

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

Open Letter to the Editor of the Wesleyan.

My Dear Sir,—

I hear you have been unwell, I hope you are now quite recovered, and prepared to pursue your editorial duties, and to receive a few more lines on some points contained in your letters.

You will have seen by last Messenger that all your remarks arising from your idea that I studied in Spurgeon's college come to nothing. You will excuse me if I say that you caused me considerable amusement when reading such as the following:—"I am informed that you came from the feet of Spurgeon," I don't mean that I was amused at the term "from the feet of Spurgeon," but from what I anticipated when reading it. Again you say, "Have you retained the principles learned from Spurgeon?" and again, "Charles Had-

don Spurgeon, your illustrious tutor," &c. However I will freely overlook all you say arising from your mistake, which occupies a good part of your letters, as some one had misinformed you. To save you from any further mistake in the matter, I may say that I studied at Bristol College, England, under the Presidency of the esteemed and venerable Dr. Gotch. Now, I confess to you, Bro. N., that there are few men living, if any, that I esteem more highly in love for their works' sake than Mr. Spurgeon. If there is an honest, hard-

working, upright, downright, straightforward, broad-hearted, noble-minded, manly Christian in the world, and if I were asked for the address of such a man, I should say, "Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, Metropolitan Tabernacle, London." Had I studied in his College I might have had still more reasons for admiring him than I have now; still I do not see that I should be bound even then never to alter my views on any subject if I saw a just reason for doing so, any more than I feel bound to hold to all I learned of my esteemed and beloved tutor, Dr. Gotch, who has perhaps a warmer place in my heart and stands higher in my esteem than even Mr. Spurgeon. Neither of those noble men would wish their students to believe and practice a thing simply because they did it themselves, but rather that they should think and act independently. They do not reduce their students to pulp and then run them into moulds of their own fashioning.

But as you are anxious to know something of my views on Communion, I will now oblige you; with liberty for you to copy them into the Wesleyan.

I was pastor of an open-Communion church from the time I left College till I came to Nova Scotia, which covered a period of five years. There were only two churches in the town, (Chipping Sodbury, Gloucestershire,) Episcopal and Baptist. There were Methodists, Presbyterians, and Independents who attended the Baptist church, and faithfully every month did I extend the invitation to "members of any Evangelical Denomination to remain with us" to the Lord's supper; yet, strange to say, during the whole five years I do not remember one of them remaining to the ordinance, which often caused me some astonishment and wonder. I find, moreover, that such is generally the case under similar circumstances. Within a year or two of the close of my ministry there, I gave closer attention to the communion question, and this thought occurred to me: That if open-Communion was right, open-membership must be right also; and to this hour I am of that opinion. I did not, however, suggest open-membership to the church, because our brethren of other churches did not even accept open-Communion. When in Manchester at the Baptist Union meetings, in October, 1872, at which Mr. Spurgeon was present, I took the opportunity to ask him about what was so much on my mind. So I said to him, (privately of course,) "Mr. Spurgeon, there is a little matter troubling my mind, and I should like if you could set me right on it; it is this: I am a pastor of an open-Communion church; and if a person were to say to me, "Why do you allow me to sit at the Lord's table with you, and not to be a member of your church?" I don't know what I should answer him.

Mr. S. replied, "Answer him! I tell you what I'd answer him, 'If I choose to let you sit at my table, do you think I am going to give you the keys of my cupboard?' This reply, however, was more witty than wise, because if I am on such terms with a man that he is welcome to sit at my table, he is virtually welcome to the keys of my cupboard,—I mean so far as to what it contained. So I expressed my dissatisfaction with the reply, when he said, "Well it is a difficult question; I have been going to write about it two or three times, but have not." And I am of opinion, Bro. N., that the difficulty of the question was the reason why he did not. So I told him that I should be glad if he would write about it, as I knew there were others in the same position, when he said he would think about it. I do not remember having read anything from his pen on that subject from that time to this.

