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LETTERS

ADDRESSED TO THOMAS BULLOCK,

MODERATOR OF THE LEXHORN ASSOCIATION;

OCCASIONED BY A PUBLICATION ENTITLED

A RESPONSE, &C.

Fishback, James

Letters addressed . . .

BY JAMES FISHBACK,

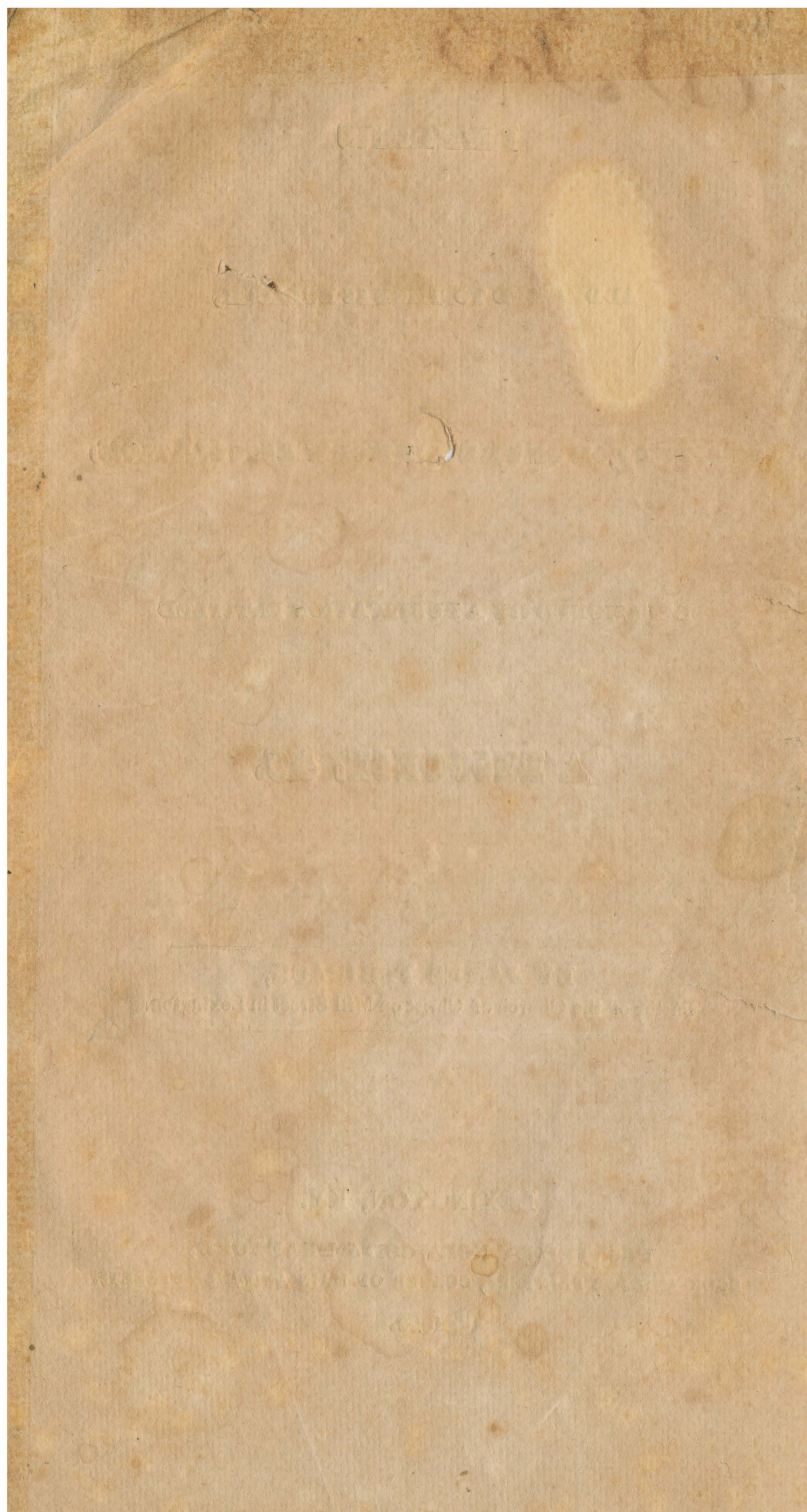
Pastor of the Church of Christ on Mill Street in Lexington.

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Letter X.

To THOMAS BULLOCK, *Moderator of the Elkhorn Association.*

SIR,

You have read, I suppose, the publication improperly entitled a Response to the Address of the Church of Christ on Mill Street in Lexington. That Address was designed to expose the improper conduct of several individuals, and of the Elkhorn Association at her last meeting towards that Church, and to defend her character against reproach.

The Response is said to have been written by Elder W. C. Buck, of Green River, and is signed by Abraham S. Drake, Joel Wallingsford, William Poindexter, W. T. Smith, and Peter Hedenburgh. It is an abusive attack upon myself, and is of such a nature, as almost to have determined me to permit it to pass without any public notice; this perhaps I should have done, but for the advice of some of my friends. Engaged in endeavouring honestly to discharge the duties incident to my station in life, I feel but little concern about the abuse I may receive in consequence of it; my chief anxiety is to have a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men in what I do, and am willing to leave the issue to the searcher of hearts. I am not answerable for the falsehoods and slander which others may be guilty of against me, nor is the christian religion under which they may cloak themselves in practicing them.

