

Correspondence between English and American Baptists.

The following came to Dr. Gillette of New York under date of Feb. 13, 1863.

DEAR SIR,—Although entirely unknown to you, I venture, on the ground of a common Christian sympathy and interest, to address you on a subject which I believe is deemed important to us both. But if, dear sir, from the want of more accurate information, I may be troubling a Christian brother, who though a Baptist, may not see "eye to eye with us on the Communion Question, I beg you to excuse the mistake, and be good enough to pass over the business to the hands of any known brother, who being of similar sentiments with ourselves, will kindly undertake to further the objects of this application.

You will see from the enclosed Circular, that we of the Strict or (as you over the water say) Close School, are about to hold a general meeting in London, for the protection of our present interests, and for the advancement of our common cause. You are aware, doubtless, that the open party have overthrown us in two appeals to Law Courts, viz., Norwich and Ramsgate, and more will follow in all probability, unless we take a more decided course than we have hitherto done. This we propose doing, as per enclosed circular, and as we are solicitous to open up a correspondence with our Strict brethren in America, I have taken the liberty of soliciting your kindness to put us into the right way of, first obtaining statistical information respecting the proportions of Close and Open Baptists among our American brethren, and whether the Open sentiment is making much headway among the churches there; and secondly, opening up the best channels of communication with the Close Baptists of America, that we may hereafter more directly fraternize on behalf of our denominational interests on both sides of the Atlantic. At our intended General Meeting we shall adopt an address to our American brethren, and we naturally desire to have it put into the widest possible circulation among those for whom it is intended.

Sincerely trusting that you will excuse this liberty, and awaiting your reply at your early convenience,

I remain dear sir,
Yours sincerely,

WILLIAM STOKES,

Hon Secretary to the Meeting of Strict Baptists in London.

To Rev. Dr. GILLETTE, New York.

Dr. Gillette brought the subject before the Baptist Pastors' Conference of New York, who made the following official reply. The Circular above alluded to was addressed to the churches of England, calling a General Meeting with a view to their internal regulations, and the protection of their rights before the law.

THE BAPTIST PASTORS' CONFERENCE OF NEW YORK CITY,

To Mr. William Stokes, Editor of the Primitive Church Magazine, and Hon. Secretary to the Meeting of Strict Baptists in London:—

DEAR SIR,—Your letter to Dr. Gillette, of New York, with the accompanying Circular, on the subject of Open and Strict Communion, was read to the Baptist Pastors' Conference at their regular meeting, April 6th, in the City of New York, and as this Conference sympathize in the objects of your proposed meeting in London, and cherish with you a deep interest in the preservation of the doctrine and fellowship of the Primitive Church, they desire that the following answer may be sent to your letter.

The members of this Conference belong to what are called the Regular Baptists of the United States of America, and our statistics, as published in our Almanac for this year are as follows: Associations, 607; churches, 13,362; ordained ministers, 8,481; licentiates, 1,138; total number of members, 1,109,443. All these churches of Regular Baptists are strict in their terms of communion, holding the principle that Christian Baptism is pre-requisite to the privileges of a church relation, and to the Lord's Supper; and rejecting the principle that all Christians, as such, whether baptized or unbaptized, are entitled to visible church fellowship and communion at the Lord's table.

You ask, whether the Open Communion sentiment is making much headway among the churches in this country? So far as the Regular Baptists are concerned, we answer, It is making no progress, for "we have no such custom neither the churches of Regular Baptists. All of these churches (without a single exception, as far as our information extends) hold fast in faith and practice to the principle, that baptism is pre-requisite to the Lord's Supper, and all other privileges of church communion.

RESULTS OF CLOSE COMMUNION.

As Robert Hall and other advocates of Open Communion, have contended that the practice of Strict communion was a mighty barrier to the progress of the principles we hold in regard to Christian Baptism, we call your attention to the evidence of facts as presented by Dr. Arnold, in his book, entitled "The Scriptural Terms of Admission to the Lord's Supper," published in Boston in 1860, pp. 115-117:—"When Robert Hall died, thirty years ago, (1831) there were more than 100,000 Baptists in England, and less Baptists remain about the same. The population of England has increased since then from 18,000,000 to 20,000,000, but the number of Baptists remain about the same. The population of the United States, which was then about the same as that of England, has fully doubled; but the number of Baptists has much more than kept pace with this rapid increase, having risen from less than 400,000 to more than 1,000,000.

