

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 26.-*Of the Communion of Saints.*

I. All Saints, that are united to Jesus Christ their Head, by his Spirit, and by faith, have fellowship with him in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory¹: And, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each others gifts and graces², and are obliged to the performance of such duties, publique and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man³.

Question 1.—*Do all saints, that are united to Jesus Christ their Head, by his Spirit, and by faith, have fellowship with him in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory?*

Answer.—Yes.¹ John 1:3; Eph. 3:16-19; John 1:16; Eph. 2:5,6; Phil. 3:10; Rom. 6:5,6; 2 Tim. 2:12. All saints are united to the Lord Jesus. We need to know what is the *foundation* and what is the *nature* of this union, and how it is established.

As to *foundation* of the union subsisting between the true believer and the Lord Jesus, the Scriptures teach that it rests in the eternal purpose of the Triune God, expressed in the decree of election (we were “chosen *in him* before the foundation of the world,” Eph. 1:4, and the eternal covenant of grace formed between the Father and his Word as the mediatorial Head of his people, treating with the Head for the members, and with the members in the Head, and providing for their salvation in him, John 17:2,6).

As to the *nature* of this union of the believer with Christ, the Scriptures teach—1.) That it is federal and representative, whereby Christ acts in all things as our federal Head, in our stead, and for our benefit. Hence our legal status is determined by his, and his rights, honors, relations, all are made ours in co-authorship with him. 2.) That it is a vital and spiritual union. Its actuating source and bond is the Spirit of the Head, who dwells and works in the members, 1 Cor. 6:17; 12:13; 1 John 3:24; 4:13. Hence our spiritual life is derived from him and sustained and determined by his life, which we share, Gal. 2:20. 3.) That it is a union between our entire persons and Christ, and therefore one involving our bodies through our souls, 1 Cor. 6:16,19.

As to the *manner* in which this union is established, the Scriptures teach that the elect, having been in the divine idea comprehended under the headship of Christ from eternity, are in time actually united to him—1.) By the powerful operation of his Spirit, whereby they are “quickened *together with Christ*,” Eph. 2:5; which Spirit evermore dwells in them as the organ of Christ’s presence with them, the infinite medium through which the fullness of his love and life, and all the benefits purchased by his blood, pass over freely from the Head to the members. 2.) By the actings of faith upon their part, whereby they grasp Christ and appropriate him and his grace to themselves, and whereby they ever continue to live in him and to draw their resources from him, Eph. 3:17.

On the basis of this union a most intimate fellowship or interchange of mutual offices ever continues to be sustained between believers and Christ.

¹1 John 1:3; Eph. 3:16-19; John 1:16; Eph. 2:5,6; Phil. 3:10; Rom. 6:5,6; 2 Tim. 2:12.

²Eph. 4:15,16; 1 Cor. 12:7; 1 Cor. 3:21-23; Col. 2:19.

³1 Thess. 5:11,14; Rom. 1:11,12,14; 1 John 3:16-18; Gal. 6:10.

They have fellowship with Christ: 1.) In all the covenant merits of his active and passive obedience. Forensically they are “complete in him,” Col. 2:10. His Father, his inheritance, his throne, his crown, are theirs. As their mediatorial Head he acts as prophet, priest, and king. In union with him they are also prophets, priests, and kings, 1 John 2:27; 1 Pet. 2:5; Rev. 3:21; 5:10. They have fellowship with Christ also 2.) In the transforming, assimilating power of his life. “Of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace,” John 1:16. Thus they have the “Spirit” and “the mind” of Christ, and bear his “likeness” or “image,” Rom. 8:9; Phil. 2:5; 1 John 3:2. This includes the bodies also, making them temples of the Holy Ghost; and in the resurrection our glorified bodies are to be like his, 1 Cor. 6:19; 15:43,49. They have fellowship with Christ 3.) In all their experiences, inward and outward, in their joys and victories, in their labors, sufferings, temptations, and death, Rom. 8:37; 2 Cor. 12:9; Gal. 6:17; Phil. 3:10; Heb. 12:3; 1 Pet. 4:13.

Christ has fellowship with them. They belong to him as the purchase of his blood. They are devoted to his service. They are co-workers together with him in building up his kingdom. They bear fruit to his praise, and shine as stars in his crown. Their hearts, their lives, their possessions, are all consecrated to him, and are held by them in trust for him, Prov. 19:17; Rom. 14:8; 1 Cor. 6:19,20.

Question 2.—*Do they, being united to one another in love, have communion in each others gifts and graces, and are they obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man?*

Answer.—Yes. Eph. 4:15,16; 1 Cor. 12:7; 3:21-23; Col. 2:19; 1 Thess. 5:11,14; Rom. 1:11,12,14; 1 John 3:16-18; Gal. 6:10. Since all true believers are thus intimately united to Christ as the common Head of the whole body, and the Source of a common life, it follows that they must be intimately united together, Gal. 2:20; John 17:21. If they have but one Head, and are all members of one body, they must have one common life, and be all members one of another, Acts 4:32.

The Roman and Ritualistic view is that individuals are united to the Church through the sacraments, and through the Church to Christ. The true view is, that the individual is united to Christ the Head by the Holy Ghost and by faith; and by being united to Christ he is, *ipso facto*, united to all Christ members, the Church. The holy catholic Church is the product of the Holy Spirit. Wherever the Spirit is, there the Church is. The presence of the Spirit is known by his fruits, which are “love, joy, peace,” etc., Gal. 5:22,23. All believers receiving the same Spirit are by him baptized into “one body”; and thus they all become, “though many members,” but “one body,” “the body of Christ” and “members in particular,” 1 Cor. 12:13–27.