



**SPIRITUAL UNION
AND
COMMUNION**

**10. GLORY UNION
AND 11. CONCLUSION**

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This present life, with its continual mixture of good and evil, joy and sorrow, with its constant fluctuations and disappointments, naturally prompts a reflecting mind to the belief and hope of a future life that will be more perfect and permanent; yet that is as far as the unaided intellect can project us. A Divine revelation is indispensable if we are to learn *how* Heaven is to be reached, and of *what* its blessedness consists. By the fall of the first Adam paradise was lost, and only through the last Adam can sinners be restored unto God, and only by the supernatural operations of the Spirit can the hearts of depraved men be fitted for and their steps be directed along the sole way which conducts to the mansions in the Father's House. Vain is human reasoning, worthless the efforts of imagination, when it comes to obtaining a knowledge of that antitypical Canaan which flows with spiritual milk and honey. How thankful, then, should we be for the Word of Prophecy and the light it supplies while we are in this dark world.

That blessed light has been enjoyed by God's elect from earliest times. "As for me (said the Psalmist), I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness" (Psa. 17:15). Here was the blessed sequel to Jehovah's response unto Moses: "show me Thy glory" had been his request, "thou canst not see My face (in *this* life), for there shall no man see Me, and live" was the Divine response (Exod. 33:18-20). But what is, necessarily, denied the saints now, shall be granted them in the future. While in this world indwelling sin raises an insuperable barrier, incapacitating the soul to discern more than a few broken rays of the Divine splendour. But when we "awake," on the Resurrection-morn, and sin and the grave are left behind, then will the soul be fitted for the beatific vision, for "the pure in heart shall see God" (Matt. 5:8), see Him then as they cannot now.

When David said “I will behold Thy face” he had reference to an *objective* glory, and that, in its most perfect representation; for the “*face*” is the principal part of our persons wherein physical beauty and moral dignity are displayed. When he added “I shall be satisfied with Thy *likeness*,” a different concept is before him, another factor is introduced—one which must necessarily enter into the equation of soul *satisfaction*. The most vivid display of the Divine glory, so far from satisfying, will only terrify those who are not *in inward harmony therewith*, as is evident from Revelation 6:16, etc. No sight of God can satisfy any one unless and until his soul be conformed to the Divine image and attempered thereto. Thus we understand the Psalmist to mean, “Hereafter I shall behold the blessed face of God, and be regaled thereby; not only by the vision itself, but because of its transfusing itself upon me, transforming me.” It is a Divine glory both revealed and received.

The same wondrous truth is set forth in the New Testament. “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed *in us*” (Rom. 8:18); “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17). The future glory of the saints, then, is not only a *realm* of light and bliss into which they are yet to be conducted, and an *objective* (outward) splendour which will rejoice their hearts, but it is also a glory to be “revealed *in them*,” a “weight of glory” *upon* them. “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are *changed into* the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18); the final and perfect degree of this occurring in their resurrection state, at their glorification. All of this is summed up in “When He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2).

There is a most striking and blessed parallel between the last-quoted verse and our opening Scripture. The Psalmist said, “When I awake,” the Apostle declares “when He shall appear”—the *same* time-mark or occasion. “I will behold Thy face in righteousness” (i.e., none but a righteous person will enjoy this

holy privilege): “we shall see Him”—the *same* persons, namely, the “sons of God,” of whom it is said in the context “every one that doeth *righteousness* is born of Him” (1 John 2:29)! “I will behold Thy face” says David, “We shall see Him as He is” says John—the *same* blessed Object. “I shall be satisfied with Thy (transforming) likeness....we shall be like Him”—the *same* blessed assimilation. What an example of the perfect unity of the Scriptures! What a proof that the Old Testament saints were favoured with the same light as we are!

Yet notwithstanding the revelation God has vouchsafed us of the life to come, how feebly do we grasp that revelation, how dimly do we comprehend its details; how infinitely it transcends the highest conceptions we can form of it. What we now know of God and His Christ is as nothing to what we shall yet know of Him, yea, in comparison with *that* it scarcely deserves to be called “knowledge:” “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known” (1 Cor. 13:12). The fact is that mere language cannot convey to us in our present state any adequate idea of the glory which God has provided for His people. But though a full discovery thereof is reserved till the time of actual possession, yet enough is hinted at to nourish our hopes and gladden our hearts. To make this the more evident unto the reader, let us endeavour to amplify our statement by a presentation of some considerations. We may now form some conception of the Church’s future glory.

From the contrast pointed by our present afflictions. That the future bliss of believers is exceedingly great is clear from “For our *light* affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17). Now we know that the sufferings of God’s people in this world are, considered in themselves, *heavy* afflictions, yea, to some of them, grievously heavy. If, then, the trials and sorrows of the most afflicted among the saints are “light” when contrasted with their future happiness, how great must that happiness be! The paucity of human language to express the ineffable joys and pleasures awaiting us at God’s right hand, is seen in the piling up of one term upon another: it is a “weight,” it is an “exceeding weight,” it

is a “far more exceeding weight,” it is an “eternal weight of glory.”

From the reward promised the saints. This is frequently exhibited under the animating figure of the *crowns* bestowed upon the victors in the Grecian games and upon the military conquerors when they arrived back home in triumph. In those games the great men of the times entered as competitors for the glory of victory, and even kings thought themselves honoured by obtaining the prize. The victor was rewarded with a crown of leaves, and was received with unbounded honour by the vast multitudes assembled. Now, after all the self-denials in their training, the unwearied diligence in preparatory exercises, the toils and dangers endured in the arduous struggle, they deemed *this reward* a rich recompense, for it raised them to a pinnacle of glory to be viewed with admiration by all their fellows. Yet, *they* had in view “a corruptible crown,” whereas *we* are striving for an “incorruptible” one (1 Cor. 9:24, 25). Their crown was the greatest honour this world could bestow, and soon faded and withered. But the Christian’s crown shall be bestowed *by God*, and bloom with unfading freshness throughout eternity; and its glory will be viewed by all the principalities of Heaven.

From the scattered hints of Scripture. These are numerous: from them we select two: “And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as *the stars* for ever and ever” (Dan. 12:3). O ye despised followers of the Lamb, groaning under the reproach of the Cross, lift up your eyes and view this glorious prospect. Behold the heavens studded with their scintillating gems; see those bright orbs darting forth their light; and that is but a faint image of your future glory! “Then shall the righteous shine forth as *the sun* in the kingdom of their Father” (Matt. 13: 43). What object in nature is so glorious as the sun? Who can look on the brightness of his beams? Who can measure the extent and distance of his shining? Such shall be your glory, ye servants of the Lord, who despise the tinsel glory of this world through faith in the Word.

From our relationship to God. We may surely be assisted in

estimating the future glory of Christians by the *titles* bestowed upon them from that connection. They are called the children and heirs of God, and it is not possible for the Almighty to invest created beings with a higher honour than that. There is a sense in which both angels and man are, by creation, the sons of God; but it is in a far more intimate and precious sense that believers are called God's *children*. He hath "begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3); "We are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26). We are the children of God, then, as we are *the brethren* of His only begotten Son, and that places us above the highest of the angels. And because we are children, we are the "heirs of God" (Rom. 8:17). O ye tried and troubled saints, who are having such a sore struggle to make ends meet, it shall not always be thus with you. Estimate the inheritance of saints by the riches of God Himself!

