

## OPEN COMMUNION IN ENGLAND.

(For the Gospel Tribune.)

Believing that the cause of truth may be subserved, and that an unjust prejudice against one of the most honorable and devoted companies of our Lord's militant hosts, entertained by another of these companies, may be fairly met by the circulation of the accompanying article from eminent English Baptists, to Dr. Sharp, of Boston, I send it for republication. All who are not the victims of the prejudice referred to, must admire the candour and ingenuousness of Dr. Sharp in his introductory observations for the *Boston Watchman and Reflector*. It is true that his course was nothing more than what a heart actuated by justice and a love of truth would be led to pursue, yet we so seldom see it on the part of those occupying the same denominational relation, that we are led to admire the man the more. We are so much accustomed to hear and see language like the following, that anything different takes us with a grateful surprise. I give you the article entire, as it appeared in the *New York Baptist Register*, from the pen of the Editor, March 8th, 1844, and headed "*Mixed Communion*."

"From an article in a recent number of the *Advocate*, the effects of the Mixed Communion practice are spoken of as most disastrous on the Baptist churches in England, and the writer seems to apprehend that some of the English Baptist Ministers coming over to this country, may have a contaminating influence on the churches here. This is probably little to be feared; nevertheless, our churches should exercise some vigilance in regard to those they receive among them, and not let their kindness to strangers occasion a relaxing as to the truth. "Obsta principiis"—Stand firm against the beginnings of mischief,—is a Latin maxim, and Christians cannot be too careful in the observance of it. The Communion principles of Robert Hall have done more mischief in the world, perhaps, than all that he has ever written has done good. England has sadly felt their deleterious effects. The Baptist cause has dragged heavily under them; probably Baptists would have been twice as numerous there had his influence never been known. One hundred thousand is all they number in the British realm—not one sixth of our denomination in this comparatively young country! And what is the occasion of this difference? In the opinion of some of our greatest and best men, this neutralizing practice of Mixed Communion has had much to do with it. A proper circumspection, therefore, on the part of our churches in regard to foreign ministers, can do no harm."

By such language as the above, the American Close Baptists have been led to entertain a perfect horror of Free or Christian Communion. And it is no doubt mainly from that cause that many of the Baptists of Canada have become possessed of the same feeling. Yea, arrogating to themselves the exclusive title of "*Regular Baptists*," they cut off all who differ from them on the Communion question, from all claim on the name, and if Ministers, they are "*marked men*," and if they be great, eloquent, powerful, and devoted to their Master's cause, *they do more mischief in the world than good*—and why?—because they hold the doctrine of *Christian Communion*! But for the present I forbear, and give place to those whom I wished merely to introduce. At a future time, if consistent with the character of the Tribune, I may resume the subject. ADELPHOS.

(From the Boston Watchman and Reflector.)

MESSRS. EDITORS,—The impressions made on my own mind, when in England, three years ago, in regard to the comparative condition of the strict and open communion churches, were so different from those of other brethren who visited that country, as published in our religious newspapers, that I wrote to obtain correct information from those who are able and every way qualified to give it.

The following is a reply to my inquiries. Its insertion, with a very short introduction, by my excellent friend, Dr. E. Steane, of Camberwell, near London, will be an act of justice to our English brethren.

DANIEL SHARP.

Boston, December 19.

At length I send you a document bearing many signatures, in reply to your letter of last March. It is, as you will infer, intended for publication, in order to counteract the many misstatements on the subject which are sent to your papers.—Whether open communion or strict be more in accordance with the will of Christ, stands, of course, altogether on other grounds. But this was not the question which the circumstances required to be met. The statements given in this document might have been considerably expanded, and others added to them, but we would rather understate the merits of the case than exceed them, and we can afford to write with moderation.

London, Nov. 29, 1848.

DEAR SIR,—Allow us to unite in thanking you for the letter which you have addressed to one of our number, in reference to the practical effects of the custom of many Baptist churches in this country of receiving pious Pædobaptists at the Lord's table. The course which you have adopted in asking for the information raises you in our esteem; if this course were pursued in every case in which brethren entertain doubts of the propriety of the procedure of any of their fellow disciples, it would conduce much to the advancement of truth and to the happiness of the churches.

We are the more gratified by your letter, as we are aware that reports have reached you which have astonished us by their want of accordance with any facts with which we are acquainted. We do not say that no such facts as are alleged have taken place, but we do assert that they have never come to our knowledge. Were things among us in such a state as some writers in your papers seem to suppose, we should lament it deeply, and should feel that we were exposed to an accusation of unfaithfulness to high and holy interests committed to our charge.

That the immersion of believers is the only baptism instituted or approved by our Lord; that the observance of this ordinance is intimately connected with the purity of his churches and the prosperity of his kingdom; and that it is proper to avow this both verbally and practically, without disguise or reserve, are convictions which we entertain ourselves, and which we believe to be held as cordially by the Baptist churches now as at any former period. It is our opinion, indeed, that a persuasion of the importance of just views of baptism is more influential now among the members of Baptist churches than it was at the time of our entrance into the ministry. We have known many individuals, who have, in our judgment, undervalued the institution; but to speak of it as a matter of small importance is less common now, we believe, than it was thirty years ago.

Interested as we are officially in the prosperity of our denominational societies, obstructions to liberality on their behalf, have naturally engaged our attention. We have not found that their funds have suffered from the progress of open communion sentiments; but,