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Poetry.

A MOTHER'S FUNERAL.

BY THE LATE NORMAN MACLEOD, D. D.

Ah, sunn ye'll lay yer mither doon
In her lanely bed and narrow;
But, till ye're sleepin' by her side,
Ye'll never meet her marrow!

A father's love is strong and deep,
And ready is a brither's—
A sister's love is pure and sweet—
But what love's like a mither's?

Ye mauna greet ower muckle bairns,
As around the fire ye gather,
And see the twa chairs empty then,
O' mither and o' father;

Ner dinna let yer hearts be dreich,
When wintry winds are blawin',
And on their graves, wi' angry sigh,
The stelly drif is snawin'.

But think o' blyther times gane by—
The mony years o' blessing,
When sorrow passed the door and nane
Frae many ye a' were missing.

And mind the peaceful 'gloamin' hours,
When the out-door wark was endin',
And after time, when auld grey heads
Wi' yours in prayer were bendin'.

And think how happy baith are noo,
Aboon a' thoct or tellin',
For they're at bame and young again,
Within their Father's dwellin'.

Sae, gin we wish to meet up there
Yer father and yer mither,
O love their God, and be gude bairns,
And O love ane anither!

—Good Words.

*iter equal, her match.

STARS.

Above me the shining shell of stars
Slowly slides o'er the hollow night,
And I watch the fiery heart of Mars
Wander across it with great calm flight.

No constellation fails in its place,
The pole forgets not its changeless course,
They seal creation on the face
With law unswerving, resistless force.

O stars, who are flaming ministers
That through God's secrets go in and out!
O solemn skies, be my comforters
When tossed by trouble and torn by doubt.

Ye, whom fixed order and no wild chance,
Visibly binds in eternal bands,
Forbid me the fear of all circumstance,
For I also, O stars, I am in God's hands!

—Harper's Magazine.

Circular Letter.

SCRIPTURAL COMMUNION.

THE CIRCULAR LETTER OF THE
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND BAPTIST
ASSOCIATION, TO THE CHURCHES
OF WHICH IT IS COMPOSED.

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request of the Association.

Dear Brethren,—

It is incumbent upon us, as the followers of our Lord Jesus Christ, not only to maintain in their integrity the doctrines and ordinances—which are set forth for our guidance in the New Testament, but also to make known to the world the Scriptural reasons upon which we base our peculiar views of these doctrines and ordinances. The sacred injunction to “be ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you,” is exceedingly comprehensive in its meaning. It clearly implies our obligation to make plain to others not only what we believe but also why we thus believe. And this, indeed, is but a rational duty. For if we are quite convinced that our principles are true and scriptural, it is surely our duty to make every legitimate effort to lead others to understand and adopt these principles. Besides, we should defend ourselves against misrepresentation and unjust reproach.

Having been frequently asked to furnish reasons for our Denominational practices in the administration of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, we shall present a brief synopsis of our views on this subject in the present

circular. It shall be our aim to “speak the truth in love,” and to omit nothing essential to a proper understanding of our position.

A clear conception of what is meant by the term Communion is a primary requisite in a proper consideration of this subject. Communion has essentially a twofold import. It implies, primarily and fundamentally, the intimate and vital relationship existing between the believer and his Saviour. “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?” The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? The secondary import of the sacramental ordinance is the fellowship existing between the true followers of Christ collectively. “For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread.” It is with this secondary phase of Communion that we are principally concerned in this discussion. Christ alone is competent to decide in reference to the believers fitness to commune with Him; but on the Church rests the responsibility of deciding who are scripturally entitled to its fellowship. That churches have a right to judge of the qualifications of candidates for membership or communion is obvious. And it is their duty to exercise this right by requiring of all those who wish to enjoy their fellowship a genuine compliance with the conditions of the Gospel,—not, indeed, with humanly appointed conditions, but with those established by Jesus Christ himself.

That fellowship which is an essential factor in true communion must be based on unity of faith and practice. The emphatic question of the Prophet Amos is here pertinent: “Can two walk together except they be agreed?” Hence true communion implies a common faith in Christ, a common work for Christ, and a common agreement in the doctrines and ordinances as taught by Christ. How erroneous, therefore, is the popular idea that communion consists merely in sitting around the same table and partaking of the same elements! This may be done by men whose hearts are filled with envy, hatred and malice against each other. Such communion would be but empty pretence. How then can there be real communion between two classes of persons holding the most diverse doctrines, one denying what the other affirms, and pulling down what the other builds up? As a Denomination, our motto is, *Let us first agree, then commune*. Let us first have “one Lord, one faith one baptism;” then shall we have one communion.

