



**SPIRITUAL UNION
AND
COMMUNION**

**4. MYSTICAL
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In the introduction [see first booklet] we pointed out that “There are three principal unions revealed in the Scriptures which are the chief mysteries and form the foundation of our most holy faith. First, the union of three Divine Persons in one Godhead: having distinct personalities, being co-eternal and co-glorious, yet constituting one Jehovah. Second, the union of the Divine and human natures in one Person, Jesus Christ, Immanuel, being God and man. Third, the union of the Church to Christ: He being the Head, they the members, constituting one mystical body. Though we cannot form any exact idea of any of these unions in our imaginations, because the depth of such mysteries is beyond our comprehension, yet it is our bounden duty to believe them all because they are clearly revealed in Scripture, and are the necessary foundation for other parts of Christian doctrine. Hence it is our holy privilege to prayerfully study the same, looking unto the Holy Spirit to graciously enlighten us thereon.”

Having shown in the previous chapters [booklets]—very stumblingly and inadequately—how that a plurality of Persons in the Godhead made possible the Mediatorial union, we are now ready to consider how the Son of God taking upon Himself our nature made possible the union of the Church to Him. While orthodox theologians have written clearly upon the Divine union which exists between the three Persons in the Godhead, and while they have treated helpfully the nature of the Mediatorial union, the same can hardly be said of their discussion of the union which exists between God’s elect and their glorious Head. Though not a little has been written thereon, most men have generalized far too much, failing to distinguish between the various aspects of that oneness which exists between Christ and

His people. Not a few have jumbled together what needs to be considered apart, if a clear view is to be obtained thereof.

It is not to be expected that Arminians should have any clear grasp of the exceedingly precious subject which is now to engage our attention. Making man, rather than God, the centre of their system, they necessarily begin at the wrong place. They make the union of the believer with Christ to commence at his conversion, when faith lays hold of and makes Him ours. But this is to start at the middle, instead of at the beginning. They fail to recognize that there must be a *vital* union before there can be a fiducial one, that the soul must first be made alive spiritually before it is capacitated to trust savingly in Christ. One who is dead in trespasses and sins has no more ability to perform spiritual acts—and appropriating the Lord Jesus as our own *is* a spiritual act—than a corpse in the grave is qualified to perform physical acts. Life itself must be present before there can be any evidence and exercises of it

Calvinists do not fall into the error just pointed out above. They perceive that the sinner must first be quickened before he can savingly believe the Gospel. They insist that the Holy Spirit must unite the soul vitally to Christ ere there can be any drawing from the fullness which is in Christ. We must be livingly united to Him before any of His benefits become ours. I must be a son before I can be an heir. So far so good. But at this point not a few modern Calvinists fail to trace the effect back to its proper source. It is not sufficient to point out that faith necessarily presupposes spiritual life, for that spiritual life itself presupposes something else prior to the communication of it. The Holy Spirit does not regenerate all. *Who* are the ones He brings from death unto life? Galatians 4:6 tells us, “Because ye are *sons*, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts.” There is, then, a relation to God *prior to* regeneration.

Now a relation to God previous to regeneration necessarily presupposes *a relation to Christ* previous to regeneration, for we have no spiritual relation to God Himself apart from the

Mediator. The elect are God's "sons" because united to His Son: "Behold I and the children which God hath given Me" (Heb. 2:13) is His own language. Before He came into this world it was said, "Thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21)—those who were to be saved by Him were "His people" *before* He became incarnate. They were one with Him by an indissoluble bond long ere the Lord of glory took upon Himself human nature. There was a mystical and eternal union subsisting between Christ and the Church, which formed the basis of that vital union which is effected by the Holy Spirit during a time state, the latter *making manifest* the former, the former being the ground upon which the latter is effected.

Not a few of the older Calvinists firmly adhered to this foundation truth of the mystical union subsisting between Christ and His Church, but it is to be regretted that they did not define more definitely the *real nature* of that mystical union, and distinguish between the different elements which composed it, or rather, the various aspects which it comprises. Some have narrowed it down to a mere legal or federal union, failing to see that this also presupposed a prior relationship. Some have confined the oneness between Christ and His people to that of the Surety and those whom He represented. Others have spoken of the *covenant-union* between Christ and His Church, without stating in detail *of what* that covenant-union consists. Still others employed the expression "election-union," which though coming nearer to the mark, still leaves the subject clouded in a certain vagueness.

The one writer who appears to have been blest with a clearer insight into this great mystery than most of his fellows was John Gill—to whom we are indebted for some of the leading thoughts in what follows—though he, in turn, received help, no doubt, from the writings of James Hussey, the high Calvinist of the seventeenth century. Those men rightly traced back the covenant and federal union which the Church has with its Head to the

eternal *love* of the Triune God, which, operating by His everlasting decree, gave them *an election-union* with Christ. It needs to be pointed out that the eternal decree of Jehovah gave Christ—as the God-man Mediator—a real subsistence before Him before the foundation of the world, and a real subsistence unto the elect in Him, so that “*before* the mountains were settled . . . while as yet He had not made the earth,” He could say “My delights were with the sons of men” (Prov. 8:25, 26, 31).

The technical name by which the oneness between Christ and His people is designated by theologians is “mystical union.” This term has been employed—for want of a better—not because the union is vague or unreal, but because it far transcends all earthly analogies in its intimacy of fellowship and reciprocal partnership, both in the very nature of it, the power of its influence, and the excellency of its consequence. “On the one hand, this union does not involve any mysterious *confusion* of the Person of Christ with the persons of His people, and, on the other hand, it is not such *a mere association* of separate persons as exists in human societies” (A.A. Hodge). It is a relation far more intimate than any which may be formed by any external bonds. This union is presented to us in Scripture as a matter of fact, without any explanation, to be credited on the ground of Divine testimony.

