

*(Printed for Private Circulation only.)*

# LETTER

TO THE

GRANVILLE STREET CHURCH,

HALIFAX, N. S.

BY THE

HON. J. W. JOHNSTON,  
*Judge in Equity.*

---

HALIFAX:

PRINTED AT BARNES' STEAM PRESS.

1867.

*The* EDITH *and* LORNE PIERCE  
COLLECTION *of* CANADIANA



*Queen's University at Kingston*

M 190  
(Printed for Private Circulation only.)  
Not in the  
N-8 in the  
Not in the

# LETTER

TO THE

GRANVILLE STREET CHURCH,

HALIFAX, N. S.

BY THE

HON. J. W. JOHNSTON,

Judge in Equity.

---

HALIFAX:

PRINTED AT BARNES' STEAM PRESS.

1867.

F5012

1867

572

*(Printed for Private Circulation only.)*

---

## LETTER

To the Pastor, Deacons, and Members of the Granville Street  
Baptist Church at Halifax.

---

It is about forty years since the Granville Street Baptist Church at Halifax was formed, principally by individuals who had then recently separated from the communion of the Church of England, and during all that long period I have been connected with it, either as a member of the Congregation or of the Church.

In preparing, as I am now doing, an act of formal separation, it ought to appear whether I am taking this step without cause, or whether I am driven out by the violation, on the part of the Church, of fundamental principles of Christian Church union, which has made separation my duty and only alternative.

But beyond and far above anything which affects you as a separate Church, and me as an individual, lie questions that vitally concern the government of independent Churches, the security of their members, and the independence of their ministers.

In such a case it is my duty to speak plainly; but precedence or deference in any degree I do not claim; and if personal superiority were necessary to justify my assuming the office which I am now fulfilling, I should cast down my pen, and acknowledge that the vocation was not mine.

I recognize the dignity and authority of a Church of our Lord Jesus Christ; and I can truly say, that so long as it was guided by the laws, and influenced by the spirit of its great Master, I would sit at its feet in all humility, however lowly in station were its members. My uniform deportment, while connected with Granville Street Church, until the recent occurrences, will, I believe, compel your admission

of the correctness of this assertion; and if anything of a different nature has lately appeared, it has only been where instances of flagrant partiality and wrong demanded rebuke.

I have held, with unwavering clearness of opinion, the doctrine of the Baptists as regards Church government; and the occasional aberrations of individual Churches have not shaken my belief. But violations of principle may arise having proportions too large to be thus passed over; when the enquiry will become inevitable,—whether there exists no remedy, and if none, whether the system must not be radically defective.

Such a case, I conceive, has arisen.

Your conduct to your late pastor, after various steps marked by prejudice, injustice and oppression, has culminated in a defiant rejection of the unanimous judgment of a mutually elected Council, composed of 12 Baptist ministers, and lay members of Churches, of high standing and character. If the Denomination have no rebuke for dishonorable, unjust, and unchristian conduct, such as this, then may reflecting men pause ere they commit what is dearest to them to a despotism so ruthless.

The subject is two-fold;—1st. As it affects the Denomination at large and the cause of religion;—and 2ndly. As it relates to Dr. Pryor and the members of Granville Street Church.

In illustration of this subject in its first and broader aspect, it may assist, if I notice an article that appeared as an editorial in the *Christian Messenger* of October 2nd, entitled, “The Church of Christ, its objects and responsibilities,” in juxtaposition with another article also editorially given, under the head of “The late Ecclesiastical Council;”—the former obviously having relation to the latter, and being intended as a formal enunciation of opinion. As far as this article speaks of the origin, nature, privileges, and influences of a Church of Christ, and of its duty to maintain its discipline, and purge itself from vicious members, there is no controversy. Herein all are agreed. For, bear ever in mind, that in pressing on you, at the Church meetings, the course of conduct which I thought our duty required, I repeatedly and emphatically explained that it was not mercy to the guilty, it was not charity to cover guilt, which I sought you to extend;—what I asked, and all I asked at your hands, was that just, fair, and charitable consideration of facts and evidence, which, alike the laws of your country and the precepts of the Divine Redeemer and his apostles enjoin, when the question of guilt or innocence is still under adjudication.

In so far as the article I have alluded to assumes the guilt of Dr. Pryor to be an established fact, and insidiously affects to give weight to that assumption by insinuating the intervention of Providence in the detection of guilt; Mr. Selden and his coadjutors, whoever they may be, have practised deception and injustice; and in as far as an inference is encouraged that the vindication of Dr. Pryor by the Council was "secured by some informality, by shutting out testimony, or by the influence of powerful advocates"—it is simply a falsehood, and one of revolting malignity; and inasmuch as these assumptions and insinuations are made covertly, and in a manner calculated to catch the unwary, they are disingenuous and unmanly. In that particular in which explicitness was essential, the authors of this article have veiled themselves in obscurity. They speak of—"some Churches in consequence of adopting worldly enactments rather than the simple and efficient principles of the New Testament, having become utterly powerless to correct vice;" and of "other tribunals," "before which a vindication may be secured by some informality, by shutting out testimony, or by the influence of powerful advocates;" and in contrast with these they speak of a Church which they assert is "the highest tribunal of character under Heaven." But unless they claim infallibility for this Church, the object of the article in this particular fails; for if this "highest tribunal of character" may err, Granville Street Church may have erred; and that "other tribunal" which it is insinuated might be led astray by low influences, may have acquitted Dr. Pryor, not in consequence either of informality, exclusion of testimony, or the influence of powerful advocates, but alone by the force of testimony, intelligently understood by upright and judicious Christian men. Now on this point I desire to speak with a distinctness which these expounders of Baptist principles have avoided. Without venturing to reach so great a height as infallibility, I do believe that any Christian Church or body of Christian men simply and sincerely influenced by Gospel principles, or to use the language of the Christian Messenger, having "Heaven born love" dwelling within and among them as their "controlling principle," and adopting "the simple and efficient principles of the New Testament" will rarely go far wrong in a question of moral conduct affecting their brother. They might fail in knowledge or discrimination indeed, while earnestly seeking to keep in harmony their duty to God and their neighbour. But of this I am assured that should *such* a Church or body of men condemn their brother, and a Council to which they had referred their judgment, on a review of the evidence, should come

to an opposite conclusion, they would not,—nay,—they could not, if actuated by the principles I have supposed, reject its decision. Humility and honor would alike forbid, while “Heaven born love” would constrain them to rejoice that brethren entitled to their confidence had been enabled to reach a more favourable judgment than they had arrived at.

On the other hand, no more odious tribunal can be imagined than an Independent Church, where the members are lifted up with self-conceit, inflamed by pride, obstinate in self-will, or irritated by real or supposed aggressions on their own importance into a vindictive and spiteful temper. Such a tribunal exhibits everything that is hateful to justice;—where accusers and judges are the same individuals; where inflamed passions and excited prejudices receive gratification in the condemnation of the accused; where the rules that reason and experience have sanctioned for the faithful administration of justice, are rejected with contempt as too worldly for Christian rule; and the mild and considerate teachings of the Gospel are set aside under pretext of zeal for religion;—a tribunal, where the plea of conscience conceals the real springs of action, and where it is forgotten that conscience, to be a safe guide, must be well instructed and well directed.

A more repulsive embodiment of arbitrary power can hardly exist. Hence the value,—the necessity,—for the protection of members of Churches, but more especially of ministers, of the Ecclesiastical Council, by which the judgment of discreet and impartial men of Christian character, unaffected by the prejudice and passion that are liable to invade a Church on occasions of excitement, may be interposed to avert evils the most serious in their consequence to individuals, to the Church, and to religion.

And hence the momentous importance of the crisis that has been created by the bold rejection, by the Granville Street Church, of the judgment and advice of the Council recently assembled in Halifax.

An arrogant and self-willed Church may in most cases be beyond the reach of legal restraint, in the exercise of ecclesiastical tyranny. But no Church can maintain itself long against the judgment of those with whom it is associated, if that judgment be upright, and be firmly asserted, and vigorously upheld.

Will the Baptists of these Provinces view this question in the light of reason, justice, and Christian charity, and give manly and emphatic utterance to their opinion? This is a question of no ordinary importance.

I turn to the other branch of the subject, being that which now

directly concerns the immediate object of this paper. Here it is necessary to review the action of the Church in many particulars,—it will be more correct to say,—the conduct of certain of the male members, who have controlled and directed the others, and to whom my observations throughout are chiefly directed, although the paper in point of form is necessarily addressed to the whole Church.

*First*,—The exclusion of Dr. Pryor from his pulpit, on the first Sunday after the occurrence that gave rise to the investigation, was a harsh and unjust act which led to the most injurious consequences to him.

At the Church meeting my son, Mr. James Johnston, proposed the correct course,—viz., that the pastor should not be interfered with in his pastoral relation, in the immature and imperfect state of the case. His proposal was vehemently put down. My proposition was that some of the Deacons should next morning visit Dr. Pryor, ascertain his views, and act as far as possible in harmony. This, too, was overruled, and a letter was sent to inform Dr. Pryor that his pulpit would be filled by another minister. The reason assigned was that some members of the Church and congregation were so excited, that if he officiated they would leave the Meeting House. It is not probable that the apprehension would have been realized had the proper means been used to avert it; but had it been otherwise, the Church was not justified in doing a wrong to their pastor in subserviency to the excited feelings of any individuals. As it was, the consequences were cruel and unjust to Dr. Pryor in the extreme. Abroad, it was universally inferred that the Church had decided on his guilt; in evidence of this you had from Mrs. Pryor's lips a deeply touching incident;—and the impression made by this act of the Church coloured to Dr. Pryor's great prejudice everything subsequent. But this was far from all. Some of his friends animadverted severely on this act; this led to recrimination, out of which grew an acrimonious hostility to Dr. Pryor, personally, to which may be traced the earnestness of desire for his conviction and degradation apparent throughout the proceedings, and so signally illustrated by the rejection of his vindication by the Council, and by the rancor exhibited in the pages of the *Christian Messenger*.

When Mr. Selden told Dr. Pryor that his son-in-law was his worst enemy, he revealed the effect on his own mind of the circumstances I have alluded to, and which he afterwards manifested in a flagrant manner.

This injustice to Dr. Pryor was aggravated by the fact, that

although at the meeting to which allusion has been made, it was distinctly declared that exclusion from the pulpit was not adopted on the assumption of guilt, and was not designed to convey the idea that the Church esteemed their pastor guilty, yet the effect was to convey that idea to the world, in a manner the most extensive and distressing. It is true, there was much in the suddenness and nature of the circumstances to palliate some error of judgment in this instance; there was nothing, however, to extenuate the rejection of the proposal to consult Dr. Pryor before acting in a case so deeply affecting his interests, and the feelings of himself and his friends;—a proposal which, had it been adopted, would probably have led to harmony of action, and have averted the consequences that followed upon the course that was pursued.

