who had been leaders in procuring it. Nor was any other Church, or any other Church-member bound to take any other notice of it than what was needful to counteract its evil influence by giving countenance and encouragement to the excluded, and reproof and condemnation to their oppressors.

Here, then, I find the remedy for these wrongs. It is the duty of every other Church to encourage and commend the right, and condemn the wrong. If the apostle had intended to teach as some modern doctors of divinity teach, he could not have called Gaius his well-beloved, and praised him for the deed, and encouraged him and the minority
who had been excluded, to go on in defiance of Church authority, and repeat the same acts for which they had been disciplined.

If one should imitate the example of the apostle in these days, there are some Baptists who would consider that he was guilty of a grievous sin in encouraging resistance and insubordination to Church authority. And guilty he would be, but upon the supposition that a wicked and unlawful Church act has no binding force. It is utterly null and void, and is to be so regarded by all Churches and all Church-members. Let us look at the condition of poor Gaius. He had joined this body as a Church of Christ. It was a true Church. It had all the authority that Christ ever gave to any Church. Gaius loved the Savior, and desired to obey all his laws. By one of these laws he was commanded to entertain the strangers. His pastor would not do it. He forbade the Church to do it. He had a majority of the Church on his side ready to do his bidding. Poor Gaius! he now found what a dangerous thing it is to be a member of a Church of Christ. He could not do right without loosing his membership; being separated from the people of God, denied the privilege of obeying Christ in the ordinance of the Supper—having his name cast out as evil—disgraced and dishonored among Christians, and despised and rejected by the heathen. But if Diotrephes and his party could cast him out for this duty, they might for any other. A member of such a Church would not dare to do anything until he had first asked permission of the majority. He is not sure that he is at liberty to offer a public prayer in a Church prayer-meeting, though called upon by the leader to do so. He may be told, next day, "that it is very offensive to a majority." He does not know whether he may give the money that he has earned by his own labor, to send the Gospel to the heathen. He may be told that
the majority disapprove such gifts. He is liable any day to be disgraced, dishonored, cast out of the Church, and given over to Satan, not for any crime, but for a simple act of obedience to his Savior. He dare not do right until he has humbly inquired whether it is entirely agreeable to Diotrephes and the majority. Alas for poor Giaus, and alas for those who, since his day, may have had the misfortune to be members of a Church with another Diotrephes for a pastor, and such a majority to out carry his wicked and tyrannical behests. There may have been many such cases since the days of Gaius. There may have been some such in our generation. In his day the apostle of the Lord condemned Diotrephes and his party, and gave his countenance and praise to those who had dared to do right—to obey God rather than the majority. But now, alas, that Church or that minister who would venture to do so, would be declared unworthy of the confidence and fellowship of all true Churches. They must all encourage and sustain Diotrephes and the majority. Why? Because they are the majority. Alas, alas, for those who fear God more than they fear majorities!!! Alas for those who dare, in the name of Christ, to protest against a wicked deed of a majority. They are cast out of the Church as disturbers of the peace, as resisters of Church authority, and no other Church may receive them, no other Church dare call them brethren, no other Church can ever admit them as it would a converted heathen to membership in its body. They stand accursed and separate forever from all God's people, until Diotrephes and his party shall see fit to undo their deed of wickedness done in the service of Satan, though in the name of Christ. Alas! alas! Can it be true that as often as Satan can get into the heart of a pastor, and through him control the vote of a majority, and influence them to cast out true Christians from the Church for obeying Christ, that all Christ's Churches are
bound to unite with the devil, give their sanction to his work, confirm and perpetuate the wicked decree, and thus aid in consigning the members of Christ to the kingdom of darkness. Forbid it, justice! Forbid it, reason! Forbid it, Almighty God! It may not, is not, never can be so. There must be some fearful mistake about this business.

