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THE MYSTICAL UNION OF THE BELIEVER WITH CHRIST

**A Thesis presented to the
Faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary**

**in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity**

**by
Waldemar Burgdorf Streufert**

**Concordia Seminary,
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Chapter I

The General Presence and Its Limitation

Man's Craving for the Infinite, as Exemplified by his Quest in Nature

There is a certain restless dissatisfaction in man as he pursues his daily tasks and endeavors to enjoy his present life to the full. In the case of the believer, there is not this uncertainty and groping. But in the case of the unconverted, there is many a one who substitutes an "unknowable Infinity for the true God. Man will strive earnestly to satisfy his craving after the true Reality, but rarely, if ever, will he try to find the truth about God in His Word. Instead of this objective source, man seeks communion with nature and thus hopes to find God there. He seems to feel that there God is present. However, we shall see that this knowledge of God's presence is a limited one, and that man has much to hope for, even though he realizes the presence of God in this way.

In the city of Athens there had been many learned philosophers, who for centuries already had speculated about the being and the existence of God. To this city came the apostle Paul, who entered their center of worship on Mars' Hill, noting the various idol altars as he walked along. He found there a strange altar with the inscription: "To the Unknown God". There he addressed the curious skeptics about the true God, whose presence was everywhere. In the course of his

address, he quoted one of their own authors who said that man was the offspring of the gods. Paul used this quotation to express and to set forth the omnipresence and the general presence of God. Though they doubted God's existence, Paul remarked: "For in him we live, and move, and have our being". This passage reminds us of the general presence of God in the universe, by virtue of His work as Creator and Preserver of His creatures. This presence, unlike the mystical union, applies to all creatures, as the dogmaticians have also stated, even including the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air. Quenstedt says: "The general union of all men with the substance of God the Creator is indicated in Acts 17,28, where the preposition "in" expresses the general presence of God with all men." 1) This fact, as stated before, is testified by the heathen, by the conscience of man. Here we have also the testimony of Scripture, which is especially noted in the work of A.L. Graebner, Outlines of Theology: Psalm 139,7 and Amos 9,2 thus point to the omnipresence of God. The man who praises God when he sees the wonders of nature receives somewhat of a conception of God's power and influence, of His overwhelming presence. (It has been denied by the Barthians that the unregenerate man can know God and know of His presence

1) Weidner: Pneumatology, or the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, p. 174, par. 406, Wartburh Publ. House, Chicago, 1915

With His creatures. However, we shall not concern ourselves with Barth's theory of the transcendent God in our present discussion.) When a person imagines, for instance, that he can worship in the outdoors and there become attuned to the infinite, he is only partly correct. In nature we do meet with the general presence of God, but not with the gracious presence which blesses and sanctifies our souls. The contemplation of God's general presence lends a momentary emotional uplift and temporary joy, but leaves gloom and despair in its wake.

As men return to the realities of life, they soon become restless and discontented again. Many of them do not speak of this restlessness openly, but their whole behavior indicates, at least in many cases, a painful yearning after peace.

"These are the momentous hours when we have come to the point that secular values can no longer satisfy us; when the need of aspiring to God is recognized and we unite in the longing cry of all human history: Dona nobis pacem ... Whenever and wherever the question concerning God has arisen among people or in the life of an individual we meet with a grandiose attempt to possess God and to become sure of Him by means of increased spiritual power." 2)

2) Dr. Ad. Koeberle: Quest for Holiness, pp. 1 and 2, Augsburg Publ. House, Minneapolis, 1940, Transl. by Dr. J.C. Mattes

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Men often begin to realize this limitation of the general presence of God, and, hence, devise ways and means to fulfill this longing after unity with God. But then the question arises: "If they have experienced only the general presence of God, how shall they come into the unity of His Spirit?"

Mysticism has always striven for a union with the divine. William James, the noted psychologist, devotes an entire chapter to this subject of mysticism, in his work, Varieties of Religious Experience. Although we cannot agree with his unstable views of doctrine and his general distrust of dogma, he has contributed much to the understanding of the personality of mystics. Koeberle makes this comment:

"Mysticism was once correctly defined as 'the form of piety ✓ that finds its highest satisfaction in the immediate union of the soul's essence with the divine essence." 3) To this we may add the underlying principle of the Oriental mystics, that of the essential unity of the soul with its divine source. To clear the way for the later discussion of the true mystical union of the believer with Christ, we now show the methods which others employ in consummating this union in their own way. All the hidden potentialities and talents are to be developed to the highest degree.

3) Koeberle: Op. cit., p. 2

To reach God, in the opinion of the mystic, one must undergo three different methods of training. "The will, the spirit, the understanding, by a conscious course of training are to draw continually nearer and nearer to the Infinite and finally reach absolute perfection." 4) Man thinks that he can bridge the chasm by a self-imposed discipline. By these three methods men have tried to become united with God and to enjoy His special presence. "The sanctification of conduct by the strengthening of the will; the sanctification of the emotions by the strenuous training of the soul; moralism, mysticism, speculation, these are the three ladders on which men continually seek to climb up to God, with a persistent purpose it seems nothing can check; a storming of heaven that is just as pathetic in its unceasing efforts as in its final futility." 5)

Of the first method, we might say "For the control of the will is, after all, the main thing. Nothing more impedes the spiritual life than self-will - hence, the value of ~~an-intuitional~~ a constant self-denial as a means of mortification." 6) The mystics often speak of an intuitional perception that exceeds the powers of the will. This breaking down of the will is apparent in both Christian and non-Chris-

4) Koeberle: op. cit. p.2

6) Pratte Religious Conscious-
ness, p.379

5) Koeberle: loc. cit.

mysticism. "In the moral (teaching) discipline of the teachings of Confucius, in the self-discipline of Stoic morals, in the desperate efforts of the Buddhist monk to destroy all enjoyment of sin, in the Pharisee, 'in the pious churchman', who conscientiously torments himself with the keeping of fasts and tithing, in the ethical humanist and idealist, who is proudly conscious of his autonomous personality that 'takes up' divinity into his will, in the lodge brother who by moral effort out of the raw material of his nature makes for himself free-masoned, all alike are sure that the communion with God may be attained by the fulfillment of duties." 7) We have seen from the history of monasticism how the monks attempted to develop their powers of will and tried to lead their thoughts to God by their rigid self-flagellation and discipline. St. Teresa often spoke of her experiences as the "Prayer of Quiet", in which the will is united with God, but thoughts are distracted, and the power of movement is not wholly lost." 8)

7) Koeberle, op. cit. p. 3

8) Dr. Kenneth Kirk: The Study of Theology, Harpers', '39

Some mystics do not go to this extreme and stress the human effort to the exclusion of the divine, as, for instance, do the Roman mystics. The ability of striving after holiness and after union is given man as an aid in gaining for himself this union and the ultimate union in heaven. This is the doctrine of Rome. In operating with this principle, they say, the grace of God is infused into man and strengthens his will so that he gradually becomes the true image of Christ through a process, not by an act. Divine assistance is admitted, but only as a partial aid and motivating force.

To what extent this endeavor goes, when it seeks the union with God by a submission and control of the will, Pratt says: "The typical mystic is filled with an almost fanatical earnestness. As a rule he cherishes the ideal of service to God for its own sake...Their strenuous effort for holiness in themselves and in others is impulsive rather than deliberative; they struggle against evil not in order to obtain some joyous future condition, but because they must."
9)

He speaks more effectively concerning this point: "But moral purity of the ordinary kind is not sufficient for him who as-

9) Pratt: The Religious Consciousness, pp. 368 and 369

pires to an extraordinary mystic life...he aims at complete mastery..The mind must be freed from the interruptions and distractions of the body at any cost." 10) This is a brief consideration of the control of the will. What the relation this position has to cardinal doctrines we supply at the end of this chapter, where we shall consider the various parts of mystical procedures in their relation to Scripture.

Besides operating with the control of the will, the mystics often operate with the intensification and the stimulation of the senses. Best for the consideration of this second method are the so-called "Steps of St. Teresa", depicting the approach and attainment of mystical union of the soul with God. The first step is that of Quietude. In this stage the soul is said to be calm. There is a vague searching after the Infinite, which is followed by a deep yearning of love. According to Pratt, here we see the "abolition of self, which is driven out by God..The substitution of self of a more ample personality. " 11) The second typical phase of this series is expressed by St. Teresa as the "Prayer of Union". "In this the distractions cease, and emotion is heightened." 12) After this first step of Quietude, then, comes the Complete Union. It is frequently termed "automatism". We find the following stated con-

10) op. cit. p. 375

12) Kirk, op. cit. p.182

11) Pratt, op. cit. p. 437

cerning this stage: "For the action guided by the personal consciousness, which has its roots in the individual and is willed, is substituted an immediate and direct action, which seems to be the action of God Himself and which gives to the individual the sense of freedom and of infinite power. He no longer desires, because he is no more attached to the objects of his actions... This feeling that it is God who acts assures the constant communion between God and the soul." 13) Intense longing in the mystics aspired to a union with God which was the end and aim of their existence. Actual union alone would satisfy the sincere mystic. In the cases of Church history, as Miss Underhill writes, we shall find that these emotions were exceedingly intense. This brings us to the third step in the endeavor to reach God through intensifying the emotions.

The third step is that of "Ecstasy". In this state of unconsciousness, or super-consciousness, the soul is in a state of overjoyed elevation, a feeling of exuberance over a new union consummated, that of the "spiritual marriage". The fourth stage is a seeming division of personality. The individual seems to be disassociated.

"A seeming division between the bodily and earthly

13) Pratt, op. cit. p.437

self, and the real self who has become identified with God..The mystic lives in two worlds and feels himself animated and guided by two powers. 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' The individual will is not lost - man is not in a dream or trance; yet the individual will still present is present only to yield to what the mystic takes for the divine will, which in all matters dominates the life. The two wills have become so united as to be but one." 14)

The claims which these individuals make are astounding. We hear of St. Teresa saying that in such a state she received unusual understanding. "Our Lord made me comprehend in what way it is that one God can be in three persons. He made me see it so clearly that I remained as extremely surprised as as I was comforted,... and now, when I think of the holy Trinity, or hear It spoken of, I understand how the three adorable Persons form only one God and I experience an unspeakable happiness." 15) St. Ignatius claimed that he was given the detailed plan of the creation in an ecstatic state. He also told of his experience of images revealing the mystery of the Trinity.

14) Pratt, op. cit. p. 438

15) Wm. James: Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 403, Modern Library edition

Perhaps it may seem as though some of these examples have been irrelevant to the main subject, and yet they do serve to point out the subjective and enthusiastic principles of the mystics. However, we can summarize the four stages in this emotional experience by quoting the steps as given by Wm. James: "Ineffability" a characteristic of these stages, that no one can understand these experiences unless he himself has had them; the mystic cannot explain them to any one who has not had them. "Noetic quality", a second characteristic, says James, that the experiences carry with them a curious sense of authority for the individual, although they remain inarticulate. "The Transiency", a characteristic of all these experiences, that they cannot be sustained for long. The fourth characteristic is "Passivity", "the mystic feels as if his own will were grasped and held by a superior power."16)

Accounts have been handed down as to the intensity of these highly developed emotions of pious people. We note especially the example given by Sabatier of St. Francis of Assisi:

"A seraph, with outspread wings, flew toward him from the edge of the horizon, and bathed his soul in raptures unutterable. In the centre of the vision appeared a cross, and the seraph was nailed upon it. When the vision disappeared, he

16) Wm. James: Varieties of Religious Experience, pp.371 and 372

felt sharp sufferings mingling with the ecstasy of the first moments. Stirred to the very depths of his being, he was anxiously seeking the meaning of it all, when he perceived upon his body the stigmata of the Crucified." 17)

Other accounts are cited by the outstanding authority on the history of mysticism, Rufus M. Jones: "In the convent of Toss the visualization of the agony of Christ was the central figure of the life of the nuns. The lacerated body, the bleeding wounds of the Savior, were always before their eyes...Like the women at the Cross, in St. John's account, they put themselves there in imagination at the foot of the Cross, they saw the scourging, they felt the severe blows as real. And they walked th whole road of pain and agony and tears with Him..(This is the account of Elsbet Staeger)...(also Suso) 18)

Many agree that these phenomena are genuine, but point to the fact that these are psychologically possible without any re-

17) Sabatier, St. Francis of Assisi, Scribner's, 1925, pp. 295- 296

18) Rufus M. Jones: The Flowering of Mysticism, Macmillan, New York City, 1939, p. 172

ligious significance. The interpretation of these may be psychological rather than religious. At any rate, their authenticity is not to be doubted.

