

**ROBERT BOYTE CRAWFORD HOWELL  
COLLECTION, 1842 – 1860**

**AR 595**



Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives

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## Robert Boyte Crawford Howell Collection, 1842 – 1860

### AR 595

#### Summary

Main Entry: Robert Boyte Crawford Howell Collection

Date Span: 1842 – 1860

Abstract: R. B. C. Howell was a Southern Baptist minister, missionary, editor, and denominational leader. His collection consists of sermons as well as letters, reports, and statements relating to the Howell-Graves controversy in the 1850's and 1860's. All of the documents are handwritten papers either by Howell or copies written by his daughter.

Size: Three bound volumes

Collection #: AR 595

#### Historical Sketch

Robert B. C. Howell was born in Wayne County, North Carolina, March 10, 1801. He attended Columbian College in Washington, D.C., and, in 1827, he was ordained as a Baptist minister. In 1834, he accepted an appointment as a missionary to the west, from the American Baptist Home Mission Society, and as pastor of the First Baptist Church, Nashville, Tennessee, effective January 1, 1835. He started a monthly paper, The Baptist, in 1835, and was editor until he gave it to the Tennessee Baptists in 1846.

In 1850, Howell became pastor of the Second Baptist Church, Richmond, Virginia, and served until his return to Nashville in July, 1857. During his absence from Tennessee, Landmarkism became powerful in Tennessee under the leadership of James Robinson Graves. Howell opposed Landmarkism and was active in freeing the Bible Board, Nashville, from Landmark domination. He opposed the creation of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Union at Nashville, by Graves and his associates, and the close connections with Graves, Marks, and Co., the proprietors of the Southwestern Baptist Publishing House in Charleston, South Carolina. The situation developed into the Graves-Howell controversy and disruption of the First Baptist Church of Nashville. Graves and Howell exchanged verbal attacks, Graves using The Tennessee Baptist to express his displeasure at his pastor's opposition to the Union.

The First Baptist Church of Nashville made five charges of "unchristian conduct" against Graves and expelled him from membership. Friction continued as the state convention and local association recognized Graves and his followers as the First Baptist Church. Graves spread his agitation throughout the denomination. The Mississippi State Baptist Convention sent a committee to make efforts to adjust the controversy. Their efforts were not successful.

Graves and his associates urged their followers (Landmarkers) to split churches, associations, and conventions. He attacked several prominent denominational leaders for their hostility to the Southern Baptist Sunday School Union. By 1860, the tide began to turn against Graves. The demise of the Union and financial woes of Graves, Marks & Co. undoubtedly had some impact on this situation. In 1868, the local association invited the First Church of Nashville back into the association.

### **Scope and Content**

The collection consists of three bound volumes of Howell material. Two volumes include letters, reports, and statements relating to the Howell-Graves controversy in the 1850's and 1860's. The third volume is a book of sermons by Howell, dating from 1845 to 1855. The papers are handwritten originals by Howell or handwritten copies by his daughter.

### **Arrangement**

No particular arrangement within the volumes

### **Provenance**

Donated by Mrs. Bette B. DeMoss in 1982 to the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives

### **Preferred Citation**

Robert Boyte Crawford Howell Collection, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee

### **Access Restrictions**

None

### **Subject Terms**

Graves, James Robinson, 1820 – 1893  
 First Baptist Church, Nashville, Tennessee  
 Concord Baptist Association, Tennessee  
 Mississippi Baptist Convention  
 Baptists – Tennessee  
 Baptists – Sermons

### **Related Materials**

Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists.

Both Sides: A full investigation of the charges, presented against Elder J. R. Graves by R.B.C. Howell and others, by a council composed of delegates from twenty churches of the Concord Association.

The Trial of J. R. Graves, First Baptist Church, Nashville, Tennessee

Hailey, O. L.: J. R. Graves – Life, Times and Teaching, 1929.

Horne, Linwood T.: A Study of the Life and Work of R.B.C. Howell, Th.D. dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1958, MF 2213.

Martin, William Terry: Samuel Henderson and His Response to J. R. Graves and Landmarkism Through the Southwestern Baptist, 1857 – 1859. M. A., thesis, Samford University, 1977.

