

# The Lord's Supper



# The Lord's Supper

Doctrines, Encouragements,  
and Duties

John Shower

Edited by Joel R. Beeke



Soli Deo Gloria Publications  
*. . . for instruction in righteousness . . .*

*The Lord's Supper*

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**Soli Deo Gloria Publications**

An imprint of Reformation Heritage Books

3070 29th St. SE

Grand Rapids, MI 49512

616-977-0889

orders@heritagebooks.org

www.heritagebooks.org

The original title from which this lightly edited reprint is drawn is:  
*Sacramental Discourses on Several Texts Before and After The Lord's Supper  
With a Paraphrase on the Lord's Prayer. The Second Edition*

*Printed in the United States of America*

21 22 23 24 25/10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Shower, John, 1657–1715, author.

Title: The Lord's Supper : doctrines, encouragements, and duties / John Shower.

Other titles: Sacramental discourses

Description: Grand Rapids, MI : Soli Deo Gloria Publications, [2021] | Lightly edited version of Sacramental Discourses, on Several Texts, Before, and After the Lord's Supper, second edition in both parts. | Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020055889 (print) | LCCN 2020055890 (ebook) | ISBN 9781601788283 (hardback) | ISBN 9781601788788 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Lord's Supper—Sermons—Early works to 1800. | Communion sermons—Early works to 1800.

Classification: LCC BV824 .S56 2021 (print) | LCC BV824 (ebook) | DDC 234/.163—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020055889>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020055890>

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## Foreword

What does the Lord's Supper mean to you? Is it a mere ceremony performed to remember something that happened long ago? Or is it an exercise of faith by which you meet with the Lord? Is it a mere duty or a meaningful delight? In the Supper, do you worship in the presence of God and find grace for your soul?

As you will learn later in this book, Christ gave us the Supper as a sign of faith in His death for our sins so that believers are accepted by God. By eating and drinking as He commanded us, by faith in Him we share in the benefits of His death, and the Holy Spirit causes us to grow in God's grace. The Lord's Supper is a means of communion with Christ in His sacrificed body and blood (1 Cor. 10:16). Just partaking of sacrifices offered to idols is fellowship with demons, so partaking of this Supper is fellowship with God (v. 20). We fellowship with our earthly friends by eating a meal with them, and we fellowship with the Lord by doing this in remembrance of Him.<sup>1</sup> It is the banquet, this book teaches us, where we find in faith and experience that His banner over us is *love* (Song 2:4).<sup>2</sup>

The author of this book, John Shower (c. 1657–1715), was an English Presbyterian minister who served when the light of the Puritans was fading away under the persecuting regime

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1. See the discourse in chap. 4.

2. See the discourse in chap. 9.

of Restoration England.<sup>3</sup> The son of a rich merchant from Exeter, William Shower (d. 1661), and older brother to the prominent lawyer Bartholomew Shower (1658–1701), John was educated at nonconformist academies such as that of Matthew Warren (1642–1706). At an early age he distinguished himself by his grave and serious manner, diligence, obedience to his mother, fear of God, devotion to private prayer, and keen intellectual abilities.

When eighteen years old, he renewed his commitment to God according to the words of Joseph Alleine's (1634–1668) suggested covenant:

O most dreadful God, for the passion of Thy Son, I beseech Thee to accept of Thy poor prodigal, now prostrating himself at Thy door; I have fallen from Thee by mine iniquity, and am by nature a son of death, and a thousandfold more a child of hell by my wicked practice. But of Thine infinite grace Thou hast promised mercy to me in Christ, if I will but turn to Thee with all mine heart. Therefore on the call of Thy gospel I am now come in, and throwing down my weapons, submit myself to Thy mercy.... I do here take Thee, the Lord Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for my portion and chief good, and do give up myself, body and soul, for Thy servant, promising and vowing to serve Thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of my life. And since Thou hast appointed the Lord Jesus as the only means of coming to Thee, I do here on the bended knees of my soul accept of Him, as the only new and living way, by which sinners may