Thus it appears that in England, where mixed communion has generally prevailed, our numbers have diminished, compared with the population in the ratio of thirty-three per cent; while in this country, where strict communion has been the rule, our numbers have increased relatively to the population in the ratio of about fifty per cent. And it ought to be taken into account, moreover, that this increase has taken place in our country under the signal disadvantage that our growth has been derived in great part from immigration and the accession of new territory; and that of the population thus added, a large proportion has been composed of Romanists, and a very small per cent. of Baptists; while in England the increase of population has been mainly natural. Add to this, that in our country the influence of Baptist principles has greatly modified the views and usages of other denominations, so that immersion is quite extensively practised and infant baptism quite extensively neglected by those who are not called Baptists; whereas no such approximation to our views and practice has taken place in England."

WHEREIN OTHERS AGREE WITH US.

The comparison instituted by Dr. Arnold, based as it is on the evidence of facts, we leave to speak for itself. It should, however, be kept in mind that in contending in this country for the principle that baptism must precede visible church fellowship, we are contending only for that in which all evangelical denominations agree, except the Quakers and Free-Will Baptists. Take a few illustrations of this fact. In a tract published by the "Congregational Board of Publication," entitled "Scripture Platform of Church Government," when discussing "the materials of which a church of Christ is formed," they say, p. 2, "As to the Gospel church, it is plain, that it was composed of none but visible saints. No other but baptized persons were admitted to communion; and no adult persons but such as professed repentance and faith were admitted to baptism, which shows that they were visible saints."

In a work on "Baptism and Communion," written by Dr. Hibbard of the Methodist Episcopal Church, published by the Methodist Book Concern as one of their standard denominational works, and recommended by the General Conference as a text book for their theological seminaries, Dr. Hibbard, in part 2, p. 174, says:—"It is but just to remark that in one principle the Baptist and Pedobaptist churches agree. They both agree in rejecting from communion at the table of the Lord, and in denying the rights of church fellowship to all who have not been baptized. Valid baptism they consider essential to visible church fellowship. This also we hold. The only question, then, that divides us here is, 'What is essential to valid baptism?'"

The American Tract Society of this country, like the Religious Tract Society of Great Britain, "was formed by Christians of various denominations, to publish the great evangelical truths in which they are agreed." The Society states its work to be "the circulation of religious publications calculated to receive the approbation of all evangelical Christians. It is thus precluded from publications involving subjects of controversy among evangelical Christians," ("Principles and facts of the American Tract Society," p. 2.) Its publishing Committee is composed of ministers of the Gospel of six different denominations, and every book or tract published by the Society goes forth to the world with the full endorsement of each and all the members of this Committee. In a tract published by this Society, entitled "Shall I come to the Lord's Supper?" the duty of the pious inquirer is thus laid down:—"Let him repent and believe, and come to the table of the Lord. All these are alike duties, and to neglect either is to violate a Divine command. But they are to be done in the Gospel order: Repent and believe, and being baptized, commemorate the dying love of the Redeemer."

It says again: "We have then arrived at the conclusion that all, without exception or limitation, who repent and believe and are baptized, and only they, are fit subjects for the Lord's Supper," pp. 1, 2. However, then, we may differ from these various evangelical denominations on the question, "What is essential to Christian baptism?" in the principle that baptism is an indispensable pre-requisite to admission to the Lord's Supper, we all agree.

ANTI-MISSION BAPTISTS.

In regard to other bodies in the United States, that practice immersion but do not belong to the body called "Regular Baptists," we are not prepared to give you exact and full information. The Anti-Mission Baptists have about 180 associations, 1,800 churches, 860 ordained ministers, and a membership of about 60,000. These churches adhere closely to the practice of Strict Communion.

FREE-WILL AND SEVENTH-DAY BAPTISTS.

The Free-Will Baptists have 142 associations, 1,285 churches, 1,033 ordained ministers, 186 licentiates, and 59,055 members. They practise Open Communion.

The Seventh-day Baptists have 4 associations, 66 churches, 77 ordained ministers, 4 licentiates, and 6,686 members. As a denomination they practise Strict Communion.