From what is said in Ephesians 2:6, 7. "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus"—"show" to the heavenly hierarchies. If, then, God intends to make a lavish display of the wealth of His love toward His people, how surpassingly glorious will be such an exhibition! "When the Monarch of the Universe, the God of power and wisdom, declares His purpose of showing how much He loves His people, the utmost stretch of imagination will in vain struggle to form even a slight conception of their glory. All the thrones of Heaven will be filled with wonder, when they behold in their glory 'the men whom their King delights to honour'" (Alexander Carson to whom we are also indebted for part of the above).

From the love of Christ for them. Surely that will enable us to form some estimate of the future condition of the saints in glory. Of His immeasurably great love for His people we have the fullest proof in His humiliation and death. Read the history of it, ponder the depths of degradation and ignominy into which the Lord of Glory descended, behold Him despised and rejected of men, an outcast from society, and at last a willing sacrifice for His people's

sins, and that, even while they were enemies; and then ask yourself, what is *the extent* of His love? It defies description; it is beyond comprehension. Now if He loved us so while enemies, what will He not confer on us as His friends and brethren! Paul taught us to pray that we “might be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.” If, then, it is a matter of such importance to *know* His love, and if the extent of it is beyond knowledge, what is likely to be the height of glory to which its objects are elevated!

From the reward bestowed on Christ. In John 17:22 we hear Him speak of “the glory which Thou hast given Me.” What is the “glory” which the Father bestows upon the Mediator? It is *the Divine reward* for His stupendous achievements. It is that whereby His infinite merits shall be suitably recompensed throughout eternity. And what a glory that must be: answerable to the dignity of His Person, answerable to the revenue of honour and praise which He has brought unto God, commensurate with the unspeakable sacrifice which He made and with the worth of Him that made it! And when *God* gives, He does so in accordance with who He is. O what a “glory,” then, must it be with which the Father has rewarded His beloved Son: a transcendent and supernal glory. And that “glory” Christ shares with His redeemed: “And the glory which Thou gavest Me, I have *given them*” (John 17:22). Thus, there is a *union in glory* between the Church and its Head.

This it is which is the most wondrous and blessed aspect of our many-sided subject. This it is which is the grand goal which all the other unions between the Redeemer and the redeemed had in view, namely, an everlasting union in glory. And this it is which best enables us to conceive of and estimate the marvel, the grandeur, the uniqueness, of this glory union, namely, that it is the very glory which the Father had given to the Darling of His bosom, and which Christ will share with those whom He loved with a love that was stronger than death. “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

whereunto He called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of (not simply “glory,” but) *the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (2 Thess. 2:13, 14)—*that* was what God had in mind for His people in eternity past: nothing less would satisfy His heart.

Of old it was revealed “the LORD will give grace and glory” (Psa. 84:11). Here upon earth the saints enjoy Christ in a way of real fellowship, but in Heaven they shall enjoy Him in another and higher manner. Here Christ communicates Himself to them in a way of *grace*, so that their present communion with Him and communications from Him are suited to them as they are sinners in themselves. As thus considered, the Redeemer in His infinite goodness holds fellowship with His feeble and constantly-failing people, and as their *Head of grace* He ministers out of His fullness (John 1:16) every needed supply. But in Heaven He will be our *Head of Glory*, communicating to us that which will be suited to our resurrection and sinless state. We shall be as dependent on Him then for glory, as we now are for grace: *all* will be received *from Him*. The elect are “*vessels of mercy*” which God hath “*afore prepared unto glory*” (Rom. 9:23), and it is out of Christ’s fullness they will be *filled*, so as to be perfectly blessed.

It is to be noted that in John 17:22 Christ employed the past tense: “the glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given (not “will give”) them.” This may be understood as follows. First, Christ has given the Church an unimpeachable *title* to the glory which has been bestowed upon Him. He has acquired the right of this glory for His people: “whither the Forerunner is *for us* entered, even Jesus” (Heb. 6:20): thus it is as surely ours now as if we were in actual possession of it. Second, He has given His people the *knowledge* of it: here in John 17:22, and in such declarations as Colossians 3:4, etc.—“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.” The promises Christ has given us in His Gospel are the root of our future blessings, and in those promises we have a *lease* to show for it. Third, He has given us an *earnest* of the same, for by the indwelling Spirit we have received the “firstfruits” of our inheritance. This it was which enabled the Apostle to say I am “a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a *partaker* of the glory that shall be

revealed” (1 Peter 5:1). Fourth, He gives an actual enjoyment of it to each of the saints as soon as they are absent from the body and present with Himself.

Finally, Christ in this remarkable verse (John 17:22) gives as the reason why He shares with His people the glory which the Father hath bestowed upon Himself: “that they may be one even as We are.” Here our thoughts are directed to such a height that our poor minds turn dizzy. The very reading of those words should fill our hearts with holy amazement, as the actualization of them will fill us with admiration to all eternity. The oneness between the Father and the Son is such that They *partake of the same* ineffable blessedness, Each enjoying it equally with and like the Other. And *that* is the pattern and likeness, by way of similitude, of the glory union between the Redeemer and the redeemed! Ours will be like *Theirs!* As the union between the Father and the Son is a real one, a spiritual one, a holy one, an indestructible one, an inexpressibly glorious one, so will be that between Christ and His Church in Heaven.

As we showed in our discussion on Divine union, there is a real union of Persons in the Godhead and a communion amongst Them, for the mutual converse between the eternal Three are recorded again and again. Now just as the essential happiness of the Three in Jehovah consists in the holy fellowship which They have with each other, so it will be by the Church’s heavenly communion with the Father, the Son and the Spirit, in and by the Person of the Mediator, that all true blessedness will be enjoyed by us throughout eternity. Even now the saints are admitted unto access to the Father, by the Spirit, through Christ (Eph. 2:18); yet in our glory union with Christ this will be exalted to a far higher degree and we shall be advanced unto much closer and fuller communion with the triune God. “And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one” (John 17:22).

“I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me” (John 17:23). In these words the nature and blessedness of the glory union between

Christ and the Church are further opened to us, its blessedness being indicated by the several effects and fruits which flow from the same. Three of these are here noted. First, as that union will affect believers themselves: they are “made perfect in one” Body. Then will all the redeemed “come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13). All differences of opinion, all animosities, all jealousies, shall have vanished forever, and there shall be perfect oneness between them in knowledge, love, and holiness. Second, as this union affects the Church, in connection with the triune God. Being united to Christ, the elect are necessarily united to and interested in all the Persons in Jehovah and as they now have a *grace union* with Them, they shall yet have a *glory union* with Them, which will issue in a communion that will constitute the fullness of their blessedness for ever and ever.

Third, as it affects “the world of the ungodly.” Those who have no part or lot in this glory union shall, nevertheless, be given a glimpse of the same, as Dives (for the augmenting of his torment) was permitted to see “Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom” (Luke 16:23). The sight of Christ’s “Queen,” standing at His right hand (Psa. 45:9 and compare with Matt. 25:34) “in gold of Ophir” figure of His glory—will be self convicting to the reprobate that Christ is what He declared Himself to be; and as they behold the honour which God has put upon the Church, it will openly appear that He has loved them as He loved their Head. And for having despised and rejected Christ, and reproached and persecuted His people, they will be filled with confusion and everlasting shame (Dan. 12:2). But the Church shall be filled with joy unspeakable and have everlasting proof of the wondrous love of God for them.

We cannot do better than commence here at the point where we closed in our last, for nowhere in Scripture do we have such a clear and blessed revelation of the Church’s future bliss as the Lord Jesus favoured us with in John 17. “Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am: that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou

lovedst Me before the foundation of the world” (verse 24). Every word in this verse calls for separate meditation. Once more the Redeemer says, “Father,” for He is suing for a child’s portion for each of His people: it is not simply wages, such as a servant receives from his master, but an inheritance, such as children receive from their parents—the inheritance being the Father’s house, where the Son now is. He had said “Father” when asking for His own glorification (verse 5), and He does so again in connection with the glorification of His saints: addressing God thus intimated the loving intensity of the Mediator’s intercession.

