Close Communion.

BY H. F. ADAMS.

The recent conversion of the eminent and prominent Dr. Madison C. Peters, pastor of the Bloomingdale Reformed church, (New York) stands out in striking contrast to the clamour of a small section of the Baptist denomination to recognize pedo-baptism as a sufficient prerequisite for the Lord's Supper. It also affords an excellent opportunity for the careful consideration of the position Regular Baptists take in the relation between the only two ordinances our Lord founded, and which form an integral part of New Testament Christianity.

Let us read Dr. Peters' admirable letter, notifying his people of his grounds for rejecting of infant sprinkling for New Testament baptism, and then proceeds to state more generally the w ole question from the view-point of New Testament precedent, and the best scholarship of ancient and modern times:

DR. PETERS' CHANGE OF VIEWS.

Rev. Madison C. Peters, D D., for the past eleven years the successful pastor of the Bloomingdale Reformed church, one of the most important churches of the Reformed denomination in this city, surprised his people and the community last week by tendering his resignation. His letter to his people, giving his reasons for the step, was read on Sunday morning, February 4. It will interest all Baptists, not only because of Dr. Peters' prominence, but because of his long family connections and traditions with the Reformed church.

DR. PETERS' LETTER.

To My Dear People: I have sent to the Consistory my resignation as pastor of the Bloomingdale church, and have requested them to unite with me in asking the New York Classis to desolve our pleasant relationship as pastor and people. My sole reason for resigning this position of power and influence is that, after many years of honest and prayerful investigation, I have come to the deliberate conclusion that the Bible—the Protestant's only rule of faith—*teaches baptism for believers only* I can therefore no longer, in good conscience, practice infant baptism, or baptism by sprinkling. I am a minister of the Reformed church, and while I am thus connected, I shall not give my reasons for the change of conviction. I love the Reformed church. It is the church of my fathers. I admire its breadth and depth. Those who have attended my ministry through all these years will bear me witness that I have always been a loyal son, and I had fondly hoped that I could serve my denomination in this church with my riper years, as I have given it the ardor of my youth. But I must be true to myself, practice only what I believe, and preach what I can practice.

To you, my dear people, whose kindly counsel, unwavering loyalty and generous support in every good work have made my labors both lovely and successful, I give my heartiest thanks. My congregation is composed of not less than eleven different denominations of Protestants, while hundreds of Jews and Catholics constantly attended my ministry. I thank God today that he has permitted me to bring his message to such various minds and hearts as have constantly gathered within these walls. All except eleven persons came into this church during my ministry of nearly eleven years. I have, therefore, and always shall have, a peculiar love for and undying interest in the Bloomingdale church. For your love I give you my love, and for your prayers my prayers. Your pastor and friend,

MADISON C. PETERS.

January 27, 1900.

For many years Dr. Peters has been one of the most popular preachers in the city. He has also been much in demand as a lecturer, and has published several books. Dr. Peters' church and denominational surroundings have been of the pleasantest and most cougenial nature. The church edifice, and the parsonage adjoining it, are among the finest of the West Side. The church has not only a large and prosperous membership, but a large endowment as well. Dr Peters' people have been loyal and devoted to him, and there was every reason, from the view-point of interest, to keep him within the Reformed fold. The measure of Dr. Peters' sincerity can be judged by the fact that he is making so great sacrifices to his conviction of duty. In pulpit power, in resourcefulness, in leadership, in active aggressiveness, and in personal influence, he will be a great accession to the ranks of the Baptist ministry. Dr. Peters will close his pastorate March 1. and will supply the pulpit of Tremont Temple, Boston, on April 27.—Examiner.

While I cannot believe any one would knowingly misrepresent our position on the relation between the ordinances, yet there are many who, not intelligently apprehending it, cannot think of it, or state it to others, without misrepreseuting our views. And people who listen to statements of our belief and practice from the ill-informed, invariably regard us as narrow in our views, ungenerous in our practice of them, and bigoted in not inviting unimmersed persons to the Lord's Supper. In short, we are called, and sometimes in quite a tone of commiseration, "Close-Communion Baptists," as if the Lord's Supper the dividing line between us and all other denominations. But if such hasty judges of our belief and practice would only think, study and compare, they would discover that a comparison of the standards of the evangelical bodies of Christians with our belief and practice that we are no more close-communion than they are, and that it is not at the Lord's Supper where the line begins that separates us from other denominations. It will be seen from the following selections that Episcopalians, Methodists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians are in their doctrinal attitude as much close-communion as we are. If they do not practice what they believe, we should not be labelled bigoted for being more consistent.