*Secondly*,—The examination of witnesses by the Committee in the absence of Dr. Pryor, was an outrage against the fundamental principles of justice and British jurisprudence, deliberately persevered in, after remonstrance and warning, for as soon as I heard that witnesses had been examined in Dr. Pryor's absence, I earnestly besought Mr. Selden to induce his fellow-committee men to abandon so unjust a course. When I saw him again, he told me that he had mentioned my objection, but the Committee declined altering the practice they had adopted. The evidence thus taken and reduced to writing was that upon which he was judged, and which, in the Church and out of it, has been constantly referred to as containing irrefragable testimony of guilt; and yet it was utterly worthless—worthless judicially, and essentially worthless. Evidence taken in a man's absence may suffice to put him on trial; but when he comes to be tried, the evidence given before the Grand Jury cannot be breathed to his prejudice, and the Grand Juror who heard it cannot sit on his trial. How men born to the privilege of freemen could manifest this ignorance of, or this indifference to first principles, may well be matter of surprise; unless, indeed, the same answer be given that I had to listen to, when at Church meetings I ventured to allude to the Rules of Evidence framed for the protection of the accused,—that the Church of Christ has nothing to do with human law,—an admirable reason, it might be, if law were urged to the prejudice of a brother on trial, but assuredly a wretched one when analogy to the law is advanced in his protection; unless, indeed, the Divine Legislator had a less delicate sense of justice, and less consideration to guard against improvident condemnations than human law-givers! To such absurdities, and worse than absurdities, do ignorance and self-sufficiency lead men.

The Council refused to receive your *ex parte* evidence, and when the witnesses were brought face to face with the accused, the practical difference was apparent; the statements of the three most important witnesses before the Council—Christian, Purdy, and Mrs. Baxter,—were shown from their own mouths to be entirely unreliable, so that no impartial man of ordinary intelligence could give them any the slightest weight in the scale; and the evidence of another witness, Mrs. Evans, which had an adverse bearing when given in Dr. Pryor's absence, was entirely changed in its character when he elicited from her a few simple explanations; and again the suspicion intended to be excited by the answer of the carpenter to a malignant question put by your clerk, was dissipated by his answer to a single enquiry of Dr. Pryor, which his cognizance of the circumstances enabled him to make.

Under the weight of this *ex parte* evidence, Dr. Pryor has been attempted to be borne down, and he still suffers from its influence on the minds of many who have read it, or to whom its contents have been retailed; and you have added to all the wrong committed by its means this further offence, that you have ventured to bring it as a charge against the Council that they refused to allow you to read from it the statements of a witness, who, you allege refused to attend personally.

*Thirdly*,—You are chargeable with a failure of duty of the most serious nature, in not calling a Council at an early stage of the transaction, aggravated by the fact, that at a meeting of all the deacons with Dr. Pryor, the propriety of calling a Council was agreed on, and the deacons engaged to recommend the measure to the Church.

I have so fully gone into the particulars on this head, in a previous paper addressed to the Church, that I need say little here. Suffice it, that the deacons, without Dr. Pryor's consent, did not fulfil their engagement with him, and their excuse was the opposition to the calling of a Council manifested by the members of the Church. If this excuse was not a valid one, then was I grossly deceived by Mr. Selden and Dr. Parker; for on their representation I acted in not moving for a Council, and in consenting to adopt a different course. But I had abundant evidence on various occasions of the hostility existing among the members of the Church to the calling of a Council, to satisfy me that in this particular they did not deceive me.

The interposition of a Council at that early stage would have been of vast value. The hostility of the Church had not yet been intensified by their own action, and the opposition which grew out of that action; and it may be hoped that then the proceedings before a Council would

have been free from the unworthy antagonism afterwards manifested, and its judgment received in a better spirit than subsequently was the case, when pride was interposed to sustain opinions already formed and expressed. The judgment of a Council in favor of Dr. Pryor would then have had no conflict opposed to it by any formal judgment declared by the Church, and if the judgment had been adverse, the heavy blow would have come not directly from their hands.

Here, then, was opportunity for doing to their pastor all the justice the circumstances admitted of, and for rendering to his many near relatives and friends, members of the Church, due consideration and sympathy. No duty opposed itself to this course. The Divine Master would assuredly not have judged you unfaithful in seeking aid from Christian men of approved character, and freer than you could possibly be from exciting influences. He would not have condemned, as opposed to his own gracious example and precepts, the tenderness of spirit which prompted the transfer to others better qualified than yourselves, of a duty which might most painfully affect your own Church members whom it was your custom to style brothers and sisters.

Had this measure been adopted, it may safely be said that a large amount of evil would have been avoided. Why was it not adopted? There may have been extenuation for the hasty exclusion from the pulpit; there can be no extenuation for the opposition to the calling of a Council. Why, then, I repeat, was a Council not called at a time when the measure would have been so proper, beneficial, and expedient? To me, who heard the self-satisfied contrasts drawn by different members of the Church between the wisdom and ability that dwelt in Granville Street Church, and anything that could be expected from ministers, the answer is but too obvious. Whatever the cause, the consequences have been fatal.

*Fourthly*,—The refusal of a Council in the Vass matter, after the other question had been disposed of, and your conduct in that business generally.

The observations on the last head are in great measure applicable here. The accounts had been examined, and certain errors ascertained. The only question remaining for the Church was—whether or not these errors, as far as they had been prejudicial to Miss Vass, had been intentional and fraudulent,—a question, certainly, not inappropriate for ministers.

The judgment you gave that the errors against Miss Vass, which

appeared in Dr. Pryor's accounts, were the result of a fraudulent design; when the same accounts exhibited errors against himself of a very large amount, and his utter inability to keep such accounts correctly, was manifest;—showed the determination of your minds to extract evidence of guilt from circumstances, which in justice, no less than in charity, demanded your sentence of acquittal

How fit you were, impartially, to consider so difficult and delicate a question, may be judged from your conduct in the other particulars relating to this business.

Dr. Pryor had been induced to take charge of her affairs on the representation that she held her property ultimately for religious and benevolent purposes; and they desired that he would manage it as he would his own; he had thrown on him, in this way, the superintending of the finishing of one large, and the erection of two other expensive dwelling-houses, and of finding the necessary funds as they were required. All this was accompanied by her own assurance, made, and often repeated, not to him only, but to many others, and to myself, in a manner the most distinct and effective,—that one, at least, of the new houses should be the property of Dr. and Mrs. Pryor, and be occupied by them as their own. She violated this promise after a couple of years, and demanded rent, without even the excuse of inaccuracies in his accounts, for she knew not of them at the time. For this you had no rebuke, although she, equally with Dr. Pryor, was a Church member.

But worse than this; when the relation of the parties had been changed and her promise violated, you refused, as far as your will extended, to allow him to change his attitude, and charge commission or other recompense for all his trouble, risk and anxiety; nay more, you rejected his charge for sums actually paid by him for raising funds to carry on the necessary business; and, to crown all, in the affair of Mrs. Howard's purchase, which offered you a specimen of what Dr. Pryor had to endure as her agent, one of the Committee on the accounts, with an inexplicable perversion of intellect and moral perception, charged him with dishonesty, in crediting her with £100 more than he received, or she was entitled to; and another of them declared that he saw moral wrong in this conduct.

Of Miss Vass' deponent as a witness before the Council, I shall say nothing beyond this, that several of you were present, and saw how entirely it baffled all my powers to extract from her either a denial or affirmance, or any other intelligible statement of the conver-

sation I alleged to have passed between her and myself in relation to her property, and her assurances in favor of Dr. and Mrs. Pryor.

*Fifthly*,—Injustice to Dr. Pryor, breach of faith with me, and want of Christian charity in demanding the renewal of the charge of immorality after that charge had been fully disposed of.

Having considered this subject in my former paper, I shall abbreviate my present remarks.

I agreed to the resolution excluding Dr. Pryor from the Pastorate, on the ground of want of discretion, but upon the express statement of Mr. Selden, and Dr. Parker, that guilt was not imputed in relation to the charge of immorality; and upon the necessarily implied understanding that the charge was thus finally disposed of. The Church afterward ratified the statement of Mr. Selden, and Dr. Parker, by adopting an amendment which I moved for the expressed purpose of removing from the resolution, ambiguity as to Dr. Pryor's innocence. Yet when I moved for a Council on the Vass matter, it was demanded of me as a condition that I should consent to the charge thus previously disposed of being again opened for investigation and adjudication.

This conduct involved the violation of three principles of the first importance. 1st. It trampled on the rule of justice which every Englishman acknowledges, by seeking to try Dr. Pryor anew on a charge on which he had already been tried, and acquitted of the higher offence, and severely punished for the lesser. This was a wrong against Dr. Pryor. 2nd. Toward me it was a flagrant breach of good faith by violating the conditions upon which my assent to the resolution of exclusion from the Pastorate had been induced. 3rd. It was an offence against Christian charity, by needlessly, renewing the consideration of a subject painfully distressing to many of your own Church members, and so it was a wrong to them. I look under all this to find the motive,—the spirit,—the temper of mind that was at work, for thus we attain the clue to much of your conduct, throughout this transaction, that is inconsistent with any idea of Christian charity. Christian men we may imagine would not find pleasure in renewing such an investigation, or gratification in the hope of being able to inflict a still more fatal blow on an already crushed and suffering man, and yet greater pain and humiliation on his nearest relatives and dearest friends, members of their own church.

The pretext offered at the time, that the two charges were connected was unfounded, for there was no connection between them, or similarity in any of their circumstances; and the insincerity of the pretext is further shewn by an admission made by Mr. Selden, *that long pre-*

*viciously the condemnatory resolution on the Vass matter had been prepared*, so that the renewed investigation of the former charge was not needed for the elucidation of the latter. Besides, if the pretended connection was any reason, it existed equally when the resolution acquitting from guilt on the charge of immorality was passed, and could therefore offer no excuse for passing over that resolution to renew the consideration of its subject matter. Nor was it then asserted that new evidence had been discovered.

What then could prompt the desire to renew the consideration of such a question, thus definitively settled and adjudicated? Not duty, that had been fulfilled. "Heaven born love" could not have been the controlling principle, for love sickens at the sight. The blood hound, called off from his prey, pants to renew the pursuit,—it is his instinct. But a Church of Christ, thus seeking needlessly, worse than needlessly, to exercise a cruel authority, is a melancholy example of the corrupting influence of irresponsible power,—of the dominion of pride and self-will over justice and charity.

It was for this act that I determined to separate from Church relations with you. You have since given others and yet stronger reasons why I should do so. Surely none will be surprised that the relatives and friends of Dr. Pryor should withdraw from a connection which subjects them to the mockery of being styled "Brothers and Sisters" by those who have trampled on the plainest principles of right, and it would almost seem for the purpose of wounding and insulting them.

Whatever right Dr. Pryor or the Association may have had to renew the consideration of the circumstances,—you had none.

*Sixthly*,—The want of candor and truthfulness at the Association in relation to the calling of a Council, manifested by Messrs. Selden, and Beckwith, and afterward adopted by a solemn act of the Church.

In my former paper I fully explained this charge, and the proof by which it was sustained. I mention it now in illustration of the spirit and conduct pursued in connexion with the subject under consideration, and as bearing on my own relations with you.

*Seventhly*,—The partiality and prejudice against Dr. Pryor manifested in the proceedings.

