

Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, JULY 23, 1862.

The Communion Question.

Efforts are sometimes made to shew that Baptists are the most uncharitable of all religious communities, because they regard—

- 1st. Communion at the Lord's Table as a church ordinance,
 - 2nd. Baptism as the initiatory ordinance to the church of Christ, and
 - 3rd. Immersion as the only scriptural baptism.
- These three principles consistently carried out, demand that only members of those churches with which they are fraternally united should be invited to participate with them in the Lord's Supper. They are, however, no barrier to the observance of all the other courtesies of christian life.

It is known to our readers that Paedobaptists do not all agree to commune with each other, but it may not be known to all that those bearing the same name in many cases have no fellowship and refuse to commune together. Although baptism does not enter into the question of their divisions, yet the arguments by which they defend their policy, may apply with far greater weight to sustain the course pursued by Baptist churches. The United Presbyterians are strictly close-communicants, and do not admit other Presbyterians to partake with them in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. This, however, is not peculiar to that body, but others both theoretically and practically are equally close.

The practice in some bodies of giving an indiscriminate invitation to become communicants with them, to all—whether church-members or not is so disorderly and loose that any condemnation of it would be superfluous before intelligent christians.

An article in the *Cincinnati Pres. Witness*, in defence of their restricted communion of the United Presbyterians, puts the subject in a very clear and satisfactory light.

The inconsistency of open communion is very apparent, but the other serious difficulties it involves are quite sufficient to induce consistent Baptists to follow the light they have on the subject, rather than make a law without Divine authority. The following is the greater portion of the article referred to:—

The practice of inviting all who are in good standing in other churches, to unite with us in the communion of the Supper, is wrong, because it is inviting those over whom we have no jurisdiction or control. We would not be allowed to institute any inquiry as to their conduct, nor would we have it in our power to censure or correct anything wrong in their doctrines or practice, however manifest it might be. Is it possible that the laws of Christ's house make it obligatory on us, to bestow privileges on those who are so entirely beyond our jurisdiction and control, and who do not acknowledge our official authority? Such a principle is not recognized in any other relation.

When we admit persons to the privileges of our house, it is understood that they conform to its rules. Foreigners, coming into our country and claiming the rights and privileges of citizenship, acknowledge the obligation to obey our laws. In a word, privilege and obligation go together. And whenever any one has a right to confer privileges, he has also the right to enforce obligations.

The practice named is wrong, because it practically takes the question of fitness for admission to this ordinance entirely out of the hands of all church officers, where it of right belongs, and leaves it wholly in the hands of persons thus invited. Let the minister extend the usual invitation, and each one hearing it decides for himself whether or not he is in good standing in his own branch of the church, and acts accordingly. The consequence is, sometimes persons who make no profession engage in this solemn work.

Nor does it excuse the matter to say, that in such cases of profanation, the responsibility rests on the parties acting thus. Such is not the fact. It is true they are guilty, but the chief responsibility rests upon the officers of the church. It is their business to guard the house of God against unholy intrusion of this kind—to decide who have, and who have not a right to its privileges. But the open communion system places the power of thus deciding entirely beyond their reach and virtually makes the authority of church officers a nullity.

But in close connection with this, it may be observed, that such a system renders church discipline a mere farce. To-day, for instance, the Session of any given congregation may find one of their members guilty of something, in doctrine or practice, which is inconsistent with his profession, and may as a consequence suspend him from the privileges of the church, until he gives evidence of repentance and reformation. The individual thus suspended may make immediate application to some other branch of the church, not holding the same views on that which was the ground of his suspension—may find admittance, and being now in "good standing," may on to-morrow come forward and commune

with the persons who suspended him to-day. Nor is this an extreme case. Similar cases would necessarily more frequently occur were it not that everything like discipline in the church of God is in a great measure laid aside.