Christ’s “I will” here at once arrests our notice—the only record we have of His ever addressing the Father thus, yet it was in as perfect keeping now as His “not My will” in Gethsemane. First, this “I will” was a note of *authority* which became Him who is God and man in one Person, to whom had been committed “power over all flesh” (John 17:2). Moreover, He had a perfect knowledge of the Father’s will, and as the Surety of His people, Christ was here suing for the fulfillment of that covenant agreement which had been entered into before He embarked upon His great undertaking. Second, it was a *testamentary disposition*: Christ was about to die and therefore said “I will.” “When Christ made His will, Heaven is one of the legacies which He bequeathed to us” (Thomas Manton). The same thought is found again in “I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me” (Luke 22:29). Third, it also reveals His deep earnestness and full purpose of heart, as the “Master, we *would* that Thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire” (Mark 10:35).

“That they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am.” Nothing gives a lover such a joy and satisfaction as to be in the immediate presence of his beloved. Heaven will not be Heaven to Christ until His glorified Bride is there by His side: then only will He “see of the travail of his soul and shall *be satisfied*” (Isa. 53:11). Nothing will content the heart of the Head but that His Church should be brought unto the possession of the utmost blessedness, to be continued unto and enjoyed by them forever and ever. It was so that His people might have a clear and comforting knowledge of this that He gave them that exceeding

great and precious promise “I go to prepare a place for you: and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:2, 3). How this reveals the heart-attitude of Christ unto us!

“Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am.” That is in sharp and solemn contrast from “where I am, thither ye cannot come” (John 7:34), spoken to the unbelieving Jews. The wicked have no title, no fitness, no heart to be where Christ is: Paradise is still closed against them by the flaming sword (Gen. 3:24). But it will be the consummation of the believer’s happiness to be where Christ is: as the Psalmist declared, “In Thy presence is fullness of joy, at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (16:11). How utterly different is the attitude of Christ toward His own from that of many of this world, who, when they enter suddenly into earthly riches and honours, quickly forget the fellows and friends of former days. Not so the Lord Jesus: His heavenly glory does not cause His love to decay in the least degree or take His mind off His people. They are inexpressibly precious to Him, and He cannot be content unless they are with Him.

It is as though Christ said to the Father, As given to Me by Thee, the elect are My “portion” (Deut. 32:9), My “special treasure” (Mal. 3:17, margin), My “royal diadem” (Isa. 62:3), My “joy” (Zeph. 3:17): and as their Head and Mediator I express My will, and it is that they shall be raised to the highest pinnacle that it is possible to elevate creatures, that they may be where I am, and that, not in some distant compartment of Thy House, but in My immediate presence, so that they may behold My glory—feasting their eyes and feeding their hearts upon Myself. Surely nothing can convey to our minds, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, a clearer view of the heart of Christ toward His beloved. O that the blessed Comforter may so shine upon these words of Christ’s, and thereby let in such light into our understandings, as may lift our hearts unto a clearer comprehension and greater admiration of His love than we have ever had before.

“That they may behold My glory.” This beholding is, first *ocular*. The bodily senses have their happiness as well as the

faculties of our souls, and this will be realised in a far nobler and purer degree hereafter. Job affirmed thus when he said, “Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold” (19:26, 27)—“see God” in the Person of the God-man Mediator. The saints shall then behold the Person who redeemed them, and that nature in which He suffered so much for them. The outward man will be regaled, as truly as the inner. There is a glory to charm our eyes in Heaven: not only the beautiful mansions and the glorious inhabitants, but above all, *the face of the Lamb*. As it is now said of Christ Himself, so shall it yet be the experience of each of His people: “For Thou hast made Him most blessed forever: Thou hast made Him exceeding glad with Thy countenance” (Psa. 21:6).

This beholding is, secondly, and supremely, *mental and spiritual*. The mind is the noblest faculty, for man is a rational creature, and there is as great an inclination to knowledge in his soul as there is in beasts to carnal pleasures. The drunkard may talk of his delight and the voluptuary of the gratification of sense, but the true delight of the soul is *knowledge*, and therefore it must be satisfied in Heaven, or else we would not be happy. “The pure in heart shall see God” (Matt. 5:8), yet not with the bodily eye, for He who is “Spirit” (John 4:24) cannot be viewed by the bodily senses, and therefore is He called “the invisible God” (Col. 1:15). But God has given man, in preference to the beasts, a mind which is capable of knowing Himself, and in our glorified state our knowledge of Him will be immeasurably increased, so that the soul shall be perfectly satisfied with its mental and spiritual sight of Him.

What an affecting sight it will be to behold the glory of Christ! How it will ravish the heart! Abraham was favoured with an anticipatory glimpse of it and “was glad” (John 8:56). If old Simeon was contented with a view of Christ as an infant—“Lord, *now* lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation” (Luke 2:29, 30)—what will be the effect on us when we stand before His very throne! Even now it fills the soul with joy unspeakable when faith

and spiritual illumination beholds Him in the Word and through His ordinances, but words cannot express what it will be to behold the Lord in open vision. To behold the King in His beauty, to see the Lamb “as it had been slain” (Rev. 5:6)—still bearing in His body the marks of the Cross—will fill us with thanksgiving and praise.

But this glory which the saints are to behold is also a *Divine* one: it will be the lustre of the Divine perfections which will be revealed to us through and by Christ, every attribute of God supplying a part, all combining to make up this supreme spiritual splendour. Then will God’s unsearchable *wisdom* be more completely opened to us, for in Christ “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). Then will God’s illimitable *power* be more fully discovered to us: that power which created a universe out of nothing, that preserved His little flock in the midst of a world of wolves, that will make a footstool of all His enemies. Then will God’s *holiness* be known in all its loveliness, and joyfully shall we then unite with the angels in crying “holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts.” Then will God’s *love* be seen without a veil: His smile shall never again be checked with a frown, nor the light of His countenance be obscured by any intervening cloud of sin.

Not till the glorified Church reaches Heaven will its union with God in Christ be complete. Union implies more than *relation*: it imports actual *presence*; not physical or local, but spiritual and cordial, by which the sinless soul, with will and affections guided by restored reason and judgment, closes with and embraces Him; and He in fulfilment of the eternal counsels, and with infinite love and delight, embraces her. When the soul is perfectly formed according to God’s own heart and fully participates in the Divine likeness so as to be perfectly like Him, it is fitted for the most intimate communion which is possible between two such natures—the Divine and human. Nor can pen depict the holy bliss of glorified saints from such a love-union, now perfected between the blessed God and them. The likeness of God upon a creature will cause the eternal One to cleave in love to it, and the beholding of His glory by eyes from which the film of sin has been

completely removed will make the soul embrace Him as its ravishing portion.

From that love-union in glory will issue everlasting *communion*. “There is nothing there to hinder God and the holy soul of the most inward fruitions and enjoyments; no animosity, no strangeness, no unsuitableness on either part. Here the glorified spirits of the just have liberty to solace themselves amid the rivers of pleasure at God’s own right hand, without check or restraint. *They* are pure, and *these* pure. They touch nothing that can defile; they defile nothing they can touch. They are not now forbidden the nearest approaches to the once inaccessible Majesty; there is no holy of holies into which they may not enter, no door locked against them. They may have free admission into the innermost secret of the Divine presence, and pour forth themselves in the most liberal effusions of love and joy; as they must be the eternal subjects of those infinitely richer communications from God, even of immense and boundless love and goodness” (J. Howe, “The Blessedness of the Righteous,” 1668).

“Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24). In the last clause Christ tells the Father *why* He wills that His elect should be with Him and behold His glory. As the God-man, the Man taken into personal union by the Son, and as such the “Fellow” (Zech. 13:7) of Jehovah, He was, from all eternity, the Object of the Father’s ineffable love. He was conceived in the Divine mind before all worlds, being the “Firstborn” of all God’s thoughts, counsels, designs toward all beings, visible and invisible. Christ, as God-man, was the Centre and Circumference as it respected all God’s vast designs in grace, nature and providence. Christ’s Person is infinitely precious in God’s sight, and therefore has He placed the highest honour of all upon Him as being the Medium through which the invisible God shall shine forth for all eternity, for *thereby* the Church will perceive *how much* the Father loves Christ and that it is the overflowings of the same which falls on them.

“I will, therefore, that they may behold My personal glory,

which Thou has given Me, that from that sight they may have the most enlarged views their minds are capable of, concerning Thy love to Me, and to them in Me, as this will be a perfecting them in the full enjoyment of Thine everlasting love. Thou hast possessed *My* mind with it from everlasting; Thou hast taken *Me* up into the mount of personal union and communion with Thee. I have shone forth before Thee in all My personal glory. I have been in Thy bosom, and been admitted into a full knowledge and enjoyment of all the love of Thine heart. Thou lovedst Me from everlasting, and My whole Person, God-man, is the Object of Thine everlasting love. Thou lovedst Me as the Son of God, and as the Son of Man; Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world as the Head of the whole election of grace. Thou lovedst Me as Mediator. I am in every sense the Object of Thy love. I would open Thy whole heart to these, Thine, and My beloved ones. I would express it unto them most freely. I would speak out in their hearing the secrets which have passed from everlasting between Thee and Me, that *they may have* the clearest evidence I can give them of it" (S. E. Pierce).

The Lord Christ will shine forth in His personal glory in the view of His saints, and it will be so beheld by them as to be reflected upon them. Our glory in Heaven will not be independent of Christ, nor will it be inherent in ourselves: our everlasting bliss will be received out of the fullness of the Lord of glory. Just as the glory of the sun is subjective in itself, but objective upon others, so it will be in Heaven: we shall be bathed in the effulgence of Him who is Light. We shall be favoured with such views of Christ, as God-man, as will forever preclude any possibility of sinning, for our souls will be satiated with *His* perfections, filled with unutterable admiration and adoration. We shall be so completely swallowed up with Christ that we shall no longer have any thought about *ourselves!* *This it is* which constitutes the very essence of heavenly blessedness: we shall be so thoroughly absorbed with the loveliness of the Lamb as to forever lose sight of, forget, ourselves! The Church will so centre in God as their Portion and Inheritance that communion with Him, through His Christ, will be the fountain of their life for evermore.

Our thoughts have carried us along so swiftly that we must now go back and consider the several steps in the believer's history which is to terminate in this blessed consummation. The first step or stage occurs at *regeneration*, when he is made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, for it is then there is wrought in him a principle (or "nature") which capacitates his (hitherto depraved) soul to visualize and relish spiritual things. A beggar might gaze upon the glory of a king, and yet be no gainer; but when a regenerated soul looks in faith unto the crucified and risen Saviour he is "saved" thereby (Isa. 45:22). The second step or stage in the soul's journey unto the beatific vision occurs in its practical *sanctification*, which is a gradual process and progressive experience, under which, beholding in the glass of the Law and the Gospel the glory of the Lord, he is changed into "the same image" by the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18).

Third, it is *at death* the believer approaches much nearer the goal so longed for by his soul, for then he not only leaves this world behind, but he is forever done with sin—he leaves *it* behind too. Welcome release! How that should reconcile him to the putting off of the body! Passing strange is it from the spiritual side of things—though not so from the natural—that the great majority of Christians are as reluctant to leave this world as are the godless, and view with such trepidation the valley of the shadows. Not only is there nothing whatever to be feared in death to the saints—for Christ has extracted its sting—but there is much in it and its attendants that should make it welcome. Sin—that plague of the renewed heart, that monster which is the cause of all our spiritual grief, that vile thing which is ever marring and interrupting our communion with God—will be done with forever. And being done with sin, there will be *an end* to all physical sufferings and mental sorrows. The entail of the first Adam will be finally severed. But this—grand as it is—is but the negative side; consider the positive.

As soon as the Lord is pleased to dismiss any of His saints from the body by death, they are *immediately admitted into Heaven*, and there they behold His glory. Christ's glory is great in the estimation of His people: they have a spiritual perception of it now, but they will have a much greater and grander view of it

when removed from this vale of tears, when they are “absent from the body, present with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8). Therefore was it that the Apostle exclaimed, “Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is *far better*” (Phil. 1:23). Heaven is the habitation of all saints upon their departure from this world, and then they shall enjoy a fellowship with God through Christ which greatly exceeds any they are capable of now. At best our present communion with Christ is but feeble and fitful; but it will not be so always: in the intermediate state the redeemed are with Christ and receive wondrous “revelations” (2 Cor. 12:7) from Him.

“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth” (Rev. 14:13): not “shall be,” but “blessed *are*” they—a Divine declaration which gives the lie to that Christ dishonouring idea which supposes that at death the souls of believers, in common with unbelievers, pass into a state of oblivion. Yes, “blessed” beyond words are they who die in the Lord, for not only do they leave all sin behind forever, but they are “with Christ in Paradise” (Luke 23:43). True, that blessedness falls short of the final state, nevertheless, in various respects it approximates thereto. There is much in common for believers between death and resurrection, and after the resurrection, though the latter excels the former. Both are termed a “crown” (Rev. 2:10—immediately after death; 2 Tim. 4:8—at the latter day), both are a being “present with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8; 1 Thess. 4:17). Both are termed a “sight of Christ” (2 Cor. 5:6, 7)—while in the body we walk by faith, but when absent from the body and present with the Lord, walking by sight is necessarily implied: 1 John 3:2.

Yet great and grand as is the blessedness of the dead in Christ, that which they will enjoy in the resurrection and eternal state shall far surpass it. To the question “How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?” the inspired answer is returned, “Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other. . . . So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it

is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body” (1 Cor. 15:35-37, 42-44). What a difference are we here taught to expect between the present and the future state of our bodies. From one view, the body that rises is the same that died—personal identity is preserved; but from another view, it is radically changed.

More than a hint of that marvellous change of the believer’s body is found in the record of Christ’s transfiguration, when “His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light” (Matt. 17:2), and when after His own resurrection He passed through closed doors (John 20:19); for it is written that He “shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself” (Phil. 3:21). And if such a great and grand change is awaiting the believer’s body in the resurrection state, who can conceive the change *of the soul* when it is “glorified?” Who is so bold as to define the limits of the soul’s capacities and capabilities when freed from the burden of sin and made like Christ (1 John 3:2)? Who can estimate the excellency of a glorified soul’s operations in connection with Divine things?!

We now make some reflections constituting a “practical application” of the subject, but lack of space hindered us; we shall therefore introduce them at this stage, and they and add a few more remarks about the future bliss of the righteous. Our desire is not only to enlighten the mind, but to affect the heart, so that our lives may be more fruitful to the praise of the glory of Divine grace. God has indeed been good in revealing so much concerning that everlasting bliss which awaits His people on High, yet the practical value of such knowledge to us is to be determined by *the effects* which it produces in our daily walk. Those who are going to behold the King in His beauty will surely strive after a closer conformity to His image in this life, and then, conscious of their deplorable lack of such conformity, will not only be filled with grief, but be kept humble in the dust before Him.