The premises we have laid down in the beginning of this article show where it is. The fact is simply this: Every Church is but the coexecutive of every other Church in the administration of the laws of Christ. There was no other Church in the whole of Christendom that was bound to pay any other attention to the unjust and wicked decree of Diotrephes and his majority, or, if you please, his Church, than what was needful to counteract its influence, and show their disapprobation. Gaius and his excluded brethren were still Church-members, because the act of exclusion, being unlawful, was null and void.

No other Church is at liberty to regard that act as valid, when it knows the facts. As it regards the place and purity of the kingdom, as it regards the law of Christ, as it regards truth and justice, it is solemnly bound to disown the evil deed, and disfellowship the Church that has been guilty of it.

As, in case the unlawful deed had been in the reception of a member in plain violation of Christ's law, no Church would have regarded the person as really initiated, so now no Church can regard him as really excluded. All Church acts rest upon delegated authority, and are valid only so far as they are in strict accordance with the instructions given for its exercise.

Now we are prepared to see what relation, if any, our association sustains to this business.

And first, I will remark that I do not find association, as such, mentioned in the word of God. I find the author-
ity for the existence of the association only in the fact that the apostolic Churches were accustomed to appoint messengers to visit other Churches, and attend to such business as was intrusted to their hands. Such messengers were appointed by the Church at Antioch to visit the Church at Jerusalem, and by the Church at Jerusalem to visit that at Antioch. Such messengers were appointed to travel with Paul, and to collect money for the poor saints. In one instance, at least, several Churches united in the appointment, for they were called the messengers, not of a Church, but of the Churches.

I infer, therefore, that there is Scriptural authority for the Churches to appoint members of their own body to go to such places as they shall send them, and attend to such business as they may intrust to them. Several Churches may thus send their messengers to one place to meet with those of other Churches, and may authorize them to establish schools, publish books, send out missionaries, or do any other work which, in their opinion, and, in fact, is lawful and proper for a Church to do or assist in doing. These messengers thus assembled, we call an Association. But what have these messengers to do with Church discipline?

May they say to any Church, You must or you must not receive, retain, or exclude this person or that? They can have no authority to do any such thing. No Church can say this to any other Church, and consequently she can not authorize her messengers to say it. But every Church can say what other bodies claiming to be Churches she will recognize as such.

Every Church is bound within certain limits to do this, for it is only thus that the unity and purity of the kingdom can be preserved.

All Baptist Churches have been accustomed to do this from the days of the apostles. She may and must decide
what other bodies she will regard as holding the same relation to the kingdom of Christ that she does herself. As she may do this, she may instruct her messengers to do it in her name. She may and must refuse officially to associate with, or fellowship any so-called Church which she does not regard as sound in faith and orderly in practice, as much so as she is herself, and she may, therefore, instruct her messengers to refuse to associate officially with the messengers of such a Church.

In this way a Church may, therefore, by her messengers, refuse to recognize the wicked act of another Church, or may declare non-fellowship with that Church. And when the messengers of several Churches meet in association, and all refuse to recognize her act, or fellowship her messengers, we say the association has done it. Yet the association had no authority, except as those composing it expressed the will of the Churches they represent. Let us illustrate: Here is a Church which has been called a Baptist Church, and has been so regarded by other Baptist Churches. It goes over to the "Reformers," and sends a messenger who has been baptized for the actual remission of sins. Or here is another that has baptized infants, or substituted the Pope’s ordinance of sprinkling for Christ’s ordinance of baptism. It sends its messengers, as usual, to meet with those of other Baptist Churches. But as those Baptist Churches may and must refuse any longer to recognize, or associate officially with those bodies as Churches, they may and must, if consistent, refuse to associate with them by their messengers.

They have not, as individual Churches, nor have their messengers as representatives of all the Churches, any authority over the heretical Church. They cannot say to her, "You must undo what you have done;" but they can and must disown her as one of the true Churches in the kingdom equally with themselves, charged with the admin-...
istration of the laws of the kingdom. They may and must withdraw fellowship from her.