Instead of so much meaningless clamor for union and communion under existing circumstances, how much more rational and effectual would it be for all denominations to make an earnest effort to arrive at a proper agreement based on scriptural principles. There would then be some grounds for hope that they might gain that position in which they could “stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel.” For this glorious union we shall earnestly labor and pray. We love all true believers in Jesus Christ, whatsoever may be their name or their nation; and we long with them to form one family and one Church. But to the attainment of this end we ask of others no surrender of their conscientious belief in reference to scriptural doctrines. Nor can they reasonably expect such a surrender on our part. A pretended union would be mere hypocrisy, than which it were far better to remain as we are, in friendly separation.

In the meantime, each church can enjoy its own communion. The Lord's table is not a monopolized relic, like Peter's chair. The Baptists are in possession of no sacred piece of furniture imported from Jerusalem, and bearing evidence of having been the veritable table used by Jesus and his disciples at the Last Supper. Were such the case there might be some propriety in making an outcry against

our restricted communion. But, each denomination has its own sacramental table. At that table its members may hold fellowship without disagreement, and communion, without hypocrisy. Communion was, indeed, evidently intended for individual churches. There is neither necessity nor apostolic example for the practice of gadding about from church to church either for communion or for worship. Christians would generally be more useful and happy if they would quietly and faithfully labor in their own respective churches. It is the idle bees that fly from hive to hive fighting and stinging, and thus arousing contentions among their peaceable neighbors.

But we are asked on what conditions we can invite others to our communion? On simply the same conditions, we reply, upon which we invite persons to church-membership. For it must be obvious to every rational mind that THE SCRIPTURAL CONDITIONS OF COMMUNION ARE IDENTICAL WITH THE SCRIPTURAL CONDITIONS OF CHURCH-MEMBERSHIP. When a person is qualified to unite with a church of Christ, he is certainly qualified to participate in the communion of that church. But if he is not scripturally eligible to membership, how in all reason can he be entitled to communion? With what consistency, therefore, could any church invite to the Lord's table those whom it had decided to be disqualified for membership? Save us from such hollow and unscriptural courtesy! To such a church other denominations might say, “We like your free communion, but we cannot help smiling at your ridiculous inconsistency in inviting us to your sacramental table, and yet refusing, on the same conditions, to admit us to your membership! When we invite you to our communion, it is on the grounds that you are qualified for church membership; and we will gladly give you the hand of fellowship if you feel disposed to unite with us. Now unless we can commune with you on the same grounds, we don't thank you for your generous but inconsistent invitation.” Such reasoning would be logical and forcible; and would clearly show the utter absurdity of inviting to our communion those whom we cannot as yet receive into our fellowship.

Baptists believe that unregenerate and unbaptized persons are not scripturally entitled to church-membership. They believe, moreover, that none are scripturally baptized but those who have been immersed on a profession of faith on the Lord Jesus Christ. How, therefore, can they conscientiously ask those who refuse to comply with these conditions, to sit down with them at the Lord's table? We will permit a candid Presbyterian writer to express our sentiments on this point:—

“Open communion is an absurdity, when it means to commune with the unbaptized? I would not for a moment entertain a proposal to admit an unbaptized person to the communion; and can I ask a Baptist so to stultify himself and ignore his own doctrine as to invite me to commune with him while he believes I am unbaptized? I want no sham union and no sham unity; and if I held the Baptist notion about immersion, I would no more receive a Presbyterian to the communion than I would now receive a Quaker. Let us have unity, indeed, but not at the expense of principle; and let us not ask the Baptist to ignore or be inconsistent with his own doctrine. Let us not, either, make an outcry at his ‘close communion’ which is but faithfulness to principle, until we are prepared to be ‘open communists’ ourselves; from which stupidity may we be forever preserved. Let us not war with his close communion, but with his doctrine that immersion is baptism. It has been quite the fashion of late years for commentators, who were ambitious to be thought candid and liberal, to concede to the Baptists that baptism is immersion. The volumes thus far issued of Lange's commentary assume this, or assert it wherever the subject

is presented. Dean Stanley, in his charming books, does the same thing; and so with others, and yet these men continue to practise both sprinkling and infant baptism. Such inconsistencies I am utterly unable to comprehend. If I believed what they teach I would be under the water before a week should pass by. My faith in such men is shaken,—men who do not follow their beliefs. No, let us have no unity, and strive for none that cannot be in consistency with our doctrine. Let the unity stop where the agreement ends.”