In adopting the open communion system we must necessarily cease to maintain a consistent testimony for all the distinctive principles of our profession. For instance, where is the force of our testimony against any sin, so long as we unite knowingly with those guilty of sins in the solemn ordinance of the Supper? All those churches holding communion with each other really occupy the same common ground, as it respects divine truth. The testimony of the most erroneous has equal force with that of the most orthodox. Where we knowingly and voluntarily commune with persons guilty of wrongs, we, by that act, become partakers with them in that wrong.

And one of the manifest tendencies of the open communion system is, to assimilate the churches thus practising in their doctrinal views. Hence how very common it is to find in churches professedly Calvinistic, every grade and shade of Arminianism. It not only assimilates in doctrine, but also in practice. The constant and irresistible tendency is for the more latitudinarian branches of the church to draw those communing with them, of the more orthodox stamp, down to a common level with themselves. And here the adage will apply, "A man is known by the company he keeps."

But finally, the tendency of the open communion system is to develop the most inexcusable form of sectarianism. This, it is true, is the very contrary of what is generally believed. Of all persons in the world, the close communions are regarded as the most sectarian. But the advocates of open communion, notwithstanding their liberality in this respect, do what they can to maintain and build up their separate church organizations. By communing together, they clearly show that it is not principle that keeps them apart. Their continued separation can, therefore, only result from a purely party or sectarian spirit. If they can unite in the ordinance of the Supper, that which is more holy and spiritual, and which brings them nearer together than any other, occasionally, why not unite in the less holy bonds of a public profession, constantly? Is not the act of communing together in the ordinance of the Supper, the very essence of that unity included in church relationship?—Why, then, be one in essence professedly, and yet remain separate and distinct in form? Any one but partially acquainted with the state of things existing in open communion churches, knows quite well that the system does not promote true Christian affection—that the same watchful, suspicious, envious spirit can frequently be discovered among them, that is thought to distinguish close communions. If then the open communion system is unscriptural—if it is extending privileges to those over whom we have no control, and who do not recognize or acknowledge our authority—if it makes every man the judge of his own state of preparation for a communion work—if to practice it is to lay aside all faithful testimony, for all the distinguishing truths of our profession, and render the exercise of church discipline a mere farce, and finally if it do not tend to promote true Christian love, but, on the contrary, fosters a spirit of sectarianism, then surely should we be careful not to adopt the system, or in any way give it encouragement. That all these are true of the system and that the system is therefore wrong, we think is clearly, though briefly demonstrated, by the foregoing remarks.

Newfoundland.

At our denominational gatherings reference has frequently been made to the absence of any Baptist church in Newfoundland, and to the fact that Baptists in that country, in consequence of being without any organization, are under obligation to other bodies, for the opportunities of joining in public worship. The subject has several times been brought to the attention of the N. S. Home Missionary Board. As a result of this, the 2nd article of the Constitution, was some time ago altered so as to include "Newfoundland" in its field of labor, and stands as follows:—

II. The object of this Society shall be the preaching of the Gospel throughout Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland, the assistance of feeble Churches, and the planting of new ones.

The want of funds and a suitable person have hitherto prevented a mission to that country.

We were glad to learn, a short time since, that a Baptist minister, we believe from England, had commenced preaching in St. Johns. A letter received from Rev. J. Davis, a few days ago, gives further information concerning this movement. The following paragraph will be read with interest by many of our brethren.

"On my way home from the Association I fell in with a respectable man from St. Johns, Newfoundland, a Wesleyan by religious profession, who gave me some interesting information about the Baptist brother now at work in that city. His name is Smith. He occupies at present a Temperance Hall, capable of accommodating some three hundred hearers. There he preaches twice on the Lord's Day; while, during the week he fills up two evenings with preaching and a prayer meeting. My informant had repeatedly heard him. He described his ministry as warm and earnest; not too deeply

tinged with peculiarities of any kind, but full of great Gospel announcements. The hall in which he preaches is well filled. There is plenty of room for him. He is favourably received, and prospects of great usefulness are opening before him.

We shall be glad to obtain further information of the progress and prospects of the work on that island.