You know, Sir, that the Church formerly denominated the First Baptist Church of Lexington, at her April meeting last, in consequence of the long existence of many afflicting dif-

faculties, arising from the conduct of a number of perverse spirits that were in it, adopted a paper consisting of a preamble and resolutions, the design of which was to renew her declaration of allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to place herself with an humble prayerful spirit directly under his guidance and care according to the gospel, and thereby endeavour to obtain his help in her time of need. That paper contained among other things, a change of the denomination of the Church, from the First Baptist Church of Lexington, to The Church of Christ on Mill Street in Lexington, and rejected every thing but the word of God from her faith and order. Deistical or natural religionist christians, cannot see why we should give such exclusive use and importance to the word of God, and reject every thing else in religion. By Deistical christians, I mean those who believe that the fall of man, did not entirely deprive him of the knowledge of God as well as of the love of him; or those who believe that human depravity consists in the natural want of a right disposition alone without the natural want of spiritual ideas and knowledge, and which has led to the incorrect opinion of the distinction between natural and moral ability, as consisting in the possession of the *natural* knowledge of God independent of *any revelation* without the love of him. Such christians, I apprehend, have not duly considered the intellectual and moral necessities there are, in the present state and constitution of man, for the existence and agency of Jesus Christ in his word, and name and mediatorial character, in imparting ideas and knowledge of Divine existence, and of spiritual things, and in producing right affections and conduct.

In his name, through his word, and by his mediation, spiritual knowledge, and divine influence are communicated. Yes, it is through the rich, blessed, Divine atonement of Jesus Christ and his powerful intercession, that all spiritual light, life, faith, hope, love and joy descend upon our world, and into the hearts of sinners. For the use of the name and word of Jesus Christ, see Sect. 5, p. 50 of the Address.

To show the deceit of Drake and his infatuated committee in their affected concern about the name of Baptist in their publication, in the change of the denomination of the Church, I ought to have reminded you, that in accommodation to those members who were tenacious of that name, that it was secured to them by the following resolution, which formed a part of the paper that was adopted. "Resolved that the adoption of the above preamble and resolutions is not designed to deprive the members of this church of the title of Baptists." See Address, p. 29. This proves that nothing of piety, sincerity, or truth caused them to split the church, especially when it is known that Drake, the leader, declared that he would not give a pinch of snuff for the name of Baptist, in his speech before the question was taken, that he was only concerned to *prevent* a division of the Church, and after it was decided proclaimed, that if only one dozen of the members would unite under the former name he would be one of them.

There was great *affected* offence taken at the change of the name of the church from *the Baptist Church*, to the Church of *Christ* by those who had been for the most part the authors of the difficulties, and they made it a pretext for dividing the Church. The split in the Church was produced by the minority headed by A. S. Drake. See Address, p. 36-7.

The publication of these unhappy men, for such they acknowledge themselves to be, nor do I see how they ever can be otherwise, so long as memory and conscience have any influence upon them, without repentance, proves the truth of the suggestion made in the Address, that the noise and strife about the name were mere *pretence*, and were made only to excite the prejudices and passions of Baptists against us, and against myself in particular, while the *real* motives were personal, but which they were not candid and manly enough publicly to avow.

In their publication they have thrown off the mask, and have appeared the undisguised assailants of my character,

with a virulence, which would seem appropriate to those alone, who had waged war against the name of Christ in defiance of truth and shame.

In all this you see that temper and spirit manifested, which were the occasion of the affliction of the Church, and which determined me no longer to continue Pastor of it or any other sectarian Church, believing as I do, that *sectarian principles* in religion, are the discordant strings in the hearts of christians, upon which the passions act, and which gall them on to hostility and revenge against each other.

In that publication you see the return I met with, after employing ten years of the prime of my life in almost uninterrupted effort and toil, in endeavours to advance the interests of religion, at considerable expense, in the First Baptist Church of Lexington. "I have spent my labour for that which satisfieth not." I have gotten clear of them, through the name of Christ with an injured character, and the tongue of slander still pursues me.

In every state of society in which I have lived, I have considered it my duty to conform to the laws thereof, even in attempts to improve it. This was strictly true in every measure which I proposed and defended in the first Baptist Church of Lexington, and in the one by which she adopted the name of the Church of Christ on Mill street. In proof of these things and in justification of myself, when I determined to notice the Response by a publication, I addressed a letter to the publishing committee of the Response, with a view of obtaining a copy of the rules and records of the two Church Books of the First Baptist Church of Lexington—for you remember that Drake and his followers at the time *they split the Church* carried off the two Church Books against her will, to which we have had no access since.

In that letter I informed them, that I had received their publication, and considered that they had done all they could in it to injure me, and moreover addressed them thus, "I have a very numerous connection of relations, who justly claim of

me the defence of my moral and religious standing in society. I owe it moreover to the churches with which I am united as a member and a minister of the Gospel, and to the religious community at large, and indeed to the world, as my usefulness is connected with it, to defend my character against injury and disgrace, as far as God shall put it in my power. If you honestly believe me to be in an error, you cannot be unwilling to afford to me the means of information in your power to lead me to repentance. If I am wrong I desire to be corrected, and if I am wrong the records in the two church books of the First Baptist Church of Lexington, which are in your possession are necessary to manifest it. By these records, including the rules of the Church and by the word of God, I seek to be justified alone, and am willing to be condemned if I have violated them.

"I now ask of you as a right demanded by truth and justice, and by the authority of that God to whom you profess to pray for me in your publication, for an opportunity to copy as many of the records in the two books as I deem necessary for a full understanding of the subject." This request was refused me.

After this, the Church on Mill street solicited the church at Mount Vernon, to which I have regularly preached, and which is also a member of the Elkhorn Association, to use her friendly influence to obtain for us an opportunity of copying the Records. She did so by sending them a letter and messengers, and received for answer from them, that they deemed her request "an unwarrantable interference with her sovereignty, and therefore declined a compliance"—and thus ended all our efforts upon that subject.

All the facts and circumstances of the case, in connection with the rules and records of the Church, with other evidences prove, that in this case a conspiracy has been formed and prosecuted against the name of Christ, as it is used in the denomination of the church on Mill street, for no other purpose than to injure me by exciting the prejudices of the Baptist

denomination and others against me, to gratify the personal resentment of a few individuals for injuries never intended and never inflicted by me, while there was no alledged difference in religious sentiment between those who have been thus employed and myself, and while in using the name of Christ in the denomination of the Church, we acted agreeably to the advice of the Association and the usage of some of the churches composing that body, as declared by the Association herself in her minutes of 1826!

