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Quarter-Centennial
—OF THE—
PITTSBURGH
R. P. Congregation.
1866 to 1891.

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COVENANTER CHURCH.

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words of the Song were most appropriate: "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

Into the spiritual meaning of this call of the Beloved did the congregation enter in some good measure, as the Psalm was explained by the Rev. D. C. Martin, and as the pastor led them in the morning devotions, and then preached the following

Action Sermon.

THE RELATIONS OF COVENANTING AND COMMUNION.

"My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies."—SONG 2: 16.

This is the endearing expression of the bride, the church, concerning her husband, the Lord and Saviour. It is also the language of each believing soul concerning Christ. No interpretation of this Song of songs will ever satisfy the believing heart unless it recognizes throughout the successive chapters, Christ and his church collectively, and Christ and the individual members of the church, in their tender and loving relations to each other. What is usually termed the allegorical interpretation satisfies the demands of a sound hermeneutical science as well as the cravings of faith and love. Like the forty-fifth psalm, the Song takes the metaphor of the marriage relation, and expands it into an allegory. And thus through

many scenes, with many characters grouped about the central pair, and with animated dialogue, this continued and elaborated metaphor of the marriage relation of Christ and his church, takes on a dramatic as well as an allegorical form. At one time the bridegroom speaks; at another time, the bride, or the collective body of the church; at another, the daughters of Jerusalem, or the individual members of the church. But one and all speak of the mutual love of the spouse and her Beloved.

The marriage tie is thus the human relationship which our Lord has specially honored by making it a most eminent figure of the bond of union between himself and his people. This Song of songs and Song of love draws aside the curtain from the privacies and confidences and intimacies of that union which makes of twain one flesh and one true moral personality. The sensual mind looks upon the revelation and sees nothing but the reflection of its own carnality. But the spiritual mind looks upon the sacred mysteries, and sees shadowed forth, in all the emblems and tokens of pure and hallowed wedded love, the obligations and the privileges of the covenant relation between Christ and those whom he chooses and possesses as his own.

No wonder, then, that this Song of songs is so intimately associated with our communion seasons. Perhaps no part of the Bible, unless it be the accounts of the institution of the Lord's Supper as given by Paul in 1st Corinthians, and by the different evangelists, is so often the subject of sacramental meditations. How appropriate did we all feel the passage of Scripture to be the other evening, when in our preparation for this day's festivity, we meditated in our prayer meeting on the "Banqueting House and the Banner of Love!" And now, as we draw near the banquet itself, how fitting is it that we should say in the language of our text, "My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies!"

This affectionate declaration of the bride is the avowal of the

covenant relation between the Bridegroom and herself. Her Beloved is hers and she is his. This declaration also affirms the fellowship or communion between the Bridegroom and all the individual members who constitute his bride, the church. They are the lilies, transformed in purity of character into the likeness of the Beloved, "the Lily of the valleys," and therefore among them he delights to feed. In most intimate communion he feasts with all those who are in covenant with himself. Let us bring together, then, these thoughts of covenanting and communion, and seek to trace the connection between them.

THE RELATIONS OF COVENANTING AND COMMUNION.

1. *The covenant relation constitutes the union which is essential to all true communion.*

The sweet and hallowed fellowship of husband and wife in an earthly home rests upon the marriage bond or covenant. Let this covenant with its solemn sanctions be wanting, and pure fellowship gives place to illicit intercourse. No beauty of robes, no wealth of personal adornment, or comfort and elegance of palatial dwelling, or charm of voice and form and manners, can of themselves lay a legitimate and enduring basis for the fellowship of the home. All such circumstances, favorable as they may be, are but the gilding of vice when the bond of union, the covenant engagement of the ordinance of marriage, has been ignored and dishonored. The loyal wife must say, "My beloved is mine, and I am his," and the loyal husband must respond in the same terms of affection and fidelity, and thus the twain must become one in covenant relation, before there can be any foundation for domestic happiness.

We think to-day, as many families gather here, parents and children sitting down together at the Lord's table, of the delights of our home circles. We see the hearth-stone, the blazing fire, the table around which father and mother, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters sit; we hear the kindly voices

in happy conversation, and the genial laughter; we look into the eyes that need no words to tell the love of the heart. Or some of us recall these home gatherings which once were ours, but which, alas! are ours no more. Whether ours still, to be acknowledged with deepest gratitude, or gone from us, with vacant places and aching breasts left instead, we all know that these blessed experiences of home life never could have been, and cannot now be, but by the bond of the marriage covenant. The privileges and joys of the family are built upon the sacred obligations of the marriage bond.

And the same is true of the communion which this Song of love portrays. We can know the felicities of fellowship with our Beloved only when we are his and he is ours in the union of the covenant never to be forgotten. The words themselves show this necessary connection—union and communion; that is, communion is something together with union. First there is union, and then communion is the added result. There is no way to communion with Christ but by covenant union with him. Uniting with the church of Christ may number us with the communicants who sit at the Lord's table; but nothing short of union by personal engagement with our Lord and Saviour himself can enable us to say in truth that our communion or "fellowship is with God the Father and with Jesus Christ his Son."

O the matchless grace of that loving Bridegroom who hath taken us into covenant union with himself that he may hold fellowship with us forevermore! We were cast out from all holy fellowship and joy in the blood of our pollution and guilt. His time of passing by was a time of love. He cleansed us in his own blood. He put the raiment of his perfect righteousness upon us. He said to us that we are his and that he is ours: "Thy Maker is thy husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel;" "as the bride-

groom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoiceth over thee." He has enabled us to say in response, "My beloved is mine and I am his." Uttering to-day this language from the heart, we shall not fail to enjoy satisfying communion with our Lord. His by a marriage vow pure and unspotted as the lily, we shall ourselves be lilies among which he will rejoice to feed on this sacramental Sabbath. Coming to his table in such covenant consecration of wedded love, we shall lean like John on the Saviour's breast, and receive from him the tenderest endearments of his plighted affection.