But though the union between Christ and His Church far transcends all natural analogies, the Scriptures set forth its variety and fullness, element by element, by means of several partial analogies. Because this union is so high and mysterious, it has pleased God to make use of various resemblances for the describing of it, that He might thereby make it more credible and intelligible to us. It is observable that the Holy Spirit has referred to various unions, natural, relative, and artificial, that He might by all of them more clearly and distinctly shadow out the grand union betwixt Christ and His saints. Yet let it be pointed out that useful as are these particular analogies as to the

end designed, yet they all come short of the mystical union which they refer to. They may indeed illustrate it—so far as temporal and natural things can—but they cannot reach or equal it.

The first of these typical resemblances which may be mentioned is that of husband and wife. Upon the conjugal relation there is a very close and intimate conjunction. Now Christ and His people stand in this conjugal relation each to the other. He is their “Husband” (Isa. 54:5), they are His “Wife” (Rev. 19:7). They are “espoused” to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2), “married” to Christ (Rom. 7:4), “betrothed” to Him “for ever” (Hosea 2:19); their name is “Hephzibah” (“My delight is in her”) and “Beulah”—“Married” (Isa. 62:4). This marriage-union Paul applies to Christ and believers: “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church: for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones” (Eph. 5:28-30), to which the Apostle adds, “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (verse 32)—I am using this union between husband and wife to point to that higher and spiritual union which exists between Christ and His people: the husband and the wife are “one;” and Christ and the Church are so much more.

The second of these natural analogies is found in the physical head and members. In the human body there is a close conjunction between these two, for they are joined the one to the other, and together form one and the same organism. Thus it is with Christ and believers in the body mystical, to which the Holy Spirit has repeatedly applied the terms pertaining to this physical adumbration: Christ is the Head, they are the several members belonging to that Head. Of Christ it is said, God “gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body” (Eph. 1:22, 23), “and He is the Head of the Body, the Church” (Col. 1:18). Of the members it is said, “Now ye are the

Body of Christ, and members in particular” (1 Cor. 12:27), and “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another” (Rom. 12:5). As truly and as intimately as the head and members of the physical body are united, so truly and intimately are Christ and believers united also?

The third of these earthly adumbrations is found in that of the root and the branches growing out of the same. There is not only a connection between them, but a vital oneness, otherwise how should the one convey life, sap, growth to the other? So it is with Christ and His people: He is the Root, they are the tendrils issuing therefrom. “I am the vine, ye are the branches” (John 15:5). To this analogy the Holy Spirit frequently makes reference: “We have been *planted together* in the likeness of His death” (Rom. 6:5); “If the Root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree” (Rom. 11:16, 17); “Rooted and built up in Him” (Col. 2:7). Thus there is a blessed resemblance between Christ and His Church and the root and its branches, both in point of union and of influence: the root is united to the branches and they to it; the root conveys life, nourishment and fruitfulness to the branches; so does Christ to believers.

Another resemblance is found in the foundation and the building. Here again is union, for in a building all the stones and timbers are joined and fastened together upon the foundation, making but one entire structure. So it is with believers and Christ. This figure is also used in Scripture again and again. The Lord Himself likened the one who heard and obeyed His sayings to “a wise man, which built his house upon a rock” (Matt. 7:24). The Apostle Paul reminded the saints, “Ye are God’s building” and added, “other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:9, 11); and again they are said to be “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,

Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph. 2:20). As a man builds upon the foundation, laying the weight of the whole building upon it, so the faith and confidence of the Christian is built upon that “sure Foundation which God has laid in Zion” (Isa. 28:16).

Now as there is nothing in this natural world which more sweetly and securely knits souls together than *love*, so the cementing bond which unites Christ and the Church must be traced back to the love of God. If love can be so effectual among men in binding one heart to another, how infinitely more powerful must love in the heart of God attract and unite the objects of it to Himself, giving them a nearness to Him such as finite minds are quite incapable of fully comprehending. *This* is the bond of union of saints one to another, for their hearts are “knit together in love” (Col. 2:2), and therefore is love called “the bond of perfectness” (Col. 3:14). *Love*, then, the everlasting love of the Father, Son, and Spirit, is the *origin* of the Church’s union with Christ. “This is that cement which will never loosen, that union-knot which can never be untied, that bond which can never be dissolved, from whence there can be no separation” (John Gill).

Now *election* was the first and fundamental act of God’s love toward His people, giving them a subsistence in Christ from everlasting, “according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4). God does not love His people because He elected them, rather did He elect them because He had set His heart upon them. The Divine order is plainly intimated in 2 Thessalonians 2:13, “Brethren *beloved* of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning *chosen* you to salvation.” The same precious truth is brought out again in Ephesians 1: “*In love* having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will” (verses 4, 5). This was the supreme act and instance of everlasting love, by which the elect were considered in Christ and one with Him, He being chosen as the Head, they

as His members—obviously we could not be *in* Christ without being one *with* Him.

“He is the Head of the body, the Church: who is the Beginning, the Firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence” (Col. 1:18). Yes, *Christ* was “the beginning” even in connection with election: there too He had “the preeminence.”

***“Be Thou My first elect He said,
Then chose the Church in Christ its Head.”***

Christ was not chosen for the Church, but the Church for Him. There was an *order* in God’s counsels, as there is in all His works; and *Christ* occupies the first place therein. The ever-blessed and all-sufficient God was pleased to desire *creature* fellowship and society, instead of dwelling alone for ever in His own infinite immensity. The eternal Father therefore ordained that His co-essential Son should take unto Himself a created nature, uniting the man Christ Jesus into indissoluble union to His Divine Person. God fixed upon the Person of Christ, as God-man, as the one great and everlasting object of His love, delight and complacency. He was as God-man “set up from everlasting,” being possessed by Jehovah as “the Beginning of His way” (Prov. 8:22, 23).