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3. On John Shower's biography, see W. Tong, *Some Memoirs of the Life and Death of the Reverend Mr. John Shower* (London: for John Clark and Even. Scadgel, 1716); *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 50:447–48. For a brief account, see Joel R. Beeke and Randall J. Pederson, *Meet the Puritans: With a Guide to Modern Reprints* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2006), 531–33.



have access to Thee, and do here solemnly join myself in a marriage-covenant to Him.<sup>4</sup>

The illustrious preacher Thomas Manton (1620–1677) encouraged Shower to pursue the gospel ministry. He preached his first sermon at age twenty on Psalm 119:30, “I have chosen the way of truth.” He was ordained on December 24, 1679, by a group of Puritan ministers led by Richard Adams (c. 1626–1698), Bible commentator and friend of John Howe (1630–1705).

Though a young man, Shower regularly preached at a sponsored lecture at a coffee house on Exchange Alley, London, and served as an assistant pastor to the polemical Vincent Alsop (1630–1703) in the congregation meeting at Tothill Street, Westminster, London. Shower had received from the Lord a double portion of the Spirit of prayer, and his preaching was full of application “suited to strike the consciences of sinners and the experiences of saints.”<sup>5</sup> Shower’s first book, *An Exhortation to Youth to Prepare for Judgment* (1681), was well received and went through twenty editions over the next century and a half.

From 1683 to 1686, Shower traveled through Europe as a companion to the younger Samuel Barnardiston (1659–1709), nephew of his more famous namesake, making the “grand tour” regarded at that time as an important experience for young men of nobility or wealth. One factor in Shower’s decision to tour Europe was the hostility against nonconformists from the royal court and the Church of England. He returned briefly to London to resume his preaching at Exchange Alley,

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4. John Shower, “My Solemn Covenant with God,” signed Jan. 31, 1675, in Tong, *Some Memoirs*, 10, 12. See Joseph Alleine, *An Alarme to Unconverted Sinners* (London: by E. T. and R. H., 1672), 164, 166.

5. Tong, *Some Memoirs*, 76.

but rising persecution drove him back across the sea to Utrecht, where he visited Howe. At Utrecht, Shower met and married Elizabeth Falkener. The newlyweds moved to Rotterdam, and for three years Shower preached at the evening service of the Presbyterian Church of England, pastored by Joseph Hill (1625–1707), the renowned Greek lexicographer.

Shower returned to England in 1691, where after a brief ministry as Howe's assistant he became the pastor of the Presbyterian congregation at Currier's Hall, Cripplegate, London. A few months later, Elizabeth died, leaving him after less than four years of marriage a widower with their one surviving child, Ann. In 1692, Shower married Constance White, with whom he had several children, three of whom survived infancy. Shower's congregation grew to be one of the largest in the city, moving to a bigger meeting house on Jewen Street in 1692 and building a new facility on Old Jewry in 1701. Shower was assisted in ministry until 1708 by Timothy Rogers (1658–1728), who struggled with depression but bore much fruit in preaching and writing, and then by the younger Joseph Bennet (1665–1726).

Shower faithfully served the Presbyterian church at Cripplegate to the end of his life, though his last years were marked by grief and declining health. In 1701, his second wife, Constance, died in childbirth with a stillborn child. Shower found himself a widower again after a mere eight and a half years of marriage. Shower himself almost died in 1706 from a fever that put him in bed for three weeks; he regarded his healing as evidence that the almighty God answers prayer. Ann, his daughter by his first wife, died in 1707 when both she and her newborn child were struck down by smallpox. Shower suffered a stroke in 1713 but was able to return to preaching until he died from an asthmatic condition in 1715. In his last days, he was heard saying, "My God is good. He is good to me.