So when a Church has violated the laws given for her guidance in the trial and exclusion of members, all other Churches are bound, when the facts are known, to disfellowship the evil deed, and those who did it; and what they may do, as a Church, they may do by their messengers.

So far as this wicked and unlawful deed may affect the interests of other Churches, they are bound to counteract its pernicious influence. What they know to have been done unlawfully and wickedly, they are bound to regard as null and void. They may not go to the Church, and say, "You must take the excluded back;" but they can say to the excluded, as John the apostle said to Gaius and his excluded brethren: "Well done. The very deed for which you were cast out was 'faithfully done,' and we exhort you to go on after the same godly sort." And to the others they can say: "You have, in our opinion, violated the law of Christ, which you were set to execute, and we can no longer recognize you as worthy to act as his executive jointly with us. Henceforth we repudiate you and your official acts, until you return to the order of the Gospel of Christ." In other words, the messengers of the Churches may, in the name of the Churches, and by authority of the Churches whose messengers they are, declare with whom they can officially associate, or, in other words, receive as messengers of orthodox and orderly Baptist Churches like their own.

If it is competent for a Church to authorize her messengers to meet with others to form an association, it is competent for her to say with what sort of Churches she will thus associate. If she says orthodox and orderly Baptist Churches, and they put this into their constitution, then this constitution becomes a permanent Church
order, and the delegates are bound to see it enforced. They can not receive and associate with those whom they regard as excluded Baptists, or with the messengers of a Church which it is known to them has, in its official acts as a Church, openly and notoriously departed from the law of Christ.

Thus indirectly, and in no further than its members give expression to the conviction of their own Churches, can an association rightly exert any control over the discipline of a Church. As an association, it can only give expression to the voice of the Churches, whose messengers compose it. Its action is binding on no one of those Churches unless it receives the sanction of that Church itself. If, therefore, the messengers in an association should vote unanimously not to receive the representatives from a certain body, on the ground that it was unsound in faith, or disorderly in practice, this decision would not prevent any Church in that association, or out of it, from continuing to associate as heretofore with that body, if it thought best.

The decision of the association has no other authority than is given it by the moral force of such an opinion expressed under such circumstances. It only says to the Churches and the world, we, the messengers from other Churches, most nearly connected with this, best acquainted with its members, and having the best opportunity to become acquainted with all the facts in the case, have decided that her act was unlawful and violative of the instructions which Christ has given for the government of his Churches. We, therefore, can no longer regard her as worthy of our confidence as an executive of the laws of Christ. We can no longer recognize her official acts as valid and binding.

If other brethren and Churches see fit to disregard her opinion, the association can not help it. Every Church
and every Church-member has the same right to look into the facts after her decision as before, and is under the same obligation to repudiate the act of the Church if unlawful, or sanction and confirm it if lawful, as if the association had never heard of the case.

But, at the same time, it is evident that it would be wise for brethren at a distance to give due consideration to the deliberately formed opinions of the Churches and brethren best acquainted with the facts.

If in the Church of which our excellent and well-beloved brother, Elder J. B. Taylor of Richmond, Va., is a member, he should be accused by some Diotrephes, and by such management as it is possible for a talented and determined pastor to employ, a majority should be induced to set aside the law of Christ, or to pursue such a course as to cause a large majority to believe the law was set aside, and to beg for its observance, when its observance, as they understood it, could have done no other harm but to delay his exclusion if he had been guilty; yet, their entreaty should be disregarded, and they should feel solemnly and imperatively bound to resist the action of the majority and disfellowship the deed. But the majority is still unmoved. It goes on and excludes Elder Taylor, and then excludes the minority for contempt of authority; but he and they should contend that as the act was unlawful it was invalid, and consequently they were as truly Church-members as though it had never been performed; if the question should come up whether Brother Taylor and the minority were still Baptists, and the brethren representing the Churches of his association should say, that in their opinion the law had been violated, and, therefore, they were Baptists; if the question should, in some shape, come before the General Association of Virginia, and they should decide the same way; if, in addition to this, the facts and the law had been carefully examined by a large
council of the best brethren from all, or nearly all, the Churches of his association, chosen by the Churches themselves to examine and report, and they, *without one exception*, had decided that the law was violated, I should be very slow to believe that the dear brother had been fairly dealt with. I should still retain the right to examine for myself from the beginning. So would every Baptist. But still the moral influence of the decision of such a council, and so many brethren to whom the facts and the law must have been known, would be very great. Yet it could *compel* no Church, no association, and no Baptist, to regard Elder Taylor and his minority as still members. It could *compel* no one to disown the wicked majority, or their wicked deed. After all, each Church-member and each Church must in the exercise of its own conscientious judgment, as under law to Christ alone, receive or reject either the one party or the other.