The part that A. S. Drake and a few other individuals have acted in this affair towards me has excited much surprise. I do not recollect that he ever differed in opinion with me in any case that occurred in the Church since I baptised him, eight or nine years ago, until the case of old sister Holmes occurred. That old lady had been a respectable member of the Baptist Church for near fifty years, and some time before I started for the Eastern States in 1826, she had brought a suit for dower which she claimed in a lot of ground in Lexington, a small part of which I am informed A. S. Drake had purchased and improved. She was cast in the suit.—Some difficulty arose in consequence of the suit. After I returned that difficulty was settled, as will appear by the Church books. The old lady moved to Nashville some time before, and desired a letter that she might enjoy the fellowship of the Church in that place. A. S. Drake opposed her getting one with passionate obstinacy. A letter was finally granted her by the vote of the Church. If my advocating the old lady's application for a letter in opposition to him, was not the cause of his virulent hostility to me, the Church and myself have yet to learn the real occasion of it. Previous to this, in consequence of our intimacy, I had frequently incurred the charge of partiality to him. I continued to treat him with kindness and attention; this however did not overcome the spirit of resentment. It was some time after this, before he could bring himself to a state of direct hostility against me. It could not have been believed by any

person who knew his sentiments and conduct previously, that he would have made the paper we adopted at the April meeting a pretext for it, as he had been zealous and active, and in some degree successful in persuading the members of the Church to adopt the principles of that paper, in dropping every thing from the order and style of the Church but the word of God, until a short time before it was adopted.

Another of the individuals alluded to is Elder Vardeman, who has been the adviser and a principal agent with A. S. Drake. He applied to him to preach for his Church immediately after the division. I found from a report that Elder Vardeman put in circulation soon after he was applied to, that I had without intending it offended him, by suggesting to him after Elder A. Campbell had preached at night in December 1826, at the meeting-house in Lexington, that I had not room enough to lodge him when he expressed a wish to sleep with him, in consequence of my having company previously engaged fully equal to my means of accommodation. When I heard of this it very much surprised me, and I wrote him a letter immediately, dated April 30th, 1827, in which I assured him of the mistake under which he laboured, explained the matter to him, and disavowed any want of respect for him or intention to offend him:—I would here publish the letter but it is too long. The letter was sent to him by Mr. Heaton who has since become a member of the Church. I heard nothing from him in answer, and his conduct continued such as was described in the Address, both before and at the Association, and has continued the same ever since. If the above was not the cause of Elder Vardeman's hostility I have yet to learn it. I feel mortified to be compelled to state those things, but truth and the defence of my own character demand it of me.

I might also mention Elder W. C. Buck, the reputed writer of the Response. His home and the Church to which he was attached, I have been informed were in Green River. In the part he has acted, he manifested too much the charac-

ter of "a busy body in other men's matters." With him I had no more than a how-do-ye acquaintance. The "personal distinction" at which he aimed in the part which he acted in writing the Response and in other conduct, might have been possessed under circumstances more favourable to the character of a Gospel Minister and to usefulness, than that which he has attained. It would have been well for him to have read the 17th verse of the 26th Chapter of Proverbs. When he considers the unprovoked injury he has aimed to inflict upon me, I trust he will not think these observations unkind.

Letter XX.

THERE are a few things which Mr. Buck and his committee, from their "desire to forget what was too painful for *them* to remember" as they have suggested, have overlooked, that I design to notice.

I was elected, against my will, Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Lexington, in 1817, after preaching to it several months. That Church began with fifteen or eighteen members and without a meeting house. I abandoned every other pursuit and devoted three-fourths of my time to her service.

In July 1825, I requested the Church to employ James Challen then a licentiate, to discharge the pastoral duties, from a desire to be released from them, that I might visit different parts of the state, and become better acquainted with religious society. I considered it my duty as a Pastor, to spend the week as well as the Lord's day with the flock. I offered to relinquish the salary they paid me for the benefit of J. Challen. They refused to acquiesce. The reason I assigned for this measure was, that difficulties would soon arise should the pastoral duties be neglected, and which I would

not be answerable for. Indeed, I saw symptoms of them in a perverse petulant temper, some time previous to this.

I relaxed in the duties of Pastor as I informed the Church I should. The difficulties I anticipated soon began to appear, and manifested themselves in whisperings and backbitings against myself, which have been continued. To the truth of this, many of the readers of these letters can testify, in Lexington and its vicinity.

The principal individuals engaged in this conduct, with the exception of two or three, had emigrated from distant States, two of whom had been improperly promoted to offices in the Church.

At the September meeting, 1825, I introduced the subject of "reformation" by way of motion. At the November meeting, a committee of all the male members were appointed at my instance, to report upon the following questions, "Is, or is not this a Church of Jesus Christ? and if it be, Is, or is it not demanded in truth and in honour to the head that it be so denominated?"

My object was to engage the minds and the affections of the members, in a free and thorough investigation of the subject, that they might understand the covenant, constitution, and laws of a Gospel Church, and realize their own obligations and duties as members, according to the laws of Christ, and find an antidote to the disorderly passions and unchristian conduct which they manifested.

I acted in this case upon the principle which has been an uniform one with me, and constitutes perhaps my greatest peculiarity, if I have any, that all the errors and disorders in religion, both in an individual and social point of view, consist in *wrong perceptions* of the truth, and a *failure to practice it*, and that any thing gained in religion without a Scriptural conviction of its truth, and without the approbation of the heart, is of but little or no use.

I mention these things to show, what are my "new fangled theology and far famed principles of reformation," as con-

sisting in the knowledge of the truth and the authority of God, in distinction from ignorance and passion, and from the inventions and authority of man, for which Mr. Buck and his committee would ridicule me.

A conference meeting was appointed upon the subject, previous to the Church meeting, when it was understood and expected that every male member would come with scripture views, or would receive and regard such as might be given. In this however we were disappointed; for when the views and principles supplied by the word of God were called for, the prejudices of ignorance, defended by passion were insisted on.

Poor Wallingsford distinguished himself on this occasion, on no other account it is apprehended, than by the operation of a weak and bigoted mind, impelled by a recently excited high conceit of himself, which the Church had occasioned by improperly appointing him a Deacon, in violation of the scriptures, before he had been "proven."