Though I am very bad, God is very good.” He was remembered as a “tender and affectionate” man, “a very compassionate minister and friend.”<sup>6</sup>

Over the course of his life, Shower authored more than twenty published works, including many funeral sermons, several of which were published together as *The Mourner’s Companion* (1692, 2nd edition expanded into two parts in 1699). Other works of note include *Serious Reflections on Time and Eternity* (2nd ed. 1689); *Practical Reflections on the Late Earthquakes in Jamaica, England, Sicily, Malta, Etc.* (1693), following the disaster that struck Port Royal, Jamaica, in 1692; *Family Religion in Three Letters to a Friend* (1694); and *God’s Thoughts and Ways above Ours, Especially in the Forgiveness of Sins* (1694), a moving book about God’s pardoning mercies to those who repent of their sins (Isa. 55:7–9).

The book that you are presently reading had its genesis in Shower’s *Sacramental Discourses, on Several Texts, Before, and After the Lord’s Supper*, first published in 1693.<sup>7</sup> The work consisted of a preface, eight “discourses” or sermons given before or after the Lord’s Supper, and a paraphrase of the Lord’s Prayer. The discourses range in topic from the meaning and responsibilities of communion to the new creation in Christ. A second edition was issued in 1702 in two parts. The first part consists of the material found in the first edition.<sup>8</sup> The second part is a volume of new material, consisting of four “discourses” that addressed questions about the Supper, four “sermons” on

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6. Tong, *Some Memoirs*, 74.

7. John Shower, *Sacramental Discourses, on Several Texts, Before, and After the Lord’s Supper* (London: for Abr. Chandler, Sam. Clement, and Sam. Wade, 1693).

8. John Shower, *Sacramental Discourses, on Several Texts, Before, and After the Lord’s Supper. With a Paraphrase on the Lord’s Prayer. The First Part*, 2nd ed. (London: for Tho. Parkhurst and J. Robinson, 1702).

related themes (the purpose of receiving the Supper, Christ's cross as the glory of a Christian, God's oath, and Christ's love), and three more sermons on Jephthah's vow and the necessity of keeping one's vows.<sup>9</sup>

This present volume is a lightly edited version of the second edition in both parts. We have moved the paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer to an appendix and adjusted the numbering of the chapters to bring the whole into one volume. Some chapter titles were shortened, and titles added to those lacking them. What had been "the second part" is now divided into part two (questions) and part three (sermons). The three sermons on Jephthah's vow are omitted because they are not pertinent to the theme of the Lord's Supper. Since "Sacramental Discourses" does not communicate much to modern readers, a new title was crafted: *The Lord's Supper: Doctrines, Encouragements, and Duties*. As the reader can see in the pages to follow, this title is distilled from the opening sentences of Shower's preface.

Thanks are due to Jay Collier for his helpful suggestions to improve this book, to Linda den Hollander for ably typesetting the book, and for helpful proofreading by Samuel Caldwell and Gary den Hollander. May God use Shower's discourses to enrich the church's spiritual communion with her Lord in his saving death to the glory of the triune God.

—Joel R. Beeke and Paul M. Smalley

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9. John Shower, *Sacramental Discourses, on Several Texts, Before, and After the Lord's Supper. The Second Part*, 2nd ed. (London: for Tho. Parkhurst and J. Robinson, 1702).

## *Author's Preface*

There are three things especially requisite to a worthy communicant: to believe and own the truths which our Beloved Lord would preserve the memory of by this institution, and to have a lively sense of the comforts and encouragements that may arise from thence, and then to perform those duties of love, gratitude, and faithful obedience, which result from our covenant relation to Him and the open profession of it. The doctrines, the encouragements, and the duties of Christianity are admirably connected and joined together. The principal of all these we are called to consider in this sacred ordinance, which yet is shamefully neglected by many who would take it very ill not to be thought good Christians, who live from year to year in the omission of it, who make no conscience of remembering the death of Christ in this manner. As if they had no Savior who died for them; or He had not appointed this way of remembering His dying love; or as if the command, "Do this in remembrance of me," because spoken to the apostles, did only concern them and the ministers of the Christian church. Whereas, though our Lord sat down with the Twelve, the command is given to them as disciples and representatives of all His church, rather than as apostles. Or if the latter, He gave it to them to dispense it afterwards to others (not excluding their own communicating, for they who deliver the elements as ministers do partake of them as disciples, Christians, and brethren). "What

I have received of the Lord, that also I deliver unto you," says the apostle, and if ministers are bound to deliver it, the people are bound to receive. If our Savior's words, "Do this in remembrance of me," relate to ministers as such, it is a command for them to administer the Lord's Supper; and the same command must be supposed to bind the people to receive it that does oblige ministers to deliver it.