First, *a radical change of heart* is indispensable before any depraved member of Adam’s fallen race can participate in the inheritance of the saints in light. Moreover, that change must take

place before death, for at death each individual goes to “his *own* place” (Acts 1:25)—Heaven or Hell, for which either holiness or sin fits him. Nor does glorification (unlike regeneration) effect any radical change: instead, it is the *perfecting* of what has previously been wrought in a person. No one enters Heaven unless Heaven has first entered him. No one goes to be with Christ unless Christ has first dwelt in his heart. How could those who never had any spiritual love for Him find joy and satisfaction from spending an eternity in His immediate presence? If we have no relish for spiritual things in this life, if our hearts perceive not the supreme “beauty of holiness,” then we would be completely out of our element in the dwelling place of the Holy One, and where none but holy persons are found. Therefore “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”

The natural man has a settled aversion from God. The unregenerate are “alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart” (Eph. 4:18), and therefore do they deliberately choose a life that is “*without God* in the world” (Eph. 2:12). True, many of them (like millions of the heathen) assume a religious garb at certain seasons and engage in a round of religious exercises, yet both in heart and practice they are “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God” (2 Tim. 3:4). Press upon such the claims of Christ, tell them He requires the throne of their hearts, seek to set before them the blessedness of a life of obedience to Him and the sweetness of communion with Him, and they will regard you as a fanatic and killjoy. At how great a moral distance, then, are all such souls from heavenly blessedness: either it must be changed to match their corruptions, or their hearts must be changed to suit its purity.

Reader, has *your* heart been so changed that fellowship with Christ is your chiefest delight? O the deceitfulness of the human heart! O the powerful infatuation of self-love! O the fatal delusions of Satan, that so many yet “in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity” should suppose that God can be imposed upon by lip-service or by the labour of the hands. Alas, what multitudes imagine that a few drops of water sprinkled upon them

during infancy secures an entrance into Heaven. What multitudes suppose that “joining a church” and financially supporting the minister is sufficient to ensure everlasting bliss. And what countless other thousands persuade themselves that a head knowledge and mouth profession of the Truth is all that is needed. Ah, my reader, thou canst not impose upon God, and never shall you enter *His* kingdom unless thou be born again. Then let each of us seriously and solemnly examine himself.

Second, the soul in which that great change is wrought *eagerly pursues Heaven’s blessedness* until it be attained. Perfect conformity to Christ, unbroken communion with Him, is now its supreme desire and quest: let a soul be regenerated and nothing short of this can satisfy it. The deepest longing of a renewed heart is “LORD, lift Thou up the light of *Thy* countenance upon us” (Psa. 4:6). The giddy crave worldly pleasures, the miser his gold, the ambitious earthly honours, but Christian experience is summed up in, “One thing have I *desired* of the LORD, that will I *seek after*; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in His temple” (Psa. 27:4). That which is to afford him *eternal* joy and satisfaction is the object of the believer’s *present* desire and delight: a visit from Christ, a smile from Him, a sip of His love, is what he is constantly asking for.

“As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness” (Psa. 17:15), which is the same as saying, I cannot be satisfied otherwise. But what does that word “satisfied” imply? Hunger is satisfied with food, thirst with water: that which was previously craved is now obtained, and *contentment* follows. Thus, satisfaction of soul necessarily implies a *previous longing* of soul after that which alone can satisfy, a working of earnest desire, a tireless seeking after that which continues to so largely elude us in this life. “With my soul have I *desired* Thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early” (Isa. 26:9)—yes, “seek” after a conscious access to the Lord and a sight of His face, as earnestly, as diligently, as persistently, as the worldling does after carnal things. “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I

follow after, if that I may apprehend (lay hold of) that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:12). That word “attained” has a very small place in the theology of some who are lop-sided on grace. Yet the Apostle hesitated not to use it, realising that his spiritual longings called for a “following after” on his part.

Here, then, is another point at which we need to test ourselves. It is a contradiction in terms to speak of a soul being “satisfied” in the future if it had no *previous yearning*. In this life there is a restless longing and working of soul: in the life to come the goal is reached and rest (satisfaction) is attained. Thus, if I be seriously minded, if I am concerned about the hereafter, how it behoves me to ascertain whether there be within me a supreme desire, a spiritual appetite, a soul craving which this poor world cannot satisfy, and which stirs me up to seek after Christ now. Or does the language of the Spouse in the Song of Solomon, wherein she expresses her joy and bliss at the brief visits of her Beloved, and her loss and anguish at His departure, strike you as wild enthusiasm? If so, be sure that your heart has not within it that principle which finds its fruition in Heaven. We may ascertain our state by the *objects of our desires*. Make no mistake: that can never be your eternal blessedness for which now you have no relish. Christ will not receive into His presence those to whom it would be a burden.

Third, the knowledge of God and conformity to His image are in their very nature *satisfying* to a renewed soul, and even now *actually do so* in the measure in which they are attained by us. Mere *things* cannot satisfy, for they perish with the using of them. He who hopes to find satisfaction by multiplying his carnal pleasures, or by heaping together material things, is on as vain a quest as if he sought to make a sum by adding together naught but ciphers. But that which shall one day fully satisfy, has in itself an aptness and power to satisfy even now. Happy the soul which has been let into the secret of where real satisfaction is to be found, and knows whither to turn his eyes and direct his efforts in the pursuit thereof. Thrice happy those who can say, Give me an experimental, living, efficacious sight of God, and I have enough:

“show us the Father, and it *sufficeth* us” (John 14:8).

Let the weary wandering soul turn unto *God*: He will not mock thee with shadows as the world does. “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent” (John 17:3). Apart from Christ we cannot know God nor view Him with comfort; but the Gospel gives a lovely prospect of Him: the glory of God shines “in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6), and the more faith beholds Him there, the more does the soul move toward satisfaction. “Godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim. 6:6). A vital knowledge of God tends to holiness, and holiness to contentment. Nothing is more analogous to Heaven than the peace and serenity which issues from the believer’s present enjoyment of God. He does not wholly conceal Himself from the saints, but favours them with an occasional glimpse of His smiling face, and the degree in which He vouchsafes this blessing brings Heaven into the soul: “They looked unto Him, and were lightened” (Psa. 34:5).

Fourth, but inasmuch as the soul’s complete blessedness lies in the future, then his happiness in the meantime must largely consist *in hope*. It is the Divine promise that one day there shall be nothing to mar his fellowship with Christ that now supports the saint. It is the assurance that ere long his hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled (Matt. 5:6), and that “no groans shall mingle with the songs that warble from immortal tongues,” which comforts the oft cast-down soul. “If we *hope* for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it” (Rom. 8:25). Yes, it is the exercise of hope which encourages the weary pilgrim to continue plodding on, which nerves the Christian soldier *not* to give up the good fight of faith. It was hope which moved the soul to first seek unto God for mercy, and hope will make its possessor *continue seeking* unto Him till every longing receives its fruition.

Here is yet another point by which to test ourselves. Are our expectations of satisfaction centred in present or future things? They who have received the “firstfruits of the Spirit” cannot but earnestly groan after the harvest itself: “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:23). Have you, my reader, been the happy recipient of a bunch of the “grapes of

Eschol?” If so, nothing that grows in this wilderness satisfies your palate, and your face will be eagerly turned to that fair Land of Promise of which that “bunch” was but the earnest. If you really have a “good hope through grace” (2 Thess. 2:16) then you will, in some measure at least, live upon things future and unseen. “They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:5).