The third avenue to God is said to be the *via sapientiae*, that of speculation. This is the most mild type of the three types of mystical approach to the subject of union with God. The less extreme and more sober individuals in church history come in to play here. Among them the preacher and evangelical shepherd of his spiritual flock, as he is called, Pauler, and also the mystic Ekkehard. Here we have rather the men of action, as contrasted with many others, who separated themselves from the world in the monastic cells. These men were also deep and contemplative, but not primarily for seclusion, but for action and activity. "Because of its rigid objective method of procedure it has been used by only a few, aristocratic spirits, who however have displayed a no less titanic and passionate zeal than those who travel the broader road. The devotion of thought, this form of piety has been fittingly called. Compared with the ecstatic and emotional beatitude of other forms of mysticism we here breathe a clearer, keener atmosphere. The mood has become more sober and academic. But all the clear-cut, dialectic propositions which we meet there must not deceive us, for the fundamental idea is still the same. Here too God must be attained by the mystical, monistic way of immanence and identity. ..So here also God, the Absolute, the Infinite Spirit, finds Himself in the finite spirit." 19)

19) Koeberle, op. cit. pp. 11 and 12

Reason, then, fuses itself with the infinite mind by a process of thinking. Moreover, from the divine logos the infinite reason is able to develop of itself the truth. This is the assertion of contemplative mystics and thinkers. Meister Eckehard belongs to this group of notable mystics. "His (Eckhart's) mysticism, however, was very far removed from the type which may be called 'romantic'. He did not strain after ecstasies. He was not interested in psychopathic wonders. His mysticism has the calm and depth which we would expect from the man who glorified the intellect and who thought of the intellect as the domain of God himself." 20) His type of mysticism was "Abgeschiedenheit". To the average reader of his writings it is not so clear what is what by this term. Whether he claims to follow the idea of the mystics who teach a thorough identification of the finite and the infinite, it is not certain. But we do know that His preaching and his writings are filled with comforting and truthful gospel thought and application, His errors notwithstanding.

Another noteworthy member of this group of mystics is the German theologian and pastor who influenced the thinking of Luther by his writings, Johann Tauler. His great work was The Book of Spiritual Poverty. "He was reputed to

20) Jones, op. cit. p. 80

be the greatest preacher of his time, his sermons, exhibiting his piety, sincerity, warmth of feeling, having a marked influence on his contemporaries and winning the commendation and regard of Luther.* 21) Another outstanding mystic who comes under this group is Ruysbroeck, a writer who resembled Tauler, and who also found hearty response in Luther. In these three methods we have the essentials of mysticism.

Whether these three methods we have in mysticism agree with the doctrine of Scripture, we shall now determine. In the earlier part of our discussion we treated those who operated with the strengthening of the will and the crucifying of the flesh through self-discipline and torture. We find that this is outside of Scriptural teaching, for the doctrine of man's inherent corruptness eliminates the freedom of the will in spiritual matters, although a certain outward civil righteousness can be upheld. By this we mean that the individual is not free to do good, but free to do evil. Only after conversion is his will given the power to do truly

21) Concordia Cyclopaedia, p. 478

good works in the sight of God. Even in the face of this, all that he does and wishes to do is still tinged with his evil nature. Paul plainly showed this when he said that his spirit did not wish to do certain things, and yet he did them, and the sin which was still within his members prevented him from carrying out the good. †

Furthermore, when it is maintained that the human reason can solve the Infinite by a fusion of the finite with the Infinite, there is an omission made which one cannot overlook. These mystics forget that the converted individual still suffers from an indwelling corruptness, which clouds much of the spiritual truth. Moreover, because we have not come to the beatific stage of heaven, we still 'see through a glass darkly'.

More important is the relation which mysticism of the false type has with the doctrine of the means of grace. Everywhere we find that the majority of the mystics were the enthusiasts of their day. "Mysticism considers as the end of philosophy the direct union of the human soul with the Divinity through contemplation and love, and attempts to determine the processes and means of realizing this end. This contemplation, according to mysticism, is not based on a merely analogical knowledge of the Infinite, but on a direct and immediate intaction of the Infinite." 22)

22) Cath. Encyclopedia, vol. X, p. 664

With these individuals one might include the modern mystics, as E. Stanley Jones. When one reads his Christ of the Indian Road and his other writings, one is particularly impressed by constant reference of receiving the spirit and personality of Christ and following the road of Christ in contemplation. He definitely disavows the doctrine of the means of grace. He calls all these doctrines "wooden theology" and claims that they all lead away from the true contemplation of Christ. Also Rufus M. Jones, who speaks of a union with the Infinite in the peak of unconsciousness also runs counter to the doctrine of the means of grace. "For him, (the mystic) the mediate, the merely reasoned, the conceptual and discursive is relatively valueless. He regards conceptual knowledge as ever unsatisfying and or meaningless, and immediate experience as the only trustworthy guide and the only solid foundation." 23) This, then, depends not upon the acceptance by faith of objective facts, but upon personal and emotional experience. Whether the mystic is speculative, contemplative, imaginative, or practical, the most of them have this in common: they do not operate with means. "Mysticism, as one has well said, 'despairs of the regular process of science; it believes that we attain directly, without the aid of sense or reason, and by an immediate intuition, to the real and absolute principle' 23) Pratt: op. cit. p. 366

of all truth, God." 24) Most of the mystics regard the verdict of feeling and experience as the final arbiter and judge of spiritual truth itself. "And if we accept the testimony of consciousness as final after long experience in every other department of life, we cannot deny it in the one in which it has spoken universally and with certainty, in that spiritual world, more real than any other, in the testimony of consciousness strongest in the most highly developed in our race. . . . Those are the facts of the spiritual world; and when a man knows them directly, when the Spirit within him, the spiritual consciousness, is so unfolded, that he is able to realize them in himself and transform hearsay knowledge on the testimony of others into direct knowledge by his own observation and experience, - then and only then is that man a Mystic, a knower of the realities of the spiritual world." 25) We find that, while many mystics employ the Word of God and reject reason as a means of finding the truth, they do not mean to convey the same ideas which orthodox theology advances when it uses these terms. "The Mystics believe that certain kinds of knowledge, particularly the knowledge of God, come not through the labored efforts of re-

24) Mc Clintock and Strong: Encycl. of Rel. and Theol. Knowledge, vol. VI, p. 794ff.

25) Annie Besant: Mysticism; The Theosophical Publ. Soc. London, 1914 pp. 8, 11, and 12

flective thinking, but through direct insight and intuition. The powers of reason may sometimes be transcended and we may have a direct approach to God, or an immediate union with reality, so that truth is felt, apprehended, grasped in a single pulse of the soul life." 26) Whenever we read of the mystic gaining this necessary knowledge and blessing via the unconscious and the supra-sensational, then logically, one must conclude that, since the Word of God, the Scriptures, are imparted by the sense of touch in the case of the blind and deaf, are imparted to the ears and eyes in the case of normal persons, then these persons do not operate primarily with the Scriptures. That is received by the senses, though understood by faith, yet the reception of spiritual knowledge comes through these channels. Moreover, these attempts are generally spoken of as endeavors made by man, while Scriptures plainly assert that it is God who searches and attempts the union through Christ and the Gospel. Without contradicting the statements of the first chapter, we may say that man by nature hates God and wants nothing to do with Him. Yet, we do know that man is and remains unsatisfied until God performs the miracle of faith. God does the work entirely. There can be no claim made by man that he successfully attempts this union with the Infinite. However, men claim otherwise. "We may accordingly define the Religious Mysticism in general as the endeavor to secure consciousness of the Agency

26) Patrick: Introduction to Philosophy, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1935, p. 55

(through Which or through Whom) the conservation of social values is sought...If God, who is purely spiritual, is to be preserved in some manner, it is obviously through cannot be through the senses; for it is impossible to see His face and hear His voice with human eyes and ears; He must be perceived inwardly. Many have believed this inward perception to be possible; in fact, that they have experienced it." 27)

Of still greater importance is the relation which false mysticism bears with the doctrine of justification. It is here that the error of mysticism is very clear. While the atonement is referred to with great admiration and emotional fervor and sincerity, the facts are otherwise. The fact that many cling to the Passion account with such intense love and devotion, would seem to indicate their faith in the justification by grace. However, the vast majority use this merely as a stepping-stone to dreadful self-discipline, as we see from the accounts given us by Dr. Luther. Christ's suffering is for them an encouragement to suffer likewise in order to appease the wrath of God and become one with Him. It is work-righteousness. Furthermore, inasmuch as the mystic sincerely believes that he can accomplish this perfection through his own efforts, he is lowering the standards of God's justice. If he realized the passage which tells us that even if we offend in one point only, we are

Wright: A Student's Philosophy of Religion, Macmillan, 1922, p. 286 and 287

we are guilty of the entire Law. If the justice of God is upheld, the mystic must also admit that God will not be satisfied with an imperfect endeavor. Also, the mystic misapplies the power of God's love, for it was not shown on Calvary as a mere stimulus to our effort, but primarily as a means of justification and salvation.

Moreover, the mode of justification, as well as the basis of justification is misunderstood by them. "They (the Mystics) lay little or no stress upon the outward ceremonies and ordinances of religion, but dwell chiefly upon the inward operations of the mind...That among this class of devoted men there was often genuine piety, with a living faith which realized Christ within them as the hope of glory, is not to be doubted." 23) Here the statement quotes a certain passage of Scripture, but we are led to believe that this "hope of glory" is conveyed to mean that the "Christ in us" rather than the "Christ for us" is the basis of justification, the source of the Christian hope. This statement is a misconception of the basis of justification, but it is equally a misunderstanding of the mode of justification. If justification is looked upon something inward, it is then also regarded as a process, which is the error of Osiander and the Romanists. Justification is rather a forensic act outside of us, an act of God's declaration that we

23) Mc Clintock and Strong; op. cit., p. 796

are righteous before Him, since the merits of Christ cover the still remaining sinfulness of men.

This is brought about by God and His grace, not through human striving. To this the Letter of Paul to the Galatians applies: for if it is by works, then it is no grace; if it is by grace, then it is no longer by works.

**Chapter Two: The Definition of the Doctrine of the
Mystical Union**

The Scriptural Basis

As we approach this chapter, there is a feeling of foreboding. In the real sense of the word, we can scarcely define the term "mystical union". On the other hand, we can show from Scripture some of the features of this union. After this Scriptural study of the mystical union, we shall also note what the Lutheran confessions and the dogmaticians say of this union and compare them with the statements of the other church bodies.

Strong says: "Starting out from the truth of God's omnipresence, it might seem as if God's indwelling in the granite boulder was the last limit of his union with the finite...And yet there are two stages beyond these: first, in Christ's union with the believer".
29)

That God desires this union, which is distinct from the general presence, is shown in the words of Christ in His High-Priestly prayer for the Church. There He uses several clauses which set forth this union: verse 16: that he (the Spirit) may abide with you forever; verse 17: for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you; verse 20: for at that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. These passages interweave the mys-
Strong: Systematic Theology, p. 441

tical union and the operative indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In verses 21 and 23 Jesus especially refers to this mystical union with the believers and Himself. He prays: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me...I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved me." In this passage Jesus prays for the Una Sancta, the Christian Church, that there may be unity in the Invisible Church by virtue of the fact that the members are joined to one another by faith in Jesus Christ. This unity is like the unity of the Trinity, as exists between the Father and the Son. The oneness of believers exists as they are all mystically united to the one Head, even Christ Jesus.

For us the pertinent part of this passage is the following: "That they may be one in us". Lenski, "As between the Father and the Son (and we are free to add the Spirit) a wonderful, incomprehensible interpenetration exists, called the perichoresis essentialis by the dogmaticians. This is absolutely the highest type of oneness known." 30)

30) Lenski: Interpretation of St. John's Gospel, p.1133

This picture of the union of the Trinity describes the union of the believers with one another and the union of the believer with Christ and the Trinity itself. "And now Jesus adds the second 'hina', as appositional to the first. It defines how their oneness is to resemble that of the Divine Persons, namely this: 'that also they be in us'. All believers being in the Father and the Son, they will certainly be one." 31) The whole connection is ~~this~~: the oneness of the Trinity and the oneness of the believers are not separate, as though they were mere resemblances. There is a connection, and it is that, as Dr. Lenski expresses it: "We believers can be one with each other only by each one of us being one with the Father and Jesus. Union with God and Christ makes us a unit in ourselves." 32) This was the contents of Christ's prayer that the mystical union might become a reality in the hearts of the believers.