DISCIPLES.

The Disciples, Reformers, or Campbellites, as they are sometimes called, (after Alexander Campbell, who has been specially prominent in gathering them together) have about 2,000 churches, 2,000 ministers, and about 350,000 members. A few churches of this body, we believe, practise Open Communion, but as a denomination they practise Strict Communion.—In vol. 6th of *The Christian Baptist*, published in 1828, Alexander Campbell says (p. 528, revised edition of 1835): "I object to making it a rule, in any case, to receive unimmersed persons

to church ordinances: 1st. Because it is nowhere commanded in the New Testament. 2nd. Because it is nowhere precedent in the New Testament. 3rd. Because it necessarily corrupts the simplicity and uniformity of the whole genius of the New Institution. 4th. Because it not only deranges the order of the kingdom, but makes void one of the most important institutions ever given to man. It necessarily makes immersion of no effect. For, with what consistency or propriety can a congregation hold up to the world either the authority or utility of an institution which they are in the habit of making as little of, as any human opinion? 5th. Because it is making a canon to dispense with a Divine institution of momentous import; they who do so assume the very same dispensing power which issued in that tremendous apostasy which we and all Christians are praying and laboring to destroy. If a Christian community puts into its Magna Charta, covenant, or constitution, an assumption to dispense with an institution of the Great King, who can tell where this power of granting license to itself may terminate?" In a Union Meeting held at Lexington, Ky., April, 1841, Alexander Campbell is reported to have said, that "a person not immersed has no right to a seat at the Lord's table; still," he said, "if such a person should come to the table he would say to him, 'I do not know whether your error is of the head or of the heart, and if you will yourself take the responsibility I shall not push you from the table.'" (*Banner and Pioneer*, Louisville, Ky., April 1941.)

Where open communion is practised in that body it is upon similar grounds. Those who are not baptized are not invited to the Lord's Supper, but uninvited those who have not received Christian baptism, to take a place at the Lord's Supper on their own responsibility.

SIX-PRINCIPLE AND TUNKER BAPTISTS.

The Six-Principle Baptists have 18 churches, 16 ordained ministers, and a membership of about 3,000. The practise strict communion. The Winebrethrens, or Church of God, are Baptists of the Arminian creed, and hold to open communion. Their form of church government is much like that of the Presbyterians. They have 275 churches, 132 ordained ministers, and a membership of about 14,000.

The Tunkers have 150 churches, 150 ordained ministers, and 8,200 members. They hold to general redemption; but are Baptist in their church government and discipline, and practise strict communion.

NON-ASSOCIATED CHURCHES.

In the account here given of Regular Baptists in the United States, we have given you as nearly as we could the grand total; but there is no reason to doubt that the number of those who hold the views of our body greatly exceeds the number we have given, for there are many churches holding our views in different parts of our country, who are not connected with any Association, and whose statistics, therefore, are not reported. And Regular Baptists not only hold that Christian baptism is a pre-requisite to the privileges of a church relation, and to the Lord's Supper; but they refuse to commune with baptized members of unbaptized members of unbaptized churches, and with all others who countenance unscriptural terms of admission to the Lord's Supper, and restrict communion to such as are in good standing, in churches maintaining the Gospel order.

You speak in your letter as if you supposed that the brethren here were accustomed to call themselves "Close Communion Baptists," rather than "Strict Communion Baptists." In this you are mistaken. We much prefer the word "Strict" to that of "Close."

Our Conference have appointed the following brethren a Committee, with whom we invite you to hold correspondence, in accordance with your request, on subjects of mutual interest:—Rev. A. D. Gillette, D. D., Pastor of Cavalry Baptist Church, New York—Post-office address, 37 West 23rd street, New York; Rev. E. T. Hiscox, D. D., Pastor of the Stanton Street Baptist church, New York—Post-office address, 217 Christie street, New York; Rev. Samuel Baker, D. D., Pastor of First Baptist church, Williamsburgh, New York—Post-office address, 18 Fifth street, Williamsburgh, New York; Rev. Rufus Babcock, D. D., Pastor of Baptist church, Paterson, New Jersey—Post-office address, Paterson, New Jersey.

To any or all of these brethren, you can address any communication you may wish to make to the Baptists of this country, and they will make such a disposition of your communication as may seem to them best.