At the laying of the foundation stone of a new College during the same meetings, Mr. S. thought fit to launch some heavy bolts at Union churches, which in my opinion is the natural result and fruit of open-Communion. He represented a man as presenting himself to the minister at the church door, and saying, "I want to join your church, sir, but I see you have a font and a baptistry, which must it be?" and the minister as saying, "O, which ye like my dears, ye pays yer money and ye takes yer choice." This caused much merriment, in which I joined, but on thinking the matter over soberly and candidly I concluded that those who admitted the unbaptized to membership were as consistent as Mr. Spurgeon in admitting them to the Lord's table; neither of which, Bro. Nicolson, do I conceive to be according to the pattern shewn us in the New Testament.

Notwithstanding this difficulty, I still held to open Communion, and did till I came to Nova Scotia. After reaching this country my attention was drawn to the question much more than when in England, so I began to investigate it with considerable diligence, and from all I have been able to hear, observe, and read, I have come to the following conclusions, and the process has been by no means hurried either:—

1. That nearly all Protestant Pædobaptist churches hold that Baptism should precede Communion.

2. That this being so, all such churches hold what is commonly called close-Communion principles.

3. That holding these principles, they occupy precisely the same position as those who are called close-Communion Baptists.

4. That Pædobaptist churches practising what they call baptism, and Baptists also practising baptism, the former consider that they should therefore commune in common with the latter.

5. That Pædobaptists seem to think that because they allow immersion to be lawful Christian baptism, the Baptists ought to be charitable enough to allow sprinkling to be the same. It is no charity to accept as true that which is not, but rather the reverse.

6. That Baptists, by admitting Pædobaptists to the communion would virtually admit sprinkling to be baptism, and thereby sustain and uphold that error. Open Communion is called for, but open baptism is wanted.

That the sum and substance of all speaking and writing against close-Communion when boiled down comes to this:—Admit us to the communion and thereby endorse our practice of sprinkling as baptism.

8. That you and your Pædobaptist brethren must have very little faith both in yourselves and your practice, that you are so exceedingly anxious for Baptists thus to endorse your mode of baptism. They do not ask Pædobaptists to endorse immersion; indeed, many do it without asking.

9. That your endeavours to promote or secure open-Communion, by which I mean communion with Baptists, does not so much arise from a desire to commune with them, as for the reason given above.

10. That you, as Christian men, pay yourselves too low, and the Baptists too high a compliment, by your cry for open-Communion, making it appear almost as if there were no communion with our Head except through the medium of the Baptist Church.

11. That while we admit most readily

all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved, whether baptized or not, yet we do not see our way clear to invite the unbaptized to the Lord's table, because it is the Lord's table, and not ours, so that we are not left to choose in the matter.

12. That if open-Communion were to become universal, the bonds of Christian brotherhood would not thereby be made any stronger than they are now.

13. That notwithstanding Baptists hold to close-Communion, they do not thereby wish to imply that the unbaptized are unsaved, although in your first letter to me you say that "with you to be strictly logical—to be thoroughly consistent,—the bulk of Christians are unbelievers—nothing more;" which is your conclusion, not ours. We hold all believers to be Christians, and all Christians to be believers, we also hold all unbaptized believers to be living in disobedience to what is to us a plain and distinct command of Christ; ignorant or not of the fact, it is disobedience none the less; yet at the same time both we and they holding Christ as our Head, and His atonement the ground of our hope, and while certain differences exist among us and them, on points not of vital, yet some of no small importance, we are thus on the surface, "Distinct as the billows," yet I trust that down beneath—in the heart—"We are one as the sea."

14. That the position of the Baptists in these Provinces on this question is in accordance with the practice of the primitive church.

15. That such as occupy a different position are not in accordance with the practice of the primitive church, and therefore,

16. I consider that Baptists are consistent with themselves and with Truth in holding and maintaining the principles of close-Communion.

For what I have said I am myself alone responsible, as well as for what I have said or may yet say on baptism. I do not profess to represent, or write in the name of any person or persons whatsoever.

