

Of the Communion of Saints

London Baptist Confession: Chapter 27

July 2023

Of the Communion of Saints, ¶1

All saints that are united to Jesus Christ, their head, by His Spirit, and faith, although they are not made thereby one person with Him, have fellowship in His graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory; and, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each others gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, in an orderly way, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.

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‘Not made thereby one person with him’

- ❖ “Theosis” or “Deification”
- ❖ “This communion which the saints have with Christ, doth not make them in any wise partakers of the substance of His Godhead; or to be equal with Christ in any respect: wither of which to affirm is impious and blasphemous.” - Westminster Confession 26.3
- ❖ 2 Peter 1:4: “partakers of the divine nature”
- ❖ Col 2:9-10: “For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him”
- ❖ Psalm 82:6: “You are gods, And all of you are children of the Most High.”

John Colquhoun

Sermon: *Union with Christ*

In the *first* place, it is *not an essential* union.—The union of the Father and Holy Spirit to the Person of the Son is an essential union ; but the union of believers to the Son is not so. The Person of the eternal Father and that of the adorable Spirit are so united to the Person of Christ as to be one with him, by an essential union, or an union of substance or essence. The persons of believers are so united to him as also to be one with him ; but it is not by an essential union, else they should be gods, possessed of every divine attribute of which he is possessed. Although Christ and believers are one, and he and the Father are one, yet this is not to be understood with respect to the kind of union, but with regard only to the resemblance between the one kind and the other.

2. Neither is it a *personal* union.—It is indeed an union of persons, but it is not a personal union. The union of the Divine and human natures in Christ is personal, his Person still continues to be but one ; whereas believers, though they are united to Christ, make not one person with him ; they only constitute one mystical *body*, of which he is the head. An apostle says to the believers at Corinth, “ Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular,” 1 Cor. xii. 27. If the union of Christ with believers were personal, if they and he together made but one person, they might, in that case, consider themselves as joint mediators with him, and as equally entitled to the honour of meriting eternal life. This sublime expression, which he uttered in ancient prophecy, would be no longer true : “ I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me.” But to suppose this, would be blasphemous.

A Catalogue of the Several Sects and Opinions in England and other Nations, 1647



Modern day

- ❖ Who today says that they are one person with Christ?
- ❖ Isaiah 42:8
- ❖ The creator-creature distinction

When Satan tempts me to despair,
And tells me of the guilt within,
Upward I look, and see Him there
Who made an end of all my sin.