My object in the investigation of the subject was lost, and I drew up a report for the committee which was adopted by the Church at the December meeting, and which is alluded to in the preamble and resolutions of the April meeting, the object of which was to answer the two questions truly and scripturally, while it recommended the postponement of any alteration in the denomination and style of the Church, until there should be more unanimity. See Address, p. 26-9. When the subject was thus disposed of I expressed an apprehension that *I-chabod* would be the proper name of the Church in future.

In this case the Response has said that I "so shaped the question as to secure to myself the vote of every member," viz. "all you who are in favour of the old name will vote for this report, and you that are in favour of the new name will vote against it." How could I secure to myself the votes? What was the Report? It was, that this is a Church of Christ, and that it is demanded in truth and in honour to her head

that she be so denominated, but owing to a difference of opinion and disposition, it is recommended that the change of the denomination be postponed," &c. The question was upon the reception and adoption of the report. The answer to the questions was in accordance with the truth; nor could the report have been objected to by any person who understood the subject, and believed the Church to be a Church of Christ and desired, for the purpose of harmony that it be postponed.

There were some members opposed to it, of whom there were three in the publishing committee. As the Response has stated the question it is sheer nonsense, and is a fair specimen of the disposition and spirit of those by whom I have been scandalized. If there was any thing said by me to justify in any degree their statement of the question, it was done solely in accommodation to the prejudice and passion of those opposed.

I will now bestow some notice upon the certificates. With respect to the certificates obtained to prove that there was no vote taken for an adjournment at the May meeting, I observe that the Church on Mill Street after the Response appeared, passed the following resolution after a deliberate consideration of the subject, with a particular reference to all the facts of the case.

"*Resolved*, That this Church would esteem certificates, obtained and published to prove that she had no meeting at all in May, as credible as those obtained and published to prove that she did not vote, after a motion was made and seconded for an adjournment at that meeting as stated in her Address, p. 39, and therefore she cannot admit the fact of her having voted to be called into question, she being as certain of it as that she had a meeting."

The Drake party, it is believed, did not understand the effect of the vote for an adjournment at the May meeting and of their own conduct in reference to it in *unchurching* them. They obtained the certificates to prove what I apprehend

all that party do not now believe, viz. that there was *no vote* for an adjournment. The certificates were designed to supply and remedy that which made their case altogether hopeless without.

A mistake may have been made by the certificate signers, as none of the Drake party did vote, and the witnesses for the most part entered the house through the lower door with them and sat in their rear, while we entered the house through the upper door. See the statement of the Moderator and Deacons on the subject of the vote at the end of these letters.

The minority did not vote with us I apprehend, because they had been advised by A. S. Drake at the April meeting, not to do so lest they acknowledge the authority of the preamble and resolutions. See P. S. Address, p. 61.

By members of the committee of helps it is stated, that I "did not, as was previously stipulated, put into the hands of the committee all the papers which I read before them, but the greater part of them, and that the committee did examine them as far as they deemed it necessary before they made out their advice to the Church in writing," and that I "left with the committee a written defence of my conduct, which was also read by me before the committee."

Answer. I stipulated nothing in reference to putting into the hands of the committee the paper I read. My proof of this is the statement of the committee itself, and which is as followeth, and which I suppose the certificate signers did not read with care before they gave their names. "The committee of helps requested the members of the Church to state their difficulties upon the most important subjects in writing,"—agreeably to which they say, "the members pursuant to the request submitted their written statements and made their remarks relative to the causes of difficulty." See Address, p. 14. This is true, but they don't say that *all* the papers that were read were submitted, or that all the papers that were submitted were read, neither of which would have been true

with respect to myself. I read in behalf of the committee sent by the Church, an Address to the helps 26 pages long, which I did not leave with them, nor any part of the sheets of which it was composed, as they *were* and *still are stitched together*, and have not been out of my possession since, nor did I agree to leave it. I left a copy of the paper we adopted at the April meeting, which was a transcript of the one I read to the committee, to which were subjoined a number of observations and questions. This paper consisted of three sheets. I left another paper which consisted of one sheet and contained as it purported to do, a "Statement of facts." In each of these papers, besides the one I read of 26 pages long, there was a protest against the helps giving any advice relative to the interests of the Church; and thus if they really did examine these papers, as some of them have certified, they had a *threefold protest*, instead of a single one against interfering in the matter.

B. S. Chambers has stated, "that he handed me the papers I left with the committee with a promise to return them, which I have not done." Answer. When Dr. Noel left my house two days after the helps met, *he promised to return to me the papers I left with the committee*, which he had in his possession. Upon the first of them was endorsed at that time the following memorandum of the promise, "Paper submitted, and to be returned when copied, as promised by Bro. Noel. J. F."

Upon the second, is the following memorandum, "Exhibited by J. Fishback and to be returned when copied." It was a kind Providence that interposed in my behalf in these instances, to shield my character against an intended injury, for which I feel thankful.

Dr. Noel promised to leave the papers with B. S. Chambers in Georgetown, to be delivered to me. Several weeks after, viz: the day on which the Indian School was examined, I went to Georgetown and got them from him in the evening. When he gave them to me he told me that he had not copied them, I replied that should he need a copy he could get one,

but supposed that it was of no consequence, as he assured me that the helps did not read them before they made out their statement and advice. This he also did at the Association afterwards to Deacon J. M. Hewett and myself on Lord's Day in the morning, in the meetinghouse, which he well remembers.

It is asserted that I participated in the organization of the helps. Answer. The communication which the committee with which I was associated, from the church was authorised to make, was in writing, and addressed to the committee of helps alone, which had been called five days before by a resolution passed by the Drake Church before we knew any thing about it and of which we were informed by J. Varde-man, by whose advice they had been called. When they first met, there was some talk of their setting with the minority by whom they had been called, under the denomination of the First Baptist Church of Lexington. I remarked, that if they did thus sit, I could not make any communication to them. After this they organized themselves.