Fifth, if we honestly perceive any disposition of soul toward the holy glory of Heaven, any principle within which causes us to pant after God as the hunted hart does after the waterbrooks, then how diligently and zealously should we *seek after the strengthening* and developing of the same, and endeavour to bring our hearts into that temper suited thereto. If we are painfully conscious of how far short we fall of being conformed to the image of Christ, then we should stir up our souls to make more serious efforts after the same. If we are to spend an eternity in His presence, how we should strive after a growing knowledge of God, how we should seek to please and honour Him in all things. Then let us “follow on to know the LORD” (Hosea 6:3), let us spend more time in the “secret place of the Most High,” let us make future things the subject of our meditation. (For much in the above paragraphs we are indebted to J. Howe).

Is it not worth some pains to attain unto the blessedness of Heaven? If athletes undergo such discipline and self-denial in order to obtain a corruptible crown, shall *we* murmur because the turning of our backs upon the world and the mortifying of the flesh are required of us if we are to attain unto an incorruptible crown? Christians are not called to lie upon flowery beds of ease, but to strive against sin, to pluck out right eyes and cut off right hands, to make the cultivation of personal holiness the great business of their present lives. Christ has left His people an example, that they should follow His steps, and His path is not a smooth one, nor did He please Himself. Christ had to “endure the Cross” before He was rewarded by the heavenly bliss into which He has entered (Phil. 2:8, 9), and unless we take up our cross (that is, live a life of self-sacrifice) Heaven will not be our portion and reward. “To him *that overcometh* will I grant to sit with Me in My

throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne” (Rev. 3:21): that is the plainly revealed condition of celestial blessedness.

Once more we say, Can any present sacrifice be too great in view of the future joy? Consider again what the blessedness of the righteous shall consist of: it will be a complete freedom from all that is evil, and the eternal enjoyment of all that is good. When the full number of God’s elect have been openly called by the Spirit and vitally united to Shiloh, their living Head, then will take place the solemnization of the nuptials between the heavenly Bridegroom and His Bride. “The King’s daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework” (Psa. 45:13, 14), which was a prophetic statement that receives its fulfilment on the resurrection morning. At that time all her spots and blemishes will be eternally obliterated, and she will shine forth immutably holy, consummately righteous, inestimably pure; thus will she be a suitable Consort for her glorious Husband, being fully conformed to His image.

Then it is that Christ shall “present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:27). This is the ultimate end of our redemption by Christ, the perfecting of our sanctification in the life to come. As Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together (Matt. 1:18), so the Church is contracted to Christ now, but the marriage is hereafter (Rev. 19:7). He will then take us Home to live with Himself and abide always in His immediate presence. “Thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot in thee” (Song. 4:7) will be His greeting; “My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand” (5:10) will be her response. This presentation of the Church to Himself is Christ’s recompense for His sufferings: it is then that “He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied” (Isa. 53:1).

It is to be duly noted that the Church’s glory in Heaven is the fruit of Christ’s death. It is not merited by us but was purchased by Him. “Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it (i.e., in a sacrificial death) that He might sanctify it...that He might present

it to Himself a glorious church” (Eph. 5:25-27). So again, “That by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance” (Heb. 9:15). The following distinctions may help. The electing grace of the Father is the original cause of our glorification. The atonement of Christ is the meritorious cause. Quickening by the Spirit is the efficacious cause. Personal holiness is what *fits* us, for it is the condition without which we cannot obtain eternal bliss (Heb. 12:14).

In Heaven our communion with Christ will reach its highest perfection, without any possibility of cessation or interruption. Heavenly communion will be our participation with Christ in all the benefits which flow from our union with Him. The glorified Head of the Church will share with His members the high honours which God has conferred upon Him. “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly” (Rom. 16:20); yes, the saints will yet be brought to participate with Christ in His complete triumph over Satan. “Know ye not that we shall judge angels?” (1 Cor. 6:3). Communion *is mutual enjoyment*, and Christ will not be satisfied till His blood-bought people be in the same condition as Himself: “That ye may eat and drink *at My table* in My kingdom” (Luke 22:30); yea, “To him that overcometh will I grant to *sit with Me* in My throne” (Rev. 3:21). Then it is that He shall say, “Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” (Matt. 25:21)—an unalloyed and holy joy, a perfect and satisfying one.

The God-man is Lord of angels (Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:4), and since His saints are joint heirs with Christ, they must *share with Him* in His dominion over the celestial hosts. This is a bold statement, yet it is fully warranted by the teaching of Holy Writ; nor let it appear absurd, though it be so wonderful: if the Son of God condescended to take human nature upon Him, is it incredible that He should raise it to the highest creature dignity? Mark carefully the discrimination of language in the following passage, “And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and *in the midst of* the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain....And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels *round about* the throne and the beasts, and the elders” (Rev. 5:6, 11). The

redeemed are *nearer* the Lamb and more intimately connected with Him than the others, for the angels are only in the outer circle.

Above all, we shall be eye-witnesses of the glory which belongs to Christ personally. "And they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads" (Rev. 22:4). Christ's glory will be beheld by us then to an extent we cannot now conceive: every faculty of soul and body will be refined to the highest degree, suited to the heavenly state, which will immeasurably increase our enjoyment of the beatific vision. The better the sight, the lovelier the object appears; the healthier the appetite, the more delicious the food tastes; the more musical the ear, the pleasanter the melody. So, the holier the soul, the more joyous Heaven's joys and the more glorious its glories. If the queen of Sheba had cause to say of Solomon's glory, "Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom" (1 Kings 10:8), then those who shall sit in the immediate presence of the infinitely greater than Solomon will be superlatively happy.

In Heaven the Christian will have a constant and satisfying sight of the God-Man, who, as such, is the "Lord of Glory." In Him the Incomprehensible Three will shine forth in the uttermost display of Their manifestative glory before all the angels and saints. It is *that* which is the blessedness of Heaven, and which each saint shall forever behold, filling them with conceptions of glory as they can never express. The wicked will see Christ in the Day of Judgment, but they will not have an intuitive and supernatural sight of Him. In blessed contrast, it is by a *spiritual* faculty and light that the saints will see Him: it is so now, as He is revealed in the glass of the Word. That spiritual faculty, elevated by the Holy Spirit, will so raise up the mind as to take in larger and larger views of Christ, swallowing up every thought in the contemplation and adoration of the same.

Our life in Heaven will consist in an ever-expanding vision of Christ's manifold glory, so that we shall be eternally admiring, rejoicing in it, having communion with Him over it, giving Him praise for it. The heart will be wholly absorbed in its

apprehensions of all “the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” which are now “hid” in Christ (Col. 2:3). We shall be completely lost to everything *but Him!* There will be such an “exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17) on our minds, poisoning them, as to preclude every wandering thought from Him. The heart will be eternally fixed on Christ as its centre. Thus there can be no possibility of sin ever again gaining entrance to our souls. Then will be completely realised that Divine promise, “They shall be *abundantly satisfied* with the fatness of Thy house; and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures. For with Thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light shall we see light” (Psa. 36:8, 9).

11. Conclusion.

We have now completed the gamut of our subject. Starting with the *Divine* union that exists between the three Persons in the Godhead, which issues in a perfect communion between Them, we endeavoured to show how that made possible the *Mediatorial* union, namely, by the second Person taking into conjunction with Himself the Man Christ Jesus. That is a profound mystery, yet it is food for faith so far as it is revealed in Holy Writ. Then we saw how that the Divine counsels respecting the Mediatorial union laid a foundation for the Church’s oneness with Christ. Tracing out the connection between the Church and its Head we have seen that it originated in a *mystical* union before the foundation of the world, when the eternal love of the Triune God chose its members in Christ, and gave it a covenant standing and super-creation subsistence, so that we read of the “grace which *was given us* in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Tim. 1:9). Thus from all eternity the Church stood in Christ as His mystical Body and Bride.