There are some who omit it from superstitious, unbecoming fears and misgivings, as if our Lord were more to be honored by our absenting from His table than by frequenting of it. Many, on the other hand, are guilty of presumption and rashness by careless, unprepared approaching to it. Several cases are here spoken to which relate to both sorts, though many more should be added.

As to the manner of performing this duty, we cannot come too humbly in a sense of our ignorance, weakness, and sinfulness, owning that we are nothing, have nothing, and can do nothing, without His grace, that may be pleasing to Him, and that we have done very much to dishonor and provoke Him (especially by our recent transgressions), that we deserve to be cast out of His sight, and denied the privileges of His house and family, never to taste of the children's bread. But having renewed our repentance before we come, we are called to express our love, gratitude, and joy. When we view a dying Savior, a crucified Jesus before our eyes, lifted up upon the cross, drawing all men to Him, bowing down His head, and stretching out His arms to embrace us, as He appears all bloody, to frighten us from our sins, so He opens His side, that we may see His heart flaming with love. He calls us to behold His wounded body, with hearts wounded by a penitent sense of sin, and a growing love to the Redeemer. He calls us to seal a covenant of fidelity to Him, and to accept the purchased benefits of a gracious covenant, sealed back from Him to us.

Here we behold the Lamb of God, a sacrifice for those sins we have so recently repented of, removing that wrath which we so recently trembled at, as having justly deserved, and therefore we should approach this table with gladness and rejoicing. Here we are called to give public expressions of the love and honor we bear to the remembrance of Christ. We do it in thankfulness to Him for all He has done and suffered for us. Here we profess our faith, hope, and trust in a crucified Savior. We own Him for our Lord, and our Jesus. We declare we are not ashamed of His cross, or of any difficulties, trials, or sufferings we may be exposed to for His sake.

He needed not have cared whether we were saved or not, and yet how low has He condescended to purchase our happiness and salvation, and to assure us of it? What manner of love is this that the Eternal Son of God, incarnate, should endure a painful, ignominious, cursed death for us, that we might not die eternally? How wonderful and incomprehensible is this love! How pleasant should be the contemplation of it! Here is an abyss of love—adorable, almighty love (on this side of heaven, but leading to it) which we cannot fathom, but are called to admire.

A crucified Jesus represented, and commemorated, as a sacrifice for us—what more glorious sight can we desire to see? How should this awaken all our affections and, in some respect, puzzle not only our passions but our faith too as an object too large for our narrow thoughts, too high for our finite minds, too great for our wonder, and for our little love and joy! How delightful is it to be thus even lost in the consideration of this matchless condescension and grace of our Redeemer, when the object is too big for our highest raptures and transports, and we are swallowed up in silence and astonishment?

How should this love constrain and draw forth ours when we consider for what vile and sinful creatures the Son of God

gave His life, and made His soul an offering! How His love to us, enemies and rebels, was stronger than fear, or shame, or death—without bounds and without example! When we feast on this sacrifice, what can we do less, in requital for this infinite love, than devote ourselves, souls and bodies, to Him, as the purchase of His death and lay all our affairs and dearest concerns at His feet to be disposed of as He pleases! How can it be but our love to Him must be kindled, maintained, and increased by such an institution? Remembering and considering His love to us, until we are brought practically to conclude and determine that our love to Him is too little, if we love anything besides Him, except it be by His order, for His sake, and to His glory, except it be according to the prescribed rules and limits He has set us.