James Robinson Graves Papers, 1858 – 1879. Southern Baptist Historical Library & Archives,

AR 9

Robert Boyte Crawford Papers, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, AR 795-140.

### Container List

(Note to reader: the items within the volumes are not individually numbered)

**Volume I** (1858 – 1859) deals with the controversy and the efforts of First Baptist Church, Nashville to expel J. R. Graves. The volume includes:

1. A paper read by J. C. Dardin before the Bible Board of the SBC concerning the “Bible Board, Graves, and Dayton;” Letter from R.B.C. Howell to J. E. Dawson, May 11, 1858
2. Impeachment charges against Graves (sent to Sam Henderson, Tuskegee, Alabama, for review)
3. Impeachment charges against Graves
4. Arraignment of Rev. Graves at First Baptist Church, Nashville (copy of proceedings taken by Howell’s daughter)
5. The Graves trial
6. Report from committee to “labor with” Graves followers
7. Letter to associational moderator
8. Graves’ speech before Tennessee Convention, March, 1859, and reaction
9. Communication from First Baptist, Nashville to the church in Marietta, Georgia, September 13, 1859
10. Letter sent to “various brethren by a voluntary committee,” September 16, 1859
11. “What is the Church,” *Western Watchman*, February 2, 1860
12. “Standing Presbyteries,” *Religious Herald*, October 1859
13. “Disciplinary Power”
14. Letter to the *Mississippi Baptist*, May 12, 1859
15. Constitution and government of Concord Association
16. “Principles of Church Government;” and “Church Independence”

**Volume 2** (1860) deals with the efforts of the Mississippi Convention to mediate in the controversy. It includes:

1. Address of Howell to committee of the Baptist State Convention of Mississippi
2. Report of committee to be presented for adoption, September 12, 1860, concerning members who left the church (not presented)
3. Report prepared for the committee appointed to conduct, on behalf of the church, negotiations with the committee of the Baptist State Convention of Mississippi, which was not adopted (includes copies of correspondence)
4. Answer of the First Baptist Church of Nashville to the Baptist State Convention of Mississippi, adopted September 12, 1860
5. Drafts of response to Mississippi committee
6. Thirty-third pastoral discourse (Howell), the nineteenth in Nashville, January 1, 1860
7. Letters to the committee of the Baptist State Convention (Letter 1 – 10)

**Volume 3** (1845 – 1855) consists of 65 sermons by Howell. The bound volume includes the following sermons:

1. "Confidence in God is an effectual support in all the trials of life." John 14:1, November 2, 1846, p. 1
2. "Sermon on resuming the pastorship," I Samuel 12:7, November 22, 1846, p. 5
3. "Improvement of time: A post commission sermon for the first of the year," Col. 4:5, p. 25
4. "What is Christ to you?" July 25, 1852, p. 33
5. "God's property in His people." September 9, 1852, p. 47
6. "Motives to Christian action." Is. 60:1, July 28, 1852, p. 59
7. "Spiritual health." 3 John 2v, May 9, 1852, p. 65
8. "Obstacles to the prevalence of truth." John 5:44, March 1, 1847, p. 73
9. Funeral of Rev. James Whitsett, 2 Tim. 4:6-8, April 12, 1849, p. 79
10. "The intercession of Christ." Heb. 7:25, July 3, 1853, p. 87
11. "Duty of the Church to its individual members." Gen. 4:9, July 23, 1853, p. 104
12. "The privileges of believers brace all the blessings of divine grace." (published), p. 109
13. "Pardon of all his sins," p. 113 (transferred 1860 into a sermon)
14. "Jesus Christ is the true God," p. 136
15. "The duties of believers in Christ are numerous and important," p. 160
16. "The confession of our Lord Jesus Christ before men is a necessary result of compliance with the general duties of religion," p. 166
17. "Departed saints are not to be lamented," (Funeral of two brothers – George W. and James Matlock), p. 177
18. "The duty of Christians to give themselves to the church." 2 Cor. 8:5, Aug. 9, 1846, p. 184
19. "The origin, prevalence, and consequence of sin." Romans 5:12, Dec. 21, 1847, p. 196
20. "Conditions of the grace of God is given to us on condition that we love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." Eph. 6:24, December 13, 1845, p. 204
21. "The true relations between religion and civil government." Matt. 22:21, July 4, 1845, p. 211
22. "Influence of the sanctuary." (sermon at the dedication of Salem Church, Caroline, VA.), July 22, 1852, p. 228
23. "Who are entitled to receive baptism?" p.272
24. "Alleged rule relating to EIS." n. p.
25. "What is baptism?" Gal. 3:24, Feb. 8, 1852, p. 306
26. "Who are to be baptized?" Feb. 15, 1852, p. 370
27. "Redemption." Eph. 1:7, December 4, 1852, p. 436
28. "Resurrection of the body." (funeral of Rev. Wm. Hatchett, Ridemont, VA), 1 Cor. 5:35, August 15, 1854, p. 485
29. "The regeneration of the soul, a spirit, not changes, produced alone by the Holy Ghost is necessary to the salvation of sinners." 2 Cor. 3:4-8, p.489
30. "Believers confess Christ before men specifically in baptism." p. 524
31. "Summary and conclusion – Chapter XIV" p. 538
32. "Christ a hard master." Matt. 25:24, Feb. 20, 1848, p. 549
33. "Christian feeling" Ezek. 33:32, Jan. 18, 1852, p. 555
34. "Inheritance of the Saints." 1 Cor. 3:22, Jan. 18, 1852, p. 571
35. "Christian love." 1 John 4:7, Nov. 11, 1857, p. 577
36. "The inheritance of God." Rom. 1:21, May 23, 1847, p. 581