Temperance.

At the late meeting of the Synod by the Presbyterian Church, a report was adopted from a Committee of that body appointed for the purpose of considering the question and reporting thereon. This report contains some statements which will interest the friends of Temperance. It says:—

Your committee, after careful consideration and earnest prayer proceeded to issue to each pastor of a congregation in connexion with the Synod a circular, soliciting as much information as possible respecting the whole subject, and we are gratified to be able to report that our circulars, instead of being treated with disrespect or neglect, as has sometimes been the fate of such papers, have by nearly all our ministers been promptly and satisfactorily responded to. Some of the brethren have even exceeded our request in their liberality and readiness to furnish information.

The facts thus elicited respecting this matter we will now briefly state. The number of communicants connected with this church engaged in the manufacture or sale of intoxicating liquors as owners or responsible heads of establishments, is eleven. The number engaged in a subordinate capacity, and who cannot be regarded as responsible for the continuance of the business, is 19. The number of ordinary hearers and supporters of the church engaged in the manufacture or sale of these liquors, as responsible heads, is 25. And further, that during the last few years about fourteen have withdrawn their pecuniary support from the church in consequence of our advocacy of total abstinence. That in thirty congregations progress appears to have been made in the temperance cause: that in and around seven the cause seems to be losing ground, and that in six more it is extremely difficult to decide whether or not any progress is being made; that about one half of our communicants are total abstainers, while a large majority are temperate, if not total abstainers in practice, and that in the case of several congregations, while the cause of temperance is making progress in the church, in the surrounding community over which the church has no control, drunkenness and all its degrading concomitants are largely on the increase.

We, as a committee, would humbly recommend to your Reverend Court the adoption of the following or similar resolutions:—

1st, That in view of the state of our Church and Community, in these Lower Provinces, as now brought under our notice, we regard ourselves as under special obligations to advocate by persuasion and example, the principles of Total Abstinence.

2nd, That the members of this Synod be earnestly recommended to co-operate with the friends of Temperance in their several fields of labor, in all judicious efforts for the success of the cause,—to preach at least one sermon each year on temperance, and to refer to the subject occasionally in their public discourses.

3rd, That the Synod do strictly enjoin on Sessions and Presbyteries, greater fidelity and diligence in carrying out the discipline of the Church against those who continue in the liquor traffic whereever evil consequences to morality are clearly traced to it.

At the same Presbyterian Synod, on the 2nd Inst at New Glasgow, a case of Appeal was tried. Mr. and Mrs. John Fraser had been "suspended from Church privileges for keeping a public house where intoxicating liquors had been, for a time, sold contrary to law (without a license), and in which when the sale was subsequently legalized disorderly practices were alleged to have been allowed." After the evidence on both sides had been heard the following resolution was moved by Charles Robson Esq., ruling Elder, and seconded by the Rev. P. G. McGregor,

That the Synod sustain the Appeal on the ground that the proceedings of the Session have been vitiated by the want of any meeting of the parties with the Session, and of any citation of the parties to meet the Session; but in sustaining the Appeal, and in reversing the decision of Session and Presbytery, the Synod declare that in their opinion the keeping of a house in which liquors are illegally sold, or which is disorderly in its character, is a good ground of suspension, and if persevered in, exclusion from the membership of the church.

The Rev. H. Crawford moved and the Rev. A. Fraser seconded—

Whereas the late Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia declared that carrying on the liquor traffic by members of the church is inconsistent with the obligations of the christian profession, and as the Session proceeded in the premises in accordance with that declaration, the Synod dismiss the Appeal and sustain the decision of Session and Presbytery.

On the question being taken, the first motion passed by a large majority.