And how proper is it here to renew our baptismal covenant: faithfully to promise to be entirely the Lord's, to be obedient and resigned to Him, to be treacherous to Him no more, but steadfast and resolved in His service? Taking His law as our rule, His will to be our will, to love what He loves, to hate what He hates, to have the same friends and enemies with our blessed Lord. For here we put God in mind of His covenant with us, through Jesus Christ, and ourselves in mind of our covenant with God. And upon renewed repentance for any sins we have committed, after any instance of unfaithfulness to our solemn engagements, by unsuitable walking, we here implore His mercy and grace to pardon us. We declare at the same time that we desire to take hold of His covenant, that though we are sinners, we are not apostates—we confess our sins, and beg forgiveness, and repeat our resolutions of fidelity to Him. We trust in the unshaken faithfulness and truth of God to His gracious promises. We place our hope and confidence in the stability of His everlasting covenant, which the blood of Jesus (the blood of the covenant) has confirmed, and made



everlasting; not trusting in our own faith, but to His free mercy and invariable truth; not to our repentance, but His gracious pardon; not to our own preparations, but His merciful acceptance of us in His beloved Son; not to anything we ourselves can do, but to the merits of Christ, the fruits of His death, and the purchase of His cross, as dispensed and applied according to the rule, method, and tenor of the gospel promise.

This is our privilege, and this our employment at the table of our Lord. And there is hardly any subject [that] will better bear to be treated of, in several different methods, than this, or upon which repeated discourses by several persons may be more useful. I grant there are many excellent books already written to instruct men in the nature, and to direct and assist their devotion in the observation, of this Holy Sacrament. I design not to wrest them out of their hands into whose this may fall. I pretend not to add, but to urge and prosecute the same great end, and sometimes by the same arguments and expressions. I acknowledge my having profited by the writings of others. I hope it is what they designed. These discourses were acceptable to many when preached, and being since reviewed (some of them with some enlargement) I hope they may be of use, at least to those who heard them and desired their publication. And it must be granted that what is so universal and important a concern as a due participation of this ordinance ought to be treated and inculcated in as many different ways as may best suit the various capacities of several persons. It may be [that] a shorter account of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, with meditations and devotions adapted thereto, would be more proper for the younger and more ignorant sort. This I have intended, if God permit, but have not yet had time to do. The Lord follow this, and all endeavors, for the furtherance of real godliness, with an abundant blessing.



**PART 1**

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**Discourses before and after  
the Lord's Supper**



## CHAPTER I

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# *Union to Christ, and the New Creature*

A SERMON PREPARATORY TO THE LORD'S SUPPER

*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.*

—2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

Through the merciful forbearance of God, we now begin another year, and have outlived several, who, twelve months ago, were as like to have seen this New Year's day as any of us. That we may begin it with some serious reflections suitable to the beginning of the year and the approaching solemnity of the Lord's Supper, I have chosen these words as proper to both. They are brought in, as one inference among others, from the constraining love of Christ, which the apostle had mentioned in the 14th verse. Many useful things might be observed in explaining the context and showing the connection of this with the preceding verses. But I shall at present consider them more absolutely, and in the general.

“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature,” or, “let him be” a new creature. He ought to be so. The original will bear either sense. The words may be taken imperatively or affirmatively, for we find not [the word] “is” in the original. It is true that whoever is in Christ is a new creature, and it is true that he is obliged thereby to prove his union to Christ; he ought to be a new creature. Neither sense is to be excluded, that the state

of such as are in Christ, and likewise their obligation, may be comprehended. It is the character and qualification of such as are in Christ, and it is their duty. So that we may consider these words either as a doctrinal assertion, that such as are in Christ Jesus are always new creatures, or as a seasonable exhortation, that they should manifest that they are in Christ by discovering themselves to be new creatures.

In both senses the new creature is a necessary consequence of union to Christ. The connection is inseparable between these two. So that we may truly affirm that all such are so, and we may rationally exhort all that pretend to such a privilege that they would be so, and show it. But whether considered as a command from God or as a wish and prayer of the apostle, there are three things obvious enough to be explained, and spoken to:

1. Something concerning this privilege of being in Christ, and the import of it
2. Concerning this new creation, which is to be connected with it
3. Of the connection between them, and the universal obligation upon all that are in Christ to be new creatures; that if any man be in Christ, he is, he must be, a new creature; or where there is no such change, it is in vain to pretend to be in Christ; or he that is not a new creature is not in Jesus Christ; he has no part in Him, and shall have no benefit by Him

Every man's title and claim to a special interest in Christ, and relation to Him, must be tried by this rule. This is more fully expressed, "But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation

the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph. 4:20–24).