Now what has just been said above has reference to God’s eternal *decree* concerning the same. Descending, then, to the actual *outworking* of that decree, we have seen that the Divine purpose was realised by two things: the Son uniting Himself to us, we being joined to Him by the Spirit. First; in order for the Son to enter this world as the Representative and Surety of His people, it was necessary for Him to become flesh, and by so doing a *federal*

union was established, Christ thereby assuming and discharging all the legal obligations of His people: “both He that sanctifieth and they which are sanctified are *all of one*” (Heb. 2:11). This federal union laid the foundation for the sins of His people to be imputed to Christ, and His righteousness to them. Second, the Holy Spirit effects the *vital* union, each of God’s elect being livingly “joined to the Lord” so that they become “one spirit,” this being essential if they are to partake of the benefits which Christ purchased for them. The same Spirit which indwells Christ in His fullness, now takes up His abode within them.

It is at regeneration the Spirit accomplishes our vital union with Christ, making us living branches of the true Vine; and it is this which makes possible a *saving union* with Him. We are not “saved” until we personally “*believe on*” the Lord Jesus Christ; but as saving faith is a spiritual act, one who is spiritually dead cannot perform it. The Spirit supernaturally quickens the soul in order to capacitate it unto a saving faith in Christ. It is the Spirit’s quickening of us into newness of life which lays the foundation for feeling our deep need of Christ and casting ourselves upon Him. Until a man be born again he cannot see either his desperate condition or where the remedy is to be found. God must begin “a good work in the soul” (Phil. 1:6) before he will have any heart for Christ. Until we are brought from death unto life the Gospel falls upon deaf ears. When the Saviour is embraced by faith all our sins are blotted out, and Christ is “made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30).

At this stage a difficulty presents itself. A vital union with Christ has been effected by the Spirit’s quickening operation and a saving union with Christ by our exercise of faith. But the favoured one is left in this world, and a sinful nature indwells him: how, then, is *communion* to be maintained between him and a holy Christ? For that, there must be a *practical* union, for “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3). That “agreement” is accomplished just so far as our wills are brought into subjection to Christ’s, just so far as we yield to His Lordship or authority over us. “Take My yoke upon you” (Matt. 11:29) is His call to us, and a “yoke” is what *unites together* in a practical

way. There can be no communion with Christ outside the path of obedience, and the obedience He requires is that which flows from love and gratitude.

Now there are two chief means Divinely appointed for the *maintenance* of our practical union with Christ, namely, His precepts and His promises. In the one we learn His will, in the other we see His heart: in the one are directions concerning our duty, in the other is comfort and cheer. Whatever be our circumstances, there are precepts to counsel us, and promises to sustain. Yet let it be pointed out that no matter how plainly our duties are set forth in the Scriptures, nor how well-suited the promises be to our varied cases in this world, and no matter how diligently we apply ourselves to the one or the other, they will yield us no relief from the incubus of the flesh until by faith we draw enabling grace from the “fullness” which is in Christ for us (John 1:16). “The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the *faith* of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20): faith in His person, in His mediatorial office, in His compassion, in His power.

Having been brought into vital union with Christ our privilege is to continue in communion with Him; having “come unto” Him, our duty is now to “abide in” Him. Yes, says the reader, that would be very simple if I no longer had any indwelling corruptions to plague me; but alas, it is but hypocrisy for *me* to talk about enjoying present communion with a holy Christ. Be careful, dear friend, lest you be found arraigning the wisdom and goodness of God. Has not *He* left the “flesh” within you?—had He deemed it most for His glory and your good, He would certainly have eradicated it. Has He made no provision for His failing people to have fellowship with His blessed Son while they groan because of their sinful nature and its ceaseless activities? Weigh well that question, and go slow in saying that present communion with the eternal Lover of your soul is not for you.

The above difficulty finds its solution in *experimental* union with Christ. This we entered into at considerable length, because it is at this point that Christians experience so much difficulty. It is hard for them to realise that “there is a Friend which sticketh

closer than a brother,” whose love for us never wavers, and whose ear is ever open to our most distressful cry. But experimental communion with Christ must be “in the light” (1 John 1:5-7): there must be perfect openness and reality in all our approaches to and dealings with Christ. If we come to Him as impoverished beggars, He will not turn us away; if we come as conscious and confessed lepers, He will not scorn us; but if we give way to a Laodicean spirit and pretend to be what we are not, He will ignore us.

Experimental communion with Christ consists in basking in the sunshine of His conscious presence: sitting at His feet and receiving from Him as Mary did (Luke 10:39), leaning upon His bosom as John did (John 13:23)—and *they* were of “like passions” as we! The more we are engaged in contemplating and resting in Christ’s wondrous and unchanging love, the more will our poor hearts be warmed and our affections drawn out unto Him. Yes, but when I have neglected this privilege, and my heart has grown cold, and I have wandered far from Him, then what am I to do? Do exactly as you did at first: come to Him as the “Friend of publicans and sinners” (Matt. 11:19), cast yourself anew upon His mercy, acknowledge to Him your vileness, ask Him to wash away the filth of your iniquities, plead before Him the promises found in Jeremiah 3:12 and Hosea 14:4, and count upon His faithfulness to do as He has said. Remember that the precious blood of the Lamb is the only sufficient antidote for a wounded conscience: it is by new acts of faith in that blood we experience afresh its virtue.

The cessation of our strivings against sin, the toleration of temptations to sin, allowed indulgence in any sin, snaps this sensitive experimental communion. The loss of our fellowship with Christ is to the believer’s soul what the extinction of sight or the absence of light would be to the body. The body might in such a case continue to discharge some of its functions, yet nothing could compensate for the loss of vision. So the soul, deprived of conscious communion with Christ, may, in a measure, perform some spiritual functions but it will go mourning after its lost treasure. The joy of the Lord is the believer’s strength (Neh. 8:16), and his joy is commensurate with his fellowship with Christ (1

John 3:4). If, then, fellowship with Him be broken, the joy of salvation is lost (Psa. 51:12) as poor David discovered; nor can that joy be regained, till things are put right with the Lord, as the Psalmist also proved.

The only thing which closes our way against renewed communion with Christ is unrepented and unconfessed sins: they are to be *renounced* by godly sorrow, by contrite acknowledgment, by a return to the path of obedience. “They looked unto Him, and were lightened” (Psa. 34:5): “looked” in faith, and were “lightened” by the removal of their load of conscious guilt. Yet let it be pointed out that there must be real diligence and earnestness of soul when seeking restoration of experimental fellowship, for no slothful and formal effort will suffice. “By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, but I found Him not” (Song. 3:1): then is the soul to give way to despair? No, “I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek Him whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, but I found Him not” (verse 2): ah, the Lord *tests* us! “The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth? It was but a little that I passed from them, but I *found Him* whom my soul loveth: I held Him, and would not let Him go” (Song. 3:3, 4)—that was perseverance rewarded. “O LORD God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before Thee: let my prayer come before Thee, incline Thine ear unto my cry” (Psa. 88:1, 2): yes “day and night” *there* was intensity and importunity!

Finally, remember that the Lord Jesus is the great Physician, Divinely qualified for every wound, malady, want, which sin has wrought in us. Who needs Christ more than *yourself*, when you feel such a vile wretch? Who is there that Christ can get more glory from than by bearing with and cleansing such a one as *you*! The Holy Spirit makes the saint feel sin continually, that he may go continually to the Saviour. The wound is opened afresh to your view, that you may remember afresh it is by *His* “stripes” you are healed. It is the special office-work of the Spirit to continually convict us of sin, and make us inwardly acquainted with it, to the intent that we make more and more *use* of Christ, who is the alone

remedy for every part of our spiritual disease.