Next, God was pleased to decree that an elect number of Adam’s race should be united to Christ and be for His glory. As the man Christ Jesus was Jehovah’s “Elect” in whom His soul “delighteth” (Isa. 42:1), and as He was (by infinite grace) taken to be Jehovah’s “Fellow” (Zech. 13:7), so those who were elected in Christ became His “delight” (Prov. 8:31) and were to be *His* “fellows” (Psa. 45:7), to be everlastingly glorified in and with Him. Though in the order of time Christ and His Church were elected together, to form one complete mystical Body, yet in the order of God’s counsels Christ was elected first, and then His people were chosen in Him. “Christ was *the Head* of election, and of the elect of God; and so in order of nature

elected first, though in order of time we were elected with Him. In the womb of election, He, the Head, came out first, and then we the members. He is therefore said *in predestination* to be the Firstborn of all His brethren—see Romans 8:29” (Thomas Goodwin). This is a profound depth, yet a most important truth, and needing further amplification.

“God in the act of election looked not at us apart and singly as in ourselves, so as by one act to choose us, and by another act to give us to Christ. But as of the soul it is by one and the same act of God’s both created and infused into the body, as so subsists not one moment apart; likewise God in the act of choosing us gave us to Christ, and in giving us to Christ He chose us. And thus, He never considering us apart, but as members of Christ and given to Him in the very act of choosing, hence our very choice itself is said to be ‘in Him.’ And so, on the other side, in the first view and purpose God took up concerning Christ, and in electing Him, He looked not at Him apart as a single Person in Himself, but as a Head to us His body, chosen in Him and with Him. So it is not that Jesus Christ was chosen by one act to be man, and then to be a Common Person by another; but at the very *same instant* that He was chosen the one, He was chosen the other, under that very consideration to be a Common Person.

“It was in this as in the creation of Adam, Christ’s shadow; who when he was first made, was not made as a single man, he was made ‘a living soul’ (1 Cor. 15:45). What is that? To be a *public* person, to convey life to others as well as to have life personally in himself. That is the meaning, as appears by the following words, ‘The last Adam,’ that is, Christ ‘was made a quickening spirit,’ that is, not for Himself, but to others. So that the very first view that God in election took of Christ, was not of Him only as a single Person considered, but as a Common Person. In a word, as in the womb head and members are not conceived apart, *but together*, as having relation each to other, so were we in Christ, as making up one mystical body unto God, formed together in that eternal womb of election. So that God’s

choice did completely terminate itself on Him and us; us with Him, and yet us in Him; He having the priority to be constituted a Common Person and root to us” (Thomas Goodwin).

Now God’s eternal decree gave His elect a super-creation subsistence before Him, so that they were capable of being “loved” (Jer. 31:3) and of receiving a grant of grace: “Who hath saved us, and called us with an 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)—note well, it was not simply that God purposed to give His chosen people grace, but that grace “*was* given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” If, then, grace was actually “given us in Christ” ere time commenced, then we must have a real subsistence in Him before God from everlasting. This too, is above our powers to fully comprehend, yet is it a truth to be held fast on the ground of the Divine testimony. In God’s eternal thoughts and foreviews, the elect were conceived and contemplated *in the Divine mind* as real entities, in a state of pure creaturehood, above and beyond the consideration of the Fall.

The everlasting love of the Triune God is *the origin* of the Church’s union to Christ, election being the first and fundamental act of that love toward its members, that election giving them a subsistence in their Head: “According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4). In election God made it manifest that He was pleased to desire *creature* fellowship and society, instead of dwelling alone forever in His own infinite self-sufficiency. First, He ordained that His beloved Son should take manhood into union with His own Person, and that as God-man He should be the Head of a people given to Him for His glory. This *order* in the Divine counsels is marvellously adumbrated in the physical realm: the head and members of the human body are conceived *together* in the womb, as Christ and the members of His Church were chosen to form one Body; yet as the head comes out *first*, so

Christ was given the pre-eminence from the womb of God's decrees.

However difficult it be for us to grasp, it is important we should recognise that God's eternal decree gave the elect a super-creation subsistence before Him, so that they were capable of being loved and of receiving a grant of grace. In other words, in God's eternal thoughts and foreviews, the elect were conceived and contemplated by Him in the Divine mind as real entities in a state of pure creaturehood, above and beyond any consideration of the Fall. Even then they were "Blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" and "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:3, 6). It is of great moment that the Church should thus be first considered by us, that we never lose sight of the *original* dignity and loveliness of the Church, anointed and blessed in Christ before the foundation of the world. Her state by the Fall *was not her original one*, any more than her present state is the final one.

"Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given Me" (Isa. 8:18). Such were "sons" *before* God sent forth the Holy Spirit into their hearts (Gal. 4:6); they were "children" while "scattered abroad" *before* Christ died for them (John 11:51, 52); they were "children" *before* the Redeemer became incarnate (Heb. 2:14). The elect were "children" *from* all eternity and decreed to be so *unto* all eternity. They did not lose their sonship by the Fall, neither by any corruption derived from that Fall in their nature. "Children" they continued, though *sinful* children, and as such, justly exposed to wrath. Nevertheless, this relationship could not be revoked by any after-acts in time: united to Christ from all eternity, they were always one with Him. It is a remarkable fact that never once has the Holy Spirit used the prepositional form "into Christ" with reference to God's *election* of the Church, although "eis" occurs in the Epistles over six hundred times: it is always "in (Gk. "en") Christ," because the Church was *never out of Christ!*

From all eternity the Church stood in Christ as His mystical

Body and Bride. A union between the members and their Head was then established which neither sin, Satan, nor death could sever. We say again, it is of vast importance that we do not lose sight of the original glory and beauty of the Church. The fall of the Church in Adam did not and could not alienate the Church from Christ, but it gave occasion for redemption, thereby affording the means and opportunity for the honour of Christ, by His work, death and resurrection bringing a greater revenue of glory to the Almighty Author of salvation than had the fall of man never taken place. Wondrous indeed are all the ways of God: in the ultimate outcome, He was no loser by Adam's defection, but the gainer; as it is written, "The LORD hath made all things *for Himself*: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil" (Prov. 16:4); and again, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee" (Psa. 76:10).

"God's love to His elect is not of yesterday; it does not begin with their love to Him, 'We love Him, because He first loved us' (1 John 4:19). It does not commence in time, but dates back from eternity, and is the ground and foundation of the elect's being called in time out of darkness into marvellous light: 'I have loved thee,' says the Lord to the Church, 'with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee' (Jer. 31:3); that is, in effectual vocation. Many are the instances which might be given in proof of the antiquity of God's love to His elect, and as it is antecedent to their being brought out of a state of nature. God's choosing them in Christ before the foundation of the world was an act of His love towards them, the fruit and effect of it. His making an everlasting covenant with His Son, ordered in all things and sure, on account of those He chose in Him; His setting Him up as the Mediator of the covenant from everlasting; His donation of grace to them in Him before the world began; His putting their persons into His hands, and so making them His care and charge, are so many demonstrative proofs of His early love to them.

“There are also instances to be given of God’s love to His elect while they are in a state of nature. ‘When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us’ (Rom. 5:6, 8). Now certainly these persons were in a state of nature who are said to be ‘without strength,’ etc., and yet God commended His love towards them when and while they were such, in a matchless instance of it. John makes use of this circumstance respecting the state of God’s elect, to magnify the greatness of God’s love; ‘Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins’ (1 John 4:10). Again, the quickening of God’s elect when dead in trespasses and sins, the drawing of them to Christ with the cords of powerful and efficacious grace in effectual vocation, are instances of His special grace and favour, and fruits and effects of His everlasting love to them.

“If God did not love His elect while in a state of nature, they must forever remain in that state, since they are unable to help themselves out of it; and it is only the love, grace and mercy of God which engage His almighty power to deliver them from thence. There are three gifts and instances of God’s love to His people before conversion, which are not to be matched by any instance or instances of love after conversion. The one is the gift of God Himself to them in the Everlasting Covenant, which covenant runs thus: ‘I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’ The second is the gift of His Son to suffer and die in their room and stead, and so obtain eternal redemption for them. The third is the gift of His Spirit to them, to convince them of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. And now what greater instance is there of God’s love to His people after conversion? If the heavenly glory, with all the entertaining joys of that delightful state, should be fixed upon, I deny it to be a greater instance of God’s love, than the gifts of Himself, His Son, and Spirit; and, indeed, all that God does in time, or will do to all

eternity, is only *telling* His people how much He loved them *from everlasting*" (John Gill).

Now it was this eternal love of the Triune God which gave the Church an election-union in Christ from everlasting, for that love ever considered them in Christ. As it is written, nothing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, *which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Rom. 8:39). Christ as God-man, was loved by the Father as the supreme object of His complacency (Prov. 8:30; Isa. 42:1), which was manifested in His election of Him; and the Church was the secondary object of God's love as viewed in Christ. The Lord Jesus declared to the Father, Thou "hast loved them, *as Thou hast loved Me . . . Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world*" (John 17:23, 24). Therefore as eternal election is a display of God's everlasting love to His people, so it is also an instance and evidence of their eternal union to Christ. The one cannot be without the other: if loved *in* Christ, the Church must have been one *with* Him.

It is not that election was a fore-appointing of persons *unto* an union with Christ, as stones are selected *to be* used in a building, or as a slip is chosen for engrafting into a tree. Ephesians 1:3, 4 *does not* say, "According as He has chosen us to be in Him" or "that we should be in Him." Instead we read, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world"—the Church was blessed with all spiritual blessings *in Christ* "according as" they were chosen in Him. Election was not the original uniting act, for *that* was the everlasting love of God; yet the two must not be separated: they went together. Nevertheless, as in election the Church is considered *in Christ*, so it is a proof of their eternal union to Him. Now there are several things which *arise from* and are *branches of* this everlasting love-union of the Church to Christ, which it will now be our joy to consider. First and chief of these is *the marriage* between Christ and the Church.

It pleased the Father to choose for His Son, as God-man, the Church, to be not only His Body, but also His Bride, who was to receive from Him and share with Him His honours, glories, and privileges. Having chosen the Church in Christ, the Father set her before Him in the glass of His decrees, according to the uttermost purpose of His love and grace toward her, causing her to shine with excelling brightness and loveliness in the view of His Son, giving Him to see how high she was in the Father's estimation, and presenting her to Christ as His choicest gift to Him. This drew out the heart of the God-man towards her, caused Him to open His arms and heart to receive her, to set His affections and delight upon her, to regard and esteem her according to the high value which the Father Himself had placed upon her.