In reference to the last item in the report of our New Brunswick Correspondent, on another page,—the future of the *Christian Visitor*—we find that the following report on the subject, was adopted by the N. B. E. Association:

"The Committee on Periodicals beg to report—We believe that it would tend to secure the peace and union of the body to say nothing of the past in relation to our Periodicals. The Proprietor of the N. B. Baptist and Christian Visitor having submitted to this body his design to give up the publication of our periodical on the 1st February next, and the Rev. I. E. Bill being unable by the failure of his voice to continue his labors as a preacher, and having long experience in publishing a Religious paper, we think the providence of God directs us in a certain course,—we would therefore recommend this Association to request the Rev. I. E. Bill to be the sole proprietor and publisher of our paper, and to be responsible for everything appearing in its columns, and we request that he should visit our churches to secure the co-operation and sympathy of our pastors and church members, and we recommend this Association to pledge to him their support if he should accept the paper on the foregoing conditions."

C. H. SPURGEON'S GRANDFATHER has been the minister of a church at Stambourne, Essex, from 1810 to the present time—a period of 52 years. In the *London Baptist Magazine* (June, 1862) is a Note from Mr. C. H. Spurgeon containing a few lines from his grandfather, which will be read with interest, as follows:—

The ancient chapel at Stambourne, Essex, in which my aged grandfather has preached so long, is certainly one standing contradiction to the statement, that "every one of the 331 meeting-houses built by the ejected, has since become a meeting for Socinians."

C. H. SPURGEON.

P. S.—I have just received a note from my venerated grandfather, which may interest our readers:—

"MINISTERS WHO HAVE PREACHED AT STAMBOURNE.

"The Rev. Henry Havers, ejected from Stambourne Church in 1662. He, his grandson, and nephew, preached from 1662 to 1748 successively—86 years.

"The Rev. Messrs. Mayhew and Hallem, from 1748 to 1774.

"The Rev. Mr. King, from 1774 to 1776.

"The Rev. Mr. Beddow, from 1776 to 1810—34 years.

"The Rev. Mr. Spurgeon, from 1810 to 1862—52 years.

"It is very observable the three Havers's were here 86 years; Mr. Beddow and I have been the same—86 years."

"A squad of Indiana volunteers, out scouting, came across a female in a log cabin in the mountains. After the usual salutations, one of them asked her, 'Well, old lady, are you a Secesh?'—'No,' was the answer. 'Are you a Union?'—'No.' 'What are you, then?'—'A Baptist, an' always have been.'—*Home Jour.*

News Summary.

Late European News has been received by the R. M. Steamer *Persia* at New York, but nothing of much interest. War and commotion appears, for the present, to have forsaken the old Continent for the New. The Southern States and Mexico, one on a large and the other on a small scale, seem now to be almost the only battle fields of the world. Of the state of the belligerent parties in the former, not much has transpired since our last. Gen. McLellan's army by the latest accounts, was still in the same position in the bend of James's River, and the Confederates probably too much exhausted by their series of destructive battles, to follow up their victories. Accounts have also reached us of some Confederate successes upon a smaller scale in Tennessee. Vicksburg on the Western side of the Mississippi is still holding out against the bombardment of the Federal ships and Gunboats, and the high cliffs on the banks of the River, lined in many places with batteries, having more or less guns, are making it very hazardous for the Federal vessels to pass the river. All accounts, however, are so vague and unreliable that little faith is to be put in them on their first reaching us. The call for 300,000 volunteers does not appear likely to be answered with so much readiness as some time since, it no doubt would have been. The truth is our good neighbours are only just now beginning to count the cost of war. We fear that every day will afford them too good cause to estimate its direful evils more fully.

The following are some of the more important European items by the *Persia*:

The recognition of Italy by Russia is telegraphed to Turin.

The King of Portugal has demanded of the King of Italy Princess Pia in marriage.

The Grand Duke Constantine was shot as he was leaving the theatre at Warsaw. It is reported that he was slightly wounded. The assassin was arrested.

It is stated that the military staff of Canada will soon be brought down to what it was before the Trent affair.

Parliamentary proceedings had been unimportant. The propriety of opening communication between Canada and British Columbia had been debated. The government admitted that such a communication was desirable.