Many suppose they cannot grow in grace and thrive spiritually unless they are full of comfort, peace and joy. But that is a great mistake. Growth in grace is a growing *in humility*, and thriving spiritually is to decrease in self-love and self-complacency. It is the great work of the blessed Spirit to humble our proud hearts, and this He does by showing us more and more of our nothingness, our utter unworthiness, our rottenness, and this in order to pave the way for exalting Christ, by showing how perfectly suited He is for our every case—for He has mercy on the *leper who comes to Him!* The Spirit makes us acquainted with our unutterable depravity and misery, that He may show us Christ's love and mercy. He brings to light our foulness, that He may proclaim the everlasting virtue of Christ's blood. He shows us our emptiness, to make us long after Christ's fullness.

Let it be duly borne in mind that *now* is the season of the Church's *humiliation*, and that those of its members still upon earth have not yet entered into their glorified state. It is very striking to observe that in this too the Church is conformed to the experiences of her Head. "The path of the Just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18), which is true alike of both the Redeemer and the redeemed. By the sovereign grace of God, His elect have been brought into the place of unchanging blessing, yet the manifestation of this and their actual enjoyment of it, is experienced *gradually*, little by little. Then let not the tried and troubled Christian be unduly discouraged because, at present, his waterpot contains only water, and that oftentimes a filthy scum rises to the surface of it. It shall not ever be thus.

Christ is our *Pattern* in all things, as well as the Forerunner. The servant is not above his Master, but must follow His steps. Now a careful study of Christ's history reveals four distinct stages concerning His glory. First, there *was His primo-primitive glory* as the God-man, in the predestinating purpose of God. Not only did God behold in the glass of His decrees the Man taken into union by His Son, so that He could say, "Behold My Servant, whom I uphold; Mine Elect, in whom My soul delighteth: I have put My

Spirit upon Him” (Isa. 42:1) this was in eternity past; “He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles” was to occur in the time state; but Christ, as God-man, had a covenant subsistence and was endowed with a glory which far excelled that of the angels. It was to *that* Christ had reference when He prayed, “And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self *with the glory* which I had with Thee before the world was” (John 17:5).

That “glory” was His mediatorial glory, for He never relinquished His essential glory as the second Person of the Trinity: He could not do so without ceasing to be God. Thus, the first and original state of Christ was one of celestial glory. So it was with the Church, for the correspondence is perfect at every point, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3): that too was “before the world began,” for the next verse goes on to state, “according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him!” And again we read, “Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Tim. 1:9).

Second, there was *His humiliation state*, when He who was rich for our sakes became poor. The Lord of angels took upon Him the form of a servant. His glory was so veiled, the degradation into which He descended was so deep, that when here He “had not where to lay His head.” The state into which He had entered was such that He became “The man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” So it is with His Church collectively, and with its members individually. It is “through much tribulation” that we “enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). Sorrow and grief are our present portion: answerable, in our measure, to that through which the Head passed.

Third, there is *His state of exaltation*. This He entered into upon His ascension, when He was “received up into glory” (1 Tim. 3:16). He has been crowned “with honour and glory” and set “over the creation of God” (Heb. 2:7). Yet, as that passage goes on to say, “But now we see not yet all things put under Him.” No, at

present He is “From henceforth expecting *till* His enemies be made His footstool” (Heb. 10:13). Moreover, Christ still lacks the completed and glorified Church, which is His “fullness” (Eph. 1:23). Agreeably to this, when we leave this world, we go to be with Christ which is “far better;” nevertheless, we still lack our glorified bodies—the perfect state is yet future.

Fourth, there is *the ultimate and eternal glory of Christ*, but He will not enter into *that* apart from His Church. The final glorification of both shall occur at the same time. God considers nothing too good or too much for the Bride of His Son, and He will yet endow and enrich her with every spiritual blessing, not only in order to fit her as a suitable Spouse, but elevating her to a state of holiness and happiness, honour and glory, beyond all human and angelic thought, so as to satisfy His own heart as well, and display to all eternity the exceeding riches of His wisdom and grace, and the height and depth, breadth and length of His love toward her. Then shall the glorified Head be glorified in His Body and admired by all them that believe. Then will be fully manifested the original super-creation glory of God’s elect.

The future glory of the righteous in Heaven is of such a character that they will be so united unto God Himself, through Christ the God-man as the Medium of it, as for Him to make such a communication of blessedness through our Head, that in the issue of it we shall be “filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3:19). It scarcely needs pointing out that those prayers of the Apostle which are recorded in Scripture were indicted by the Holy Spirit, and therefore their several petitions are to be regarded by us as so many Divine promises, which, though realised by us in some measure now, will receive their perfect fulfilment in the future. Thus it will be with this most remarkable expression: in the Eternal State the elect shall be granted such communion with the Blessed Three that they will be filled with the life, the light, the love of God.

It is through Christ, yet it is *by the Spirit*, that we have all our knowledge of God. “The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God

knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 2:10, 11). The Spirit dwells in the hearts of believers now on earth, and He will dwell in them in Heaven to all eternity. Therefore is He denominated “The Spirit of *glory*” (1 Peter 4:14), for that title *looks forward* to His special relation to us in the unending future. Each Person in the Godhead will therefore have a distinctive part and place in connection with the everlasting bliss of the Church. We shall behold the Father’s face (i.e., His revealed perfections), and Christ will be the Medium through which He shines, yet it is by the Spirit we shall be “filled with all the fullness of God.” That will be the climax of grace, the consummation of our salvation, and the very zenith of joyous privilege and bliss.

How incapable we are of forming any adequate conception of what it will mean for a soul to be “filled with all the fullness of God!” Not that the finite will ever contain or encompass the Infinite, yet the holy and glorious One shall completely possess and abundantly satisfy our entire beings, spirit and soul and body. The renowned Puritan, Thomas Goodwin illustrated this by the following simile: “So fill you, as the fire of a hot furnace doth a small piece of iron cast into it, when not dissolving it, or converting it into fire itself, yet you see not nor discern the iron, but it appears to be all fire. So the ever-blessed Three will be *all in all* to saints in Heaven, as to fill, penetrate, and so thoroughly possess their understandings, as for them not to mind or think of themselves or of the glory they are possessed of, through their being swallowed up in the thoughts and enjoyment of the glory of the co-equal Three shining on and in and through them.”

Christ will everlastingly delight in the Church, and the Church will everlastingly delight in Him. There will be mutual intercourse, an unrestrained opening of heart one to another. In communion *communications* are made by *both* parties. One party bestows favour upon another, and the recipient reciprocates by giving back to the donor, according to the benefit received, grateful acknowledgment: those communications, from both sides, flowing from love and union. Thus we read, “Now ye Philippians know that...no church *communicated* with me as concerning giving *and* receiving, but ye only” (Phil. 4:15). Paul and the

Philippian saints were united in heart and had spiritual fellowship together in the Gospel (Phil. 1:5). Out of love to him, they communicated in a temporal way, they being the active givers, he the passive receiver. Then, in return for their kindness, the Apostle communicated by acknowledging their beneficence, thanking them for it. This may help us a little to form some idea of what our communion with Christ in Heaven will be like. As the vine conveys sap to the branch, so the branch *responds* by bearing leaves and fruit. Christ will continue to be *the Giver*, and we be the receivers, yet this will issue in the overflowing of our love, and *in return* we shall pour out praise and thanksgiving, adoration and worship.

***“He and I in one bright glory
Endless bliss shall share:
Mine, to be forever with Him;
His, that I am there.”***

The seventh of seven booklets.