1. The Episcopalian. Rev. Dr. Wall, an eminent writer, says in his "History of Infant Baptism," part II., chap. 9: "No church ever gave the communion to any persons before they were baptized. Among all the absurdities that ever were held none ever maintained that any person should partake of the communion before he was baptized."

2. Methodist. Rev. F. G. Hibbard, Methodist Epis copal, says in his book on "Christian Baptism," part II., page 174: "Before entering upon the argument before us it is but just to remark that in one principle the Baptist and pedo-Baptist churches agree. They both agree in rejecting from the communion of the table of the Lord, and denying the rights of church fellowship to all who have not been baptized."

3 Congregationalist. Rev. Dr. Hopkins, of great authority in his denomination, says: "No one is to be considered and treated as a member of the church of Christ unless he is baptized with water, as this is the only door by which persons can be introduced into the visible kingdom of Christ, according to His own appointment." See "Curtiss on Communion," page 125.

4. Presbyterian. I will now give you a more lengthy extract that proves the Presbyterians to be more "close-communion" than Episcopalian, Congregationalist or Methodist.

The Rev F. M. Iams was my predecessor in the pastorate of the First Baptist church, Mount Vernon, Ohio, U. S. A., but when he entered the ministry he was a Congregationalist. The following is his own account of an incident that happened in the early part of his ministry:

"In the beginning of my ministry, before I was ordained, I invited a Presbyterian minister to occupy my pulpit on Communion Sabbath and administer the Lord's Supper, and he accepted my invitation. There was at that time in my congregation a young man, a very recent convert, and a very zealous Christian worker. He was an Englishman and had been christened in infancy the Church of England. Afterward he had become an avowed atheist, and was such when I first met him. I found him a sharp, trained reasoner of a very decided metaphysical cast of mind, and our discussions were continued for several months. At length he was convinced of his mistake, made a public renunciation of his atheism, sought Christ, and became a devout, earnest Christian. His talents made him very useful, and he was almost immediately made superintendent of the Sunday School. In this position he was doing good service at the time Rev. Mr. S. came, at my invitation, to administer the Lord's Supper in my church. He had not united with any church, being in doubt about which one he ought to unite with. I loved him tenderly as a Christian brother, and a very dear friend, and in common with many of my brethren, I greatly desired to have him sit with us at the Lord's Table.

"At that time I had not examined the question of communion, but was governed in the matter by misguided feelings, and consequently was in favor of open communion. So I spoke to the Rev. Mr. S. confidentially, and requested him to speak to Brother H. privately, and invite him to come to the table with us. I told him of his recent conversion, his zeal for Christ, and our great love for him as a true and devoted disciple. Mr. S. listened attentively until I concluded, then he said: "Is Bro. H. a member of any church?" I replied, "No; he has not decided where he ought to unite He has that matter under prayerful consideration." "Well, I cannot invite him to the Lord's table. That is an ordinance of the church, and only those who are church members have a right to come to it." "Oh, but he is such a good man; we all love him so much. Please do invite him." "No, I cannot. As for loving him, you can love him just as well, and fellowship him just as much, if he does not come to the table. The Lord's table is not to exhibit our love and fellowship for each other, but to commemorate the death of our Lord. It will be time enough for Brother H. to engage in the observance of this church service when he has become a member of the church." I replied, "But Bro. H. has been baptized: he was baptized in infancy in the Church of England. Is not that enough?" Rev. Mr. S. replied, "No, sir. The Supper is a church ordinance and it belongs to not all who are baptized, but only to those who are baptized members of the church. Bro. H. has been baptized, but he is not a member of any church. He was baptized by a minister of the Church of England. Very well. We respect this baptism; but he was not received into the membership of the Church of England, and he does not consider himself a member of that church, or any other, and therefore he has no right at the Lord's table, and we have no right to invite him there till he unites with some evangelical church."

And Mr. S. was firm, and I was obliged to submit to what I then deemed a very great hardship and a grievous wrong. But I long since learned that he was right in putting the order of the Lord's House above the clamour of private affection or personal interest or feeling. In refusing to invite Bro. H. to the Lord's table he acted on strict Presbyterian principles and upon strict Baptist principles as well."