As we attempt a fragmentary definition of this wonderful union of the believer with Christ, we find that Paul speaks of this in his letter to the Corinthians, chapter 1, verse 30: "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," etc. Paul shows the Corinthians

31) Loc. cit.

32) Loc. cit.

that the fact of their being in Christ is not due to themselves; but to God. The mystical union which they enjoy is of God. 'In Christ' indicates a real communion and union with Christ which they were enjoying by faith, which was nurtured by the means of grace. "So every believer of the Word is 'in Christ', in vital, blessed communion with Him." 33) As they are in Christ, they are under the influence of a power that changes their lives, as stated in the word "sanctification". To show more emphatically that this union is of God and different from all other conditions the world attempts, Paul lays stress upon the riches that are involved in this union. First reconciled to God, justified, then united with God in Christ, the believer then has access to the merits of Christ to which he can appeal for forgiveness, he has the wisdom of spiritual understanding, and a life of growing sanctification. "When displaying what Christ is to us who are joined to Him Paul reaches out into those glorious treasures about which the world with all its wisdom knows nothing. Far beyond anything the world attempts we are blessed in Christ." 34)

We find that this union is also a reciprocal one. It is not only that Christ is in us, but that we are also in Christ. We might cite the analogy which Dr. Strong has from the writings of Kant, the philosophers, as he points out the close relation between the believer and Christ in his

33) Lenski: Interpretation of I and II Cor., 80 and 81

34) op. cit. p. 82

great work: "Kant defines an organism, as that whose parts are reciprocally means and end. The body is an organism; since the limbs exist for the heart, and the heart for the limbs. So each member of Christ's body lives for Him who is the Head; and Christ the Head equally lives for His members. Eph. 5, 29.30: 'No man ever hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as Christ also the church, because we are members of his body.' " 35)

Christ in us, as stated by Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, chapter 3,17 is accomplished thus: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith: that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,"etc. It is one of the effects of the Spirit's operation in the heart that this union comes into being. The Holy Spirit enters the heart as He creates faith and thereby strengthens the inner man. "Through faith" denotes that this union is accomplished through faith, nurtured thereby, and not by the ecstasy of false mysticism. Fasting, mutilation will have no nurturing power here.

"Here Paul speaks not of the first entrance of Christ, but of the further indwelling due to the strengthening we receive through the Spirit by Word and Sacrament...Hence, the subjective means is added: 'through faith', parallel to the objective means: 'through the Spirit'. Christ comes
35) Strong: Systematic Theology, p. 442

by the Spirit, and enters and dwells in us by means of the faith which embraces him". 36) In I Peter 3, 16 we read: "Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ." Dr. W. Arndt refers this 'in Christ' as this, that Christ is the element in which the Christians live, the spiritual air which they breathe. He lays stress on the mystical union, paraphrasing the verse: "the good life which we live, being in Christ". The union of the believer with Christ shows itself in the daily conduct of the Christian. As it were, the spirit of the Christian is invigorated by the daily healing rays of Christ's love in the Gospel.

The expression "in Christ" occurs also in Coloss. 1,27, where Paul says: "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Here Paul applies the truth of the my-
36) Lenski: Interp. of Ephesians, etc. p. 494

stical union to individuals. The glory concerning which the mystery speaks will be the individuals own possession. The union is a sign that this will occur. The mystical union is already in itself a partail fulfillment of this great mystery. These riches constitute the mystical union, that Christ is in the individual believer.

The mystical union, however, is also described in Scripture as a union in which the believers are in Christ. This is especially noted in II Cor. 12, 2: "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago". It is exactly so clear here as in other passages that this union is spoken of, but here we do note that Paul, in speaking of his conversion, says that he was in Christ. Another passage, I John 5, 20 states: "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ." Here John states that the believer is in Christ, especially in view of verse 10, and also verse 1, he who believes in Christ as the Divine, the Savior, the God-man, is a child of God and has the witness of God in him to such an extent that Christ is in him, and ⁱⁿ in the Lord Jesus Christ. In connection with Christ, he has the understanding about which the heathen Athenians scoffed and Festus fested. Because they have Him in the knowledge of faith, the believers are united with Him and

and truly know Him. The believers are in the Son of God, in Christ Jesus. They are in Him Who is the Incarnation of the Truth. Theirs is not the search for truth any longer. They have the truth, for they are united with Him in this mystical union. Further visions and ecstasies are not necessary. All needed knowledge comes from Him, their own Fountain of Truth.

Also in Romans 8, 1 we meet the expression: "to them which are in Christ Jesus". We then read "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Here we note that not the fact that we are in Christ makes us free from condemnation, but rather that, since we are in Christ, this is a sign that we have been justified. As a telling fruit of our justification and conversion, the union tells all accusers that the believer is acquitted through Christ. This union is a seal that this has already taken place, but this union is not to be confused with that which it proves, namely, the justification of the individual sinner. No charge can carry any weight, for they have been acquitted when Christ was condemned. As long as they are in Christ by faith, united with Him and His merits by the hand of faith, theirs is the free verdict.

Included in the Scriptural definition is the important thought that also the Father and the Holy Spirit are united with the Christian believer. "Die Schranke, welche bisher fuer Gott sein Zorn und der Gesetzesfluch bildeten, und welche ihn hemmte, mit dem Menschen in persoenliche Lebensgemeinschaft zu treten, ist nun gefallen, und der Gnaden- und Versoehnungsband ermoeeglichen jetzt wieder den realen Gemeinschaftsbund. So kommt der dreieinige Gott und macht aufs neue Wohnung in dem Gerechtfertigten als in seinem Tempel. Derselbe Gottesgeist, welcher den rechtfertigenden Glauben in ihm gewirkt, zieht zugleich als Gottesgabe in das Herz des Gerechtfertigten ein, und mit und in dem Geiste kraft der Wesenseinheit und der wechselseitigen Perichoresis der drei Personen der Gottheit, auch der Sohn und der Vater." 37)

That the Father is included in this union is stated clearly by the phrase in John 17, 21: "that they also may be one in us". Here Christ addresses His heavenly Father, and He is included in "us", although the Holy Spirit is not to be excluded, by any means. But here more specifically, the Father and the Son are mentioned as taking part in this union. Moreover, in John's first epistle, chapter 2, 24 we read: "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard 37) Meusel: Kirchl. Handlexikon, vol. 7, pp. 3 and 4

from the beginning. If that ye have heard from the beginning remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. " To understand this passage in connection with the mystical union, we must remember that John was combating the error so prevalent in our day, that of denial of Christ's deity. If any one rejects the fundamentals of faith, as the deity of Christ and His atonement, then such a one is not in the mystical union. Moreover, we find that in the first chapter of this epistle, especially in the third verse, John tells his readers that the aim and purpose of all their preaching and teaching was to bring them into fellowship with the Father and the Son, by means of the Word. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." Although we maintain that a fundamental error cuts one off from this union, we cannot urge the thesis that only the orthodox persons enjoy this mystical union. This principle would contradict the Doctrine of the Church, that believers are in the scattered heterodox churches, insofar as they still teach some of the fundamentals of Christian faith. Of this we shall treat later.

This union also includes a union with the Holy Spirit. After all, He is the One who brings about this union into reality, for He kindles the faith that accepts the merits of Christ and accomplishes this union after justifica-

tion. Moreover, the Spirit preserves the individual in faith and keeps this union alive in the hearts of the believers. He sets His seal of assurance into their hearts that they are in the true faith and that they are united with the Trinity. "A spiritual union, that is, a union whose source and author is the Holy Spirit. By a spiritual union we mean a union not of the body, but of spirit, - a union, therefore, which ~~the~~ only the Holy Spirit originates and maintains. Rom. 8, 9. 10: 'Ye are not ⁱⁿ the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit dwelleth in you. But if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness.' The indwelling of Christ involves a continual exercise of efficient power. In Eph. 3,16 and 17 'strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man' is immediately followed by 'that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith'. 38) This is, however, never done unless the Word or Sacraments are there. No media can be eliminated here. Meusel quotes the writer and exegete Philippi: "Dieser Geist ist der Siegel der Rechtfertigung und Kindschaft und ein Pfand des himmlischen Erbes, und wie er die Gerechtigkeit des Sohnes und die Liebe des Vaters, welche zugleich mit ihm gekommen, gegenwaertig und durch ihn wirksam wird, den Herzen denen er einwohnt, fortgehend bezeugt, erbietet und zufuehrt, so erhaelt und mehrt er auch den Glauben daran und

38) Strong, op. cit. p. 443

bestaetigt, versiegelt, und staerkt in ihnen die Gewisheit der Kindschaft und des Erbes, wodurch er sich erweist und bewahrt als Geist des Trostes und des Friedens." (Philippi, Glaubenslehre, v.1, s.20) 39) The Scriptural basis for this is I John 3, 24: "And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." Christ sent the Holy Spirit, who comes into the hearts of men and makes of them true believers. He dwells in their hearts and nourishes the faith that He has created. But He also testifies, by the very fact of His indwelling and His sealing, that these or those individuals are dwelling in the Son, Jesus Christ, and that Christ dwells in them. The one indwelling corroborates the other and the two cannot be separated. If the Holy Spirit dwells in the heart, the Son also dwells there. Another passage which sets forth the participation of the Holy Spirit in this union is I John 4, 13: "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." Here the same thought is set forth. A similar thought is elaborated by the statement that our union with God is the gift of the Holy Spirit. "Our love for one another is evidence that God is remaining in us, that his love for us has not been in vain but has been

39) Meusel, op. cit.

brought to this goal, namely, God's union with us. Valuable as this evidence is, it must be taken together what underlies it, namely, God's gift of the Holy Spirit to us..... The thing to be noted is that our love for one another is evidence for our union with God, whose children we are; but when we look at the source of this love and see that it is a gift of God from His own Spirit, whom He also gave us, then we know by 'this' that we remain in God and He in us."

40) This is proof that the Holy Spirit is united with and that we are united with the Spirit.

The Lutheran Definition

The Lutheran theology, based entirely upon the Bible, agrees with the Scriptural doctrine on this point of the mystical union. The dogmaticians, as Elert also says, were extremely careful in this doctrine so that it would not disagree with the other fundamental doctrines of Christianity: "Sie sind im Gegenteil sorgfaeltig darauf bedacht, den Zusammenhang mit der Rechtfertigungslehre nicht zu verlieren. Das zeigt sich sofort darin, dass zum Beispiel Quenstedt seiner ganzen Darstellung Epheser 3,17 zugrunde legt." 41) Of this careful distinction we shall speak later, as we follow the definitions given by the Lutheran dogmaticians. We shall

40) Lenski, Interpretation of Peter, John, and Jude, p. 516ff.

41) Elert: Der Christl. Glaube, pp. 629 and 630

then observe the extremes against which Quenstedt wished to warn.

In the first place, the mystical union is indeed a real union, and not a pretense, nor yet a mere mental union. Calov writes: "It is a union of the believer with God which is more than simply an agreement with of his will with the divine; for it is a real presence, an actual union and communion, by which the divine essence in a mysterious way joins itself to the believer's person." 42) Quenstedt writes: "The mystical union is the real and most intimate conjunction of the substance of the Holy Trinity and the God-man Christ with the substance of the believers," etc. 43) Another statement of Quenstedt on this point is equally pertinent: "The mystical union does not consist merely in the harmony and tempering of the affections, as when the soul of Jonathan is said to be united with David, I.Sam. 18,1, but in a true, real, literal, and most intimate union; for Christ, John 17,21, uses the phrase 'to be in some one', which implies the real presence of the thing which is said to be in, not figuratively as a lover in the beloved. The mystical union does not consist alone in the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit in the believers. For when Christ says, John 14,23: 'I and my Father', etc., and 5,

42) C.T.H. vol. I, p. 171f.

43) Weidner, Pneumatology, p. 173

16: 'the Holy Spirit', etc., these are not names of operations, but persons. And it is entirely wanton to convert such emphatic words, expressing a reality by which this union is described, into mere energetic expressions, for example, to come, to be sent into hearts, to dwell, to remain, to live in any one. For these are personal properties, and not attributes of operations." 44) Also among the teachers of our Church who helped to frame the Confessions, spoke in this way, as we note from Melancthon: "It must be admitted that God dwells in our hearts, not only in such a manner that He there is efficacious, though not present with His own essence, but that He is both present and efficacious."