“Thine they were,” said Christ to His Father, “And Thou gavest them Me” (John 17:6), to be My heritage, My portion, My bride. Here was the grand originating cause of Christ's love for His Church; the fact that she was the Father's love-gift to Him. Viewing the Church from eternity as thus presented to Him by the Father, He could not but regard her as supremely worthy of His affection and delight. His language was “I will betroth thee unto Me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD” (Hosea 2:19, 20)—let it be carefully borne in mind that the record of His words in Holy Scripture are but the *open* transcript of what He said in secret before the world began: many examples of this might be given, but we here only state the bare fact.

“The King's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold” (Psa. 45:13). Observe well the glorious title which the Church here bears, and mark carefully what is necessarily presupposed and clearly implied in it. The “King” is God the Father, of whom we read “a certain King, which made a marriage for His Son” (Matt. 22:2). That “marriage” was made

from everlasting, and therefore could the Divine Bridegroom say to His celestial Bride, “thy Maker is thine Husband” (Isa. 54:5). Now it is by virtue of this marital union between Christ and His people that the Church is here designated “the King’s *daughter*,” because the Father is *Christ’s* “Father,” He is the Church’s “Father” (John 20:17); because Christ is the Father’s *Son*, and the Church is wedded to Him, therefore the Church is the Father’s “Daughter!”

Most marvellously and blessedly was all of this shadowed out in connection with our first parents. Adam, in his creation and formation, was a type of Christ; Eve of the Church. Before Adam’s creation we read of a council held between the Eternal Three concerning him: “And God said, Let *Us* make man in our image, after Our likeness” (Gen. 1:26). So it was in connection with the last Adam (Heb. 10:5, 9). Adam’s body was supernaturally produced out of the virgin earth, as Christ’s body was miraculously conceived by the Virgin Mary. The union between the soul and body of Adam (Gen. 2:7) adumbrated the incomprehensible union between the eternal Son of God and His assumption of our nature into oneness with His own Person. Adam’s lordship, or his being given dominion over all mundane creatures (Gen. 1:28), prefigured Christ’s universal headship over all things to His Church (Eph. 1:22, 23). But it is the formation of Eve and her union with Adam to which we would now direct particular attention.

“And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (Gen. 2:18, 21-23). First, behold here the tender solicitude of God toward Adam: “It is not good that man should be alone.”

In this a deeper mystery is opened unto those who have eyes to see: it is a revelation on the earth plane of what had passed secretly in the eternal councils of Heaven. Christ, as God-man—“the Beginning” of Jehovah’s way (Prov. 8:22; Col. 1:18), the Fountain-head of all His decrees (Isa. 42:1; Eph. 3:11)—was the grand Object of Jehovah’s love: all His vast designs concentrated in Him, concerned Him, and were designed for His manifestative glory from all eternity—“all things were created by Him, *and for Him*” (Col. 1:16).

Second, we discover here God’s purpose to provide a suitable companion for Adam: “I will make him an help meet for him.” This affords us a yet fuller insight into that which had passed in the Divine mind before the foundation of the world: God thought it not meet that the God-man (“set up” in Heaven before the world was: Prov. 8:23, 24) should be alone, therefore did He ordain and choose a Bride for Him. Third, God created Eve *out of Adam*, taking one of his ribs and from it and the flesh cleaving thereto made He the first woman. This also was a most striking acting out in time of what had transpired ere time began. God had chosen the Church in Christ; she was *in Him* before the foundation of the world. Christ having been “foreordained before the foundation of the world” (1 Peter 1:20) to become incarnate, and His human nature having a covenant subsistence before God, the Church, as thus considered in Him, received her human nature from Him, and hence that expression “We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones” (Eph. 5:30) is language which most evidently refers us back to Genesis 2:23.

Fourth, out of Adam’s rib the Lord God made, or as the margin more correctly renders it “*buildded*” the woman, for she is of a more curious and delicate frame than the man. Now Christ is “the foundation” (1 Cor. 3:11) and the Church is His “building:” built up for Him and upon Him, with heavenly art, by an infinitely wise Architect—“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house” (1 Peter 2:5). Fifth, God then set Eve

before Adam, “and brought her unto the man,” and this, in order to effect *a marriage union* between them. What blessed light this casts upon the high mystery of grace, when God the Father presented the elect unto Christ. It was *to that* He referred when He said, “Thine they were, and *Thou gavest them Me*” (John 17:6)—as He gave Eve to Adam!

In our endeavour to view the eternal transactions of Divine love and grace, we must contemplate the Church as she was before Adam’s defection. We must view her first, not as fallen, but as unfallen; not as involved in sin and ruin, but as the pure and spotless bride of Christ, given by the Father to Him as His Spouse. Most blessedly was this typed out in Eve as she was brought and given to Adam in all her spotless innocency. O how surpassingly fair must Eve have appeared in the morning of her creation, as she came fresh from the hand of her Maker! What could Adam do but love her and delight in the admirable bride which the Lord God had so graciously provided for him! So Christ viewing, in the glass of God’s decrees, the Bride selected for Him, loved and delighted in her, betrothed Himself unto her, took her as thus presented by God unto Himself in a deed of marriage-settlement as the gift of the Father.

Let it be fully noted that Adam was joined to Eve in marriage *before* the Fall, and not after it. How this exposes the makeshift compromise of sublapsarians! Ephesians 5:31, 32 in the light of Genesis 2:23 unequivocally establishes the fact that the making of Adam and Eve *before* sin entered the world, prefigured the marriage-union of Christ and His Church, decreed of God prior to any consideration of the Fall. Nor does this stand alone. In Leviticus 21:13, 14 is another precious type equally definite and plain. There we read, “And he (namely, the high priest of verse 10) shall take a wife in her virginity. A widow, or a divorced woman, or profane, or a harlot, these shall he not take: but he shall take a *virgin* of his own people to wife.” Now as the high priest under the law was a figure of the great High Priest over the House of God, we must see in this Divine prohibition a

typical intimation that the Church was espoused to the God-man in all her *virgin purity* as she stood before Jehovah in her native innocence.