You are aware that I often complained at the Church Meetings, of the unfair conduct of some of the most active of you in the prosecutions; of the earnestness exhibited to find occasion of charge against Dr. Pryor, and the dull ear turned to what made in his favour. Take as examples the time spent in trying to extract something prejudicial

in the case of the notes of Ruland and McVane, after their continued indebtedness to Miss Vass, (by reason of Dr. Pryor having paid the money to withdraw their notes,) had been made apparent; and the perversity with which fraud was endeavoured to be fixed on him in the case of Mrs. Howard's purchase. In both cases the efforts to injure Dr. Pryor were childish in the last degree; but in that they only manifested the more clearly the spirit and disposition of his judges, while in the matter of the erroneous charge against himself in the loan to Wilson, it was shown how hard was the entrance into the same minds of anything favourable.

But on this head I need not go further than the exhibition made by Mr. Selden, when Dr. Pryor, before he withdrew from the meeting of the Church, and while they had to consider and decide on interests the dearest and most sacred to a man, had made his final explanation, and had avouched his innocence with a solemnity surely entitled to consideration when opposed to suspicion, and in terms that might have touched the hardest heart, and quelled the bitterest hostility. Mr. Selden, being in the chair, at the instant he finished, rose, and poured out a torrent of invective, charging Dr. Pryor with being the author of his own misfortune, and him and his friends with having unjustly assailed and aspersed the Church.

Here was a judge, bringing himself and his brother judges into antagonism with the accused, arousing their prejudices, and inflaming their passions at the most critical moment, and, as far as in him lay, crushing out the effect of the address which Dr. Pryor had just made.

In a court of law the judge would have warned the jury, on the sacredness of their oath, that every hostile feeling was to be subdued, every prejudice brought into subjection, no outside stories regarded,—and shall we listen to the slander,—that courts of law have a sense of justice, and a humane respect for the rights and interests of accused persons, which the Church of Christ is at liberty to disregard?

Mr. Selden was obviously not fit to be a judge in the case. It needed high-mindedness and enlargement of soul, to keep in subjection the motions of pique, and the stirrings of wounded pride;—and he failed. Nor was he alone of Dr. Pryor's judges thus unfit for impartial judgment. You heard Mr. Ackhurst say how he had been taunted,—“You dare not find Dr. Pryor guilty,” had been said to him;—and your clerk, Mr. Eaton, how he, too, had been taunted, and by members of the Church, because at first not prompt and decided enough,—an offence for which he has since assuredly atoned. The feeling of opposition was ever showing itself among certain of

you, in a manner too distinct to be mistaken, and you remember I made this charge, and named the individuals in their presence; and almost every resolution reveals this antagonism, by the extreme earnestness displayed to set the Church in the right, and Dr. Pryor in the wrong.

It remains to consider the conduct of the Church in relation to the Council. After the arrangement made between the deacons and Dr. Pryor respecting a Council had failed, and after my failure to obtain a Council when only the Vass charge remained unsettled, the Association made its recommendation.

The scrupulous caution shown by the Church as regarded the selection of the Council, I thought much beneath the conduct that ought to govern such a body. It would have been dignified and Christian-like to have said to Dr. Pryor, "Choose your own Council, and if they are men of character and standing in the Denomination, we will accept them, and rejoice to receive their judgment if they shall concur in believing you innocent." Instead of this, you acted the part of keen litigants, and imposed on Dr. Pryor your own basis of Council; and when he failed to concur in your conditions, you, without his concurrence selected and invited a Council of five; and as you thought yourselves justified in taking *ex parte* evidence, so you deemed yourselves authorized to have *ex parte* judges. Dr. Pryor resisted your authority thus to deal with the momentous interests which he had at stake, and the Council declined to act without his consent. Through their intervention Dr. Pryor submitted to every condition comprised in your basis, except as to the number, and a Council of twelve was agreed on. You chose the five who had formed your *ex parte* Council, with the addition of one other.

The skill displayed in long preambles, and adroit resolutions, and bases of Council, did not desert you in the choice of your members. You had succeeded in excluding one individual whom Dr. Pryor thought well fitted for the office from the character of his mind, and from his being extensively known beyond, as well as within the Province; and in your own selection I noticed that you had avoided men acquainted with Dr. Pryor's early labors in promoting the educational and religious interests of the denomination; and that but two out of the six could be exposed to the sympathies that you might dread from early acquaintance and recollection. These six, selected from the three Provinces, with the six chosen by Dr. Pryor from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, met. Granville Street Church was represented by a committee of its members appointed for the purpose,

and Dr. Pryor was assisted by Rev. Dr. Crawley, Professor DeMill, my son James, and myself; my son and I being members of the Church.

The Council, being organized, before proceeding to business, formally inquired if Granville St. Church acknowledged the Council. Your representatives, or such as were present, answered in the affirmative, as did Dr. Pryor when the like question was put to him. You were required to give in your charges, which you did in writing. I gave in written charges against the Church, or those who had been active in the prosecution, which I withdrew in consequence of the Council thinking that their functions did not extend beyond the complaints of the Church and Dr. Pryor against each other.

Your witnesses were produced, examined, and cross-examined, and afterwards Dr. Pryor and his witnesses. At the close, Mr. Rand, and Mr. Eaton your clerk, addressed the Council on behalf of the Church, and Dr. Crawley on behalf of Dr. Pryor. These proceedings occupied, I think, six working days from 10 A.M. to 11 P.M., excepting meal hours, and one day, when the evening session was not held. The seventh day the Council devoted to deliberation, and in the evening delivered their unanimous sentence in writing, signed by eleven, the twelfth, Rev. Mr. McKenzie, having been obliged to return to St. John shortly before the close of the proceedings. He was one of the six selected by Dr. Pryor, and I understand that he has since desired his name to be appended in approval of the judgment, so far as covers the charges on which he heard the evidence.

The proceedings on the part of the Council were conducted with perfect regularity and order, and were marked throughout by moderation, great firmness, and strict impartiality. I have scarcely ever, if ever, seen a court better conducted in all these particulars. The Church had no cause to complain that Dr. Pryor was not prosecuted with all possible energy and zeal, or that any advantage was lost through the modesty, delicacy, or moderation of the two principal managers, Mr. Rand and Mr. Eaton. With a long experience, I do not hesitate to say that I have seldom, I think I may say, never, seen a criminal prosecution involving anything like analogous interests, pressed with so much vehemence, and so little consideration for the feelings and interests of the accused. My soul burned with indignation as I listened to the addresses of these two individuals, particularly the younger of them, and I felt how much they outraged the moderation and fairness that a respectable crown officer would in a like case have observed in a court of law.

You have dared to trample under your feet the sentence of this Council, and remember, of your own six selected men,—and to act in defiance and contempt of their judgment and advice, and I have designedly narrated these details that I might, with these before your eyes, more emphatically ask, as I asked at the last Church meeting that I attended, but asked in vain:—What did you mean by this conduct? Why the basis of Council? Why the guarded precautions in the selection of a Council? Why the *ex parte* Council? Why the larger Council, in both cases separated from their homes, their duties, and their business, at no small cost and inconvenience? Why openly and without qualification acknowledge the Council? Why assemble your witnesses? Why sedulously devote six days to the investigation of testimony? Why address the Council? Why assemble to receive their sentence?

You would not, you could not answer me, when I looked you in the face and asked such questions as these. I will answer for you;—“We hoped to add to the weight of our judgment against our late pastor, the heavier weight of the judgment of condemnation of a Council, and so crush him hopelessly and forever in this world.” Your conduct admits of no other explanation. Its language is the language of the King of Moab:—“We called you to curse our enemy, and you have not cursed him.”

Dr. Pryor could not have resisted an adverse decision, and it would have overwhelmed him in utter ruin. Compared with this, a decision adverse to your views is insignificant in its effects on you. It crosses your self-will, and wounds your pride,—no more. Justice and honor demanded of you an equal submission to the judgment of your severally chosen Council that Dr. Pryor must have rendered, and at so much heavier cost; unless indeed, the Church of our Lord in their dealings with their ministers and members, are freed from those restraints of equity and truth which men of the world in their dealings with one another respect.

If justice and honor have been outraged by your conduct, no less deeply has Christian charity been wounded. The opportunity was afforded you of shewing, even at this latest period, some measure of consideration for the interests and feelings of one who had once held the sacred relation of your pastor, and of others who had been bound to you in the ties of Church fellowship; and that too, without the sacrifice of duty, or the surrender of opinion. Instead of this, by refusing deference to the opinion and advice of the Council, you have added to the evidence afforded throughout the previous proceedings,

that personal hostility had interwoven itself with all your springs of action, and that your acts instead of being the calm impartial decision of upright Christian Judges, have been influenced by pride and resentment.

Zeal for religion and the purity of the Church is a plea easily made, and is one, under which,—it may be consciously or unconsciously,—self-will, and many of the worst passions of our nature find abundant scope and indulgence. In this case it cannot avail. A large Council, after patiently hearing all the evidence, found Dr. Pryor not to have been guilty of immorality and fraud with which he was charged; and they recommended your reconsideration of the resolution which you had passed suspending fellowship with him. But they also censured him for a “want of discretion” in the one case, and for want of proper care in the other, and you had already removed him from the pastorate on the ground of that “want of discretion.”

Thus religion was vindicated and the purity of the Church maintained as far as the facts in the judgment of the Council warranted; and although you maintained your first opinion, and believed that the Council ought to have gone further in condemnation, yet as you do not, I believe, claim infallibility, and as wisdom does not dwell only in Granville Street Church, it would not seem to have been an unreasonable sacrifice made to modesty and decorum, had you adopted the supposition that you might be wrong, and the Council right. But if such a deference to the opinion of any does not become Granville Street Church, then the question recurs:—Why call a council to review a judgment that was unalterably fixed? And when you did do so in professed respect to the recommendation of the Association, common honesty would seem to have required that you should have explained the position you occupied. This was due to the Association, to the Council, and to Dr. Pryor. Having failed to make this explanation; and especially having failed to do so when publicly recognizing the Council; the same principle of ordinary honesty required your submission to the judgment of the Council,—and your rejection of its judgment is an insult to the Association, and to the Council, and is most unjust and dishonorable as regards Dr. Pryor.

I can scarcely imagine anything more disreputable than this conduct towards Dr. Pryor. To bend the most energetic efforts to procure his condemnation,—a condemnation the most ruinous, and when the brethren selected to be judges unanimously acquit him, to do all in

your power to defraud him of the benefit of the acquittal, is evidence of a low and perverted standard of moral sentiment, almost incredible.

I have not yet noticed the resolution by which you attempt to vindicate your conduct.

Some of it I do not understand; and some of it is too puerile for notice, and it is pervaded by the same uncandid and partisan spirit that may be found in almost all your recent Church records.

Whatever expressions the president, or any member of the Council made, after the decision of the Council had been read, were referable only to themselves, and if they had borne the import imputed to them,—which, however, was not the case as far as my remembrance and apprehension extend,—yet they could not affect the opinions of other members, or change the character of the written sentence. Better far, and more becoming men professing to be Christians, would be a bold, defiant rejection of the Council's decision, than this tortuous and fraudulent attempt at evasion. The remarks that there was evidence in the case of Mrs. M——, which the Council rejected or did not use, are the result of ignorance. The statement of Dr. Pryor, which is referred to, was not evidence that the Council could use to his prejudice. It was a statement of innocent purposes and acts on his part; and none but the merest tyro could imagine that while standing alone and uncontradicted, any other purposes or acts could be inferred from it than those which it expresses.