Such are the matly and intelligent views of a writer in the *American Presbyterian*. Our position, as a Denomination, in reference to this question is here fairly represented. We thus see that the differences between us and other denominations do not arise on the subject of communion, but on the conditions of church-membership. Generally, however, this fact is artfully kept in the background by popular declaimers who grow eloquent in denouncing our “close communion.” The truth is that, substantially, we are in agreement with other denominations on the question of communion. Almost all of them practise restricted communion, admitting to the Lord's table only those whom they regard as having complied with the scriptural conditions of church-membership. Such precisely, is our position. Here we might end this discussion and report a general agreement on the question. But we shall briefly explain the real cause of separation.

The principal points of difference between Baptists and other religious denominations are involved in the simple question, What are the New Testament conditions of church-membership? When the true answer to this question shall have been agreed upon, the last obstacle to general communion will have been removed. But we are all aware that, at present, serious differences in faith and practice exist among the various denominations. Many churches admit to their membership those who do not even pretend to have been baptized; thus either ignoring or treating with contempt the ordinance divinely appointed as the initiatory rite of the Christian Church. Others have, as Baptists believe, entirely changed that rite in substituting a human invention. Most Pedobaptist churches receive into their membership those whose age is such that they have never heard the Gospel, and who, therefore, have never believed that Gospel, or had any faith in Jesus Christ. As a natural result, a large number of such members do not, in later years, even pretend to be regenerate persons. Baptists, on the other hand, believe that these practices are not only entirely unscriptural, but exceedingly disastrous to the welfare of the Church of Christ.

There are clearly three fundamental conditions laid down in the New Testament as being essential to church membership, and, therefore, to communion. These are 1. Conversion, including repentance and faith; 2. Baptism, or immersion, on a profession of faith; 3. Continuance in Apostolic doctrine and practice. These conditions are explicitly taught in the inspired account of the formation of the primitive and model church. “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” Here we plainly see, firstly, Conversion, as indicated in the joyful reception of the word; secondly, Baptism, as immediately following this conversion; and, thirdly, Continuance in Apostolic doctrine and fellowship, as the groundwork of communion or “breaking of bread.”

1. Conversion is a primary condition. This was emphatically taught by Christ and his apostles. “Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” And Peter explains the new birth thus: “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but

of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.” And Christ's family is designated as a “household of faith.” This faith, moreover, “cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” On what authority, therefore, can we invite to our fellowship or communion those who were received into denominational churches at an age when they had no faith, gave no evidence of being regenerate, and who, in subsequent years, do not profess to be the followers of Jesus? Or shall we take it upon ourselves to discriminate between the converted and the unconverted members of other churches? This would be preposterous as well as impracticable. We must, then, invite all their members or none. But there is another condition to be considered. Have they been baptized?

2. Baptism must precede church-membership and communion. This is not only admitted but firmly maintained by almost all religious denominations. By Baptism we mean what Paul meant when he said, “Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.” We mean what John Wesley meant when he made the following comment on the foregoing passage: “Buried with him—alluding to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion”; or what Calvin meant when he affirmed that “The very word baptize signifies to immerse; and it is certain that immersion was the practice of the ancient church.” And we have no authority to recognize any other baptism administered by human agency.

That baptism, as thus defined necessarily precedes church-membership and communion is abundantly evident from both the teaching and example of Jesus and his apostles. All converts were first baptized. There is not a single instance recorded in the New Testament in which an unbaptized person was admitted to the Lord's table. Baptism was administered as soon as possible after conversion. At was thus in the case of Cornelius, of the Ethiopian eunuch, of Saul of Tarsus, of Lydia, of the Philippian jailer and of all others who are mentioned as uniting with the church. In no case did they first sit down to the Communion. Such a thing would have been anomalous and unmeaning. For baptism is comprehensively designated as “putting on Christ.” “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.” It is thus indicative of the commencement of the Christian life. Communion, on the other hand, represents the continuation and nourishment of that life. We must, therefore, “put on Christ” before we can commune with Christ. Origin precedes development. To reverse the ordinances would be to introduce confusion and absurdity. It would imply that spiritual life continues before it begins, that one lives before he is born. Baptism denotes a separation from a previous life of sin. Communion implies that this separation is an accomplished fact. Baptism typifies a washing away of sins. Communion typifies a state of holiness and spiritual unity with Christ. Hence the relation of these ordinances, as antecedent and consequent is obvious from their very meaning and design, as well as from scriptural example and teaching. All, therefore, who have not been scripturally baptized are disqualified for scriptural communion. Baptists feel that they are under moral obligation to observe these ordinances in the manner and in the order plainly prescribed in the Gospel system. Jesus and his disciples celebrated and established restricted communion. Baptized believers alone were admitted to the Sacramental Supper. On what authority