Were it a matter of feeling merely, I should most certainly practice and maintain open-Communion, for it has often pained me to witness the husband, perhaps, remaining to the ordinance, and the wife leaving, or vice-versa, or a Methodist minister taking part in the public service as was the case two or three Sundays ago in connection with myself, and then to have to leave when the Lord's Supper was to be observed. I admit, sir, I felt it, but when we have to do with PRINCIPLES, which we believe to be just and right, our feelings must stand aside, and right must take its course. In matters of conscience, faith, and doctrine, principle should regulate our actions, not feeling. If the latter were lawful I should adopt sprinkling instead of immersion, especially in winter, and open-Communion instead of close all the year round.

I will finish my remarks on this subject by giving you what Dr. Talmage says about Baptists and close-Communion. Mark it well!—"We deplore the many sharp things that have been written in many papers—and we are sorry that some of them (unknown to ourselves) have crept into our own paper (Christian at Work) on the fact that the chief body of the Baptists believe that they ought not to invite to the communion table those who have not been immersed. They have as much right to have that belief as the Pædobaptists have a right to the opposite belief. We know close-Communion Baptist ministers, and open-Communion Baptist ministers, and we do not know that the latter are any more genial than the former. Let each denomination mind its own business, and cease meddling with others. If the communion-table of the Baptist church were the only one in the land, and you Pædobaptists were not allowed to sit at it, there might be some ground for complaint; but when there are thousands of communion-tables all over the land, where the sprinkled as well as the plunged may partake, what are you making such a fuss about? If there are ten houses on a street where you are invited, and there is one that does not invite you, what an unreasonable thing for you to spend your time in throwing stones at the windows of the closed house."

Just so, Mr. Talmage, it is unreasonable; but don't you see that the nine admit sprinkling to be baptism, but the tenth does not. That accounts for the stone-throwing. Compare conclusion 7, Bro. N.

We will now turn to the baptism

question, and your views thereon. You say by way of objection to immersion that you "can give the name of a beloved minister in Boston, who avers that, by standing in the water during the time necessary for baptizing" some scores of candidates, he contracted a cold which has laid him aside from his work and may carry him to his grave. He is a Methodist withal—the more the pity."

By this last remark it appears that if it had been a Baptist minister who had thus taken cold and was laid aside from his work, and likely to be carried to his grave by it, it would not have mattered so much. Well, perhaps not, they are considerably in the way of some people. I hope, however, he has recovered and continues to practice baptism after the scriptural and apostolic method.

At the close of your letter you say, "We are heartily sincere in the opinion that immersion and close-Communion are both foreign to the spirit and genius of the Christian religion. At least this is my position." The "we" at the beginning, I perceive, applies to Methodists, not being the editorial "we," as you speak of yourself in the first person just after. If this then is the position of Methodists on these questions, and as an editor you are supposed to know, then I ask, What business had that Boston Methodist minister in the water? practising what, according to you, he believed to be "foreign to the spirit and genius of the Christian religion." It looks almost like a judgment on him, and if I am ever found sprinkling any one, and calling it baptism, while I believe and am confident it is "foreign to the spirit and genius of the Christian religion," may my fingers be seized with rheumatism or something worse, to shew me not to act the hypocrite again.

But supposing this good brother and "beloved minister" believed in immersion, and knowing he had some scores to baptize, why, if there was any risk, did he not, like a sensible man, take the necessary precautions to prevent taking cold. The laws of nature, Bro. N., will not be suspended even for a Methodist minister. Thanks, by the way, for the information of the spread of immersion views among Methodists.

Again, if such is the view of the Methodists of Nova Scotia regarding immersion, and yours in particular, why is it, why is it, I ask you, that your ministers sometimes immerse, and you record such immersions in the Wesleyan? Do not write to me about the inconsistencies of the Baptist creed till you shew a little consistency yourself. When and where did you ever hear of a Baptist minister sprinkling? Tell me I pray. I must tell you here, Brother Nicolson, that that part of your letter in which you try to make immersion appear ridiculous, does not look well. Ridicule is not argument, and is generally the resort to which men flee when they find they have no arguments to sustain them. In speaking of the precautions taken by Baptists in preparing for baptism, which precautions I may tell you are taken so that it may be done "decently and in order," you say, "The utmost powers of human invention have been exercised to bring your mode within the limits of common life and decency." If so, what I ask you is your idea of the human mind if its "utmost powers" are required to suggest or invent, "Baptistries in churches, warming water, cutting ice on the Lord's day (which I think is a guess of yours, as I have never known it done and hope it never is), rubber clothing to keep the minister dry, and weights to sink the dresses of the female candidates."