The observations respecting the rejection of Margaret Robinson's testimony, and the reception of letters and certificates of character, are also founded on ignorance. The testimony was properly rejected on the established principle of justice, which forbids a man to be prejudiced by *ex parte* evidence; the letters and certificates, which prejudice no body, were receivable in support of character, under the beneficent indulgence which courts of law extend to accused persons.

The resolution also complains that the Council refused to hear "certain important rebutting testimony." This would have taken the investigation back some thirty years, and that too, in the face of the fact that the individual alleged to have been offended united at a subsequent period in a tribute of respect and esteem presented to Dr. Pryor on his removing from Wolfville to the United States, as appeared from his name appended to the address which was presented to Dr. Pryor on that occasion, and read before the Council in the hearing of your representatives. It commences with stating that the Baptist Church and congregation in Horton could not suffer Dr. Pryor to leave them, after his long and disinterested labor of twenty years

among them, without expressing their high estimation of his valuable services, rendered gratuitously, for so long a period; and deep regret at his removal; and closes with presenting a purse of money, which they desired should be expended in the purchase of "some article," to use their own language, "as a memento of the long continued and happy intercourse which had existed between him and them, and as a trifling expression of their deep feeling on the occasion."

The members of a Church of Jesus Christ, and if so, a Church of pardoned sinners, who would revive from its long oblivion any transaction buried under the weight of bygone years, and covered with the mantle of renewed Christian confidence and love, for no nobler purpose than to destroy or weaken the evidences of long years of subsequent usefulness in the Church, subvert the foundation on which the Christian Church rests; and evince a malignity of spirit irreconcilable with the vital principles of the Gospel. If this is the Christianity of Granville Street Church, it may be a Church that suits you,—it is no place for me. I must find a Church where a life of faith and penitence of far, far, shorter time than thirty years may be accepted as giving the standing of a humble follower of the Redeemer; and where the sins and follies of later as well as of earlier years may be allowed to rest with Him, who, blessed be His name, judges on other principles than Granville Street Church.

Dr. Pryor's friends, it is true, while seeing the gross impropriety of this attempt, and the great irregularity in the proceedings that must result, yet felt it their duty, acting in his behalf and interests, to withdraw every objection, and to court the investigation. But the Council acted wisely notwithstanding; and in refusing to allow the subject to be opened in any manner, they did only that which the principles of the Gospel, the dictates of reason, and the rules of law, unite in requiring. And sad it is that a Church professing to be called by the name, and to be acting for the honor of the benign Redeemer, should have so often to be rebuked in relation to the first principles of Christian duty; and instructed in maxims of equity and charity from the examples of legal tribunals.

The observation in the resolution that many of the Councillors were the constant guests of the accused and his advocates is disposed of, as far as regards the effect intended to be produced, by a single fact. The six Councillors selected by the Church, and none of whom were the guests of the accused or his advocates, concurred in, and subscribed their names to the judgment of the Council, and when they did so, they formed a majority in consequence of Mr. McKenzie's absence.

Five of these formed the Council first called by the Church, and it would be paying a poor tribute to their judgment, integrity, and firmness, to suppose that the evidence on which they acquitted Dr. Pryor would have produced a different effect had they sat alone as an *ex parte* Council. Besides you should have remembered when you made this charge, that you had already made Dr. Pryor penniless, and had afterwards insisted that he should bear half of the expenses of the Council.

In the midst of the meaningless distinctions, and childish quibbling that disfigure the resolution, there may be discovered the controlling notion that it was for the Church members to judge the judgment of the Council, and to enquire and know *why* they should differ from the opinion which the Church had formed. The Council heard the evidence and drew a conclusion different from your conclusion. That is all, and it is enough. They might be men of juster discrimination and broader grasp of mind than you. The thing is possible. You admitted its possibility when you consented to submit the case already adjudicated by you to their review and decision; otherwise, when asked whether you recognized the assembled members as the Council between Dr. Pryor and yourselves, your answer should have been "we do,—so far as to findings which we shall approve, but we do not as to findings which we shall dislike." Again, if we discard the idea that any of the Council might be wiser than you as too improbable, yet they might be, nay, they certainly were more free from exciting influence, and that is much more important;—nay more, there may have been wounded pride, and stubborn self-will at work to pervert your judgment; this too is very possible, while the Council breathed a purer atmosphere, and saw through a medium less obscured.

You will recollect that when I asked you to adopt the judgment of this Council, I did so in a manner as little wounding to your pride as possible, by proposing that the rescinding your former resolution of exclusion should be expressed to be done in deference to the judgment and advice of the Council. When you assembled to put aside that judgment of the Council, and to show the contempt in which you held the opinions and advice of the tribunal whose opinions and advice you had invoked, by reaffirming your sentence of exclusion against Dr. Pryor with greater aggravation than before, the Church meeting should have been full and perfect. I refer not to the paucity of members present, but to the absence of the head of the body—the pastor. He should have been there;—if he approved, to have given to the Church his countenance and support; if he

disapproved, honestly to have warned them of their wrong, and to have cleared himself from participation in it. His absence from unavoidable cause, which I understand from him was the case, does not excuse the Church. They should have delayed until their pastor could have been present; nor is it any excuse that I did not urge the objection, or ask delay. It was for the Church to study the propriety of its own action. I, after making a final appeal in vain to reason and principle, disgusted with its conduct, would not have attended another meeting, as I stated at the time; and only sought to wash my hands of Granville Street Church forever.

Again, on an occasion so important, it might be expected that some member of experience and weight in the Church would introduce and explain the proceedings; but instead of this the duty was committed to one young and inexperienced, and who before the Council had not manifested the modesty, moderation, and decorum, becoming to one so young.

Nor was the resolution of the straightforward, simple, and honest character that became Christian men on such an occasion, and they who had a right to demand, and to know the grounds, on which you justified your inconsistency in calling a Council and repudiating its judgment, were entitled to something more becoming the utterances of a Church on a subject so solemn, than are the wire-drawn arguments and quibbling distinctions; the inane comparisons and impotent conclusions; the misunderstood law and uncandid representations which abound throughout this production. The reference that had been made in the first resolution of exclusion to future explanations, was as I told you at the time delusive and insulting, for you knew that no further explanations could in the nature of the case reasonably be expected, and none were expected; the pretext in the last resolution that these further explanations had not been given, was yet more disingenuous, deceptive, and unjust, after the Council had fully heard your charge, and had passed upon it by a judgment of acquittal.

The questions between us are not to be tried by either your opinion or mine as regards Dr. Pryor's innocence or guilt. Your conduct is not to be justified by your suspicion of guilt; nor are you to be condemned on my belief in Dr. Pryor's innocence, although indeed my constant and unrestrained and familiar intercourse with him has given me means of judging much superior to yours. You were at least bound to bring to the inquiry minds impartial and free from prejudice, pride, and self-will. I who followed you through all your steps, saw the motions of all these evil passions, until with some of you—I fear

with many, it seemed that the condemnation of Dr. Pryor was intensely desired, and his acquittal was looked upon as a mortifying defeat and personal wrong.

When Mr. Selden addressed to the Rev. Mr. Hunt, one of the Council, in allusion to his having asked Dr. Pryor to pray in meeting soon after the decision of the Council had been pronounced, the insulting remark:—"So you completed the whitewashing," he illustrated the bitterness of this feeling, and the pages of the *Christian Messenger* have since borne too abundant evidence of the same rancorous enmity.

In nothing has this state of mind been more apparent than in the falsehood circulated, in reference to Dr. Pryor's withdrawal from Cambridge, and his relations with the Church there. The testimonials of respect and love which he brought away, were such as fall to the lot of few ministers however devoted; yet it was boldly asserted that these were fictitious, or got up in a corner; and when proof came that could not be resisted, no honorable retraction was heard; and I understand that to this day the slander covertly circulates. Dr. Pryor left Wolfville after labouring with abundant success in the Academy, the College, and the Church, and carried with him to the United States the recorded expression of the gratitude and Christian confidence of that Church, the Professors and Students, and the warm affection of Baptists all over those portions of the Provinces where he was known. He brought back from the United States, I may say the very hearts of his own people, and the respect and esteem of numerous friends outside;—the learned and unlearned, the rich and poor, the old and young combining to acknowledge his worth. All this went for nothing in the eyes of Granville Street Church. The Council is reproached for listening to the testimony. The records from Wolfville are sought to be "rebutted"; those from Cambridge denied. This spirit comes not from Heaven.

Contrast with this the conduct of the Cambridge Church. They repel the evil report, and wait in hope, desire, and confidence to see it refuted. When the decision of the Council comes, they receive it with delight. Their old pastor visits them, and their overflowing love can hardly find scope ample enough for expression. This is Christ-like.

You have mistaken the vocation of a Christian Church. It is not a police court; nor are its members police detectives; but even a police court does not identify itself with its prosecutions, nor, if its judgment should be reversed on appeal, would it resent it as an insult

to be avenged on the party. It is true, the strong hand of the law does not restrain you as it would a police court. There was a law, however, that should have had more power over a Christian Church than human enactments,—the law of love. The impunity with which you have broken this law will not always last, nor will the self-complacency with which you assume the character of zealous defenders of Church purity always continue. Words of mercy, tenderness, and love dropped from the Saviour's lips upon every class,—but one; for the proud, vain-glorious, hard, vindictive oppressor, He had no look of kindness, no language of encouragement; nor did the cloak of zeal for religion cover from His stern scrutiny the self-righteousness and want of charity that lurked beneath.

I should do injustice were I to close without saying a word on the decision of the Council. In my opinion, whatever that may be worth, the Council delivered a just and righteous judgment, and Dr. Pryor was entitled to the acquittal they pronounced; and, as regarded the Church, they dealt in the most conciliatory manner, and used the gentlest terms, in cases in which they disapproved of its action. Their delicacy and moderation you have misconstrued and abused, quibbling on their use of the word "reconsider" instead of "rescind," although in connection with the context it can rationally point at nothing but rescinding. You trample common sense under your feet, that you may free yourself from the restraint, couched in terms the mildest, which the Council proposed to place on your self will.

Wrong and injustice may be done, and has very largely been done to Dr. Pryor, by the manner in which the evidence may be, and has been retailed and repeated. Some of the evidence, as I have before remarked, is entirely unworthy of credence; and statements to which this character does not belong, may, when unaccompanied by the attendant circumstances, or just explanation, convey a meaning different from their true import. When to this are added rumors,—some utterly false, others exaggerated misrepresentations, it will be understood how much of evil report Dr. Pryor had to contend against, and how much cause he has to complain of injustice and consequent wrong in your conduct towards him.

I have the consolation of knowing that had the advice which I urged from time to time, been followed, much of the evil now to be deplored would have been averted, without dereliction of duty or sacrifice of integrity on your part.

It but remains that I should fulfil the only duty open to me—to

separate myself from your fellowship formally, as I have been separated for some time past in fact.