45) The following is the maxim of Gerhard: "Spiritus sanctus non separatus est a donis suis, sed in templo illo, quod donis suis emiss coronat, etiam ipse habitat." 46) This is to point out that it is a real union, and that the believer is truly united with the Spirit, with the Trinity, for in the same heart into which the Spirit has placed His gifts, there He necessarily resides. Schmid says: "By this mystical union more is expressed than a mere agreement of the will of man with the will of God, or a mere union of both in love, or a mere influence and communication of spiritual gifts on the part of the Holy Ghost." 47) At one time there were certain errorists who denied the real presence of the Trinity in the

44) Schmid: Doctr. Theology of the Ev. Luth. Church, p. 482

45) Gene. Triglotta, Hist. Introd. p. 161

46) Koeberle, op. cit. p. 104 47) Schmid: op. cit. -p. 480

hearts of the believers. The Formula of Concord says: " We unanimously reject and condemn as contrary to God's Word, the doctrine of the pophets and apostles, and our Christian faith that not God dwells in the believers, but only the gifts of God." 48) This was the error of the Hamburg pastors, who overstated themselves, as they endeavored to urge against the error that Osiander taught, namely, that the divine nature of Christ is infused to the heart of the believer and that by a medicinal process justification is gradually accomplished.

This union may also be termed a vital union, as Strong also says: "A vital union,- in which Christ's life becomes the dominating principle within us. This union is a vital one, in distinction from any union of mere juxtaposition or external influence. Christ does not work upon us from without, as one separated from within, (this is not adequate, if this is construed to mean that it is done without the means of grace) as the very heart from which the life-blood of our spirit flows. See Gal. 2,20 and Coloss.3,3.43 Christ's life is not corrupted by the corruption of his members, any more than the ray of light is defiled by the filth with which it comes in contact. We may be unconscious of this union with Christ, as we often are of the circulation of the blood, yet it may be the very source and condition of life."49)

48) Conc. Trigl., F. of Conc. p. 937, Ther. Decl.

49) Strong, op. cit. p.442ff.

As we have already noted, the mystical union is a union of the Trinity with the believer. "Where the message of the Gospel is proclaimed and savingly apprehended, there the Spirit occupies the heart and mind, draws the soul into communion with Christ and makes it a dwelling-place of the Trinity." 50) Elert remarks similarly: "Eine Fuelle von neutestamentlichen Zeugnissen ...macht verstaendlich, dasz die Dogmatiker diese union als Einigung des Dreieinigen mit dem glaubenden Menschen auffassen." 51) We have previously noted the statement of Quenstedt, who also holds that the conjunction of the Trinity with the believer is a fact.

In order to place this doctrine in correct relation to the other fundamental doctrines, it is necessary to consider the negatives angles of this definition. First, this union is not an essential one. Two extremes are to be avoided: the rationalistic view that this is only a mental union, and the other, that the essence of the Believer is mingled with the essence of the Trinity. "Quenstedt will damit von vornherein dem Irrtum einer kontemplativen Mystik vorbeugen, ebenso wie die vorherige Ausscheidung der allgemeinen Praesenz Gottes in seinen Kreaturen, jedes pantheistischen Miszverstaendnis ausschalten soll." 52)

50) Th. Graebner, C.T.M., vol. I, p. 17ff. 52) Elert, p. 629

51) Elert, op. cit. pp. 629 and 630

Regarding this point Hollaz says: "God dwells in us as in temples, by the favor of the mystical union, I Cor. 3,16; but the habitation is not changed into the inhabitant, nor the inhabitant into the habitation; (2) by the mystical union we put on Christ, Gal. 3,27; but the garment is not essentially one with the person who wears it; (3) The divine nature is very distinct from the human, although God comes to us and makes His abode with us, John 14, 23, but he can depart from man to whom he has come. The mystical union, is indeed called a union of substances, but strictly taken, not a formal substantial union. ...but it is an accidental union." 53) Quenstedt says: "This union does not consist in transubstantiation, or the conversion of our substance into the substance of God and of Christ, or vice-versa, as the rod of Moses was converted into a serpent. Nor in consubstantiation, so that of two united essences there is formed one substance." 54) With this agree Calvin, Luther, and the other leading theologians of Protestantism. Schmid says: "It would be wrong to suppose that in this union the two substances become one, or that the one is absorbed in the other; or, as if out of the two persons, God and man, one person were constituted, as in the case of the two natures of Christ." 55) To this we

53) Weidner, op. cit. p. 174 and 175 55) Schmid, p. 481
 54) Schmid, op. cit. p. 485

might add the thought that, since God departs from those who fall from faith and there breaks the mystical union as a result of the individual's own fault, the union is not a substantial union in the strict sense. If it were, then it would be rather difficult to conceive of a change in the unchangeable God.

Similarly, this union is not a personal union. This was a part of the error of Osiander, who taught the indwelling of the divine nature to which we must look in the search for forgiveness, or rather acquire the essential righteousness of Christ's person. Cfr. Pieper, vol. II, Christl. Dogmatik, pp. 637-640. We note that Quenstedt says: "The mystical union does not consist in a personal union or a coalition of extremes united into one hypostasis or person, such as is the union of the divine and human person nature in Christ; so that the believer, united to Christ, could say, I am Christ." 56) Although we do read of Luther saying this, it was in a far more moderate sense. Of his statement we shall treat later. Although we do read of Paul saying that Christ ruled in his heart, we cannot say that what Paul performed, Christ did as the same person. Hollaz says: "Paul teaches that Christ and believers being mystically united remain distinct persons, Gal. 2,20." 57)

56) Weidner, op. cit. p. 175 57) Weidner, loc. cit.

This union, as we have already intimated in several ways, is distinct from the general presence of God in His creatures. "Sondern (diesz) ... ist eine sonderliche Art der Gegenwart des dreieinigen Gottes als des Heilsgottes, nicht des Schoepfers im Menschen." 58) Elert cites the passages of Quenstedt and discusses this point: "Die Dogmatiker gingen dabei von der Unterscheidung einer doppelten unio mystica mit den Menschen aus. Die eine fanden sie Apostg. 17, 28 ausgesprochen: 'In ihm leben, weben und sind wir.' Das ist der Praesenz Gottes, der sich keins seiner Geschoepfe entziehen kann (Quenstedt, III, 64). Die andere besteht in der 'Einwohnung' (inhabitatio) Gottes in den Christusgläubigen." 59) It is very often that theologians confuse the two and fail to distinguish between the general presence and the special union, the mystical union, which is entirely different. Schmid says: "It is often objected that this doctrine of the mystical union is unnecessary, and that there is no need to make any distinction between the general presence and the special presence of God, in the hearts of believers. In reply to the objection: 'Whatever as to its substance is already present, is necessarily present and cannot be absent, and, therefore, it cannot be said that it comes, draws nigh, or approximates by its substance anew. But, as the Holy Trinity as to its substance, or the divine essence by the common and general presence, is al-

58) Meusel, op. cit., p. 5

59) Elert, op. cit. p. 629

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ready present in all creatures, and thus also to believers; therefore, He cannot approach them by a new and special presence, 'Quenstedt answers, III, 629: (1) The substance of the Holy Spirit willed to unite Himself in a peculiar manner of presence with the dove, and thus to manifest itself to the Baptist, so that where the dove might be, there it could correctly and truly be said that the substance of the Holy Spirit was present in that peculiar kind of presence. (2) That the divine essence, as essence, could admit of such an approximation without the danger of losing immensity, the peculiar mode of its presence in Christ proves, in whom the divine nature is so united to the finite human nature, that in this way it neither wishes to be anywhere else; which presence is determined, certainly not by a new mode of operating, but by the divine intimate immanence of one near substance in another. And although this presence is very peculiar, yet it cannot be denied, because it may be deduced from the hypostatical union, that such an approximation is not entirely repugnant to the divine essence." 60) There is a mystical union in the wider sense, the general presence of God in all creatures. This is different, since persons cannot prevent it as they can resist the grace of God and prevent the entry of the Holy Spirit and

60) Schmid, op. cit. p. 485

can hinder the work of conversion and the subsequent union. In the general union, however, there are no means employed. There it is not necessary, for God's omnipresence make that union a fact. However, since the mystical union in the narrower sense, with Christ and the believer, is impossible without the operation with means. Finally, the relationship of God with the believers is a far more intimate one than exists in relation to Creator and creatures. Why? Because the believers, once far off from God because of their sin, have been made nigh by the blood of Christ, the Lamb. True, God is still calling those who are afar off, yet it remains true that as long as they are ~~un~~belief, they are not yet in the mystical union in the narrower sense. The relationship of God with the believers is one of Redeemer, Sanctifier, High-Priest, co-worker, co-laborer, and Brother. With this we do not mean to say that Christ is not the Savior of the unbelieving, as if He did not objectively justify them and die for them, but rather the point is that they have not this benefit while they are outside of the household of faith.

Since it is a very distinct union, it is necessary how this union is brought about. Here we operate with the terms, "objective means", and the "subjective means". They are the means which God employs to bring this into existence in the believers' hearts. Specifically, they, the means which God employs to bring this into existence -

they are the means of grace, the objective means: the Gospel and the Sacraments, Lord's Supper and Baptism; the subjective means: faith. By 'faith' we mean to convey the meaning of the confessionalists: 'the hand that reaches out for the grace offered.' Quenstedt says: "The mystical union...effected by God Himself through the Gospel, the sacraments, and faith, by which, through a special approximation of His essence, and by a gracious operation, He is in them, just as also believers are in Him."

61) Concerning this we can also say that this specific teaching distinguishes us from all the rest, that we insist that the mystical union occurs mediately, and not immediately. Dr. Th. Graebner writes: "But while He upholds all things by the Word of His power, He is present in a spiritual way only through the operations of the Word of God". 62) The Reformed position, on the other hand, denies that means are necessary here for the mystical union. They argue on the basis that faith is there before the Sacrament of Baptism is applied. We say that it is possible, but this does not remove the power of the means, nor does it prove that the faith before Baptism was produced without the Word. Strong says: "Perhaps the most pernicious misinterpretation of the nature of this union is that which conceives of it as a physical and material one, and which rears upon this basis the fabric of

61) Weidner, op. cit. p. 173

62) C.T.M. vol. I, p. 17

a sacramental and external Christianity. It is sufficient to say here that this union cannot be mediated by the sacraments, since sacraments presuppose it as already existing; [?] both Baptism and Lord's Supper are destined only for believers. Only faith receives and retains Christ; and faith is the act of the soul grasping what is purely invisible and supersensible: not the act of the body, submitting to Baptism or partaking of the Supper." For one thing, this⁶³⁾ misrepresents the Lutheran position. We do not teach an opus ex operato benefit of the Lord's Supper. We do not eliminate faith as the means of receiving the benefit/. But we must insist that faith acts only through the means of grace. It is faith, indeed, that feeds and nourishes the mystical union but at the same time, it is the faith that is fed by the Word and the Sacrament. That faith is the subjective means has been treated in the section regarding the Holy Ghost's part in the union. We showed that the Holy Ghost kindles the individual's faith and then brings about this union. Faith grows, for the Spirit dwells in the heart with the Word employed, and the union grows more intense and deeper, although the respect and awe of God is never violated by an improper intimacy and familiarity, as some teach.

When the mystical union sets in, is not very readily explained. The entire procedure of the Holy

63) Strong: op. cit. p. 442

Spirit is one that can hardly be divided as to periods, for conversion and the union are consummated in short succession. A theological maxim has always been: "In-habitatio Dei sequitur justitiam." The union, then, takes place after justification, after the faith has been set into the heart. It follows fresh upon the kindling of faith. There is no intermediary stage. Hence, also all synergism is excluded. Elert says: "Quenstedt will sogar die unio mit Rechtfertigung, Wiedergeburt und Erneuerung praktisch in puncto mathematico zusammenfallen lassen (III, 621). Nur in der begrifflichen Unterscheidung sollen Rechtfertigung und Erneuerung der unio vorangehen. Das richtet sich selbstverstaendlich gegen den Irrtum des alten Osiander und gegen seine pietischen Nachfolger", etc. 64)

Regarding the time and the sequence of justification and the mystical union, Quenstedt says: "Regeneration, justification, union, and renovation, are simultaneous, and, being more closely united than the ingredients of an atom, so cohere that it cannot be separated or rent asunder. Yet to our mode of conceiving them, regeneration precedes, that faith may be attained; justification follows, which is of faith; the mystical union then occurs, which is succeeded by renovation and sanctification." 65) However, we find that in this point of sequence many have disagreed

64) Elert, op. cit. p. 629

65) Weidner, op. cit. p. 173

and claim that the mystical union may take place before justification. This is false, however, on the very face of it. Schmid seems to allow for this view: "According to another mode of considering this, it may be said that union precedes justification; and in faith, as the organ by which the union is effected, its beginning is already presupposed. Therefore Hollaz (p.933) after consenting to this view adds: 'Although the mystical union, by which God dwells in the soul as in a temple, may, according to our mode of conception, follow justification in the order of nature, it is however to be acknowledged that the formal union of faith, by which Christ is apprehended, put on, and united with us, as the mediator and the author of grace and pardon, logically precedes justification. For faith is imputed for righteousness, so far as this receives the merit of Christ, and so unites it with ourselves as to make it ours.'"⁶⁶) On the contrary, the believer is justified the moment he receives faith. There is no middle stage. This can hardly be stated without violating distinct doctrines of Scripture. How can, if we reason thus, a man who is as yet unjustified in the subjective way or converted, stand before God, and how can he claim union with Christ?