But to return unto the exquisite scene set before us in Genesis 2. We observe, sixth, that Adam *owned* the relation which now existed between himself and Eve: “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (Gen. 2:23). In like manner Christ received the elect at the Father’s hands, became their Husband, and from thence owned them as His everlasting Spouse. His love for her is blessedly told out in “As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you” (John 15:9)—eternally, infinitely, unchangeably. He speaks of her as “in whom is all My delight” (Psa. 16:3); and “How fair and how pleasant art thou, O Love, for delights!” (Song. 7:6). Seventh, as Adam was not created for Eve, but she for him, so God did not foreordain and “set up” Christ, as God-man, for the Church, but the Church was ordained for Him: “For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man; neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man” (1 Cor. 11:8, 9).

Finally, though Adam was not taken out of the woman nor created for her, nevertheless it was not good that he should be “alone:” Eve was his necessary complement, his companion, his help meet; yea, as we are told, “the woman is *the glory of the man*” (1 Cor. 11:7). In like manner, Christ, as God-man, would be incomplete without His Bride: considered as His mystical Body, she is called “the fullness of Him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:23). Christ needed a vessel which He might fill, that should reflect His glory; hence we read, “the messengers of the churches, and *the glory of Christ*” (2 Cor. 8:23); and again, “Israel *My glory*” (Isa. 46:13) He calls her. In the last reference made to her in Holy Writ we read, “Come hither, I will show thee the Bride, the Lamb’s Wife . . . descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious” (Rev. 21:9-11). In and by and through the

Church Christ will be glorified to all eternity.

We have pointed out that the everlasting love of the Triune God is *the origin* of the Church's union to Christ, and that election was the first and fundamental act of that love toward its members; that election giving them a super-creation subsistence in their glorious Head. In God's eternal thoughts and foreviews, the elect were conceived and contemplated in the Divine mind as real entities in a state of pure creaturehood, above and beyond any consideration of the Fall. Even then they were "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" and "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:3, 6). It is much to be deplored that this *original* dignity and loveliness of the Church, as anointed, graced, and blest in Christ before the foundation of the world, has almost entirely disappeared from the theology even of the "orthodox" during the past century. A glorious relationship was established between Christ and the Church in eternity past, which neither sin, Satan, nor death could sever. This alone provides the key to all of God's dealings with her in a time state.

We also pointed out that several things arise from and are branches of the everlasting love-union between Christ and the Church. First and chief of these is the *marriage* between them, marvellously and blessedly shadowed out in connection with our first parents before the Fall. We will now endeavour to point out that that marital union gave the Church *communion with Christ* in His honours and interests. A wide field—"hinted at in the Introduction"—is here set before us, which, because of our spiritual feebleness, we are not able to fully explore. Christ admits His Church into fellowship with Himself in His names, titles, relations, grace, fullness, salvation, blessings, and benefits. As God in choosing the Church in Christ gave her a relation to His Person, giving her being in Him, so in accepting her in Him God gave Christ to her, so that she should live with Him, have communion with Him, and be like Him for ever, the everlasting object of His unchanging love.

See how this is exemplified in the Church's sharing of Christ's names and titles. As Christ is by His co-existence in the Godhead, the essential *Son of God*, so by predestination His brethren are the adopted *sons* of God, and by virtue of the marriage-union between Christ and them, they have His Father as their Father, and His God for their God (John 20:17). In Colossians 1:15 Christ, as God-man, is designated "*the Firstborn* of every creature," while in Hebrews 12:23 His people are said to be "the Church of the *Firstborn* which are written in Heaven." Is Christ the "Heir of all things" (Heb. 1:2), so believers are "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17). Is Christ denominated "the *Stone* of Israel" (Gen. 49:24), His people are also called "living *stones*" (1 Peter 2:5). Has Christ acquired "a name which no one knoweth but Himself" (Rev. 19:12), so also has the believer: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (Rev. 2:17). So precious is this aspect of the truth that we take leave to copy from our introduction:

In Jeremiah 23:6 we read, "And this is His name whereby *He* shall be called, The Lord our righteousness," and in Jeremiah 33:16 we are told, "And this is the name wherewith *she* shall be called, The LORD our righteousness"—this by virtue of her oneness with Him. So again in 1 Corinthians 12:12 the Church is actually designated "the Christ," while in Galatians 3:16 and Colossians 1:24 the Head and His Church forming one body are conjointly referred to as "Christ;" hence when Saul of Tarsus was assaulting the Church, its Head protested, "Why persecutest thou *Me*?" (Acts 9:4). But what is yet more remarkable, we find the Lord Jesus given the name of His people: in Galatians 6:16 the Church is denominated, "the *Israel* of God," while in Isaiah 49:3 we hear God saying *to the Mediator* "Thou art My servant, O *Israel*, in whom I will be glorified!"

In Colossians 3:12 Christians are exhorted to "Put on

therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies.” Each of those titles are given to the saints because of their *union with Christ*. They are “the elect of God” because *He* is God’s “Elect” (Isa. 42:1); they are “holy” because conjoined to God’s “Holy One” (Psa. 16:10); they are “beloved” because married to Him of whom the Father says, “This is My Beloved Son” (Matt. 3:17). Again, we are told that God “hath made *us kings and priests*” (Rev. 1:5), which is only because we are *united to Him* who is “the King of kings” and the “great High Priest.” Is Christ called “the Sun of righteousness” (Mal. 4:2)? so we are told, “Then shall the righteous shine forth *as the sun* in the kingdom of their Father” (Matt. 13:43)! Does the Redeemer declare “I am the rose of Sharon” (Song. 2:1)? Then He promises of the redeemed “The desert (their fruitless state by nature) shall rejoice, and blossom *as the rose*” (Isa. 35:1)—the only two occasions the “rose” is mentioned in Holy Writ!