*1. “If any man be in Christ”*

Sometimes it will be necessary to speak concerning this union to Christ, from which we are said to be in Him, as sometimes Christ is said to be in us. And both are sometimes joined together, “He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwells in me, and I in him” (John 6:56).

There are three sorts of unions, which we cannot sufficiently admire. The first from all eternity, in the impenetrable secrets of inaccessible light. The second, in the fullness of time, in the womb of the virgin. The third is made daily by the Spirit and grace of Christ. The first of these is the essential union between the eternal Father, and the eternal Word, in the adorable mystery of the ever blessed Trinity. The second is the personal union of the human nature with the divine, in that unspeakable mystery of the incarnation. The third is the spiritual union between Christ and Christians, which depends on the two former, and has some dark resemblance of them. Concerning which let me mention a few things.

a. That there is a real union between Christ and the souls of believers, howsoever difficult it is to understand the manner of it. He is not only Emmanuel, God with us, as partaker of flesh and blood, having assumed our nature; He is not only for us, in the work of redemption, by giving Himself to God a ransom and sacrifice for us; but He is said to be in us, and to dwell in our hearts; and we are said to be in Him, and dwell in Him, as the branches are in the vine, and by many other images and ideas on union, is this set forth, by allusions and metaphors,

and similitudes of many sorts, to signify and represent to us this blessed union between Christ and real Christians, and as He did partake with us of flesh and blood (Heb. 2:14). We are said to be made partakers of Christ as the principle and measure of all spiritual enjoyments and expectations (Heb. 3:14), and to be in Him that is true, in Jesus Christ (1 John 5:20).

It is sometimes set forth by the natural union between head and members; at other times, by the marriage union; and both are discoursed of together. "We are the members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (Eph. 5:25, 30), by allusion to what is said of Eve as to the first Adam. He is set forth as a foundation for never-failing support, as a husband for the dearest love; as a vine, as a head for vital influence; as food and nourishment for the most intimate conjunction. He is said to be one flesh with us, and we are said to be<sup>1</sup> one spirit with Him. Yes, as Christ is said to be in the Father, believers are said to be in Him, and He in them (John 14:20). Yes further, He is said to be one with them, as He and the Father are one (John 17:21). And He is said also to live in them, and they to live in Him (Gal. 2:20). Insomuch that sometimes the Scripture speaks of Christ and the church as of one person where the church is called Christ (1 Cor. 12:12).

How amazing and admirable is the expression, Christ in us, and we in Him! "What riches and glory is there in this mystery!" as the apostle speaks (Col. 1:27). Whoever heard before of a servant's being in his master, or a disciple in his lord, or the members being in the head? But here is a mystery of divine love and grace, which the apostle seems with some kind of affectation to speak of, at every turn, and upon every occasion; to mention it several times in one chapter, in one verse; yes, and over and over in the same verse; so genuine

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1. Footnote in original: Edward Polhill, *Christus in Corde*, pp. 10, 12.



and so fervent was his love to Christ. If he fight or triumph, it is in Christ Jesus; if he blesses God, or God blesses him, it is still spoken of as in Christ Jesus: he speaks, as if he could do nothing without Him; his life, his motion, his very being is to be in Christ.