⁶⁶) Schmid: op. cit. p. 481

Similarly, the Reformed writers frequently confuse the act of God justifying the sinner and the beginning of the mystical union. In other words, they often identify the result with the cause. Strong writes: "As Christ's union with the race secures the objective reconciliation of the race to God, so Christ's union with believers secures the subjective reconciliation of believers with God." 67) He confuses the conversion of the individual and the beginning of the mystical union. While they are simultaneous, they cannot be intermingled. In contrast to the other errorists, these tend to prolong the act of justification and include in it the beginning of the union. No; the justification already has taken place as the union sets in. Union is one of the blessed results of conversion, or subjective reconciliation.

In a similar manner, the Confessions, the Formula Concord in particular, condemn those who confuse justification in this way: "We reject and condemn the error that faith looks not only to the obedience of Christ, but to His divine nature as it dwells in us, and that by this indwelling our sins are covered before God." 68) The controversy of Osiander was concerned with the fundamental concept of the mode of justification. He looked upon justification as a me-

67) Strong: op. cit. pp. 444 and 445

68) Conc. Trigl., F. of C. Art. III, 4, p. 937

dicinal process whereby the righteousness, the essential righteousness of Christ, was gradually absorbed by the believer. He taught that the hope of the believer was the divine nature of Christ dwelling in his heart. From this the believer takes and acquires righteousness before God. This is a confusion of the doctrine of justification and sanctification. The mystical union, on the other hand, is, the effect of faith, not the object of faith.

The union sets in at conversion. When the heart is changed by the power of the Word, then begins the mystical union. "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." Also in Romans 6 we read: "We are buried with Christ by baptism into death". Through the means of grace we are brought to faith, through the means of grace strengthened in this faith, and through these means we are also brought into the intimate union with Christ and with the entire Trinity. This tie becomes stronger as we feed upon the means of grace. Schmid says: "The union may be conceived as an act, inasmuch as it takes place instantaneously, and is then more particularly to be defined as a uniting (unitio), or the act of union, which is transient and momentary, and takes place at the same time with regeneration and justification; or, as a state, which is properly and specifically called 'union' (unio) and remains unbroken as long as the justified person avoids voluntary sins." 69)

69) Schmid: op. cit. p. 481 and 482

This union precedes sanctification. United with Christ, the Vine, we bring forth much fruit, for we are the branches, as Christ has told us. Without Him we can do nothing. Without that vital connection the life of sanctification that follows upon this union would be impossible. Again, this union is impossible without the individual's justification, or conversion. Therefore, one can observe how these doctrines fit together. It all hinges upon the doctrine of justification: if the person is not justified, the life of true sanctification is not possible.

A number of excellent definitions, if we may call them thus, have been given. "The mystical union, as the result of indwelling grace, is the spiritual conjunction of the triune God with the justified man in whom as a temple hallowed to Himself, God dwells by special personal presence, not the presence of separated gifts, but of substance bringing the gifts and operating by a gracious influence in him. As a part of this mystical union, there is a conjunction, true and real, and most close, of the divine-human nature of Christ, the God-man with the renewed man." 70) This is a spiritual union, maintained by faith and nourished through the means of grace. Quenstedt says: "The mystical union..... that, by a mutual and reciprocal immanence they may partake of His vivifying power and all His mercies, become assured

70) Weidner, op. cit. p. 169

of the grace of God and eternal salvation, and preserve unity in the faith, and love with the other members of the mystical body."71)

One of the characteristics of this union is that it is a gracious bestowal of God in Christ Jesus. As God already in eternity knew how man would separate himself from God by sin and would cut off that friendship that existed at the beginning of time, then God planned a way that men, through faith in His Son might enjoy the intimacy of the mystical union after conversion. We can hardly treat this deep doctrine without realizing that this union is a bestowal of grace. Therefore, we endeavor to focus this doctrine of the mystical union in such a way so as to remain true to the sola gratia both in conversion and in justification.

Coupled with this, there is the characteristic of mystery. This is not a mystery that would invite speculation, but it is a God-revealed mystery that invites the humble investigation of faith. Strong says correctly: "An inscrutable union,- mystical, however, only in the sense of surpassing in its intimacy and value any other union of souls which we know, and cannot be fully described or understood by earthly analogies. Cfr. Eph. 5,32, and Coloss.1,27."
72)

71) Weidner: op. cit. p. 173 and 174

72) Strong: op. cit. p. 443

Regarding the wonderful nature of this union, Strong speaks in very glowing terms, with the fervor of faith: "Such is the nature of union with Christ,- such I mean, is the nature of every believer's union with Christ. For, whether he knows it or not, every Christian has entered into just such a partnership as this. It is this and this only which constitutes him a Christian, and which makes possible a Christian church. (This, however, should not exclude the means of grace). We may, indeed, be thus united to Christ, without being fully conscious of the real nature of our relation to Him. We may actually possess the kernel, while as yet we have regard only to the shell; we may seem to ourselves to be united to Christ only by an external bond, while after all it is an inward and spiritual bond that makes us his...Christ and the believer have the same life. They are not separated persons linked together by some temporary bond of friendship, they are united by a tie as close and indissoluble as if the same blood ran in their veins." 73)

Of the Reformed position we shall treat in the succeeding paragraphs.

73) Strong: op. cit. p. 444

The Reformed Position

If we consider the Reformed position, as well as the theology of Barth, who do not distinguish between the Law and the Gospel, but intermingle these doctrines, then we can readily understand their approach to the mystical union. The Reformed are correct in asserting that we are in Christ by faith. However, it is not correct to say with Hodge: "The consequences of this union are, a) Participation in His merits. His perfect righteousness, agreeably to the stipulations of the covenant of redemption, is imputed to the believer...He is thereby justified...b) Another consequence of the union with Christ effected by faith, is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit." 74) The difficulty is this: we do not participate in Christ as a result of this union, for the union is the result of being justified and being made a partaker of His merits. He is justified by the merits of Christ, it is true, but this precedes the mystical union. Regarding the second point we also find a difficulty, for we cannot say that faith effects this union in the sense in which the Reformed employ these terms. 'Faith' to them is the obedience to the ordinances of Christ. It is extremely difficult to understand their procedure, when they say: "The first effect of faith, according to Scriptures, is union with Christ..The proximate effect of this union, and, consequently, the second effect of faith, is justification."75) The effect of this union cannot be justification, neither can

74) Hodge: Systematic Theology, vol.III, p. 226 and 227

75) Hodge: op. cit. pp. 104 and 105

we employ the phrase that justification is an effect of faith, unless faith is looked upon as obedience.

More in particular, we consider the doctrinal statements of the various Reformed bodies, in order to prove our contention that their definition of the mystical union is not adequate in the light of Holy Scripture. In the first place, the Mennonite theology, which speaks of the mystical union at great length, agrees with our contention: "Mennonite theology has inverted the Scriptural relation of good works to justification and has made the mystical union of the believer with Christ the basis and not the result of justification. Therefore regeneration is viewed as moral transformation, the Confession of Dort stating: 'As man is inclined to all unrighteousness, therefore the first doctrine of the New Testament is repentance and amendment of life.... Without faith, the new birth, and a change or renewal of life, nothing can help or qualify us that may please God or receive any consolation or promise of salvation from Him.' Art.VI. Mennonites say that we are saved through faith, but faith and obedience are continually identified...The Shorter Catechism: 'Obedience from love of God is the life and the light of faith.'"

76) Also the Moravian theology, with Zinzendorf as a chief exponent, stresses the idea of the mystical union. It errs, however, by lapsing into pietism. "Moravians seek a 'positive

76) Popular Symbolics, pp. 260 and 261

unity', i.e., the personal, mystical union, with Christ as the living force of Christianity and offer the hand of fellowship to every one who accepts this basis." 77) On the one hand, it is not sufficient that mystical union be the basis of external fellowship. Furthermore, we can hardly base fellowship on something that cannot be unmistakably determined: who shall decide that these or those are in the mystical union? In their Manual, p. 88ff., we read that the Moravians believe that the peculiar purpose of their Church is to keep its members "in constant confidential intercourse with Christ..and to carry the new life of the regenerate child forward towards maturity and its perfection into eternity." 78) Their hymns reflect this principle, where the mystical union is distorted into many irreverent allegories.

Another theologian, who does not have such a great following, deserves mention here, namely, Schwenkfeld. His subjectivism is everywhere apparent in his theology. His line of thought is like this: "Man is incomplete until God's love and grace fill him. God's ethical essence must become man's property. (Compare the Osianrian doctrine of the infused righteousness of God.) This divine righteousness is conveyed to the believer by "the Eternal Word", the glorified or deified human nature of Christ.' Faith is the soul's mystical

77) Popular Symbolics, p. 278ff.

78) Pop. Symb. p. 279

union with the absolute God and His ethical righteousness, and therefore justification cannot be viewed as the imputation of Christ's righteousness, but it is the union with 'the glorified King of heaven.'" 79) This is one the same plane with the Roman conceptions and the Osiandrian error.

Among others, the Irvingites and the Holiness Bodies, in agreement with the Reformed position of sanctification, stress sanctification in a way that distorts the doctrine of justification. "In the opinion of some Holiness writers, sanctification is tantamount to an infusion of Christ. Simpson writes: 'When we are dedicated to God (entirely sanctified), Christ comes to live in us as trul as though we were dwelling under His wing..The Fourfold Gospel,39.40.'"80) The Reformed clearly teach that good works, then, bring about the mystical union. They reverse the entire matter as Scripture places it. Furthermore we read: "Many Holiness teachers declare that in sanctification the 'living physical Christ comes into our life, sharing with His physical life with ours in a union which is closer than the connubial life.'" 81) More plainly does the Seven Day Adventist group express the Reformed view: "True, they say, we are justified by Christ's blood for the sins that are past,- but they consider it equally important 'that we are saved from the power to sin by His indwelling.'"

79) Op. cit., pp. 322 and 323

80) Pop. Symb. pp. 336 and 337

81) Pop. Symb. loc. cit.

Justification is therefore not based on the 'Christ for us' but on the 'Christ in us'. Mrs. White writes: 'Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and in that wrought by His Spirit working in and through us.' Steps to Christ, 68. Naturally the Adventists make much of the believer's mystical union with Christ, which is said to result in man's moral transformation and the ability to keep the Law of God." 82) The Methodist theology, particularly with the principle of total sanctification, is included in this group.

Anti-Trinitarian

One Scandinavian theologian, an Anti-Trinitarian, claimed that freedom of the will and free cooperation on the part of man are the factors which bring about the union. "According to Swedenborg, salvation, positively considered, consists in establishing a reciprocal conjunction, or 'union', between God and man. Since man is a free agent in spiritual matters, therefore it depends solely upon man whether the union with God is established, and it does not depend upon God's grace, not upon a capricious election, nor upon a predestination of grace, True Christian Religion, 486; 490. God dwells in every man (369), but man must also prepare himself as receptacle for God, into which God may enter with man's consent (105). But if the finite man would be conjoined with the infinite God, the finite human being would be consumed. Therefore the Lord assumed the human and glorified (deified) it, and hence man can now be conjoined with the

divine in the glorified humanity, i.e., with the Lord who is God-man and Man-god.(370) 83)

The Roman Catholic Position

In Roman theology there is much enthusiasm and a concomitant confusion of justification and sanctification. Hence, also a confusion of the term, 'mystical union'. "Whoever wishes to be united to the Risen Savior sitting at the right hand of His heavenly Father- and this principle must be ingrained in the every fibres of the heart- must deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow Christ in his daily life." 84) The Roman position not only confuses justification in this view of attaining to this union, but it errs in its position regarding the immediacy of such a union: "To some souls, however, even in the present life, God gives a very special grace by which they are enabled to feel His sensible presence: this is true mystical contemplation. In this act, there is no annihilation or absorption of the creature into God, one, enlightened by special illuminations, contemplates ^{with} the ineffable joy the Divine essence." 85) That Roman theologians teach this can be seen from the hosts of

82) Pop. Symb. p. 355

83) Pop. Symb. p. 392

84) Dr. A.N. Fuerst: The Systematic Teaching of Religion, p.13
Benziger Bros., (Cath. text)

85) Cath. Encycl. pp. 664 and 665

mystics whom we have enumerated at the beginning of the first chapter. The visions of St. Francis, the stigmata of the woman in France, the legends of the saints and their mystical experiences are regarded as genuine today by the Roman Church. Therefore, inasmuch as they depend upon these illuminations as sources of knowledge and doctrine, we can very well place them with the Reformed, both because of their similar principle of enthusiasm and because of their confusion of justification and sanctification.