37. "Mediation of Christ." 1 Tim. 2: 5, 6, June 19, 1853, p. 588
38. "The true church of Christ." 1 Tim. 3:15, Sept. 5, 1852, p. 617
39. "Uses of the law in the scheme of salvation by faith." Gal. 3:24, June 9, 1852, p. 646
40. "The divine protection." John 17:15, February 17, 1856, p. 662
41. "Christian strength." 2 Tim. 2: 1, Nov. 23, 1851, p. 687
42. "The Christian Life." Gen. 5:24, December 14, 1851, p. 692
43. "Sufficiency of the-instituted means of Grace." Luke 16: 13, August 4, 1852, p. 704
44. "The relations between Baptist principles and political liberty." (Address – Slash cottage, Hanover Co., VA), July 5, 1852, p. 709
45. "The nature and tendency of Christian union." Eph. 4:5, March 2, 1852, p. 733
46. "Prayer alone is not obedience." Ex. 14:15, June 28, 1853, p. 744
47. "The Trinity." Matt. 18:19, August 5, 1855, p. 755
48. "The expansive genius of the Gospel." Rom. 11:1, February 2, 1852, p. 772
49. "Christ the way of life." John 14:6, June 4, 1842, p. 780
50. "Sanctifications." 1 Thess. 4:3, August 26, 1855, p. 783
51. "Duty of compliance with the invitations of the Spirit." Hebrews 3:7, 8, September 25, 1853, p. 816
52. "The sin of?" Col. 3:9, December 14, 1856, p. 829
53. "The millennium." Rev. 20:1-10, April 9, 1854, p.845
54. "Baptism – its mode, subjects, and design as delivered to us by the Apostles." 1 Cor. 11:2, Sept. 17, 1846, p. 892
55. "The sign of the times." Matt.16:3 (Introduction to the General Association of Tenn. at Enon -Rutherford County, TN), October 28, 1846, p. 904
56. "God's government over us is absolute in time and in eternity." Rom. 14:7, 8, December 6, 1846, p. 919
57. "Charge to the church in New Orleans at its organization." January 27, 1844, p. 926
58. "Contemplation of Christ." Heb. 3:1, August 13, 1854, p.928
59. "The Gospel." Tim. 1:11, October 4, 1846, p.937
60. "Predestination." Eph. 1:3-13, August 22, 1852, p.953
61. "The difference in the glory of the happy in heaven." 1 Cor. 15:41, 42, July 11, 1852, p. 1010
62. "The blessedness of doing good." Dan. 12:3, April 15, 1852, p. 1016
63. "The proof of religion from miracles." John 11:47, 48, August 27, 1855, p. 1023
64. "Benevolence to the destitute and suffering is the glory of the church." Mark 14:7, December 19, 1847, p.1055
65. "Contentment." Phil. 4:11, January 7, 1855, p.1064