

V. Union with Christ

A. Statement of the Doctrine

Chapter 26 of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* is entitled "of the Communion of Saints". Section I and II deserve quotation in connection with this doctrine.

I. All saints, that are united to Jesus Christ their Head, by His Spirit, and by faith, have fellowship with Him in His graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory; and, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's 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.

III. 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; 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 propriety which each man hath in his goods and possessions.

In volume 3 of his *Systematic Theology*, Augustus Hopkins Strong states:

Union with Christ is not union with a system of doctrine, nor with external religious influences, nor with an organized church, nor with an ideal man, -- but rather, with a personal, risen, living, omnipresent Lord (J. W. A. Stewart). Dr. J. W. Alexander well calls this doctrine of the Union of the Believer with Christ "the central truth of all theology and of all religion". Yet it receives little of formal recognition, either in dogmatic treatises or in common religious experience. Quenstedt, 886-912, has devoted a section to it; A. A. Hodge gives to it a chapter, in his *Outlines of Theology*, 369 sq., to which we are indebted for valuable suggestions; H. B. Smith treats of it, not however as a separate topic, but under the head of Justification (*System*, 531-539).

The majority of printed systems of doctrine, however, contain no chapter or section on Union with Christ, and the majority of Christians much more frequently think of Christ as a Savior outside of them, than as a Savior who dwells within. This comparative neglect of the doctrine is doubtless a reaction from the exaggerations of a false mysticism. But there is great need of rescuing the doctrine from neglect. For this we rely wholly upon Scripture. Doctrines which reason can neither discover nor prove need large support from the Bible. It is a mark of divine wisdom that the doctrine of the Trinity, for example, is so inwoven with the whole fabric of the New Testament, that the rejection of the former is the virtual rejection of the latter. The doctrine of Union with Christ, in like manner, is taught so variously and abundantly, that to deny it is to deny inspiration itself.

-- Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology*
(Westwood, N.J.; Revell, 1907), p. 795.