If, in view of all the facts as they became known to her, any Church should be convinced that the proceedings were Scriptural, lawful, and right, and Elder Taylor should come to that Church as a minister, or even as corresponding secretary of the Foreign Missionary Board, she would be bound to reject him as an excluded Baptist, and just so with any member of his minority who had been cast out for humbly, yet earnestly and persistently, insisting that the law of Christ had not been observed, and declaring that they could not fellowship those who would not regard it. But if any Church with the facts before her believes that the law was trampled on, that the proceedings began in a bad spirit, were conducted for an evil object, and were unjust, unlawful, and wicked, she is not bound to give her sanction to the wicked deed, because it was done by a majority. On the contrary, it is a duty which she would owe not merely to Brother Taylor and his company as innocent and oppressed, but to Christ and his kingdom, *not* to give the
slightest official sanction to the official wickedness which had been done by others in the name of Christ, but without his authority, and only at the instigation of the devil. She must, therefore, receive him as though no such unlawful act of exclusion had been passed.

The decision of a council or an association is nothing to her except as it may be regarded as testimony, as to whether the law of Christ had or had not been violated by the majority. Our Churches have been ever accustomed to regard such testimony as conclusive when the alleged violation of law had reference to the reception of members or soundness in faith; so when a Church on this ground was not fellowshipped by its own association, it was disfellowshipped by all others. Why should it not be equally conclusive in a case of the violation of law in regard to discipline?

But enough. Of the things which we have said this is the sum:

1. A Church is no more independent of all other Churches in the trial and exclusion of a member, than in the reception.

2. If she violates the laws of Christ in the reception of members, either in regard to the person received or the mode of receiving, other Churches are bound to repudiate the act as null and void; and disfellowshipped her for doing it.

3. If the first position is true, they are equally bound to repudiate the act as null and void, and her for doing it, if she violates the law of Christ in the trial and exclusion or discipline.

4. As the Churches are bound to do this as Churches, they are authorized to do it by their messengers, if they see fit so to instruct them.

5. Instructions given at any time not to associate with any who are not orthodox and orderly Baptist Churches,
will not only authorize but require their messengers not to receive those from a Church that has violated the law of Christ in its official acts, either in the reception, retaining, or exclusion of members.

6. This refusal to associate with such a Church does not bind any other Church in or out of the association not to do so. Every Church is still to decide for itself whether the law of Christ was violated or not.

7. But the simple fact that the Churches in the association where the facts are best known have decided that the law was violated, will be strong _prima facie_ evidence that it was really so. And this testimony will be much stronger if the Churches in that association had previously appointed their ablest men, and charged them to examine carefully the law and the facts, and they had spent days in the investigation, and reported _unanimously_, without _one_ dissenting voice, that the law had been violated both in its spirit and its letter, and that the deed was oppressive, tyrannical, and wicked.

The case must be very rare and the circumstances very peculiar, where the Churches at a distance would not be justified in acting upon this opinion, and receiving those whom their association had received, and rejecting those whom it had rejected.

THE END.