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"ONE IS YOUR MASTER, EVER CHRIST: AND ALL YE ARE BRETHERN."

Moral and Religious Miscellany.

From the Christian Union.

OPEN AND CLOSE COMMUNION.

QUERY TO J. S. LAMAR.

After carefully reading the first three numbers of the *Christian Union*, I am convinced that there is very little difference between your views and those entertained by the majority of Baptists. I think we should still strive, instead of widening the breach, to close it, and if possible, to become one. We are apt to imagine that we are further apart than we really are. For one, I am in favor of attempting to remove the obstructions which hinder our union; and will, therefore, state to you some points of difference, upon which I desire your opinion. We understand you to believe in open communion; and, with the views you hold upon baptism, I am frank to tell you, that I think this is inconsistent. Will you confer a favor upon me and others, by giving us your position on this subject, with the reasons for it, in your next issue? With Christian regards,

I am yours in the Lord,

BAPTIST.

ANSWER.—We regard it as very unfortunate, that the subject upon which our brother Baptist writes with so much frankness and kindness should ever have been mooted. The terms open and close communion are unknown to the Scriptures. They therefore indicate a state of things which did not exist in the first or Apostolic Church. We deem it modest, to say the least, not to dogmatize upon a question which, from the nature of the case, cannot be directly answered by the Scriptures. To meet the difficulties of the case, we simply ignore the whole question, in its controversial aspects; we take sides with no one. If it is required that we define our position in the consecrated terminology of sectarianism, we say that in a certain sense, we believe in both open and close communion; but in the sense appropriated to these terms, we believe in neither. We believe the communion table is "open" to all real Christians, of every age, sex, color and name—but that it is closed against all others. We do not invite moralists, nor even those who merely "repent of their sins," as others do; and they may, therefore, say that we believe in close communion. We simply invite all Christians to partake, and when any one comes forward and puts forth his hand to receive the solemn mementoes of his Lord's flesh and blood, we do not draw them back and say—"Stop, sir, have you been baptized? have you repented? have you received the Holy Spirit?" But we say as Paul directed—"Let every man examine himself and so let him eat." These are questions for him.—Christ said to his disciples,—"Eat ye all of it—drink

ye all of it;"—so say we. Christ invites ALL his disciples, we can do no less. If there is a Judas among them, he does not injure us. If our Master would dip his hand in the dish with him, let us not be over scrupulous, especially as he tells us to judge not. If such an one presents himself and eats and drinks unworthily, we thank the Lord that we are not responsible for it—but that he "eats and drinks condemnation to himself." We do not invite such a man; he comes when Christians are invited; he comes of his own accord: we do not know his heart, and if we err it is on the side of charity.

The Apostle teaches us that it is the communion of the body and blood of Christ. It cannot be such, unless it is partaken of by the proper persons, in the proper spirit. And now we beg of our Baptist brother, and all others, to notice this remark—it is an idea we have never seen advanced by any one, viz: that *unless the emblems are taken by the proper persons, in faith, discerning the Lord's body and blood, it is not communion*. For instance—A. eats the loaf, and gratefully remembers that body broken for him—he drinks the cup and his heart is stirred with joyful emotions, in thinking of the blood shed for the remission of his sins; he raises his heart and voice to Heaven, and communes with his living Saviour. All is gratitude and joy in the present, and faith and joy in the future. B. goes through the same formality, but his heart is on his farm or his merchandize. He has not been washed from his sins in that blood; he has never realized that his iniquity was laid upon that "crucified one,"—and hence, he has no feeling of gratitude; no emotion of love; no communion with Christ. Need we ask, does B. commune with A.? If he does, the supper is a mere ceremonial—all outward, all body and no spirit. This by no means meets our views of the case.

The same is true with respect to praising and praying. We commune in this way as well as in partaking of the Lord's supper. A. sits and offers a song of praise to the King Immortal; his heart is in it; he feels what he says; he sings with the spirit and with the understanding also. B. sits by him and utters the same words, but with no heart no spirit, no understanding. Do they commune? C. sings like A., and their spirits are in unison; they are in communion; but B., we think, is left out.—Thus we act consistently. We do not go out into the world and employ sinners to do our singing for us. It is a part of our own worship—our *social* worship, our communion. If we cannot make the melody to our hearts, to the Lord, we think it poor worship which we offer by proxy—a proxy, too, of worldly-minded men and women. But when such engage with us in singing, can they be said to commune with us? Certainly not.

We think, therefore, that our brother will see that, if we are inconsistent in communing at the Lord's table with those who have not been immersed, he is