I may, and probably shall join another Baptist Church, but I do not seek a dismissal. I could not receive one from you, nor could you grant one to me without each of us falsely assuming the existence of relations between us, which have been essentially, and in truth, severed.

I have, therefore, to request that you will take my name, as a member of the Granville Street Church, off the Church books, and consider me as no longer connected with you in Church relations. I am aware that this course has not met with the approval of the Association. It must, however, be evident that the subject requires renewed consideration from the ministers and members of the Baptist Churches.

And it is my earnest desire that none of you, in your own persons, or in the persons of any of your families, or friends, may ever, by bitter experience, be taught to deprecate the exercise of arbitrary power uncontrolled by Christian principle; or ever learn from its absence, in the hour of need, the value of that charity which believeth all things, hopeth all things.

I am, your obedient servant,

J. W. JOHNSTON.

---

#### POSTSCRIPT.

A statement which appeared in the *Christian Messenger*, of Nov. 29th, requires that I should append a postscript.

The editors say they have it under the hand of several members of the Council, that the action of the Church in relation to Dr. Pryor was fully anticipated by them, and was in harmony with their recommendation.

It is hard to believe that any members of the Council should have so stultified themselves. The remarks I am about to make will therefore be hypothetical, applicable or not applicable to any individual, just as the *Christian Messenger* may have published the truth or perverted it.

A comparison of the Resolutions of the Council with the Resolutions of the Church show antagonism so palpably, as to render remark needless. It is only the bold assertion in the *Christian Messenger* that justifies my observations in a matter so plain.

The Council had acquitted of the charges of immorality and fraud, and had advised the reconsideration by the Church of its action in suspending Dr. Pryor from fellowship, on the charge of fraudulent

transactions, and respecting which, the Church was reminded that the Council had delivered its decision. It must be assumed that the Council in thus advising was influenced by some reason, and had in view some object. Their acquittal was an adequate, and the only conceivable reason, and in their allusion to their own decision, we find that reason to be present to their minds, while their object is apparent from the circumstances; for if the rescinding of the resolution of suspension was not their object, their advice was without motive and without meaning.

The Council would naturally and justly desire that Dr. Pryor should be relieved from punishment for an offence of which they had pronounced him not guilty.

Your own resolution shows that this was your view of the Councils advice. You say "in approaching the reconsideration which the Council has advised, the Church is sorry to be compelled to say that they do not feel warranted in adopting the findings of the Council as their basis of reconsideration for the following reasons, etc." It would hardly have been congruous to express to the Council regret at not being able to reconsider on the basis of their findings, and to have given elaborate reasons for not doing so, if the Church had not understood that the advice of the Council indicated that basis.

In your resolutions you also give your own construction of the written decision of the Council. Of that, on the first charge you say "so positive and emphatic an expression would naturally be understood to convey to the Church, that the Council wished it to believe, that the many and suspicious facts, extending over a period of three years, adduced in support of the charges, were explicable by the Council apart from the supposition of criminality."

Of the decision on the second charge you say "it would appear to express the conviction of the Council that all the evidence in support of the charge was explicable by them on grounds consistent with honesty."

This testimony coming from you is valuable. "Under your own hand" we have the acknowledgement that the written decision of the Council conveyed not only the clear negation of Dr. Pryor's guilt, on both charges, but did so in terms that shewed that the Council believed that all the evidence in support of the charges was explicable, on grounds consistent with innocence.

You added to these admissions in each case your inferences drawn from verbal expressions asserted to have been made by the President.

You say that as publicly explained to the Church by the President

the decision on the first charge, expresses the fact that direct evidence of criminality was wanting, and that the decision on the second charge means that dishonest and fraudulent intention was not in their mind fully proved.

I have already noticed this most unworthy attempt to defeat the plain meaning of a written judgment by verbal statements. But it is pertinent, in the aspect in which the subject is now being considered, to remind you, that if Dr. Spurden and the other members of the Council were men of ordinary understanding, they must have apprehended the meaning of the paper they signed, seeing its import was so positive and emphatic as you yourselves represent to have been the case; and if they were men of ordinary integrity, and had entertained a different or more restricted opinion, they could not have signed a solemn judgment bearing a meaning variant from their real sentiments.

No member could sign the decision of the Council, unless in his heart and conscience he believed in the truth of what was there expressed, according to the plain import of the words, without violating honor and principle in no ordinary degree.

Having noticed these significant admissions, I proceed to consider what the action of the Church was, that we may be in a condition to determine whether it was in harmony with, or antagonistic to the action of the Council.

First, the Church, as I have shown for another purpose, did not feel warranted in adopting the findings of the Council as their basis of reconsideration, and refused to withdraw their condemnation on which the sentence of suspension passed, although the Council had acquitted, and as I have shewn, had referred to their decision when recommending reconsideration, in a manner that could not be, and that was not misunderstood.

There was no harmony of mind or of action here.

Secondly, The Church, after the decision of the Council, pronounced against Dr. Pryor, the most solemn judicial act in the power of a Baptist Church;—the sentence of exclusion;—and one which has the most serious consequences, except in cases where the conduct of a Church has sunk it so low as to render its acts powerless and contemptible.

They proceeded on three grounds:—1st, Dishonesty;—2nd, Immorality and impropriety;—3rd, Misconduct during the proceedings. On the first and second the Council had delivered their distinct, emphatic, written decision, that Dr. Pryor was not guilty. The third was not

before the Council, and I know not to what it refers, unless it be his expressions of honest indignation against unjust and oppressive conduct. It is significant, that on the charge of immorality, the Church itself had acquitted Dr. Pryor, before the meeting of the Council; and that it is not until after the decision of the Council pronouncing him innocent of that charge, that the Church for the first time treats him as guilty of it.

Assuredly we can find no harmony of mind or action here. Nothing can be well conceived more repulsive to men of integrity and good feeling, than the condemnation and punishment of one of whose innocence they have satisfied themselves after careful investigation; and such condemnation and punishment become an insult, if they shall have judicially investigated the case at the instance mutually of the parties accusing and accused; and their condemnation and punishment is in despite of their solemn judgment of acquittal.

It is almost impossible to conceive of a case of repulsive antagonism more strong.—To speak of harmony of action in such a case is an outrage on common sense. But here also you have given your own commentary in these words;—"The Church regrets exceedingly that such obstacles stand in the way of taking the decision of the Council as their guide in this grave matter."

It is of this conduct of the Church that Mr. Selden and his coadjutors have ventured to publish in the *Christian Messenger* this passage:

"This action, we repeat, is what was fully anticipated by several members of the Council, and in harmony with their recommendation. We have it under their hands."

What! did the same hand that signed the solemn judgment of acquittal, sign the certificate of approval;—approval that the judgment of acquittal had been treated with contempt, and that the innocent had been punished as if he were guilty?

Have words any meaning! Has truth any place in the hearts of professed Christian men?

Let the members of Granville Street Church pause and reflect;—I mean not the members steeped in the vemon of hate and pride; I mean those of them, if there be such, who have not drunk in the poison till Christian candor and honesty have withered out of their souls, and I hope I may include in this number your Pastor. Let these I say, behold the spectacle set before the world by Mr. Selden and his confreres, and reflect upon it.—This it is:—Several Christian men, ministers or members of Baptist Churches, after having accepted the elevated and important office of Judges between a Baptist Minister

and his Church, on issues the most momentous; after having placed each his own hand to a document in which they say that they "having given prolonged, patient, and prayerful attention to all the matters that have been placed before them, and to the testimony and arguments in relation to these matters, deliver their judgment herein," and then proceed to pronounce judgment of acquittal in terms clear and emphatic; and recommend to the Church reconsideration in the light of that acquittal:—after all this,—behold, these same men declaring that they fully anticipated the action of the Church by which their judgment was treated with disregard, and by which the man, whose case they were called to consider, was condemned and punished for offences of which they pronounced him innocent;—worse than this,—declaring that such conduct was in harmony with the Council's recommendation.

Members of Granville Street Church! study the spectacle. It is presented to you in the *Christian Messenger*, once supposed to be the organ of the Denomination, but which now seems to be the special organ of Granville Street Church.

But alas! it is not to you alone it is presented. Other Christian Denominations see it. The world too sees it; and they will not be deceived.

Either Mr. Selden and his associate Editors have been guilty of perverting the truth, or men of your Denomination selected for a sacred trust have manifested a miserable want of common sense or common principle. I can believe the former, for I have had occasion before to remark on Mr. Selden's want of candor:—I cannot believe the latter. When I see it under their own hands, and not before, I will believe that several members of the Council have so be-fooled or be-knaved themselves, as Mr. Selden and his associates have asserted.

There was not one individual in the Council who when he signed the decision of that body did not know the nature and force of written documents of that character, by which the interests of others are directly affected. None could have been so grossly ignorant, as not to know, that were the force and efficacy of such documents liable to be defeated, altered, or abridged, by verbal explanation, or any like subsequent acts, the safeguard of society would be undermined; and that no limit could be assigned to controversies, through the intervention of any tribunals whether appointed by law or selected by the parties. Each man, when he signed the decision of the Council, knew that by that act he was determining, as far as his opinion or authority extended, the rights and liabilities of the parties who had submitted themselves to the judgment of the Council; and that the written document,

when published, was final and conclusive, and his own authority at an end. I say each of the Council knew these things, because it seems incredible that among men of their age and position in society, should be found even one ignorant of these common principles.

If it is otherwise, the Editor of the *Christian Messenger*, by not proclaiming to the world imbecility and ignorance so gross, would have studied the honor of the Denomination, and would not have added to the wounds Granville Street Church has already inflicted on it, a spectacle so humiliating.

J. W. J.

## A P P E N D I X .

---

Extracts from Hon. Judge Johnston's letter to Granville Street Church, referred to in the foregoing publication :—

SIR,—I make the following statements and observations in connection with subjects treated of in the preamble and resolution with a copy of which you furnished me at my request ; as well as in reply to the desire of the Church, that I should furnish a written statement “ of overtures made, if any,” to the deacons, at a meeting at Mr. Nutting's, by Dr. Pryor, for a Council.

At the meeting at Mr. Nutting's alluded to, the calling of a Council of ministers was suggested by me. Dr. Pryor at once concurred, and the proposal met with general acceptance. Mr. Beckwith at first expressed reluctance, but he presently acquiesced. The conversation then turned on persons who would be suitable, and at easy distance, and many were named. The discussion concerning the members of the Council was harmonious, and altogether free from antagonism, and we parted with the expressed declaration that the deacons should recommend to the Church at its approaching meeting the calling of a Council on all the matters relating to Dr. Pryor.

Dr. Pryor's desire that a Council should be called, was heartily and earnestly expressed ; there was nothing to lead me to suppose that the disposition of the deacons in favour of the measure was not sincere ; and the engagement was one from which neither party could with propriety recede without the consent of the other, except on some imperative reason.

I beg that it be remembered that at that time the report of the Committee, with the evidence, had not been presented to the Church, and that the appointment of a Council might have prevented their publicity, until after judicious and impartial brethren had considered the whole case ;—a thing surely not unreasonable in view of the interests of religion, and certainly very important to Dr. Pryor, as tending to avoid hasty and premature opinions to his prejudice. The deacons, without the consent of Dr. Pryor, failed to carry out this engagement.

