

Presbyterianism 101

ALL TO GOD'S GLORY:
Communion of Saints
(WCF 26)

The Christian Life: Communion

- **New Section of WCF:** Largely focused on the means of grace
- **Communion is not primarily about bread and wine;** bread and wine are an expression and illustration of a deeper, wider communion

Union Defined (26.1)

All saints, that are united to Jesus Christ their Head by His Spirit and by faith, have fellowship with Him in His grace, 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.

Union Defined (26.1)

- **What is Communion?**
 - Participation in and with one another
 - “Bound by what we have in common in the Lord Jesus Christ” (Gerstner)
- **Described in Scripture**
 - Foundation/Structure (1 Pt. 2.4-6)
 - Vine / Branches (John 15.5)
 - Body/Head (Eph. 4.15-16)
 - Husband/Wife (Eph. 5.31)

Union Defined (26.1)

- **Nature of Union:**
 - *Federal*: Christ is our representative; acts in our place and for our benefit
 - *Spiritual*: His Spirit makes alive and sustains life
 - *Vital*: New Life derived from Christ entirely
- **Fellowship with Christ**: we share in all His merits and He in all our experiences

Union with Christ Expressed (26.2)

Saints by profession are bound to maintain a 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.

Union with Christ Expressed (26.2)

- **Saints have fellowship with one another**

- Spiritual Communion (e.g. church, worship)
- More than Spiritual Communion: “We have communion with Him and with him” (Gerstner)

1 John 4:19–21, *We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.*

Limits on Communion (26.3)

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.

Limits on Communion (26.3)

- **Limits on Union with Christ**

- Familiarity breeds contempt: do not forget the immeasurable distance between Creator, creature
- We do not become divine! (cf. Emergent, Liberals)
- Gerstner: “we are worms, lower than worms”

Limits on Communion (26.3)

- **Limits on Union with the Brethren**

- All we have longs to God, we are stewards of it;
- Helping my brother with my property does not mean my property is no longer mine: "it belongs to Him, but it does not belong to him"
- Generosity and gratitude to must rule not forceful, compulsory redistribution or abolition of private property