We append a list of pastors of Baptist churches in New York city and vicinity, most of whom are members of our Conference, and a large portion of whom were present and voted unanimously for the adoption of this letter.

In behalf of the Conference,
ROBERTY LOWRY, Stated Clerk.
SAMUEL BAKER, Moderator, pro tem.
April 9, 1863.

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

Autobiographical Sketch.

BY REV. CHARLES TUPPER, D. D.

EVENTS OF YOUTH.

No. 4.

There was no theatre near the place where I was brought up. Travelling play-actors, however, occasionally exhibited in Kentville and other parts of the county. I was, of course,

taught to shun such allurements to vice; and this wholesome instruction was heeded by me.

But a circumstance occurred which was adapted to ensnare me. A school-teacher who was addicted to intemperance, but in some respects a clever man, was imprisoned for debt. During the time in which a Court was held in Kentville, it was proposed by some gentlemen to obtain his release, by encouraging him to hold a recitation, for admission to which each adult should pay fifteen pence, and youths should be admitted for half price. Attendance at this was deemed unobjectionable. His recitations, however, partook considerably of theatrical action. He acted Cato's Soliloquy with a book and a knife. His performance of "The Drunkard's Lament," which he professed to have himself composed, was especially applauded.

Having succeeded well in this enterprise, he attempted the same thing in a room obtained in a tavern. In accordance with the saying of the wise man, "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing," I was anxious to go the second time, and did so. The man who received the fee for admittance, perceiving that the people did not come as numerously as on the former occasion, began to shake the hat, and to call out, "Charity, boys! here's a man in jail." If he had stated that the man was in a worse place than a jail, he might have been believed; but all knew that the statement made was untrue. At this time the actor acted the drunkard to the life; for he could act nothing else.

This seems to have been one of those cases in which good comes out of evil. The scene was disgusting to me. I have no recollection of ever feeling any inclination after this to attend a play, or any thing of the kind. I did, indeed, since I entered the ministry once take my children early in the morning to see some beasts brought from foreign countries, especially such as are mentioned in the Bible. If these were exhibited without the demoralizing accompaniments which usually attend them, I conceive that the seeing of them might be instructive and harmless. But as these things are ordinarily conducted, the deleterious consequences of them, in many respects, are notorious; and therefore all who wish well to their country and the rising generation ought, in my opinion, to set their faces against everything of this nature, as well as against all theatrical amusements.

I cannot satisfy my conscience without here entering my caveat against certain practices which appear to me to be rapidly advancing at examinations of schools and literary institutions. Unquestionably pupils are, in many instances, much more intent on getting prepared to act their parts adroitly in a dialogue, than they are on preparing for actual examination in useful studies. It appears to me well worthy of serious consideration, whether such exercises, which undeniably have a near affinity to the theatre, are not adapted to foster a passion for its diversions, and ultimately to engulf persons in this vortex of ruin. The young ought to be carefully guarded against first steps in any wrong direction.

In my youthful days fortune-telling was a prevalent practice. I would not, however, allow any person to tell mine. I did not believe that they foreknew future events, and if they did, it was not my desire, to know what awaited me till it came. Undoubtedly events have sometimes transpired nearly in accordance with statements previously made, but I have known persons in such cases to endure much disquietude from the apprehension of the fulfilment of other predictions, which never came to pass. An aged fortune-teller, who had been highly exalted for predicting correctly, when she seemed near the close of life, and I expressed disapproval of her conduct in this respect, stated to me, that she had told the young people something to satisfy them, but she added, "I did not know any more than you did." Doubtless this was true.

My parents disapproved of novels, and I was not accustomed to read them. At one time, however, when I was living from home, and was disabled from work, through a dangerous wound by a scythe, instead of improving this visitation for my spiritual good, or the real improvement of my mind, I became engrossed with the reading of several volumes of a novel. My mother, who kindly visited me in my affliction, providentially came across one of them, and remarked, that it was "poison." I thought she was too particular, that I could improve myself in the art of reading, learn the use of words, &c., without sustaining any injury. Her remark, however, led me to serious reflection. It induced me to no longer more cautiously the tendency of what I read; and this I perceived to be injurious. There was nothing openly hostile to