On the afternoon before the Church was to meet, Mr. Selden and Dr. Parker informed me that the intention of calling a Council had been abandoned, in consequence of the opposition that prevailed among members of the Church. It was mentioned as a reason assigned by some, that one of the charges against Dr. Pryor being connected with accounts,—subjects that ministers were not generally qualified to deal with,—and a Council being therefore inappropriate for that matter, it was not thought expedient to call one on the other charge. Mr. Selden and Dr. Parker also mentioned that after the meeting at Mr. Nutting's, there had been a meeting of deacons, and the two Committees, (of which I had not any knowledge,) and that

resolutions had been prepared to be moved at the approaching Church meeting which they then came to submit to me; and they spoke in such connection that I clearly understood that the proposal for a Council had been over-ruled at that meeting, and these resolutions then substituted. On a future occasion, one or more of the Committee denied that at the meeting referred to, the proposal for a Council had been considered. Dr. Parker seemed to admit this; and explained that the opposition to a Council which he and Mr. Selden had referred to, came from members of the Church, irrespective of that meeting.

It is unnecessary that I should insist on the impression plainly made on my mind by the communication of these two deacons; nor is it necessary to enquire whether they obtained their knowledge of the existence of opposition to the calling of a Council at a meeting, or by individual intercourse with members, or whether the opposition was more or less universal; it is enough that Mr. Selden and Dr. Parker considered the opposition existing in the Church to the calling of a Council to be such as to justify them in abandoning that measure, notwithstanding their arrangements with Dr. Pryor.

This communication filled me with surprise and perplexity, and after short reflection, I saw no course left but to accept the resolution which they submitted to me touching the charge of immoral conduct. It was confined to the dissolving of the pastoral relation. I knew that the power of the Church in that particular could not be long resisted; and Mr. Selden and Dr. Parker assured me that in drawing that resolution the intention had been to reject any imputation of guilt, and to ground it solely on the fact of indiscretion. As I then heard it, that seemed its necessary construction, and it was amended and made more explicit in that respect at a subsequent meeting of the Church. Having consented to the disposal of that charge, I suggested the leaving out of needless preambles, and some modification in form. This concurrence has been used disingenuously since.

When the Church met in the evening, this resolution was put, and I supposed that the charge against Dr. Pryor had been, as far as the Church was concerned, finally disposed of. The charge connected with Miss Vass' accounts stood over, and was not brought to a conclusion until several weeks after, when certain mistakes and incorrect charges made by Dr. Pryor on both sides of the account, having been ascertained, the question for the Church was narrowed to a single point, viz., whether the incorrect charges made to Miss Vass' prejudice, had been made by Dr. Pryor knowingly and fraudulently. I believed, and urged on the Church, that the facts did not warrant the assumption of a fraudulent purpose;—failing in this, I besought them to submit that question to a Council, rather than venture themselves on the hazardous responsibility of undertaking to read the heart, and condemn a brother on such an issue;—and surely none can be better qualified for a question of that nature than ministers. I again failed. My motion for a Council was negatived 12 to 8, and then followed a vote of condemnation on the main question, by which Dr. Pryor was degraded and worse than excluded.

\* \* \* \* \*

At a Church meeting after the late Central Association, a discussion having arisen as to contradictory statements made at the association respecting the calling of a Council, by Dr. Pryor and Messrs Selden and Beckwith, after hearing the explanations made, I charged those two deacons with having been guilty of disingenuously misleading the association by the suppression of the truth. Mr. Beckwith declared that he would not be satisfied until that charge had been cleared away. I

was not present at the Church meeting, when the resolution and preambles under consideration were passed, but judging from their tenor they are designed for this clearing away.

I am sorry to be obliged to say that this Church record is of precisely the same disingenuous nature, as were the statements of the two deacons. The artifice consists in asserting a fact which is true, but from which an inference arises that is inconsistent with the truth, when all the facts are known. The whole document partakes of this character. The last resolution is a flagrant example. It runs thus:

*Resolved*, That this Church affirms that at its next meeting following the meeting of the deacons referred to, at which Dr. Pryor was present the greater part of the evening, and which was convened especially to pass finally upon the charge of Dr. Pryor in relation to Mrs. M——, no proposal was made by Dr. Pryor, the deacons, or other members of the Church for a Council to advise upon the charges under consideration."

Here is a strong affirmation, such as is used when a fact is controverted, and the affirmation is made in relation to the contention, whether a Council had been desired and denied, and in that connection the necessary inference is that a Council, not having been asked, had not been denied; and the further inference may reasonably be made from such an affirmation, in such a connection, that had it been asked, a Council would have been granted. Such is the inference which any stranger to the circumstances would draw. Such is the inference that this Church record, as it stands, will carry in its face for time to come. Here stands the condemnation of Dr. Pryor's statement; there stands the vindication of the statement of deacons Selden and Beckwith; and yet these inferences are all false, and known to be false when the resolutions were passed. The members of the Church who passed the preambles and resolution, knew that it was not asserted that any application had been made at the Church meeting alluded to for a Council, and that the affirmation was uncalled for, and illusory; but they knew also, some of them as parties in the transaction, and others from explanations made in their hearing, the reason why it had not been moved; for they knew that a Council had been desired and agreed upon, and that the agreement to move for a Council made by the deacons had not been acted upon, because of the repugnance and opposition existing among the members of the Church, to the calling of a Council; and they knew that in consequence of that opposition, a different course had been followed at the meeting from that previously agreed upon. Knowing all this, the two deacons Selden and Beckwith having at the association concealed, and misrepresented the truth under verbal evasions, the Church members who have united in the resolution now seek to justify them, making truth the servant of falsehood. They ask what "overtures" Dr. Pryor made for a Council. It may be said he made none, but nevertheless he desired and agreed to a Council. With confident boldness they assert, he never applied for a Council to a meeting of the Church," yet he agreed with the deacons, that they should move for, and recommend one to the Church. They raise the inference that he was never refused a Council, and that it might have been had for the asking, when the Council was not moved for, only because of the opposition existing to it in the Church. Surely these Church members have to learn the first lessons on the nature of truth.

Let the members of Granville Street Church remember that as often as they represent or insinuate under any pretext or form of expression, that Dr. Pryor

failed to have a Council, because he did not desire it, and not because the Church would not have it, they brand their own deacons, Selden and Parker, with fraud and falsehood in their communications with me. There is no escape from this dilemma. If there was no insuperable or known obstacle in the way of a Council, owing to opposition in the Church, then I was grossly deceived by these deacons, and through me Dr. Pryor was grossly defrauded. On the other hand, if those deacons did not deceive me, then it is a fact that Dr. Pryor, having desired a Council on both charges, at an early stage of the proceedings, one was not moved for, and had, because of objections against a Council prevailing among members of the Church. But I believe those gentlemen in that instance did not deceive me. I believe as well from what they told me, as from what I heard and saw myself afterwards, that there was in the Church a wide-spread opposition to a Council, and any attempt to elude that fact is but a warring against the truth, all the more despicable when cloaked under verbal evasions.

\* \* \* \* \*

---

The following resolutions and other statements are published, for the purpose of explaining the circumstances referred to in the foregoing Letter.

Resolution passed May 10th; amended May 17th, 1867:—

*Whereas*, On the 26th day of April, a meeting of the Church was held in the vestry for the purpose of receiving from our pastor, Rev. Dr. Pryor, certain statements in reference to reports derogatory to his moral character, and he having explained his motives and the reasons for his conduct on the occasion referred to, and having denied all criminality, a Committee was appointed, consisting of brethren S. Selden, R. N. Beckwith, T. H. Rand, H. N. Paint, and W. Ackhurst, to investigate said reports. The said Committee having presented their report, consisting of the statements made to them by the several parties who were examined.

*Be it therefore resolved*, That the Church are unwilling to believe, and have no positive proof of criminality in the cases mentioned in the evidence given, and as opposed to suspicions, we have the tried character of our pastor, as a minister of the Gospel, through a long series of years, and his faithful and affectionate services among ourselves, as well as his solemn denial of the present charges. The Church, however, are compelled to express their conviction that Dr. Pryor's indiscretion has been so great, as appears by the evidence, and by his own statement, that we regard it as having destroyed all hope of his further usefulness as a pastor in connection with this Church.

Resolution passed May 30th:—

*Whereas*, On the 27th of April the brethren in meeting assembled, in presence of Dr. Pryor, who assented thereto, did appoint a Committee, consisting of brethren E. G. W. Greenwood, George Fraser, and Horatio Vaux, for the purpose of investigating certain charges made by Miss Vass against Dr. Pryor, and also the difficulty existing between brother John McVean and Miss Vass, and Dr. Pryor as her agent.

*And Whereas*, The said Committee, after receiving a list of said charges, and the books and papers, furnished by Dr. Pryor, containing the accounts between

Miss Vass and Dr. Pryor, and assented to by them severally, as representing said accounts correctly, have given said books and papers a most patient, careful, and searching examination, and after placing the results of their investigations before Dr. Pryor, failed to obtain from him satisfactory explanations of the apparent defalcations, have reported to this Church the said charges, and the basis on which they rest, as exhibited by the documents placed in their hands by the Rev. Dr. Pryor.

*And Whereas,* The Church, having heard from Dr. Pryor his explanations of said accounts and incorrect entries.

*And Whereas,* Dr. Pryor has expressed his entire satisfaction with the manner in which the Committee had conducted their investigation of his accounts, as well as with the time allowed him by the Church to prepare his defence, read at two consecutive meetings and appended to the Committee's report.

*Be it therefore resolved,* That the Church do not consider the explanations satisfactory, as accounting for the overcharges and inaccuracies in the accounts submitted, and that whilst we are unwilling to believe that Dr. Pryor had any intention of fraud, and would still hope that further light will be thrown on the matter, they feel that several of the facts elicited are of so grave a character, and apparently confirmatory of the charges made, that they demand of us the fulfilment of a most painful duty—that of suspending fellowship with Dr. Pryor until such time as he shall afford satisfactory explanation to the Church.

On the receipt of this Dr. Pryor sent the following reply:—

*To the Deacons and Members of Granville Street Baptist Church,—*

I have received a copy of a resolution passed at a meeting of male members of the Church last night, by which I am suspended from the fellowship of the Church until such time as I shall afford satisfactory explanations to the Church.

The effect of this mode of dealing with me is at once cruel and insulting.

Those who have passed that resolution cannot but know that this reference to further explanations, is, from the nature of the circumstances, no better than a mockery so far as I am concerned. How far it comports with candour and manliness on their part, this is not the time nor the occasion to enquire.

In this crafty and most insidious resolution, not one word is said, nor even a hint given, that the mistakes were as great against myself as against Miss Vass; not one word to let it be known that the Committee themselves, on further investigation, had requested to be allowed to alter their report, so as to show that even in one single account, that of Mr. McVean, an error had been discovered of more than eight hundred dollars; that instead of the mistake being upwards of \$1000 it was but little over two hundred; that on the very last day of my appearing before the Church, an error of upwards of \$70 was discovered, which I had, as in several other instances, made against myself; thus carefully and wilfully excluding every extenuating circumstance, while putting in the strongest light everything that could be construed against me.