What is there in these things to call forth the exercise of the "utmost powers of human invention," or to induce you to hold them up to ridicule? My good brother, have some pity on yourself, and on your readers, and do not so expose your folly.

I am not surprised that in yesterday's Wesleyan (July 13th), you half-apologize to your readers for having written so much, by stating with reference to anything you may yet say, which for your own sake, the less said the better, "We promise our readers (perhaps you mean leaders) not to take up much space, however, with this controversy." This looks to me, sir, like an apology, and that some of your readers (or leaders) seem to think you have written too much, and that possibly some one has

sent you a word of caution which I am informed was done during a former discussion of the baptism question between myself and a Presbyterian brother. They see it is not safe to allow you too much scope.

It also seems strange to me, Bro. N., that while before your late Conference you had so much to say, since that, you say so very little. Why have you collapsed so suddenly? Did some venerable brother whisper a little advice into your ear? or hold up his fore finger and look stern at you? or give his cane a gentle shake in your presence and for your benefit and that of the denomination you so efficiently represent? Three numbers of the Wesleyan have appeared since that Conference, and all you have now to say occupies about six lines and a half! But to this I shall refer again at the close of this letter.

(Conclusion next week.)

For the Christian Messenger.

Our Ancestors.

BY PETER.

No. 6.

The Petrobrussians were accused of denying the efficacy of baptism without faith; and those at Oxford (though allowed to have rightly confessed the nature of the Heavenly Physician) yet of denying those remedies wherewith, it was said, He deigned to heal man's moral infirmity, i. e., the divine sacraments confided to the catholic church.

Thus the fair inference from all these statements seems to me to be this: That instead of heresy respecting the sacraments, their doctrine was chiefly, if not entirely, a protest against that same abuse of the sacraments, against which the Lord himself recorded beforehand his protest, if I mistake not, in the memorable prefiguration vision of the 7th of the Apocalypse: it being that substitution of the sacramental form for the spirit, the outward for the inward, and the work of the minister for that of his own life-giving Spirit, which is then allusively noted as the first symptom and cause of the then instealing apostasy. Perhaps as it was the first, so it might be considered as of all others the most subtle in the apostolic system. Yet, subtle as it was, against it, as well as against all the grosser errors of the apostasy already noted, this remarkable line of dissentients were taught and enabled, if my inferences be just, to keep up through the five centuries comprehended in our review, a faithful testimony."

LATER WESTERN WITNESSES.

Before the Council of Orleans, held A. D. 1022, several Canons were accused of heresy. From the reports of their trial, all written by their enemies, it seems that they agreed with the Paulikians in their repudiation of sacramental efficacy, and in basing their doctrines on the Bible alone. The concluding words of their reply to their accusers bear the true ring, and deserve to be remembered, "Ye may say these things to those whose taste is earthly, and who believe the figments of men written on parchment. But to us who have the law written on the inner man by the Holy Spirit, and savour nothing but what we have learnt from God, the Creator of all, ye speak things vain and unworthy of the Deity. Put, therefore, an end to your words. Do with us as you wish! Even now we see our King reigning in the heavenly places, who with his right hand is conducting us to immortal triumphs and heavenly joys."

On this, after shameless insults received both from the people and specially the Queen, who was present, they were led to the stake, and smiled, it is said, in the midst of the flames.

At the Council of Arras, A. D. 1025, other heretics professing a like faith, were examined, of whom it was said, "Their objection to the baptismal rite was this: That personal faith in the baptized did not accompany it."

THE BERINGERIANS.

BERINGER, in the year 1845, being then principal of a public school at Tours, first excited attention by combating the received doctrine of transubstantiation. Roman Catholic writers, says Dean Waddington, do not dispute the brilliancy of his talents, his eloquence, or general erudition. They admit, too, that habits of exemplary piety gave life and efficacy to his genius.