It is not true that we expressed any consent to or about any additions that were made to the helps. The Church had determined to submit no matter to their advisement, and which we had in charge to read to them and did read, and cared nothing about their addition. See Address, p. 15.

But we are asked, why we attended and were so lengthy in the defence of our conduct and character, in what we had done, if we designed to submit nothing to the advisement of the committee of helps? Answer. We attended upon the same principle you would, were an ill natured neighbour without your consent, to choose and convene a number of individuals as arbitrators to determine whether or not you should surrender to him your farm. You are informed of their meeting. They are composed of your neighbours, and you meet with them with your patent or deed, and to show them that you are an honest man in holding your farm, you read your title papers to them, and conclude by telling them

that nothing existed in truth to justify their being called, and as you had no part nor lot in it you submitted nothing to their arbitrament, particularly as you had been informed that they had been convened for the purpose of injuring you; and retired.

Such, Sir, was our case in meeting the helps; admitting however, that their recommendatory advice had the power of law, it has not been complied with agreeably to the rules of the Church, nor has the change of the name been reconsidered, but remains as it was established by the preamble and resolutions adopted at the April meeting. These things I will show in my next letter.

Letter XXX.

I now invite your attention to a subject in which your own character and mine are deeply concerned, and in which that of many of your coadjutors is much involved. I do this to enable you to do me justice, in a case in which you have injured me.

You, with others, since the Association, have reported, that I have been excluded from the Church, and consequently have no right to preach the Gospel, or to administer the ordinances, nor have I authority to solemnize marriages. This was the end that was designed to be answered by the conspiracy through the helps and the Association, and every one engaged in it, has been diligently employed in endeavouring to induce the public mind to believe that it has been accomplished.

Attend to the following facts, and I will convince you of the injustice you have done me, and put it fairly in your power as a man of truth, to revoke what you have said, and to

contradict all the reports that you and others have put into circulation on the subject.

It is admitted by all, that at the April meeting of the First Baptist Church of Lexington, there was a majority in favor of the preamble and resolutions that were adopted, which changed the name of the Church. This the minority acknowledged by calling for helps to re-consider it.

At the May meeting the minority refused to vote on the question for adjournment, and of course we did not ascertain the relative number on each side. A. S. Drake and his party say, that they had forty-nine members, including the African slaves who voted. This is the greatest number it is believed, they have ever had at any meeting.

At a subsequent period fifty two white members had their names recorded as members of the Church on Mill Street, and calculating from the minutes of the preceding year, we have ninety-three members, which gives us a majority of three.

Attend now to the following statements that are made from the resolutions which the Drake party passed, and put into my hands from time to time. These will show clearly their disorder and prove the injustice that has been done us.

After the Church adjourned at the May meeting, the forty-nine members resolved to reconsider the change of the denomination. This reconsideration was to be made at the next meeting in June, in pursuance of which they passed a resolution appointing a committee to wait on myself and the rest of the members, who were absent to inform us of it, and request us to meet them with a copy of the preamble and resolutions. On the the 23d of May, four days after, *at a called meeting*, they resolve to call in helps. The rule for called Church meetings is the following, "The Church may call a meeting when in her judgment or in the judgment of the Moderator and Deacons it shall be deemed necessary." The Moderator and three of the Deacons or two besides the Moderator, in this case, were not consulted, of course the meeting was an unlawful one at which the helps were called.

On the 29th of May, I received a copy of the resolution calling the helps, at the instance no doubt of J. Vardeman, who informed me the evening before of the helps being called, when I told him that we would submit nothing to them, and that the whole difficulty was personal.

The helps met on the 16th of June, and gave the following recommendatory advice. Note it well. "The committee of helps recommend to all the members of this Church to meet together as a Church, under their old name and covenant, and endeavour by all means in their power, to unite in harmony and brotherly love."

This was the *help* they gave the minority in "*reconsidering the denominative name.*" See Address, p. 14.

The object of the helps was to place all the members under the old or former order of things, and of course under the former rules of the Church. When were we all to meet together? The regular monthly meetings for business were on the 3d Saturday in each month, and had been so from the commencement of the Church. The 21st July would have been the next regular meeting for business after the helps met.

On Saturday the 23d of June, the next Saturday after the helps met, when I was at Mount Vernon, the Lake party had a called meeting, without consulting the Moderator and three of the Deacons, or letting the majority know of the meeting, which was of course an unlawful one. At that meeting they entered into the following resolution.

"Resolved, that the advice of the eighteen helps who met with this Church at our last meeting, to council us in relation to a change in our denominative name, from the First Baptist Church of Lexington to The Church of Christ on Mill Street, be and it is hereby approved and adopted by this Church, in compliance with which, we agree to still retain our old name and covenant; believing as we do, that our covenant has always recognized us as a Church of Christ; and as the Scriptures authorize various denominative names,"

they resolved to retain the old one, which the scriptures do not authorize, as they themselves voted in December 1825.

This was the *only* reconsideration of the change of name that has been had; this was done by the minority, and in disorder, the meeting having been called without the authority of the Church, and without giving the majority an opportunity of meeting in pursuance to the advisement of the helps. In this, they resolved that the Church had ever been known by the covenant as a *Church of Christ*; our sin, then, consisted in calling it what it had ever been known to be.

We heard that they were to have a meeting, but for what purpose we knew not, and sent the Moderator who was a Deacon and two other Deacons to meet with them, that a negotiation might be commenced for union and harmony, in or to which we sent them a most friendly letter; but the Moderator and Deacons, who ought to have been consulted about the meeting, were not permitted to read the letter. See Address, p. 41-2. The Drake party seems not to have designed a union, and therefore gave no opportunity to meet with them. Their design in the helps was that they should help them to exclude us, in violation of all rule. See Address, p. 15.