The individuals who have passed this resolution, must also know that after the treatment I have received from them, I never could, under any circumstances, desire to renew a communion with them which they have thus harshly broken, or again place myself in the hands of men, who, in the exercise of the great power which a Baptist Church possesses, have shewn how little they appreciate those Gospel principles which were designed to regulate and control that power.

Under such circumstances, to retain me still a member of the Church in name,

and subject to its power, while condemned as unworthy of its privileges, is a refinement of cruelty and wrong.

I must, therefore, require that, in common justice to me, my name be erased from your books as a member, and that the separation between us be final in this world.

It is my great consolation that, in the next world, those who have voted for the resolution passed last night will not be my judges.

*Halifax, May 31st, 1867.*

JOHN PRYOR.

Dr. Pryor then appealed from this decision of the Church to the Central Baptist Association. The Association voted the following :

That this Association recommend the Granville Street Church to invite a Council, to be mutually chosen by Dr. Pryor and the Church, to consider the charges that have been made against Dr. Pryor, and the action of the Church thereon.

This recommendation was approved of by Granville Street Church.

The Church and Dr. Pryor then entered into negotiations respecting the calling of a Council, which resulted in nothing definite, owing to the inability of the parties to agree upon preliminaries.

Granville Street Church then invited an *ex parte* Council.

Dr. Pryor then sent to the Church a letter objecting to this action, and soon afterwards sent the following :—

HALIFAX, JULY 25, 1867.

*To the Deacons and Members of Granville Street Church,—*

It being evident to me, if not to the Church themselves, from their whole proceedings, almost from the very beginning of their inquiry into the reports derogatory to my character, that they have not been influenced by any sincere desire to establish my innocence if it could rightly be done, but rather to make their first step in the case (*viz.*, their suspending me from my pastoral duties on the Sabbath) to appear a righteous act, though in aiming thus to do they must condemn me rightly or wrongly; and the matter being now by them narrowed down into an absolute personal hostility toward myself; and all overtures of mine being rejected, and all propositions made by me being refused by the Church; nothing now is left for me to do, if I would have a mutual Council, but to assent to the Church's own terms and to yield to their exactions.

Though I do still continue to protest against the right of the Church *ex parte sua* to dictate to me, or to the Council, by the so-called "Basis," formed by the Church at a private meeting, of which I had no intimation, and could not, therefore, be present, though, assuredly, I was the party most deeply concerned in the proceedings and results of the Council,—a body which was to have for its enquiry my reputation, dearer to me than life; still, being now, as I have been from the first, exceedingly desirous that there should be a Council mutually chosen in accordance with the advice of the Association, I am forced, by the action of the Church, to waive all my objections to the Basis, and to submit to the dictation of the Church. My position leaves me no alternative in the matter; and under pressure I am forced to yield up my just rights to your demands, in order that an *ex parte* Council may be avoided, and a Council be formed upon mutual choice.

I make, therefore, this concession to you, that such a Council as you propose in your Basis be formed; only stipulating that the number composing the Council shall be enlarged—four ministers and two lay brethren to be chosen by the Church, and the same number by myself; all relatives of mine, and of that portion of the Church which has taken part in these proceedings heretofore conducted by you, to be excluded. This will form a Council of twelve, by no means too large a number, when the interests at stake, and the consequences resulting from their action, are considered. By this concession I shall be compelled to give up the benefits, as well to the Church as to myself, which would have resulted from the matured wisdom, long experience, and high standing in the Denomination of the Rev. Dr. Crawley, who was the only one of my relatives, if relative he can be called, whom I had the intention of nominating to the Council.

JOHN PRYOR.

To this the following reply was sent:—

HALIFAX, JULY 27, 1867.

*Rev. Sir,*—Your communication of the 25th inst, relative to a Council, &c., was received yesterday afternoon, and I shall place it before the Church at the first opportunity.

I am, sir, yours truly,

REV. DR. PRYOR.

B. H. EATON, *Clerk.*

JULY 29, 1867.

In accordance with the resolution I handed you a few days ago, I have now to state to you that the proposed Council will be convened in Halifax, on Thursday, August 8th. I will notify you of the hour and place of meeting as soon as I can do so. The Council will consist of Rev. Dr. Spurden, Rev. Charles Randall, Rev. John Davis, T. R. Patillo, Esq., and Wm. Faulkner, Esq.

Yours, &c.,

B. H. E.

To this Dr. Pryor sent the following reply:—

HALIFAX, JULY 29, 1867.

*Brenton H. Eaton, Esq.,—*

DEAR SIR,—I have just received a note from you. I should be glad to be informed whether it is a private communication or whether it is sent to me by the direction and order of the Church.

I can scarcely conceive it can be from the Church after I had stated “that I would not place myself in connection with a Council, in the appointment of which I had no voice,” and which “is in direct opposition to the advice of the Association.”

Please inform me distinctly whether your note is by order or resolution of the Church, and at what time the Church meeting was held at which the resolution was passed; and whether my communication respecting its *ex parte* Council was submitted to any regularly called meeting of the Church.

Yours truly,

JOHN PRYOR.

To this the following replies were received:—

HALIFAX, JULY 30, 1867.

*Rev. Sir,*—In reply to your note of yesterday just received, allow me to say that my note, of which you speak, was not sent by special direction or order of the

Church, but was conceived by me to be rendered necessary by the resolution previously handed you, which required that you be notified of the convening of the Council. I was unable, till then, to state the time at which those comprising the Council could assemble. Your communication respecting an *ex parte* Council has not yet been submitted to any meeting of the Church, but a meeting was announced on Lord's day for Wednesday evening, at which I will submit it.

I am, sir, yours truly,

B. H. EATON.

HALIFAX, AUGUST 1, 1867.

*Rev. Sir*,—I am directed to say, in reply to your communication of the 25th ult., that the lateness of its receipt and the character of its language (as well as that of the 17th ult.,) both preclude the Church from giving any further consideration to the proposals contained in it.

I am, sir, yours truly,

REV. DR. PRYOR.

B. H. EATON, *Clerk*.

The *ex parte* Council thus called by the Church then met at Halifax on the 8th day of August.

Dr. Pryor refused to attend their meeting or to recognize their authority, and sent to each of the members a written protest against their acting in any matter affecting him, but expressing his continuous desire to unite in the mutual Council recommended by the Association.

Several interviews and some correspondence then took place between Dr. Pryor and these gentlemen, when, at the suggestion of the latter, Granville Street Church consented to a mutual Council of twelve, and added to the five, which they had already selected, the Rev. Stephen March.

Dr. Pryor selected, on his part, the Revds. I. E. Bill, A. S. Hunt, George Armstrong and W. S. McKenzie, and James E. Rand and Abel M. Wheelock, Esqrs., forming in all a Council of twelve.

This Council met at Granville Street Church on Thursday, 29th August, and organized by the appointment of the Rev. Dr. Spurden as Chairman, and the Rev. Messrs. McKenzie and Armstrong as Secretaries.

The Council, as the result of their investigation, extending over seven days, unanimously made the following deliverance, Rev. Mr. McKenzie being then absent:—

#### DECISION OF THE COUNCIL.

This Council having been called in this place in conjunction with their late Pastor, to consider certain difficulties which had arisen between him and them, and having given prolonged, patient, and prayerful attention to all the matters that have been placed before them, and to the testimony and arguments in relation to these matters, deliver their judgment herein, in manner and form as follows.

**FIRST ALLEGATION.**—"That Dr. Pryor is guilty of immorality and gross impropriety in regard to Mrs. M. McM., and Mrs. R. M.

*Resolved 1.*—That in the opinion of this Council, Dr. Pryor is not guilty of immorality as charged in the Allegation: yet it is the same time, the opinion of this Council that Dr. Pryor has shewn great want of discretion in the character of his visits to Mrs. M. McM.

*Resolved 2.*—That in the absence of all evidence in the case of Mrs. R. M., the Council dismiss the said case.

**SECOND ALLEGATION.**—"That Dr. Pryor is guilty of dishonest and fraudulent dealings in conducting the affairs of Miss A. Vass."

*Resolved 1.*—That the Council acquit Dr. Pryor of dishonest and fraudulent intentions in his dealings as the agent of Miss Vass: but they are of the opinion that it was most unwise in him to take the management of her accounts at all, and that he is chargeable with incompetency in keeping accounts, and culpable negligence in not preserving vouchers.

**THIRD.**—The action of the Church. Viz.:

Whether the action of the Church relative to the affairs before referred to, and to Dr. Pryor, was such as should have taken under all circumstances, and if not, why not, and what course the Church should have adopted.

The Council find that the Deacons of the Church have been accused of precipitancy in virtually suspending Dr. Pryor, from the exercise of his pulpit duties on the occurrence of the unhappy incident in Pleasant Street.

*Resolved 1.*—That the Council is of opinion, that in view of the circumstances forced upon the Church, and for the consideration of which time could not then be obtained, the Deacons, whatever mistakes they may have committed in the discharge of the duties so suddenly devolved upon them, ought not to be charged with the want of affection on account of such mistakes: it nevertheless might have been better, if the Deacons had sought a personal interview with Dr. Pryor, and consulted with him in reference to the services of the approaching Sabbath.

The Council further find that the Church is regarded as blameable for having refused to call a Council at an earlier period in the history of the whole case.

*Resolved 1.*—That the Council are not able to decide upon the particular question. But in relation to the whole matter of calling a Council in critical cases of a difficult nature between Pastor and people, we are of opinion that for the interests of all parties concerned, an advisory Council will generally be found desirable, and that such a procedure is in harmony with the practice of the Churches in these Provinces.

*Resolved 2.*—That in relation to the suspension of Dr. Pryor on the charge of fraudulent transactions in the affairs of Miss Vass, the Council is of opinion, after a careful examination of the whole matter, in relation to which this Council has already delivered its decision, that it would be desirable for the Church to reconsider their action thereon.

Such is the judgment on all the above points at which the Council has arrived. They would have desired to add a few sentences, embodying thought and counsels, suggested by the matters which have come before them. The time at their disposal however forbids this. They may utter somewhat in the above way, but cannot

write anything further. They can only commend the late Pastor of this Church, with its Deacons and members to the care and guidance of the great Head of the Church. May he dispose, counsel, and direct them to all that is well pleasing in his sight, and beneficial to his cause. May he render the efforts of the Council which is now about to be dissolved conducive to these great ends. May he at last bring us all to the world of purity, and rest: the members of this Council will not regret the toil which they have at this time been led to devote to the cause of Christ in this place, and in heaven we shall all rejoice together in the result of our common labors, and in the salvation of our common Lord.

(Signed.) CHARLES SPURDEN, Fredericton, N.B., *President*.  
 GEORGE ARMSTRONG, Bridgetown, N.S., *Secretary*.  
 JOHN DAVIS, Charlottetown, P.E.I.  
 I. E. BILL, St. John, N.B.  
 A. S. HUNT, Cornwallis, N.S.  
 CHARLES RANDALL, Weymouth, Digby, N.S.  
 STEPHEN MARCH, Bridgewater, N.S.  
 T. R. PATILLO, Liverpool, N.S.  
 JAMES E. RAND, Cornwallis, N.S.  
 W. FAULKNER, Truro, N.S.  
 ABEL M. WHELOCK, Wilmot, N.S.