I now appeal to every thoughtful person and ask: "Wherein do the Episcopal, Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian bodies differ from the Baptist on the prerequisite to communion?"

You must admit that all five are close communion bodies. They all teach that only baptized persons are eligible for the Lord's Supper.

Do I hear some say, "Well I never looked at the subject in that way before, but now I see that we are all close-communionists. And on that subject I will never again think of the Baptists as pursuing a course different from others, as all denominations demand that a person must be baptized before he partakes of the Lord's Supper. But please tell me, Mr. Adams, why is it that you Baptists do not invite members of other denominations to sit down with you at the Lord's Table?"

Now, my friend, you are approaching the real point at issue. We do not invite them to the Lord's Table because we believe baptism is a prerequisite to Communion And as we believe the only water baptism in the New Testament is the immersion of believers, you must perceive that the real point at issue is not Communion but baptism.

Now it is my duty to show why Baptists do not regard those who have been christened as having fulfilled the New Testament obligation to be baptized. First, how many baptisms are there in the New Testament? Ephesians 4: 5 says, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." How many baptisms are practiced by the aforesaid denominations? Three: Sprinkling, pouring, and immersion. If God's Word says only one, two of these forms must be wrong. Then the task before us is to ascertain which one of the three Christ commanded and the apostles practiced.

Of course you know that the word baptize is not a translation of the original Greek word into an equivalent of the English language. But is the Anglicising of the Greek word baptizo. In ascertaining the Greek word for Baptism and its meaning, we will take the best Pedo-Baptist authority in the world of scholarship. That splendid lexicon compiled by two eminent English churchmen named Liddell and Scott, is used in all the universities and colleges on this side of the Atlantic.

Baptizo—To dip in or under water; to sink, to bathe, to baptize.
Baptismos—A dipping in water—baptism.
Baptisma—Baptism.
Baptistes—One that dips—a baptizer.

But do not these great scholars give other meanings to Baptizo? They do not even hint the bare possibility of any other than that given from their dictionary? But perhaps you are thinking that they were favoring the Baptists in confining the meaning of baptizo to immersion! Of course you smile at the mere suggestion of Church of England clergyman doing such a thing to substantiate the practice of the Baptists That church has done many cruel things to suppress the Baptists, such as the excommunication of John Smyth, imprisonment of John Bunyon, and the burning of John Boucher, for rejecting infant baptism; but to translate such a fundamental word as *baptizo* in order to help the Baptists, was far from the intentions of Liddell and Scott. These English clergymen did not compile their great lexicon with the intention of helping any ecclesiastical body, but as scholars they forgot all human substitutes, and honestly and correctly gave the English word that exactly represents the Greek original. And with them we may name forty lexicographers who agree that baptizo means "to dip in or under water." They are Sophocles, Donnegan Rost and Palm, Parkhurst, Stephanus, Robinson, Wright, Schleusner, Dunbar, Leigh, Schrevelius, Scapula, Bass, Suidas, Morel, Laing, Hederic, Greenfield, Ewing, Jones, Schœttgen, T. S. Green, Suicer, Mintert, Pasor, Grove, Bretschneider, Stokins, Robertson, Passow, Schwarezius, Alstedius, Pickering, Rouma, Gazes, Bagster and Sons, Authon, Grimon and Cremer. In the language of Moses Stuart we may justly say, "All critics and lexicographers of any note are agreed on this." (Stuart was a professor in Andover Theological Seminary for forty-one years.)

It is not necessary to say that not one of the above scholars was a member of the Baptist church, and yet they all confess that only Baptists practice apostolic baptism. And I think all will grant that the arguments I advance to prove that baptism means only to dip have additional force, when I say I have not brought, and will not bring the opinion of a single Baptist forward, but only pedo-Baptist scholars. "Pedo" is from the Greek "pais" or "paida," and means "child."

What is the Greek word for sprinkling? Liddell & Scott's Lexicon says:

Raino—To sprinkle, besprinkle. But they do not hint that by squeezing that word thus

Raino—to sprinkle sometimes, and to dip sometimes?

No. Again these gentlemen translate this word not as clergymen, but as honest and exact scholars. But methinks I hear a pedo-Baptist say, "But did not Christ use the word raino when he gave the command to his apostles to baptize?" He never once used it in connection with baptism. If he had meant that baptism was to be a sprinkling with water, he would have used the word raino, but he always used "bapto" when speaking of that one of the only two ordinances which he instituted for the observance of his disciples.