We must silently adore this wonder of divine love, and cover our faces in humble adoration for such an honor, which the blessed angels might envy, if they are capable of it: for however Christ be their Head, they are yet at His feet, they are not in Him, as believers are. It is true, the angels serve Him, and worship in His presence; they follow Him by millions, they compass His throne with flames of love, they quit heaven to obey His orders, they fly swift as the wind to execute His pleasure; but Christ is not in them, as He is in us; nor they in Him, as we are said to be. The name Emmanuel is to them an inexpressible name; they cannot say, God with us, in the sense that we can, for He took not the nature of angels at first, and He has not taken them into such a union with Himself as He has the sons of men. But:

b. That you may not mistake, remember that all Christians are not in Christ in a like manner. Some are so only by baptism, and a visible profession, others by a living union. Such a difference our Savior makes where He tells us, there are some branches of a tree that have only influence enough to bring forth leaves, and no fruit, and are cast off “as branches”<sup>2</sup>; they seemed to be branches in Christ; they appeared as branches; they profess union to Him, but were not what they seemed to be (John 15:6). In this sense I understand the being in Christ spoken of. I “was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ” (Gal. 1:22), that is, to the body

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2. Greek: *hos klema*.

of professing Christians there, as distinguished from the Jews, though there were many rotten members among them that were not in Christ by a lively faith. Therefore:

c. The great bonds of union between Christ and real Christians, or true believers, are the Spirit on His part, and faith and love on ours. On which account, Christ is said to dwell in us by His Spirit, and we are said to dwell in Him by faith. By the Spirit He comes down to us, by faith we ascend up to Him. It is by faith [that] we are joined to Christ as our foundation (1 Peter 2:6). And by the Spirit we are built together for a habitation of God (Eph. 2:22). And he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him (1 Cor. 6:17). Our union to Christ immediately arises from the communication of His Spirit to us, and the participation of the same spirit with Him, by which spirit the divine nature, as the image of Christ, is formed in us (2 Pet. 1:4; Gal. 4:19). And the introduction of this new spiritual form gives denomination to the person. Christ enters into us by faith, and inhabits in us by His Holy Spirit. And of these two bonds, the Spirit is the primary one, as being the author of the other. And therefore believers are said to live in the Spirit of Christ, and to walk in the Spirit, and after the Spirit, and to be led by the Spirit. "Hereby," says the apostle, "know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit" (1 John 4:13; 2 Cor. 13:14).

I confess it is hard to conceive any union nearer than that between God and every creature; for God, as creator, is as near to every creature as that creature is to itself, and yet distinct from that creature, for that creature is not God. But the different sort of union must be distinguished by different operations. God is near to creatures in their natural state, working on them as the God of nature. Christ is near to the souls of believers by His Spirit, working on them as a head of holy,

gracious influence. The different operations make the great difference, though we shall not fully understand this until we come to that place and state where that which is imperfect shall be done away. However, we are said to be built on Him, as on a foundation; to be inserted into Him, as branches into a vine; to be incorporated with Him as a head; and what words can be used more significant of an intimate union? Therefore:

d. We may add that it is more than a relative and political union, such as is between king and subjects. It exceeds it in the intimacy of the union, as well as the benefits of it. The similitude between head and members, making one natural body, amounts to more. Besides, His kingdom is not of the same sort, and He rules His subjects after another manner. And the mystery of the Trinity in unity, to which it has some resemblance, carries it yet hither and further. It is therefore a most near and immediate spiritual union, whereby every particular believer is joined to the Lord. This is a great mystery (Eph. 5:32). Oh, how mysterious and ineffable is this union of the Lord and the soul!<sup>3</sup> Who would not admire at their proud disdainful folly, that while they cannot explain the union between soul and body, [they] are ready to jeer at their just, humble, and modest ignorance, who call this other a mystical union: or, because they know not what to make of it, would make nothing; and will not allow there should be any such thing at all, or would have it to be next to nothing. But have those words no sense belonging to them, or not a great sense? “But he that is joined unto the Lord, is one spirit with him” (1 Cor. 6:17). This is a mystery, says the apostle, that has riches of glory in it (Col. 1:27).

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3. Footnote in original: “John Howe’s Funeral Sermon of Mrs. Baxter,” p. 10.