Rev. W. S. MCKENZIE, had to leave before the close of the proceedings.

HALIFAX, September 5th, 1867.

On the 24th September, 1867, the Granville Street Church met, the following Report was adopted.

The Committee appointed by the Church, to examine the Copy of the Minutes of the Council, or any evidence obtainable by them, with a view of furnishing new facts or considerations, if any, for the information of the Church, in carrying out the recommendation of the Council, beg to report, that they have been unable to find in the minutes of the Council, and in the minutes of evidence obtained by them, any facts or considerations calculated to explain the difficulties in connexion with the series of pecuniary transactions, which have hitherto prevented the Church from entertaining a more favourable consideration of the acts of Dr. Pryor involved in the same.

(Signed.) B. H. EATON, *Secretary*.  
 D. McN. PARKER,  
 GEO. FRASER.

Mr. Nutting was also one of the Committee, but could not act.

Mr. Rand still to sign.

The following Resolution was passed:—

The decision of the Council with a copy of their minutes having been submitted to, and carefully considered by this meeting:—

*Resolved*.—That with respect to the recommendation which concludes the decision, the Church regard it as alike due to the Council, and to Dr. Pryor that that recommendation be promptly acted upon, but in approaching the reconsideration which the Council have advised, the Church is sorry to be compelled to say that they do not feel warranted in adopting the findings of the Council as their basis of reconsideration, for the following among other reasons:—

1.—The Council, in framing a *moral* decision, which, from the great notoriety both of the charges made, and of the vehement denial of the accused of his guilt,

must of necessity obtain a very wide circulation, have adopted the formula of the verdict of a jury instead of the unequivocal language of the deliverance of a Church Council.

The decision on the first charge reads thus: "that in the opinion of the Council, Dr. Pryor is not guilty of immorality as charged in the Allegations." So positive and emphatic an expression would naturally be understood to convey to the Church, that the Council wished it to believe that the many and suspicious facts extending over a period of three years adduced in support of the charges were explicable by the Council apart from the supposition of criminality; whereas, as publicly explained to the Church, by the President of the Council, it expresses the facts that direct evidence of criminality was wanting.

The decision on the second charge "that the Council acquit Dr. Pryor of dishonest or fraudulent intention, in his dealings as the agent of Miss Vass," would appear to express the conviction of the Council, that all the evidence in support of the charge, was explicable by them on grounds consistent with honesty; whereas, as publicly explained by the President of the Council to the Church, it means that dishonest and fraudulent intention was not to their minds fully proved.

The decision is not correct in the case of Mrs. M——, inasmuch as the Church put in evidence, and the Council received certain statements made by Dr. Pryor to a Committee of the Church, and reduced to writing, suggested by Dr. Pryor himself, (see copy of minutes of Council, 7th Session). The decision is unaccompanied by the evidence adduced, and does not show how the Council reached their conclusions in the face of the evidence. The Church were anxious to be informed how the facts adduced by them in support of their charges could consist with the absence of guilt. With respect to the action of the Church, they take this opportunity of saying that the decision is meagre and vague. They asked "Whether their action was such as should have been taken under all the circumstances; and if not, why not; and what course the Church should have adopted;" and although that action extended over a period of four months, and embraced many important points in Church government and discipline, in regard to which the Church fully expected a definite and guiding opinion, yet only two subjects are mentioned in the decision, viz., the charge of "precipitancy in virtually suspending Dr. Pryor on the occurrence of the unhappy incident in Pleasant Street," etc., and the matter of calling a Council, on one only of which a decision was given. In regard to the former, the Council say, "whatever mistakes" the deacons may have committed, they are not, in view of the suddenness with which their duties devolved upon them, chargeable with want of affection. What mistakes did the deacons make? The Church wished, and considered themselves entitled to be specifically informed upon this point.

2. While investigating the charges against Dr. Pryor, the Council, notwithstanding the objections of the Church thereto, adopted the procedure of courts of law, instead of that of advisory Church Councils; but in considering the action of the Church, they reversed their method of proceeding. The Council would not admit the testimony given and signed by Margaret Robinson before a Committee of the Church; whilst at the same time they received, as evidence from Dr. Pryor and Dr. Crawley, purely *ex parte* documentary testimony in regard to Dr. Pryor's character. Though conducting the proceedings after the manner of courts of law, the Council denied the Church the right to cross-examine Dr. Pryor or Dr. Crawley in regard to a portion of the former's past life in the ministry, or to adduce

certain important rebutting testimony in reference thereto, notwithstanding he and his advocate were allowed to testify *ad libitum* with respect to the spotlessness of Dr. Pryor's past life.

Though conducting the proceedings after the manner of courts of law, many of the Councillors were the constant guests of the accused and his advocates.

The Church regret exceedingly that such obstacles stand in the way of taking the decision of the Council as their guide in this grave matter, because the Council laboured long and patiently in their investigations, and because the adoption of the decision would have relieved the Church from a grave responsibility, which they now feel morally bound as a Church of Christ to assume.

On the 30th of May last, the Church suspended fellowship with Dr. Pryor, until such time as he should afford satisfactory explanations of certain statements apparently confirmatory of the charges under consideration. The main question now is whether such explanation has been furnished. After carefully considering all the evidence adduced before the Council, the Church are forced to conclude that it has not been furnished, and therefore they cannot rescind their resolution of suspension, and they see no prospect of any further light being thrown upon the matter.

Considering these things, and the character of the evidence adduced in support of the charge of immorality and impropriety, and Dr. Pryor's conduct during the whole course of the proceedings relating to him, the Church have no course left, but to declare the termination of Dr. Pryor's connection with them as a member, and they do hereby withdraw fellowship from him.

The above resolution was moved by the Clerk, B. H. Eaton, and seconded by Brother Paint, and passed with one dissenting voice.

September 24th 1867.

The foregoing resolutions and letters contain everything which is believed to be necessary for the clear apprehension of this Letter. Nothing has been omitted but what affected points of comparative unimportance, or those, the substance of which is comprised in what is now published.

---

The following are letters to which allusion is made in the foregoing Letter :—

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., January 21st, 1867.

REV. DR. PRYOR,

*My Dear Brother,*—The Old Cambridge Baptist Church, after granting, at your request, a letter of dismissal to yourself and Mrs. Pryor, to unite with the Church at Halifax, felt that they could not let the connection which has bound them to you for so many years be severed, without some special expression of the affectionate esteem with which they continue to regard you, and the regret with which they are reminded afresh of the painful sundering of ties which are still dear to their memory. After listening to remarks which breathed a spirit of the utmost kindness and affection for you personally, and of tender and judicious appreciation of your faithfulness as pastor and friend during the whole period of your ministry among them, they requested me, by vote, to convey to you in a special letter (to accompany your letter of dismissal) their sentiments of undiminished attachment and regard.

My dear brother, I feel how incompetent I am to do justice to the task assigned me; for to adequately express what I have been deputed to convey to you, would require of me to give you a transcript of many hearts, whose depth of emotion at sundering the last formal tie that bound you and them together as members of the same visible Church, sought its only suitable expression in tears. Surely, if it be the part of a good pastor to win the hearts of his people, and to leave behind him, at his departure, lasting memorials of his influence and power, you have much to look back upon with pleasing recollection as you pass in review your connection with this Church. The five years which have elapsed since you left them, have only served to mellow their attachment, which yet shows no signs of decay.

Permit me also to add my personal testimony to the universal kindness and affection with which your name has always been mentioned in my hearing during the nearly four years of my connection with this Church.

And now that the pleasing relationship which for nearly seventeen years has existed between you and this people, is broken,—with what regret on their part, I need not tell you,—it remains but to add the assurance of their warmest and best wishes for the happiness and prosperity of yourself and family among friends who are even older in your affection, but not more warmly attached, than those whom you have left behind you.

In behalf of the Church,

With esteem and affection,

Your brother in Christ,

COURTLAND W. ANABLE,

REV. JNO. PRYOR, D.D., Halifax, N.S.

*Pastor.*

We, the subscribers, at the request of Dr. Crawley, as a friend of Dr. Pryor, the former pastor of the Baptist Church in Old Cambridge, hereby declare that we were intimately acquainted with Dr. Pryor, during his residence among us, and are in circumstances to know fully his reputation in this place; that we have heard with inexpressible surprise and pain, the recent reports prejudicial to the character of Dr. Pryor, and that so contrary are those reports to everything which we have ever known or heard, or had even the slightest cause to suspect of Dr. Pryor, that we do not hesitate to declare, emphatically, our utter disbelief of them; that during a residence among us of nearly twelve years, Dr. Pryor invariably bore himself as a Christian minister should,—faithful, devoted, and beloved in the Lord; that his character was above reproach, and without the slightest shadow of suspicion; that we never heard at any time even the slightest imputation against him, in any respect, and do not believe that any exists in this community, or that there were ever any grounds or occasion for such imputation; but that, on the contrary, as expressed in the letter accompanying the letter of dismissal given to Dr. Pryor, the highest confidence, esteem and affection are entertained for him as a man and a Christian minister.

We likewise declare that the said letter of dismissal was not passed by a party vote in the Church, nor by a few individuals, but unanimously at a largely attended public Church meeting, with the fullest knowledge, consent and good will of all; and further, that there is not now, and never has been, a division of sentiment in our Church respecting the character of Dr. Pryor, but that the letter accompanying said letter of dismissal expresses, truthfully, the estimation in which he is held universally in the Church, and so far as we know, or have any reason to believe, in

the community, and was written by direction of the Church, as unanimously resolved at the same meeting at which the letter of dismissal was granted, to express to their late beloved Pastor, a rare instance, after the lapse of so many years, of warmly cherished affection and undiminished esteem.

COURTLAND W. ANABLE,	<i>Pastor.</i>	
JOSIAH COOLIDGE,		} <i>Deacons.</i>
J. B. DANA,		
W. T. RICHARDSON,		
AUSTIN J. COOLIDGE,	<i>Church Clerk.</i>	
J. B. DANA,		} <i>Standing Committee.</i>
JAMES H. THAYER,		
GEO. H. WHITTEMORE,		

[In signing the above, I except the single statement that I was intimately acquainted with Dr. Pryor during his residence in Cambridge. I had no personal acquaintance with him at that time. But his name is honored and beloved in the entire community and in all the Churches. The above Subscribers constitute the entire Board of Officers of the Church, with the exception of one member of the Standing Committee, who is a stranger to Dr. Pryor, and is now removed from Cambridge. If it were necessary to obtain further testimonials to the Christian character and high moral and ministerial standing of Dr. Pryor in this vicinity, they can, and, if thought best, will be readily furnished.

COURTLAND W. ANABLE.

## ERRATA.

PAGE 9—Lines 31 and 36, erase the word “the” before “members.”

11—Line 12, erase “they.”

Line 15, instead of the words “of finding” read “the finding of.”

13—Line 19, read “other” in place of “others.”

28—Line 14, read “the” in place of “their.”

31—Line 22, add “s” to “report” and “Committee.”

33—Line 18, read “desired” in place of “denied.”

40—Line 6, after “will not” insert “then.”