On the 29th of June they had another called meeting, without consulting the Moderator and Deacons, and without ever saying one word about meeting together as the helps recommended, and adopted the following resolution, which fully develops their original purpose. "Resolved, That in consequence of a number of members of this Church having gone off in disorder, and declared themselves no longer of our body, organizing themselves into a separate Church, receiving and dismissing members as well as transacting other business, and thereby violating the rules and covenant under which this Church was constituted" (every meeting they had had, and this very resolution was in violation of them) "notwithstanding the advice of the eighteen helps, who met us to assist in settling the unhappy difficulty. I move" (a

true copy) "that a committee be appointed to wait on those brethren and sisters and write to those who are absent, and affectionately entreat them to return to the embraces of the Church, and if they refuse to do so, report their names at the next meeting,"—they then appointed a committee of nine,—“any three of whom were to read to those absent, a copy of the above resolution, and report at the next meeting.” By this resolution they put it out of our power to meet them except as criminals, as by it and the preceding one, they assume the judicial seat and put us upon our trial.

On the 9th of July they had another unlawfully called meeting and preferred five charges against me, and requested me to attend on the 13th and answer to them. The committees visited the members and read the above disorderly and offensive resolution to them. The members expostulated with them, and urged them to show wherein they had erred, either in transgressing the word of God or the rules of the Church, in voting for the preamble and resolutions.

This they did not attempt to do, nor have you, Sir, or any person for them. But, perhaps you will say that the objection is not to the paper we adopted, but to our splitting the Church. That is often said. This is altogether an evasion, and is both childish and untrue. Did you ever know the majority of the members of a Church to split it, who acted agreeably to its rules?

The minority met on the 13th July, eight days before the next regular Church-meeting after the helps met, and without one regularly called Church-meeting having intervened, and professed to exclude us all!

Admitting the minority to have been the Church, and the advice of the helps to have had the authority of law, neither of which can be admitted, you perceive plainly that we have not been excluded; nor has the denomination of the Church as established at the April meeting been reconsidered.

You remember, that we offered by resolution to the minority at the April meeting, a friendly separation, tendering to

them, *if they would go*, every expression of regard that was compatible with the best feelings of Christian charity; and we invited them to a joint participation in all the property, with a mutual promise to cultivate fellowship and love with each other as far as practicable, which they spurned with passionate indignation. See Address, p. 36. They have pursued us ever since with relentless hostility. We have never asked of them any thing more, as they would not agree to be in fellowship with us, than to let us alone and permit us to enjoy the fellowship of other christians, and the high privileges and blessings which God has bestowed upon us under the perfect law of liberty.

I resigned the Pastoral office of the Church, in November, 1826, and in the subsequent February or January, two or three months before the adoption of the preamble and resolutions, *the whole Church gave me a fair and full and honourable acquittal, from all the charges of a reproachful nature which the Response has made against me, on account of any thing that had previously occurred, by inviting me by a resolution which is spread upon the Church Books, to supply the pulpit as often as convenient.*

In conclusion of this letter, I ask of you in the name of truth and justice and in behalf of the independence of the Churches and the Character of the United Baptists, to contradict the report you and others have circulated about my having been excluded from the Church. Apply the remedy to the extent you have inflicted the injury.

The majority of the helps, and the greater part of the members of the Elkhorn Association, I do not design to implicate in the conspiracy against me. Those brethren knew not, it is believed, the origin and nature of the case fully, and they could not have been induced, with the knowledge of the truth on the subject, to have aided the plan that was adopted for my destruction. I claim their fellowship, and ask at their hands in behalf of their own character and of the Baptist

denomination, to disavow and to oppose the system of persecution and oppression which I have exposed.

The excuse that is made in the Response for the Association not hearing us, is of such a character as to excite astonishment and alarm. Baptists never can tolerate it. It is alleged that had not some of the helps (twelve in number) been members of the Association, consisting of more than seventy members, who could inform that body (and the members of Corresponding Associations I suppose) of the facts and circumstances of the case, in a private way it is apprehended, the world would have had a right to join in the hue and cry against the Association! Every thing taken together, the annals of the religious world are challenged to produce a similar case. Even the worshippers of Diana of the Ephesians, when her own character and the shrine-making interest were endangered by Paul preaching the Gospel, recognized the right, that opposing parties had to implead one another in a lawful assembly. Acts, xix. 34-41.

Other ecclesiastical bodies claim power as a right, and exercise it by some rule; you disclaim it and yet exercise it in violation of all rule. Your Association must either *legislate, dissolve, or meet for social religious intercourse alone, or act the tyrant.* The Church of God in the Gospel is the only divinely established order of religious society in the world, and if well improved according to the laws of Christ, is quite sufficient for every purpose.

Letter XV.

THERE are a few things more I desire to notice before I conclude these letters.

I attended the meeting of the minority when they professed to turn us all out of the Church, in obedience to their request. I heard them read a number of specifications of the charges they had made against me, and which they say were proven. I demanded a copy of them, and an opportunity to defend myself against them by proof, to which I was entitled by the rules of the Church, if they really thought themselves the Church, both of which they refused to me.

I heard sometime afterwards that Elder W. C. Buck had a copy of these specifications, and showed them privately to my injury in an adjoining county.

After expostulating with them against the course they were pursuing, and denying to them any such authority, I retired.

It is asked why I introduced the subject of a change of the order and style of the Church after I advised that it be no more agitated? I answer, that I did it to cure a growing evil which had greatly increased since I gave that advice and had become insupportable, and which had no remedy but in the *principles* of the paper we adopted. See Address, p. 25-9. *I did not pledge myself again no more to introduce it.*

It is said, that I advised that the preachers in the Licking Association, and those of the Pedo-baptists' in town, should not be invited to supply the pulpit. Answer. During the difficulties in the Church, I did advise that the preachers in the Elkhorn Association alone be invited; but it was only on account of the difficulties. This statement was made I suppose, to induce a belief that I was unfriendly to the ministers alluded to. This is not true. I have now in my possession

an offensive letter written by one of the committee that published the Response to me, censuring me for being instrumental in bringing about the Union prayer meeting, and for publishing one, in which he alledges, "that the Presbyterians are a disorderly inconsistent body, so far as they differ from us, if we think we are right, and as such we have nothing to do with them, but so far as we have we bid them God speed." And yet they wanted them to preach for them!

