

Wm. G. Stone

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Doctrine and Duty.

AN ESSAY ON THE TERMS OF COMMUNION, BY CATHOLICUS; WITH A PREFACE, BY JOHN GILMOUR.

Such is the title of a tract of 45 pages which parties are circulating in the province, a copy of which, has recently been handed to the Editor of the *Observer*. We have read it carefully, and having found nothing new in it, still retain as a matter of course, our former well considered views. The preface by Bro. Gilmour, and which really contains the marrow of the arguments of *Catholicus*, is a very pretty and pleasing descant upon Christian love and forbearance. We scarcely know how our good brother intends us to apply his preface. Does he mean that the absence of such love and forbearance, as he and those who think with him possess, makes Regular Baptists close-communicationists, and does he think that an increase of those graces in our hearts, is all that is necessary to bring us upon the open-communication ground? If he does, he must regard our piety as being sadly deficient in compass. If he does not, his remarks are irrelevant. Is it true, that the practice of open-communication is the legitimate offspring of Christian love—that grace, which led many a martyr to burn at the stake, rather than yield up, or sacrifice one iota of Christ's truth—that grace, which, above all others, preserves intact heaven's legislation, which rejoices not in iniquity, or in any thing belonging to the mystery of iniquity, but rejoices in the truth. Is open-communication, again we ask, a child of this grace? We must be excused for not being able to believe that it has, in itself considered, the remotest connection with love. It is a mere sectarian badge, the shibboleth of a party, who, in attacking the Baptists ring changes upon those kind of epithets, which not unfrequently pass for arguments, viz: intolerance, bigotry, superstition, sectarianism, &c.

While we agree generally with the sentiments of the preface, we deny its relevancy to the point at issue. We say generally, meaning by that, that there are some expressions which we cannot endorse. It has long been to us a most obvious truth, that many of the controversies which agitate our world, would be greatly circumscribed, and perhaps cease altogether, if disputants would agree in their application of first principles. Many a page of logical argumentation resting upon false premises, and many an impassioned burst of glowing rhetoric, built upon such a foundation, would never have seen the light of day, had their authors paused at the threshold of their work, and candidly proposed to themselves the question—are the principles upon which I am about to build self-evidently true? We think that the principles upon which the dogma of open-communication rests, are self-evidently erroneous. Take a few examples from the little work before us:

In the preface we read, "that the law of Christian forbearance is that which Christ has given for the purpose of preserving harmony of spirit, amidst the diversity which

prevails." Now, did Christ give a law, based upon the exercise of forbearance, which should harmonize men at the expense of the truth taught by the Holy Spirit? Is it not our duty to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints? But can forbearance enlighten us as to one iota revealed in that faith? We must obey the gospel of Christ; but can forbearance enlighten us as to what that gospel teaches? We must keep the ordinances as they were delivered; but can forbearance instruct us in the nature of those ordinances? We must withdraw ourselves from every BROTHER that walketh disorderly; but can forbearance point out to us the distinction between orderly and disorderly walking? Paul says, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men and not after Christ." But forbearance magnified to the place of a law for the maintenance of harmony, neutralizes the apostolic caution, and sanctions at the table of the Lord traditions which make void the law of God. From the very nature of forbearance, it is self-evident that it is not its province to discern the mind of the Spirit; and harmony without such discernment would be harmony in rebellion. Christian love and forbearance are essential graces; but what are their legitimate functions? Do they fulfil or set aside the law? Christ said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments;" and again! "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." Here the evidence that we love Christ, and are his friends, is found in doing what he has commanded us. And John, the loved and loving disciple, taught thus, "by this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments." "For this is the love of God, that we obey his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous." Whatever plea, then, may serve as an apology for open-communication, it is obvious that it cannot bring to its aid that love which clings to Christ's commandments, even though it should be at the expense of making a man's foes those of his own house. If an individual wrongs me personally, and I take it patiently, that is forbearance; but if he wrongs my Lord, and I remain unmoved, that is indifference. If I obey God from the heart, and from the heart seek to do good to men, that is love; but if I sanction the subversion of a fundamental law of Christ's house to please myself or others, that is criminal latitudinarianism. The immersion of believers is the inspired process of church-building, and all the love on earth and in heaven cannot change that order; and we cannot think that love ever attempted to effect such a change.

"Forbearance has its limits," says the preface; and our brother would, in view of those limits, receive all that God receives, and reject only the unconverted, and quotes the beautiful passage, "Wherefore receive ye one another as Christ also received us." There is a sophism lurking beneath the term received, as employed by open-communicationists, which alone gives the appearance of plausibility to their remarks, founded on this passage. It is, of course, assumed that we, who practise restricted communion, do not receive Christians as Christ did. Now this is a gross mistake: we