Having sought to show that the Church had a super-creation excellency, that before the foundation of the world its members were chosen in Christ, united to Christ, and blessed with all spiritual blessings; we must now point out that *sin has drawn a veil* which makes it very difficult for us to discern the *original* purity, dignity and glory of Christ’s mystical Body and Bride. It is much easier for us to apprehend our ruin and misery, and our redemption from it by the incarnation, obedience and sacrifice of the Son of God, than it is to realise what the Church was in the purpose, counsel and mind of God before sin entered the world. It is only by receiving into the mind what is revealed thereon in the Scriptures of Truth and by mixing faith therewith, that we can in any measure obtain a conception of this transcendent and glorious mystery. It is only as the Holy Spirit is pleased to shine upon our understandings that we can see the light in His light.

As Eve was united to Adam in her virgin purity and became his wife *before* she ate of the forbidden fruit, so in the will and eternal counsels of God the Church was wedded to Christ, over

and above any foreviews of the Fall. As Eve disobeyed the Divine prohibition and fell from her pristine uprightness, and lost her original beauty, so the Church shared in the defection of the whole human race when its federal head (Adam) apostatized from his Maker. In God's infinite prescience He foresaw the Fall, having predetermined to permit it, and upon the foresight of that Fall, He entered into an everlasting covenant with Christ, the spiritual Head of the elect, to raise them up from the ruins of the Fall, by the incarnation and finished work of Christ. In this the illustrious wisdom of God was discovered and displayed in a way which would serve to be the marvel of time and the admiration of saints in Heaven to all eternity.

In Adam, the Church was brought into this world by creation pure, holy and righteous. From that *creature* purity, holiness and righteousness, she fell by Adam's first act of transgression, and became in her own nature and person, simply considered (that is, viewed apart from her eternal standing and state in Christ), impure, unholy and unrighteous. Therefore do we read that the elect are "by nature the children of wrath even as others" (Eph. 2:3); that is, because of sin, their *nature* is repellent unto Divine holiness, and falls under the condemning sentence of Divine justice. It was to redeem or deliver the Church from the state of sin and misery, and in order to raise her up again to the enjoyment of her original state and glory, to which she was decreed or predestined, that her Head and Husband, her Lord and Saviour, became actually incarnate, taking upon Him humanity, tabernacling personally in the same, and having imputed to Him the transgressions of His people, with all the guilt thereof.

Herein we may behold not only the fathomless love and amazing condescension of Christ, but also the wondrous wisdom of God, who designed that there should be *an accurate conformity* of the Church to its Head, between the mystical Wife and her celestial Husband. By their fall in Adam, a veil was drawn over the elect, so that they cannot in their ruined state be

known by themselves or by others, to be the Lord's. In their natural condition there is nothing to distinguish the elect from the non-elect: their "life is *hid* with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). They are born into this world the same as others, with no halo of glory around their heads to mark them out as the high favourites of Heaven, with nothing to show that they are the beloved Bride of Christ. Instead, according to human observation, there is everything to the contrary: they are shapen in iniquity, conceived in sin, and live in a way of open revolt from the Lord.

In like manner, a veil was drawn over Christ when He appeared on the earth. As the God-man, He had a glory with the Father "before the world was" (John 17:5), and lived a life of blessedness inconceivable by us; yet He laid aside that glory and took upon Him the form of a servant. When He was born into this world, it was not in a palace, but a cattle-shed. Ah, my reader, what was there about the Babe of Bethlehem, hanging upon His mother's breast, to indicate that He was the Maker of Heaven and earth? Witness the vile attempt upon His life and the consequent flight into Egypt, and what was there to show that He had previously been worshipped by all the hosts of Heaven? See Him later, in the lowly peasant-home of Joseph and Mary in Nazareth, and who among the companions of His boyhood dreamed He was the incarnate Son of God? View Him in early manhood, labouring at the carpenter's bench, and wherein did it appear that He was Jehovah's "Fellow?" Was not the Sun of Righteousness eclipsed for a season when He was in all things "made like unto His brethren" (Heb. 2:17)!

When the Lord of glory became incarnate, He came under a cloud, if we may so express it. He suspended the shinings forth of His essential glory, due to the dignity of His Person, and appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh, coming not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and give His life a ransom for many, that He might complete the work of redemption by which He was to redeem His spouse, and wash away her deformity and stains. In this lay the depths of Christ's humiliation: that the

Father's co-equal should make Himself "of no reputation," be made in the likeness of men, be made "under the law," and so humble Himself as to be "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." In Him "dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," but for a season—"except when its beams darted forth on the Mount of Transfiguration"—the breakings forth thereof were withheld. Incomprehensible grace! such as will fill the saints in Heaven with astonishment through the ages of eternity. Alas, that our hearts are so feebly moved by it now.

Herein, then, we may perceive *the conformity* between Christ and the Church: each had a celestial glory before the foundation of the world: a veil was cast over that glory when each appeared on the earth. When the elect were brought forth into creature existence and open being (having subsisted previously in the secret counsels of God), they were pure, holy, righteous, perfect in their natural head. Yet, being in Adam, not only by seminal union but by federal representation, when he broke the Covenant of Works and fell from God, the elect also fell in and with him into a state of sin, misery and alienation from the Lord. Therefore the Spouse of Christ became wholly unlike herself and unlike her Divine and Heavenly Bridegroom, so that she became in her natural head, and inherently in herself, altogether unholy and unrighteous, becoming sinful and impure, having undergone an eclipse of her glory, suffering the loss of the moral image of God, in which she was created: all of which is to be justly ascribed to the mutability of the creature's will—proving that no creature has whereof to glory before God.