I am ridiculed as a Reformer, &c.

The only reformation at which I have aimed, has been to maintain the sentiment that the word of God is true, and is the only mean and rule of faith and practice in religion.

My only peculiarities in religion, consist in the belief that mankind *naturally* have not faith or any spiritual ideas, and that the word of God is the mean of spiritual ideas and knowledge—that God, as existing distinct from and independent of nature, and as the author of it, is an *object of faith*, and so are all spiritual beings, as they exist distinct from matter, as is the *fact* of the creation of the world, all of which are only known from revelation: that natural phenomena draw the bounding circle of all natural knowledge and supply the materials of it, while supernatural phenomena, consisting in miraculous works and words, draw the bounding circle of all spiritual knowledge, and supply the materials of it. Revelation associates the invisible Jehovah, whom it makes known, with the visible universe in the view and thoughts of the mind. That the word of God in the Gospel is the *mean or instrument* of regeneration by the agency of the spirit of God, to which nothing can be added or any thing taken away without corrupting it—that all sectarian principles and peculiarities in religion, are errors and corruptions;—that Natural religion is a contradiction and impossible, if by it is to be understood the knowledge of God without revelation, and it operates a total denial of a most prominent principle in human depravity which is a consequence of the fall, viz. the loss of the knowledge of God. Natural religion as above defined, cannot pos-

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sibly comport with the truth and use of revelation, either in an intellectual or moral point of view, and must, to the extent it operates, destroy its necessity and usefulness in both, and involve the whole christian system in mysticism and contradiction. Our ideas, affections, and conduct in religion, are only correct and true when they correspond with the word of God.

My first publication on the subject of religion was in 1809, since which time I have made many others, and the great fundamental principles above detailed are exhibited in all, but more prominently in some than in others.

It is rumoured abroad that we, in practicing free communion, compromise away the baptism of believers by immersion. I reply, we compromise away nothing. We do not commune on baptism in the Lord's Supper with Baptists or Pedobaptists, any more than we do in prayer. We consider it the duty of all believers to be baptised, but in the New Testament baptism is not administered in the Church, to the Church or by the Church, nor are the members of the Church subjects of it. We consider that Pedobaptists are honestly wrong in their opinions on the subject of baptism, and the identity of the Jewish and Christian Churches and the two covenants on which they are built, as they perhaps think we are, but consider that there is an essential difference between an honest error and wicked rebellion in religion; God does not hold us answerable for their errors or they for ours, only so far as there is on either side a failure to exhibit the truth in the love and practice of it.

We commune on the broken body and shed blood of Christ as the expiation for sin, when we sit at the Lord's Table. Baptism is not a subject of communion or fellowship; it is administered to the believers *individually* in which there is *no communion*, for that implies *pleurality*—a *joint participation*. Those therefore who profess to commune on Baptism in the Lord's Supper, do not commune with the Father and with the Son, or hold fellowship with the Apostles in it.

Do not mistake me. We think it the duty of all to be baptized who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; and we receive none into the Church as members, who have not been.

We have no fellowship in breaking bread and in the cup with any, who reject the broken body and shed blood of Jesus Christ, as the meritorious transaction in the divine government, in the establishment of the new covenant through which by the mediation of Christ, salvation and all the blessings of that covenant are communicated.

We regard Jesus Christ as God the Word made flesh, God manifested in the flesh—the same God who created all things visible and invisible before he was made flesh—in him dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily—he is the light of the world, the Author and finisher of our faith—the one Lawgiver—God over all blessed forever—and in his incarnation the only begotten son of God.

His word is the divine system of truth, through and by which the Spirit, under his mediation, operates in glorifying him in the understanding and affections of men in renewing his own image upon their hearts by the knowledge of him.

Into his word, Baptists and Pedobaptists say “their faith is finally resolved.” Then let them drop every thing else in religion, which is a system of truth of which God is the great subject, or a system of affections and conduct of which he is the supreme object revealed by Jesus Christ, in the Gospel, and they will of necessity soon become one, John 17, 20, 21, and there will be no Arians, Socinians, or Sectarians.

I intended to have addressed one letter to Elder J. Creath Sen., but will defer it for the present. Should it be necessary for me to write again, I will address him; I have a number of things to bring to his remembrance, and many to say to him. I expect from him a fair, open, and consistent course of conduct towards the Church on Mill Street and myself. If I have “burdened” Elder Creath I wish him to be exonerated. If, however, I mistake not, “his own word is his burden.”

In what I have said, I may sometimes have employed expressions that savoured of severity; if I have I regret it. My state of feelings is very much regulated by the objects that occupy my mind. On this account, I would prefer its being occupied by Jesus Christ through faith, than by the Response.

I have found it a very painful task to attempt a public notice of the Response; a sense of justice to myself, alone could have induced me to yield to the advice of others in this case. I am pained beyond expression to find in the history of it, such an awful illustration of God's declaration, that "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?" But it inspires me with more confidence than ever, if possible, that the only antidote to it is in Him who "searches the heart," and to whom *we* have committed our *whole interest*.

When I have used the expression the *Drake party*, and the *Drake Church*, it was not in derision or contempt, but for the convenience of distinction and reference.

We have been unrighteously treated, and I have thought it a right to complain.

If the Church on Mill Street and myself are wrong, show it to us, and we will correct the error immediately, and you will confer upon us a favour in doing so. Read attentively the Preamble and Resolutions in the Address, p. 26-9, if there be any error it is in them.

We are happy in our Church, and will endeavour to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free."

We esteem it an unspeakable blessing to enjoy the liberty of the Gospel, and claim the fellowship of all the Saints, to the exclusion of all sectarian peculiarities, as they form no part of religion, as our spiritual birth-right in the name of Jesus Christ.

I have baptized between thirty and forty persons here and at Mount Vernon since the last April meeting; and have a regular Bible Class in each Church.