And that union is the foundation of fellowship and communion with Him, as the apostle speaks (1 John 1:3), that He may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. That is, that you may have like fellowship with God and Christ as we have. Not that our union and communion is first with the church, as some of late have argued, though therein they contradict a learned man, whose opinions, in other instances, they are very fond of—I mean Episcopius. For upon that place he says that this sense is carefully to be avoided, that we are first united to the apostles, and then to God and Christ. This is both absurd in itself, and of very ill consequence. It is in itself absurd because we, and the apostles themselves, are but brethren, in respect of union to Christ; they are united to Him in the same manner with us. And there are very ill consequences that would follow from that opinion, for then there must be union and communion with some men and company of men, before we can have union and communion with Christ, which error, by degrees, was serviceable to introduce the papacy. Let me add:

e. This union is not to be supposed without regeneration, without the renovation of our corrupt nature by the Spirit of Christ, in order to communion with Him. The union otherwise between Christ and us would be like Nebuchadnezzar's image, the head of gold, and the arms of silver, and the feet of clay. If there be not spiritual life from Christ by the quickening Spirit, the body of Christ would be partly dead, and who would ever endure a dead body to be joined to him, though it were the carcass of one he never so dearly loved?

f. This must also be remembered, that this union between Christ and us is to be brought about by mutual consent, and therefore often set forth by the conjugal union, to which

consent is necessary. Our Lord has laid the foundation, and declared His readiness to receive us into union with Him, by the publication of His gospel; and it is the work of His Spirit, to make us willing to yield ourselves to the Lord, that we may enter in union with Him, and be brought under the bond of the covenant. We must know Him, choose Him, and accept Him for our Teacher, Savior, and Lord, by a present compliance with His terms. We must devote and give up ourselves heartily, and genuinely, and unreservedly to be His; and then we may say, my Beloved is mine, and I am His; I am in Christ, and Christ in me.

And here is the great office and work of faith in this work, to bring Christ and our souls into this blessed union, upon which account we are now in Him, as hereafter we shall be with Him. When the work of faith is over, and we are brought to glory, we shall be with Christ, and shall be ever with the Lord; but now we are said to be in Him.

It is true, we are now said to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; but hereafter it is promised, we shall sit down on His throne with Him. Now He dwells in us, and we in Him; hereafter we shall be with Him, to behold His glory. For so He prays (John 17). And He promised the penitent thief that he should be with Him that day in paradise. Our spiritual life is now hid with God in Christ, as to present union by grace; but it is hid with Christ in God, as to eternal glory. The expressions are observably different; in Christ now, with Christ hereafter; now united with God in Christ, hereafter with Christ in God; in Christ upon earth, in God in heaven. For to be in Christ refers to the Mediator, and is by faith; but faith shall cease in heaven, and the Mediator will deliver up the kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all. Thus for a brief explication of the privilege of being in Christ.

*2. Let us consider what is affirmed of those that are in Christ, or what they are exhorted to, what they are if they be in Christ, what they must manifest themselves to be if they will prove an interest in such a privilege, that is, new creatures*

“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature,” or a “new creation,” for so the original will bear. And it is not in this place only, but several others, where the like expressions are used, concerning that great change that is made by the grace of God on the souls of men. It is termed a creation, for the greatness of the change; and a new creation, for the excellency of it.

One may be apt to think that the extraordinary conversion of the apostle Paul made so great a change in him that it is on that account he so often speaks in such terms; that he mentions so often old things done away, and the old Adam put off; that he speaks of a new man, a new creation, and new creatures, and a spiritual resurrection from the dead, and the like; as that glorious light, which shone around about him, when he was struck to the ground in the way to Damascus, might occasion him so often to use the expression of light; for, at every turn, he speaks of the Father of lights, the armor of light, the kingdom of light, the inheritance of the saints in light, of illumination, of opening the eyes, etc. But how fit a representation is this of the change by converting grace? As might be illustrated, by considering the state of spiritual death that we are in before, and by considering the nature of the change itself, and the effects and operations that do afterwards manifest and discover it.

We are created in Christ Jesus to good works, begotten again, born from above, quickened and made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins. Several words are used, according to the several powers of the soul, and according to the different objects the new creature is conversant about; for as this change discovers itself in the understanding, it is a