Estranged as the Church became in her affections and obedience to her Lord, by reason of her sunken and degraded condition through the Fall, yet the union existing between her and her celestial Husband remained the same. The very fall of the whole human race in Adam, by virtue of the mutability of the creature, only made more evident the absolute necessity of *Christ's* Headship, to the end that *by Him* the elect were so united to God by everlasting bonds as to be beyond the

possibility of hazard or miscarriage or by finally falling from Him; having been blessed with super-creation grace, and that, that Christ might be the more honoured and magnified. It is His sole prerogative, as God-man, to have life *in Himself*: “For as the Father (the self-existent One) hath life in Himself; so hath He *given* to the Son (as Mediator) to have life in Himself” (John 5:26). No creature, either angel or man, “anointed cherub” or Adam when made “very good,” is able to stand one moment of himself. Those who have an eternal standing before God owe it alone to Christ.

The fall of the elect of mankind (in the decree of Jehovah) was *subordinated to the glory of Christ*, it being thereby contrived to show forth and exalt His wondrous perfections. To mention here only one: consider Christ’s *love for the Church*. Christ had a view of the Church in the glass of God’s decrees before the world began. He saw her as graced in Himself, and destined to eternal glory. He saw her as presented to Himself by the Father as His love gift. This drew out His heart to her. He saw her as “the King’s Daughter all glorious within” (Psa. 45:13). She was given to Him: they were made one by marriage-union in the everlasting settlements of Heaven. The Father blest her in Christ with all spiritual blessings. Hear Him speak as God-man before time began: “Then I was by Him, as One brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him; rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth; and *My delights were with the sons of men*” (Prov. 8:30, 31).

Certainly Christ’s “delights” were *not* with “the sons of men” regarded as *fallen* creatures. No, He was there contemplating them in their supralapsarian state, in their original purity and beauty. Oh how vastly different must the Church have next appeared in His eyes, when He viewed her as fallen, depraved and filthy! Yet so knit was His heart to her, such was His affection for her, that it neither destroyed nor abated the same by the foreviews He took of her apostasy in Adam. Yea, as He viewed the members of His body in their debased and vile

condition, His heart was drawn out in pity and compassion toward them. Therefore was He willing to be their Surety, assume all their liabilities, fully discharge their debts, and make a complete atonement for them? Their fall in Adam occasioned an opportunity for their eternal Lover to display the changelessness of His infinite love for and to them.

“It is among the mysteries of grace, such as belong to the deep things of God, that the elect, though they fell from God by reason of sin, through the fall of the first man, by means of their union to him and interest in him; from whence they received and partook of the same equal corruption and total ruin of their natures by the infection of sin, with the rest of mankind—having in themselves the same fountain and principle of sin which the very reprobate hath: *yet they fell not from* the grace of personal election, nor from the everlasting favour of God; nor did they lose their interest in their Heavenly Father’s love thereby.

“Their union and relation to the person of Christ, their eternal Head, and interest in Him, were not dissolved nor impaired hereby; nor did they cease to be the beloved of Immanuel’s soul. Though they, by the Fall, lost all that was given them, in Adam as their nature-head, and nature-root, yet, the grace of election still continued the same as ever; and Jesus Christ, their ever-living Head, in whom is their spiritual, everlasting life, happiness, and glory, was Alpha and Omega to them; their beginning, their eternal spring, who, as such, broke forth towards them in their fallen state, and still continues His kindness in dispensing all grace to them, to whom it will be continued with all its glorious fruits and blessings by Him to eternity” (S.E. Pierce).

Christ was first the “Head” and then the “Saviour” of the Church (Eph. 5:23). All is eternally secured in the Person of the Lord Jesus. When God permitted the fall of all mankind in Adam, the elect fell in him; yet they fell not from the heart and arms of Christ. They lost in Adam the creature blessings of purity, holiness and righteousness, which as their natural head

he should have conveyed to them, and received from him instead an impure and sinful nature, the fruits of which are as justly deserving of Divine wrath as are the sins of the non-elect. In that state they are, in themselves, without hope and help. This it is which made way for their need of redemption, to be delivered out of it, and which provided an occasion for their Husband to become their Redeemer, which He engaged to be before the foundation of the world. “On His head are *many* crowns” (Rev. 19:12), each representing a separate and distinctive glory, which it is the joy of saints to separately contemplate.

“The elect lost their all that was given unto them and bestowed upon them in their nature-head. But they lost not their interest in the grace of election in the Person of Christ, in the supernatural spiritual blessings which had been bestowed upon them in Christ their eternal Head; and this secured them from everlasting ruin and misery. The love of God to His elect in Christ was not weakened, nor the union-knot between Christ and His Church loosed, by all which befell them and came upon them by the Fall. Christ being the Head of the Church, the life, light, grace, holiness, righteousness, glory, and blessings in Christ, could not undergo any hazard or damage by the Fall.

“The Body being defiled with sin, the glorious Head and Husband who had loved His Spouse as Himself, having viewed her as the object of His Father’s complacency and delight, descended from Heaven, by His mysterious incarnation, to fulfil His covenant stipulations on her behalf, and act a part of Redeemer and Saviour” (From “Christ’s love to His Church” by S.E. Pierce, to whom we gladly own our indebtedness for much in this chapter [booklet]).

The third of seven booklets.