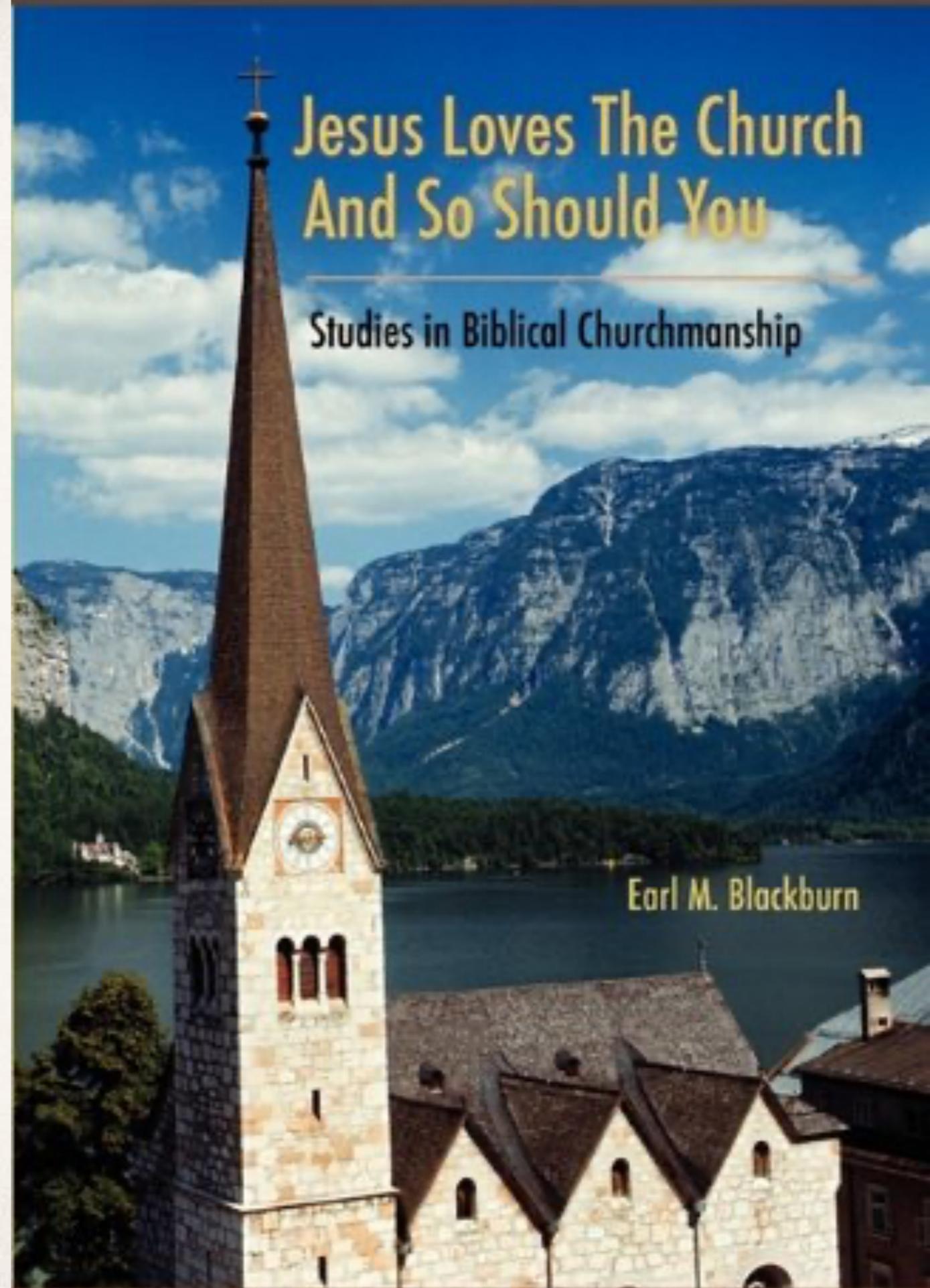
Before the Throne of God Above

Communion of Saints, ¶1b-2a

1. [...] and, united to one another in love, they have communion in each others gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, in an orderly way, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.

2. Saints by profession are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification; as also in relieving each other in outward things according to their several abilities, and necessities; [...]

“united to one
another in love”



“obliged to the performance of
such duties”

What do these words mean,
the communion of saints?

First, that all and everyone who believes are in common partakers of Christ and all His graces, as being His members, and then that everyone ought readily and cheerfully to bestow the gifts and graces which they have received to the common commodity and safety of all.

An Orthodox Catechism, Question 54

GIFTS

Public

Private

Spiritual

Material

Review

- ❖ Union with Christ is the foundation of the communion of the saints
- ❖ It is the obligation of all believers to serve one another with the gifts they have been given
 - ❖ Spiritually and materially

“One another” passages

“Be kindly affectionate to one another” (Rom. 12:10)

“Edify one another” (Romans 14:19; 1 Thess. 5:11)

“Be likeminded to one another” (Romans 15:5)

“Admonish one another” (Romans 15:14)

“Have the same care for one another” (1 Cor. 12:25)

“By love serve one another” (Galatians 5:13)

“Be kind to one another” (Ephesians 4:32a)

“Forgiving one another” (Eph. 4:32b; Col. 3:13b)

“Submitting yourselves to one another” (Eph. 5:21)

“Forbearing one another” (Colossians 3:13a)

“Admonishing one another” (Colossians 3:16)

“Abound in love toward one another” (1 Th. 3:12, 4:9)

“Comfort one another” (1 Thessalonians 4:18)

“Exhort one another” (Hebrews 3:13, 10:25)

“Consider one another” (Hebrews 10:24)

“Confess your faults to one another” (James 5:16a)

“Pray for one another” (James 5:16b)

“Love one another with a pure heart” (1 Peter 1:22)

“Use hospitality toward one another” (1 Peter 4:9)

“Be subject to one another” (1 Peter 5:5)

Westminster

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Saints **by profession**, are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification; as also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities. Which communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended **unto** all those who, in every place, call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.

This communion which the saints have with Christ, doth not make them in any wise partakers of the substance of the Godhead, or to be equal with Christ in any respect: either of which to affirm, is impious and blasphemous. Nor doth **their communion one with another as saints, take away or infringe the title or property which each man hath in his goods and possessions.**

Savoy

All Saints that are united to Jesus Christ their Head, by his Spirit and faith, **although they are not made thereby one person with him**, have fellowship in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection and glory: and being united to one another in love, they have communion in each others gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.

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London Baptist (1689)

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Communion of Saints, J2b

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Recipients of communion

- ❖ Families

- ❖ 1 Timothy 5:7-8,16; Ephesians 6:4

- ❖ Churches

- ❖ Rom 12:4-6a

- ❖ Believers everywhere

- ❖ Rom 15:25-27; Acts 11:29-30; Galatians 6:10

Communion of Saints, J2c

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Communalism

- ❖ Acts 2:44-45: “Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.”
- ❖ Acts 4:32: “Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.”

Private property and charity

- ❖ Private property

- ❖ Stealing: Exodus 20:15, Lev 19:13

- ❖ Ownership: Acts 5:4; Eph 4:28

- ❖ Wealth and covetousness: Ex 20:17; 1 Tim 6:17-19

- ❖ Charity

- ❖ Freeloading: 2 Thess 3:10-12

- ❖ Freely: 2 Cor 8:3, 8:8, 9:7

For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

–Romans 12:3-8