**Chapter Three: The Extent of this Union, or the Description
of this Union**

A Union in which the Believer and the Savior Share Blessings

As we consider the extent of this union, we cite the various blessings which the believer shares with the Savior. These gifts are manifold, and the abundance in which they are supplied belong to the effects of the Christian's faith. The first blessing or gift which the believer partakes of is the divine nature of Christ. This is to be correctly understood, and not in the manner of Osiander, whose error we have sketched in the previous chapter. Neither is it a partaking of the divine nature that would contradict God's attribute of indivisibility. However, in a certain sense a Christian shares in the divine nature of Christ. We read in II Pet. 1, 4: "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." The apostle here assumes that his readers have come to faith and have accepted the grace of God in Christ. Through the marks and properties of God's essence: love, mercy, majesty, God has given us this gift, namely, faith in the Savior. "At the same time, and through the same perfection of His essence, God has imparted to us another gift, the precious, the immeasurably great and beautiful and incomprehensible promises. His purpose in doing this was and is that He might so strengthen our faith as thereby to make us partakers of His divine nature, to give us power to put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." 86)

86) Kretzmann: Pop. Comm. Vol. II, 545

We share also in the mind of Christ, as Paul says in I Cor. 2,16: "For who hath known the mind of (Christ) the Lord that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ." The Christian believers possess the mind of Christ, for they hold the wisdom of the Gospel in their hearts by faith. By the working of the Spirit through the Word, they receive their share in the mind of Christ. Lenski "To have Christ's mind' is to possess its contents by way of a gracious gift, v.12....This is the message of the Gospel, the wisdom made to be shared by us through faith in the Gospel. Through the Word by the Spirit, 'the mind of Christ' is come to us." 87) In Philipians 2,5ff., we have the more specific characterization of the mind of Christ as shared, or as it ought to be shared by the believers: "Let this same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, Who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant...He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." By keeping the example of the Savior always in mind, the Christians are to be of the same frame of mind which characterized Christ, namely, humility. "The Christians should have this opinion concerning themselves, they should let this manner of thinking govern their lives." 88)

87) Lenski: Interpret. of I and II Cor., p. 119

88) Kretzmann: op. cit. p. 302

The believers naturally share in the Savior's love which He shows toward them. By His care over them, by His guiding them, by His feeding and nourishing them with the Word and Sacraments, He shows them the fullest measure of His love, in which they share. In the Song of Sol. 2,16 we read of the possession of the Church, the Bride, in the Christ, the Bridegroom: "My Beloved is mine, and I am His, He feedeth among the lilies." So completely is Christ the possession of the Church, the Church His own, that there is no modifying or qualifying remark added which limits this complete possession. The further confidence of the Church, in its exultation over the union with Christ, is expressed by the words of certainty in chapter 7, verse 10: "I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me."

This union also includes a share in the spirit of Christ. Paul says in I Cor. 6, 17: "But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." The previous verse points out that he who joins himself with a harlot, he is one with her. By faith, however, we are joined with the holy Christ and thereby follows our union with Him in spirit. Here we see that the mystical union is a spiritual union, and not a substantial or physical one. What occurred to him who joined himself to a harlot, that was the opposite of what happened in the case of the believer and Christ. One spirit vibrates through Christ and the Christian, as though one mind is controlling the two, which is the case. He is in us and we are in Him. "With no absorption of our spirit into Christ, with

no mingling or fusion of the two, with no loss of identity, of either, our spirit is joined to Christ's, so that one thought, one desire, one will animates and controls both, namely his thought, desire and will." 89)

A more profound thought of Scripture is the statement that we, all believers, share in the sufferings of Christ. Lest this be misunderstood, we note that this does not mean that we assist in any way in the mediatorial work, neither in redemption nor in justification of the individual. Paul touches upon this vital point in Philipp. 3,10: "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, being made conformable to His death." Because the Christian is connected with Christ by faith, what falls on Christ, falls on him. Paul realized this to be true as he also went to death as many Christians, as a martyr. So closely united to Christ is the believer that Christ is formed in him. The deep and inward connection between Christ and the believer is here expressed. In II Tim. 2,12 we read that we share suffering with Christ, but that afterward we shall also be glorified with Him. In I Peter 4,13 the apostle goes so far as to say that the measure in which we share in Christ's sufferings, so great is our joy. The paradox is this: the more a believer is abused for the sake of his faith in Christ, the more

89) Lenski: Interp. of I and II Cor., p. 269

blessed and happy he is. This does not mean that the suffering is a simple matter, but the Christian, united to Christ, bears it as a necessary consequence of this union. Those who are outside of the union will mock and ridicule those who are in the union. A further step in the development of this thought is seen in Coloss. 1,24: "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." Before explaining this passage, we quote the foregoing passage, I Peter 4,13: "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings!" etc. In both passages we have a reference to the joy that comes with sharing in Christ's sufferings. In the Colossians passage, however, the new thought is added, that the Christians complete the sufferings of Christ. This would seem to prove the Roman contention that we complete the satisfaction of Christ, but we must say again, this has nothing to do with the way of salvation. As the Christians begin the judgment with their sufferings, as Peter says, chapter 4,17, thus the Christians complete the sufferings of Christ. There is no thought of further atonement. There are 'left-overs', as Lenski says, from the sufferings of Christ. "There is no thought of further expiation, but in a very real sense our blows are struck at Christ. Paul conceives these left-overs as bitter waters gradually being poured into a huge vessel until it is completely filled, when at the last the final day arrives. So he says: 'I am filling up in my

turn' my allotment of these left-over afflictions of Christ.' In this way the Christian shares in and completes the sufferings of Christ. It can also be understood this way, that the enemies of Christ did not stop reviling and abusing the Gospel and His name when He finished His suffering, but they extend their taunts even to centuries after His ascension against Him and especially against His followers. The Christians, in the epistle of Peter, are described as beginning the judgment with their suffering, while the unbelievers complete it in eternity. The Christians here continue to complete the suffering that comes from enemy camps." 90) The afflictions of the Christians are the results of the world's hatred of the Suffering of Christ, not because they detest the treatment of Christ, but they, the worldlings, detest the Message that springs from the Suffering: the Gospel. In other words, the suffering of Christ is complete in the real sense. But the abuse is not yet ended: in that respect the Christians complete the sufferings of Christ. Moreover, we can add the passage from Acts which relates of Saul's conversion, where Christ identifies the suffering of Christians in persecution with what happens to Himself: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Saul was really persecuting Christ, as he tracked down all believers of 'the Way'. Here the other side of the picture is given: not only do the be-

90) Lenski: Interpr. of Coloss. Thessal. p. 74

lievers share in Christ's sufferings, but Christ also says that whatever is done against them because of their faith, is done against Him. It is a reciprocal sharing.

The closest that the believer comes to Christ, it is said, is in the Sacrament of the Altar, when the believer, as well as the unbeliever, receives the true body and blood of Christ. In the first epistle to the Corinthians, verse 16 and 17 we read: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread and that one cup." Here the communicant receives the body of Christ and His very blood for the forgiveness of sins. This repeated offer and promise of forgiveness, this participation in faith brings him the benefits of the Lord's Supper, so that the mystical union between the believer and Christ is nurtured and strengthened. Dr. Engelder writes: "And in the Lord's Supper the Lord brings this promise to us in a particularly solemn and impressive manner, confirming and sealing it with His body and His blood. In this way the Lord's Supper also preserves and deepens the unio mystica, for Christ dwells in the hearts by faith, Eph. 3,16, and the more our faith is invigorated in the Lord's Supper, the more the powers and blessings of the unio mystica unfold themselves."

91) Engelder, Notes on the Lord's Supper, p 12-13

The illustration has been used to set forth this strengthening of the mystical union in the Lord's Supper: in the sciences we learn that some objects are joined by adhesion, others by cohesion, and still others, by assimilation, as in the case of food becomes a part of the human body. Thus in the Lord's Supper, the Lord's body and blood becomes part and parcel of us, though not in a physical manner. Our soul becomes strengthened by the assimilation of this spiritual food and drink and grows into closer intimacy with Christ, on to greater spiritual maturity. The effect is similar with the communion of fellow-believers: their unity among themselves becomes more deepened and more intensified. The more closely they are knit with Christ in the mystical union, the more closely will they be knit to one another in the mystical body of the Church.

Though the Lord's Supper nourishes this mystical union, yet one must bear in mind the difference between the mystical union of the believer with Christ and the union in the Sacrament. Baier quotes Quenstedt, p. 294: "Differt quoque ab unione et communione sacramentali unio mystica. Ibi enim extremum, participans substantiam sacramenti, latius se extendit, quam hic, dum ibi indigni et hypocritae, hic soli fideles uniuntur; ibi communicatio consistit in actu transitorio, hic in permanente actu." While in the Lord's Supper both believers and unbelievers receive the true body and blood, in the mystical union only the believers are united with Christ, for faith is the connecting link.

In the Lord's Supper, only those who believe receive the benefits, while all receive the body and blood. Secondly, this communion at the Lord's table is a temporary act, while the mystical union is permanent.

Furthermore, the Christian shares in the death of Christ. The same principle which we applied before, applies here. This does not mean that the Christian shares in the physical death of Christ, as the mystics have claimed. In Romans 6, 3-8 we hear that the Christians share in the death of Christ: "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life....Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him," etc. The two deaths are not the same, yet our death to sin is a resemblance to His greater death for sin. The tertium comparationis goes no farther than Scriptures allow: as He died on account of sin and rose again to new life, thus also we die in a different way to sin when we are converted and baptized. The power of the old Adam is put down in the believer at conversion and a new man, the new life enters in, thus resembling the resurrection of Christ. What occurred to Christ in a physical way, happens to us in a spiritual way in Baptism and in conversion. Through Baptism we are united with Christ. "By connecting us with Christ's death Baptism so joined us to it that we ourselves died to sin. It was a dying together, this

death of Christ and of ourselves, a being entombed together as dead. The difference between Christ's death as sacrificial and vicarious, and ours as escape from sin and dominion, is fully conserved; for only on the verity of this difference rests this concentrated predication...Baptism connects us with the Messiah Jesus, and Paul says that this means the connection with His death... The mystical uniting of the two, however, exists ^{not} only in our thought and thus in the expression of our thought; this union is a reality; no matter how we think of it and speak of it." 92)

Also in Gal. 2,20 Paul says: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me", etc. Paul had been speaking of the justification by faith, and the danger of the Galatian error of Judaism. Hence, he was pointing out to them the conversion which he had experienced in Christ, that he was now no longer a slave to the Law, but was in Christian liberty. He had been crucified with Christ and had died unto sin. That every believer is thus crucified with Christ is evident from the following part that he now lives 'by faith'. There is a different principle ruling him now that he is joined to the Savior through a mystical death. In II Tim. 2,12 and 11:

92) Lenski, pp.402ff.

"For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him.. if we suffer, we shall reign with him." Dr. Engelder writes: "All other effects of Baptism are the result and consequence of these two effects, justification and regeneration. The implantation into the body of Christ, effected by Baptism, I Cor. 12.13, is the necessary result, or rather the concomitant of the impartation, by Baptism, of the forgiveness of sins and of faith." 93) Dying with Christ unto sin, suffering for the cause of the Gospel, all belongs to what the believer shares with Christ in the mystical union. If we go back to the Gal. 2,20, we find that Paul's statement of Christ ruling in him has been emphasized by Luther, who stressed the mystical union when he worded his explanation of Galatians in a rather extreme manner, though not erroneous: "I am Christ". Luther merely wanted to stress the fact that he was united to Christ by faith. Baier speaks of this in his Compendium, "Lutherus quidem in Com. ad. c.2. Gal. inquit, fidelem per fidem sic conglutinari possit: 'Ego sum Christus'; sed statim se explicat, addens: i.e., Christi justitia, vita, victoria est mea; et vicissim Christus dicat: 'Ego sum ille peccator', i.e. ejus peccata, mors etc. sunt mea." 94) In Colossians 3,3 we read the remarkable words: "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." With their death to sin, the believers have cut themselves off from their former sinful life. In inner relationship with Christ, joined to Him through the

93) Engelder: Notes on Baptism, p. 5

94) Baier: Compendium, III, p. 294

mystical death to sin, the believer does not operate with the principle of sin. Here we also anticipate a later point, that we share the life of Christ. The new life is hidden in so far as it is incomprehensible and spiritual. It cannot be understood by the world. But it is made manifest in good works of sanctification, though ridiculed and misunderstood by the unbelieving world.