I should do great injustice to the Church of Christ on Mill Street in Lexington, and to the cause of truth, were I to conclude these letters without presenting to you the substance of the paper she adopted at her April meeting in 1827, and which was made the pretext by Drake and his party for dividing the Church. The following is a summary of the principles of that paper, exclusive of the concluding prayer, which see in the Address, p. 28-9.

"This is a Church of Christ and it is due in truth and in honour to her Head, that she be so denominated.

The church of God in the Gospel, in its constitution, denominations, laws, doctrine, ordinances, and duties, is the only divinely established order of religious Society in the world, and every thing of a different or of a schismatick character in reference to it, is condemned and forbidden:—"Therefore, from a sense of violated duty, and a desire to place ourselves as a church directly under the authority, protection and guidance of Jesus Christ, and to meet together and to do all things in His name agreeably to His instructions and commands, that we may enjoy His presence and be happy in Him, *Resolved.* That this church, be, and she is hereby denominated **THE CHURCH OF CHRIST ON MILL-STREET IN LEXINGTON.**"

"If we would learn and speak the truth as in Jesus, and enjoy its divine influences, and know how to behave in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth, we must hold fast and practice in speech and in conduct, the form of sound words in faith and in love as revealed in the gospel, because it is impossible, according to the scriptures, for us to know and to speak the things of God which are freely given us of Him, and be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment in religion, only as we use the words which the Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost, hath taught, and practice the duties He hath commanded. Neither is there any authority from the word of God, or in the nature of things, but the reverse, ever to expect the union of all christians, which is most devoutly to be wished for, as with it is connected the glory of God, the happiness of the saints, and the conversion of the world, only as sectarian peculiarities, human commandments party names, and systems in religion, are rejected, and *all* believe in the Lord Jesus Christ through the word of the Apostles,

agreeably to His intercessory prayer, John xvii. 20, 21. and build their religious congregations or churches upon the foundation of the doctrine of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, and *continue* in the word of Christ, and conscientiously practice the duties and ordinances of the gospel, in His name and by His authority alone, and cultivate the spirit of mutual love and forbearance.

"We do therefore acknowledge and receive the word of God revealed to the prophets and to the Apostles, in the Old and New Testaments, in its own statements, facts and connections, as the only mean of faith and rule of conduct and practice in religion, regarding the word of God in the New Testament, as the proper expounder and interpreter of the things that are written of Jesus Christ in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms in the Old. And we do, as members of the body of Christ and of one another, give ourselves to each other in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and do promise, by the aids and the influences of His Spirit and truth, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men, and to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace."

It was for our voting for and defending these principles and sentiments with the concluding prayer, according to the rules of the Church, that the Response intimates the Spirit of God refused to bless A. S. Drake and his party, and caused God to hide his face from them, and constrained them to be sincere in their prayers to Him for me, and my "deluded followers" I suppose, who voted with me, to turn our hearts to the wisdom of the just and to hide us under the cover of his most gracious wings! These were the principles we maintained, and which they opposed, that caused their tears to flow so freely as unblessed spectators of God's work with the Presbyterians and Methodists!!

Any measure of *excitement* produced by *efforts* to build up a Church, upon principles in *opposition* to those we adopted and which are above exhibited, is spurious, and can last but

but for a short time. Their conspiracy with, J. Vardeman for their counsellor and leader, against the name of Christ as used in the denomination of the Church, to injure me, would seem to make their case hopeless without repentance. It is by the system of truth alone that we have adopted, that the Spirit of God operates in glorifying the Saviour and in converting sinners.

There are pious individuals among them who have a deep interest in my affections, who have been deceived by misrepresentations into opposition against me.

The distinction and emolument that J. Vardeman has obtained here by his interference and improper conduct in promoting division and strife, is a poor compensation for the injury he has inflicted on the peace and harmony of religious society. It is believed that his great solicitude to prevent our case being heard before the Association, arose from a fear of having his conduct exposed before that body, as

they were hinted at before the helps. His Church would have done well to have investigated his conduct in these respects, as would the Association.

The most distinguished heresy of this day consists in a system of orthodoxy, which exists and is supported at the expense of the genius and spirit of christianity, in conduct.

I now take leave of you by repeating the hope that you will not fail to repair the injury you have endeavoured to do me, and that you will employ your friends who have been coadjutors in it, in doing the same.

CERTIFICATES.

I do hereby state, that I acted as Moderator for the First Baptist Church of Lexington, at the April meeting in 1827, by previous appointment, when her name was changed to the Church of Christ on Mill Street in Lexington. I also acted as Moderator at the May meeting, and owing to disorder which arose from an improper motion being made and persis-

ted in, and which I could not controul, Elder

J. Fishback made a motion for an adjournment, which was seconded by Deacon J. Cassel, whereupon a vote was regularly called for and taken; and when the question was reversed there were no hands lifted against it.

I moreover state, that B.S. Chambers declared at the Association to Elder J. Fishback and myself, that the helps did not read any of the papers left with them before they made out their advice.

JOHN M. HEWETT.

We whose names are hereunto subscribed, state that we had been Deacons of the First Baptist Church of Lexington for several years before her change of name was made at the April meeting in 1827, and have continued so since. And, owing to the disorder produced at the April meeting by the minority, it was resolved after a free consultation on the subject among us, that should it occur at the May meeting, that a motion would be made and seconded, and a vote taken for an adjournment, which was done accordingly when the Moderator could not preserve order. One of us seconded the motion, viz. Jacob Cassel, after it was made by Elder J. Fishback, and the Church did vote upon it. When the motion was made and seconded, some of the members had gotten to the door going out of the house and were called back to vote, that they might leave the house in an orderly manner, which they accordingly did. When the question was reversed none of the minority voted.

We do moreover state, that we were not consulted on the call of a single Church meeting, after the May meeting, as required by the rules of the Church in relation to called meetings. We attended a meeting of the minority the Saturday after the helps met, by the request of the Church with a friendly letter, but were prevented reading it, owing in part to the advice of Elder W.C. Buck.

JOHN M. HEWETT,
JACOB CASSEL,
RICHARD VAWTER.