We share in the life and the resurrection of Christ. In Romans 6 we note that "like as He was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." In Gal. 2,20 we hear Paul stating that Christ lives in Him. This new life occurs by faith, after the old Adam has died. The effect of our being crucified with Christ is now rising to new life. By faith the Savior permeates the ~~life~~ believer with life and resurrection to new spiritual activity. The believer receives from Christ the Life that comes by virtue of Christ's death, the subjective justification which is nothing else than the acceptance of the objective justification of Christ's merit. From the Christ who was raised for justification, from Him the believers by faith receive the Life everlasting. In the second place, the believers receive the Life through union with Him, so that they agree with Christ in word, will, and deed in the life of sanctification. In Col. 3,4 we heard that our spiritual life is hid with Christ in God.

The share with Christ and the believer is a path from the cross to the crown. He shares with Christ not only suffering and pain, but also the glory which is to come. In Revelation we read that the teachers who have led many to righteousness shall shine as the stars in heaven. The martyrs will also be glorified. In I Peter 5,10 we read: "But the God of all grace who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while", etc. The object of our conversion is that we might finally share the glory of Christ in heaven. That is the final extent of the mystical union. The Greek original has it rather, "in Christ", meaning that, we shall be covered and surrounded with Christ and His glory. Already now Christ is the spiritual air which our souls breathe, in the mystical union. Again, in Coloss. 3,4 we have the plain statement: "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye appear with Him in glory." In the preceding Paul spoke of the mystical dying with Christ, but here there is something in store for the believers: those who have died the mystical death and have been raised in conversion, they shall partake of His glory. In I Peter 5,1 the apostle calls himself "a partaker of His glory". Also the Evangelist John speaks of the glory which the believers beheld: "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only Begotten of

the Father, full of grace and truth." In chapter 17, 24 John records the prayer of Jesus, who prayed that the believers might have the privilege of seeing His glory, in fact, to be with Him where He was: "Father, I will that they whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which Thou has given Me." In one of his epistles, John, in I John 3,2 extends this intimacy to a resemblance, not merely as a presence with Him: "But we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." Christ also guaranteed to every believer that He would so glorify them in heaven that He would confess their name before the angels and before His Father in heaven: "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, Him will I confess also before My Father in heaven." Matth. 10,32.

This glory which the believer shall share is to include the idea of reigning with Christ, as is stated in II Tim. 2,12: "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him." Paul also mentions the fact that by faith we are all kings and priests with Christ. This agrees with what Peter says regarding the universal priesthood of all believers. Believers, who are united with Christ, enjoy these tremendous privileges.

Other passages which treat of this "sharing":
 Rom. 15,27; II John 9b; Matth. 10,24;
 3 Maccab. 4,11; Sap. VI, 23.

A Union Far Beyond Human Parallels

In Scripture we have many pictures which describe to us the relationship which exists between the Savior and the believers by virtue of their faith in Him. In John 5 we have the familiar account stressing Christ as the Vine and the believers as the branches. The words show that this vital connection is very important for their spiritual life. While there is a distinction made: "I am the Vine; ye are the branches," there is no doubt that the two cannot be separated, for Christ says: "For without Me ye can do nothing." Without the connection, the spiritual life disappears. It is like a great piece of machinery, with the current turned off. Furthermore, the comparison is limited and clear, inasmuch as the Vine and the branches are clearly set apart as different units. There is no danger of identifying the two, nor of teaching a commingling of Christ and the believer, if the point of comparison is kept in mind. The believers bring forth fruit of sanctification, only as long as they are in vital connection with Him by faith. The Vine and the branches must be connected with the prospect of bearing fruit. This figure is employed of Israel also in Is. 5.

Another illustration which has been employed in Scripture, that of the Church as the building resting on Christ, the Foundation. It is employed in the following passages: first of all, in I Cor. 3, 10, 11, where Paul says

that he laid the foundation of the congregation, or organized it, but that in reality no one lay any other foundation than that which was laid by Jesus Christ. The Una Sancta rests upon the fact that it is connected vitally and spiritually with Christ by faith through the Word which it proclaims and the Sacraments which it administers. Its hope is built upon Christ, who gives strength, stability, permanence, and protection to the Building. He is the Chief Cornerstone, as Peter says in I Pet. 2, 4-6. This spiritual house is built up by the preaching of the Gospel which the prophets and apostles confessed and preached. Through this preaching many are led to faith and added as 'living stones' to the growing structure, the Holy Christian Church. All these stones find their support in the Chief Cornerstone, Christ Jesus.

Still another analogy has been used to depict the relationship between Christ and the believer. It is the illustration of the Body and the members. Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthians that Christ is the Head of the Church, and the members of the Church are the members of His body. This refers, naturally, to the invisible Church. From their vital connection with the Head, the members receive strength and increase in knowledge, spiritual understanding, and Christian service. In I Cor. 12,12 we note: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ." The Church is virtually identified with Christ,

("so also is Christ"), by virtue of the mystical union. In the Church, the members, as though limbs of Christ's body, are united with Christ and with one another. All those who are in this sacred relationship by faith are bound together in the same manner. Those separated from outward fellowship because of doctrinal differences, those separated by denominational lines, all who accept Christ as their only savior from sin are members of this mystical body and enjoy the mystical union. Not only individually, but also with the invisible Church enjoy the self-evident fellowship of faith; this is the paradox that exists while outward fellowship cannot be granted with the existence of error. Here one must again apply sound hermeneutical principles and not interpret this comparison allegorically. Some misguided interpreters draw on this passage to prove that certain functions and organs function in relation to Christ for a definite purpose and so on. First of all, the verses apply only a simple comparison. In the second place, all these interpretations border on and lead to blasphemous suggestions. Keeberle quotes the statement of Barth: "With the greatest emphasis we teach the connection of the Head with the members. The in-dwelling of Christ, yea, His mystical union with us. As Christ becomes our possession He makes us partakers of the gifts that He has acquired for us. We do not dream about a distant Christ, who remains a stranger to us while His righteousness is imputed to us; much rather because we have put on Christ and are in-

corporated with Him, yea, because He has made us worthy of becoming one with Him, we dare boast we have a part in His righteousness." 95) Although we would not express ourselves in the manner of Barth, who so clearly reflects the Reformed point of view, we believe that this statement is striking indeed. In verse 27 we read: "Now are ye the body of Christ, and members in particular." This bears out what we have stated in the foregoing. Also Eph. 1,23 says: "The Church, which is His body". The members function as they are united with Christ the Head. Though the various functions and talents differ, all form one unit, because all are united with the Head. In Jeremiah 33,16, as many scholars agree, we have a reference to the mystical union in a very remarkable way. The name of Christ, mentioned earlier in the prophecy of Jeremiah, "The Lord our Righteousness", is given to a feminine pronoun: "And she shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness. If this translation is correct, it is most satisfactory to apply this pronoun to the Church. This brings out the thought that the Church is so intimately connected with Christ, that she receives the very name whereby He is called, The Lord our Righteousness. Although not all scholars are agreed that this translation is correct, yet this is a noteworthy observation. This passage is interpreted thus by Dr. L. Fuerbringer. On the other hand, Dr. J.Th. Mueller takes this as: "It shall be called unto her".

95) Koerberle, op. cit. p. 104

Another picture which the Bible uses to describe the mystical union, especially between Christ and the Church, is that of the Husband and Wife, the Bridegroom and Bride. In Ephesians 5, 25-32, where Paul admonishes to marital faithfulness and sobriety, he interweaves his exhortation by a parallel union, the marriage of Christ and the Church. Christ is pictured as the model for husbands to love their wives even as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. The comparison is remarkable, and shows the close relation between Christ and the believers as they constitute the *Una Sancta*. It is the ideal after which the Christian husbands should strive, says the apostle. Paul also points out the loving care which Christ has showed and still shows the Church by His redemption. He also says, "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." So intimate is this union that as in marriage, the two are made one flesh, so Christ and the Church are pictured as being one Body, flesh of flesh, and bone of bone.

This is a spiritual relationship, and beyond this we cannot go. Hollaz says: "The espousal of Christ with believers is that by which He eternally marries Himself to believers through faith, so that they become one spirit, and by His power communicates to them, as to His spiritual bride,

intimate and enduring love, all His blessings and all His glory, so as finally to lead them to His home, and dwell with them in His celestial and eternal kingdom." 96) Some have gone to the extreme of mysticism in interpreting this passage, as they also do when they interpret the Song of Solomon. "As we have already pointed out, mysticism describes the union of God and the soul in sentimental naturalistic terms. It speaks of a substantial marriage of the human and the divine spirit that ends in an act of union where all distinctions cease. But wherever the Deus in nobis is affirmed on the basis of the Christus pro nobis, there can be no talk of an absorption and submersion into a state of static being. . . . How modestly and with what exalted tone Luther, in his Freedom of a Christian Man uses the picture of the bride and bridegroom that is so common in mystical literature, and how unsensuous are the descriptions of the "exchange" which takes place in faith as we find them, for example, in the letter to the Augustinian monk, Geo. Spenleini. The real reception of exchanged possessions is maintained but the erotic taint is nowhere to be found. To receive 'the wedding ring of faith' is a 'joyous exchange', a 'joyous business', not an ecstatic love union. Faith, even when endowed with God's richest blessing, continues in a state of pure humility." 97) Here we

96) Schmid, op. cit., 481 ff.

97) Koeberle, op. cit., pp. 105 and 106

have a definite expression of the difference between the true and the false concept of the spiritual marriage of the Lamb and the Church. All eroticism which is frequently the characteristic of sincere, but misled mystics, is outside of and against this text. This comparison of Paul points to the union in its aspect of Christ's love and the Church's obedience to Him as its Head in its sanctified condition. In this union Christ nourishes the Church as a group, but also the individuals, by Word and Sacraments.

This union is also indissoluble. If we examine the words of Paul in Romans 8,35 we find that the union is permanent with the believer and Christ. Even trial, temptation, trouble, sword, death, height, depth, creature, angel, events cannot separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. This is the extent to which this union goes. This also explains the patience of Christians in persecution and tribulation. They can assure themselves of the words of Christ: "None shall pluck them out of My hand." We do not say that this is a 'nearness of God without means or price'. Cfr. Koeberle, op. cit. As soon as the believer falls from faith to mortal sin, this union is broken off. By the grace of God, it frequently happens, that such a one returns and enters the union again. Is this a contradiction? Is this an indissoluble union? Yes, it is, but we take into consideration here the distinction between Law and Gospel. To the dejected and weakening believer we say: "It is indissoluble".

To the secure and Pharisaic we say: "Beware, you can be cut off from this union, as was Judas." The principle is not a self-contradictory one, but the situations are different.

While we have said that this union is not an essential one, that is, the believer does not become a part of Christ's essence, yet Scripture says that men who believe in Him are virtually identified with Him, though not actually so. In the book of Acts, chapter 8, verse 1, we read: "And that time there was a great persecution against the Church which was at Jerusalem." In the ninth chapter, verse four, Christ questions Paul and says: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" When Saul persecuted the Christians, he persecuted Christ, for both were united in the mystical union. Here also I Cor. 12,12 and Jeremiah 33,16 apply, which we have discussed previously.

This union, as the name implies, is mysterious, and inscrutable. We can gather together all the passages which treat of this union and yet be amazed at the deep mystery of this doctrine. Cfr. Strong, op. cit., p. 443. This is also called a mystery by Paul in Ephesians.

A Union Significant in Spiritual Life

This union is important for the spiritual life of the believer. We quote from the writings of the theologian, Johann Arndt, famous for his Das Wahre Christentum, from which we quote: "Das heiszt recht, dem Bilde Christi ähnlich werden,

naemlich mit ihm und in ihm geboren werden, Christum recht anziehen, mit ihm und in ihm wachsen und zunehmen, mit ihm in Elend wallen, mit seiner Taufe getauft werden, mit ihm gekreuziget werden, mit ihm sterben und auferstehen, mit ihm auch herrschen und regieren, und dasselbe nicht allein durchs heilige Kreuz, sondern auch durch taegliche Busze und innerliche Reue und Leid ueber die Suende." 98) While Arndt seems to verge on legalistic pietism, his appeal to a correct emphasis on the union with Christ seems to be very fitting and in line with our discussion. He states also the striking words regarding our union with Christ: "Und darum ists auch geschrieben, dasz es in uns geistlich geschehe. Denn Christus hat andern geholfen, er musz mir auch helfen: denn er ist in mir, er lebet in mir." usw. 99)

In Coloss. 2,10 Paul tells the Christians that they are "complete in Him", complete in Christ. They are in Him by faith and have the complete knowledge, though not fully understood by them, yet they are complete in the knowledge of Christ. By faith in the Gospel they are rooted and thus complete and need not, nor dare they, let philosophy or vain deceit pull them from faith. Nothing is needed besides that knowledge and faith which Christ has given them. They are complete in Him.

98) John. Arndt: Das Wahre Christentum, p. 27

99) " " op. cit. p. 30

The believer is exhorted to maintain this union. How he is to do this is shown in John 15, 7, which shows that "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you". By feeding on the Word and Sacrament the mystical union is maintained. Verse 7 plainly shows that the Word of Christ must be employed. A great argument for regular church-attendance. The two go together: abiding in His Word and abiding in Him. In Acts 11, 23 we hear of Barnabas at Antioch, as he told the Christians: "Exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." He had spoken to them of the Gospel, no doubt, and they had heard it previously, by which they were united with Christ. He exhorted them to maintain this union, no doubt pointing them to the use of the means of grace. In Col. 2,7 Paul tells the members to walk in Christ, for they have been rooted and established in the true faith. With it he later adds that they avoid all false principles and teachings, but that they should adhere to what they had learned, the Gospel, in which they had received this firmly rooted union with Christ.

This mystical union is necessary for growth in grace. Eph. 4,15 states that the Christians are to grow up in- to Christ the Head. Their spiritual maturity and growth depends upon their intimacy with Christ. If they are but loosely attached to Him, theirs is a spirituality, but one at a low ebb. The more closely united the believer is with the Head, the more he will grow in spiritual understanding, and the more fruits he will show in Christian service. As we have also said before,

this growing in grace is connected with the mystical union. Unless we are united with Him, the Vine, as John says, we, the braches, can do nothing. It is, therefore, necessary to fruitfulness. Those who do not derive the so-called 'spiritual sap and stamina' from the root and the true Vine, do not bear fruit, and hence, are ripe for destruction. This was the verdict of John the Baptist as he prophesied the coming of Christ as the One who will thoroughly purge His floor. The branches will fail to bear the fruit and will be cut down to be cast into the fire, as worthless. They prevent the falness of life from being seen in the tree, and may endanger the union which the other branches enjoy. They are the 'dead timber' members of the Christian churches. All those who are not united with Christ are those who likewise do not believe, for if they were believers, they would be united with Him in this union and bear fruit. Also we are to bear in mind that Christ in the words of Paul wishes to remind that this union is not to create false security, for Paul writes in Romans 11, 18: "Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee." No false security, no boasting can be there, for it is all due to the mercy and grace of God.

In Col. 2,19 and in the epistles of John we find that the false teachers which deny the fundamentals of the Christian faith dishonor Christ and are not in connection with the Head. They derive their teaching from themselves, and not from Him, the true Head.

Chapter Four: How this Union is Maintained:

By the Operation of the Holy Ghost

As soon as the individual is brought to faith, we have stated, he enters the mystical union with Christ. It is the Holy Spirit Who really brings about this union in the heart of the believer. "Where our Savior has spoken most directly regarding the indwelling of the Trinity, in the last half of John's 14th chapter, He says on the one hand, that He and the Father will come into the believer and make their abode with him. But He adds that by this indwelling the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, will be given us, and "He shall teach you all things". All knowledge that we have of spiritual things, the understanding of God's loving counsel toward us, of Christ's work of redemption, of our reconciliation to God, of all these things 'which make us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus', are the result of the Spirit's inward teaching." 100) Scripture plainly teaches that the operation of the Spirit is bound up with the mystical union, for John says in his first epistle Chapter 4,13: "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit." The preceding quotation has alluded to the fact that Christ promised to give the Spirit. By the fact that we have the Spirit within us, Who gives us the assurance that we

100) Dr.Th. Graebner, Concordia Theol. Monthly, vol. I, pp.85ff

are united with Christ, we conclude that we are 'in Him' and 'He in us'. This agrees also with chapter 3,24: "And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us." In order to be clear on this point, we quote from Lenski: "With the Spirit Christ enters into our hearts...The hearts in which the Spirit dwells hears and feels the Spirit's prompting by the power which the Spirit supplies. The Spirit is present in His Word, and we hear him in our hearts when his Word is in us and moves us. Only in and through the Word does the Spirit dwell in us, speak to us, impel, and control us." 101)

True, it is difficult to conceive how this occurs. When we say that with the Spirit also the Savior enters, we also bear in mind the axiom: Opera ad extra sunt indivisa et communia. Where the one Person of the Trinity is, there the other is also. But, for the sake of classification and in point of time, we say that the Spirit first enters the heart and kindles faith through the Word and after this act of conversion or subjective justification, then He brings about the union of the Trinity with the believer. When the apostle said: "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost and that the Spirit dwelleth in you?" he alluded to this in-dwelling of the Spirit, who creates faith, keeps it alive, and incites to sanctification. It is really impossible to conceive

101) Lenski: Interpret. of Romans, pp. 514-516

of any separation of the entrance of the Spirit's work and of the entrance of the Trinity in the believer. At least, we know that the kindling of faith, justification, and the mystical union are acts which are simultaneous and cannot be separated in point of time, and only thus in thought process. Here we labor under the difficulty of the strange operations of the Godhead, mysteries, to which the human mind has no solution to offer.

The Holy Spirit accomplishes this union only by the Means of Grace; the Gospel, the Sacrament of the Altar and the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. Here we appeal to John 15,7: "If ye abide in Me, and my words abide in you". Also the passage in John's first epistle, chapter 2, v. 24 is fitting: "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father." What have they heard from the beginning? He tells this in the first part of the epistle: that Christ is the Son of God and the Savior of the world. That is Gospel, the Means of Grace. If they abide in this grace, what will happen? They will continue in the Father and in the Son. This is plainly written: this mystical union is maintained as long as the believers maintain the means of grace and employ them. This is similar to the thought expressed in I John 2,5: "But whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him." This asserts that by abi-

ding in the Word we know and gain the assurance that we are in Christ. "Hewing the line" according to the Word, thereby we can ascertain whether we are united with Him, by using the Word as the criterion. That it is essential to bear in mind the relation between our doctrine and this union, we find the statement in II John, verse 9: "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." An indictment against all those who treat error with undue tolerance and indifference. They can hardly be one with Christ and still permit fundamentals to be denied or neutralized by compromise. They can be united with Christ as little as Christ is united with error, He Who is the Incarnation of Truth itself.

The mystical union is nurtured also by the Sacraments, for they are the ~~invisible~~ Word. Of the Lord's Supper we have treated in the previous chapter. The Reformed regard it the 'most pernicious perversion of Scripture' to claim that means are ~~needed~~^{used} to bring about and to foster this union. Cfr. Strong, Systematic Theology, pp.442 ff. Union is effected through Baptism, for through Baptism "we are buried with Christ by Baptism into death". The definite connection is made mediately. This is shown by Romans 6,4ff. Lenski: "Always the Word is the medium for the 'en' of the unio mystica; without this Word there is no connection with God; there is no other means, despite all claims to the contrary. Only

one divine means (the Word, etc.) reaches down from God to us sinners, cleanses us and puts us in fellowship with God; there is no other means...to repudiate the means is to lose the result, the fellowship, the goal of which God's love would attain. This union is spiritual; it is not properly expressed to say it is like that of living creatures 'in the air', etc. 102)

This union, nurtured by the Sacraments and the Word, is maintained by faith. The Spirit maintains the union and faith maintains the union. The harmony lies in this: the Holy Spirit creates the faith that connects with Christ, and He also strengthens and intensifies that faith so that it draws closer to Christ. All this He does by the means of grace. Faith, activated by the Spirit, maintains this union. In Gal. 2, 20 we read: "Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live I live by the faith of the Son of God." He lives and the Savior lives in him, while faith is there. If he had no faith, he could not say this. He associates his living and Christ's living in him, and then adds that he lives by faith. Faith indeed maintains this vital union. More explicit is the statement of Eph. 3,17: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." Christ dwells in union and communion with the believer by faith.

102) Lenski: Peter, John, and Jude, pp. 418ff.

This union by faith is a spiritual one. I John 4,15:
"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." What is confessing Christ as the Son of God but faith itself? Confessing Christ as God is evidence that, or shows that a person is one with God and that God is in him. Who believes that Christ is the Incarnate Son of God and his Redeemer, that one has faith. He has faith and then also the mystical union.

In John 6, 56 we read that whoever receives Christ's death and sacrifice by faith is thus joined with Him. This is the effect of faith. "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." Christ is the life ~~the~~ element within us, in which we live and have our spiritual existence. Christ also molds the spiritual life within us. (cfr. Lenski)

II Cor. 5, 17 tells us that after conversion and after the imputation of Christ's merit, the person is in Christ. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." In verse 21 we note that "we are made the righteousness of God in Him." This does not mean that we are justified by the Christ in us, but by the Christ for us. Philipians 3,9 notes that we are in Christ by faith. "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." As we believe, we are in Christ. Here Paul explains

that his righteousness is not of his own works, but by faith in Christ. At the same time he is found in Him. Faith and union come together. Romans 8,1 shows that those who are in Christ are beyond condemnation..against them no one can bring legitimate accusations. Those who are united in Christ are also the very ones who have already come to saving faith.

Chapter Five: The More Detailed Implications of the Union

Advantages of this Union

The advantages of this union are manifold.

With this union comes also an increase in spiritual understanding. Peter shows the Christians in his first epistle, ch.2,9 that they were called out of darkness of ignorance to the light of spiritual wisdom. I Cor. 1, 9 reveals also that we were called and converted for this reason: to enjoy fellowship with Christ. The Holy Spirit, as we have noted, is responsible for this effectual calling and thus brings the person into fellowship with Christ. "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." One of the effects of the Spirit's calling and of faith is the fellowship with Christ, the mystical union. I Pet. 1,8 shows that as the Christians believe in Christ, they "rejoice with unspeakable joy and full of glory". United with Him by faith they are blessed and joyful. Furthermore, in connection with Him the spirituality of the Christian grows, for the Spirit's influence through the Word has its telling salutary effect. With this union they enjoy

all manner of spiritual blessings, Col. 1,23. As we are in faith and are united in Christ, we have the guarantee of answers to prayer, John 15, 7: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

The Evidences of this Union

The evidences for this union are many. Here we carefully note that some evidences commonly stated as evidences of the mystical union, as results of the mystical union, are really the results of justification by faith. Freedom from condemnation and from the dominion of sin are evidences of justification, not the results of faith, as we view faith: sanctification and growth in good works. However, we use the terms this way, that the believer shows that he is justified, is in faith, that he is united with Christ, by his life of obedience. In I John 3,6 the writer says: "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth," etc. In Rom. 8,1 we find similar expressions, which we have discussed. Such a person who is united by faith with Christ is alive unto righteousness, Rom. 8,10: "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." When the righteousness of His merit is applied by faith through the Spirit, the Spirit places new life into the believer. Before sanctification comes the consummation of the union. Abundant fruitfulness is

is also predicated of the believers in John 15,5: "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." Those who are in this union ought to walk as Christ walked, says John in his first epistle, chapter 2,6: "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." The climax of this discussion is found in a consideration of the outstanding evidence of this vital connection with Christ, namely, confidence at His coming. John speaks of this in I John 2,28: "And now little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." This is both psychologically and theologically true: if they are united by faith and trust in Christ, then they are waiting for His coming and return. They have no fear of Him with Whom they are in intimate connection. They often become impatient that their Leader does not appear. John also says in chapter four, verse 17 of the same epistle: "Herein is our love made perfect, that we have boldness in the day of judgment." Thus the implications of the mystical union reach from the beginning of our spiritual life to the beginning of eternal life. The mystical union finds its fullest realization in heaven. John tells us that "when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

Conclusion:

This doctrine finds its true definition in the correct distinction between justification and sanctifi-

cation, a proper conception of the means of grace, the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to man, and a careful demarcation between objective and subjective theology. Then the definition finds agreement with the definition set forth by Scripture.

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