2. *Covenanting pledges the exclusive possession which promotes and intensifies communion.*

"They *twain* shall be one flesh." This is the exclusive law of the marriage relation, The Creator ordained this law of monogamy at the very origin of the human family. According to this law, the exclusive possession of each other by husband and wife is the inherent condition of full wedded happiness. God never approved polygamy. He suffered it for a time, because of the hardness of the human heart; but he did not fail to inflict in his providence the just penalty for this violation of the law of wedlock which provides for the union of one man with one woman. Abraham and Jacob and David, as well as many others less eminent, drank deeply of the bitter cup of domestic unhappiness because of their infraction of this law of the marriage relation.

In like manner the law of monogamy must have full sway in the marriage of the Lord Jesus and his bride. He is a jealous God who will not give his glory to another. He says of his bride, "My dove, my undefiled is one; she is the only one of her mother." And because of this exclusive affection he will brook no rival: "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm." All the affections of the heart, and all the loving embraces of the arm, must be sealed exclusively to

the rightful Lord of the bride. And this is the reason: "For love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame." The bride of Christ must covenant to be his alone; to love her Lord with all her heart, with all her soul, with all her strength, and with all her mind; and in the faithful keeping of such exclusive covenant relation, she shall know that many waters cannot quench her Husband's love for her, neither can the flood drown it.

Does the Lord say of his bride: "As the lily among the thorns, so is my love among the daughters?" Then must the bride regard her Lord as "the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys." He must be to her "the chiefest among ten thousand," and she must say of him: "He is altogether lovely. This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."

Who is this that, in the beautiful figure of this Song, rests with the Shepherd at noon, sheltered from the scorching heat, where he makes his flock to feed? It is the faithful one who turns not aside after other flocks, but goes her way forth by the footsteps of the flock of the Shepherd Himself. Who is this that sits down under the shadow of the one chosen tree with great delight, and finds his fruit sweet to her taste? It is she who, with her affections centred on her Husband, says: "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons." Who is she that is brought into the banqueting house, and shares in its festivities under the banner of love? It is the true-hearted one who banquets at no rival board, and whose loyalty permits no wandering from that kingly standard.

The marriage covenant between Christ and his bride pledges this exclusive union and possession. She is reserved for her Lord, as he has chosen her for his own and his only bride. It

must be his own garden into which he will go to eat his pleasant fruits. He will go into no other. To his eyes the lilies are clothed in beauty beyond all the glory of Solomon, and their fragrance delights him above all the odors of myrrh and frankincense, and he hastens like a roe or a young hart to feed among them, only when they belong to himself alone. And the more entirely his people surrender themselves to him as the people of his possession, the more full and complete will be their communion with him. Remembering that they are not their own, but that they are bought with a price, even the blood of the Son of God, the blood of the everlasting covenant, they will enjoy closer and fuller fellowship with their Covenant Head and Lord while they glorify him with their bodies and spirits which are his.

Bride of Jesus Christ, can it be that any person or any thing is capable of supplanting your own divine husband in your affection? Or shall he have a divided place in your heart? Call in all wandering desires. Let the heart be fixed on your rightful Lord alone. Take him as all your salvation and all your desire. Covenant anew to be only and wholly his, and you shall be ravished with your royal Bridegroom's love.

3. Covenant engagements serve to remove hinderances to communion.

When the obligations of the marriage vow are forgotten, the peace and harmony of the home are rudely disturbed. Trials to the patience, forbearance, and devotion of husband and wife will be sure to arise, and the full force of the marriage covenant will be needed to maintain the sweet confidences and joys of wedded life. The memory of the solemn engagements of that covenant will help to calm the disturbed temper, and to restrain hasty and unkind words. And those who have truly given themselves to each other in God's ordinance of marriage will diligently guard, under the sense of the obligations that

rest upon them, against everything in thought, word, or deed, that would hinder the tender and loving fellowship of the home.

And how manifold are the influences in this wicked world that interrupt and hinder the fellowship of the bride of Christ with her Lord! In the bride's own heart are tendencies which, if not counteracted, will lead her to forget her husband. False worldly lovers seek to draw off her affections from her rightful Lord. She needs to remember the covenant of her youth, that she may remain faithful to her first love, and that her communion with her divine husband may not be marred.

And not only do gross sins hinder this intimate communion. What may be regarded as minor matters, either of omission of duty or of commission of overt wrong, will turn the bride's affections away from her husband, and shut out his gracious communications from her heart. Not only the full grown foxes, but "the little foxes" as well, make sad havoc in the spiritual vineyard. No deadlier foe to spirituality of life and consecration to the Master's service has the Christian to meet than the fashionable follies and sensuous pleasures of the world. The bride of Christ cannot continue long to be like the lily in such an atmosphere. If she is to retain her attractive beauty, and with radiant face and loving tones respond to her husband when he says: "Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely," she must ever heed the admonition: "Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes." Ah! how tender are the implanted graces of the Spirit; the buds of righteousness; the young and forming fruits of a holy life! How readily may these be injured by the contaminating touch of a corrupt world! How constantly do believers need to be on their guard against the apparently harmless and insinuating, yet treacherous and deadly influences of worldly

pleasures and ambitions! On every hand, in social and business life, are at work these "little foxes" that spoil the vines of heavenly planting, and destroy the tender grapes of the soul's communion with God. But the treasured memory of our covenant relation, and our acts of covenant renovation, will serve to keep us on our watch against all such interruptions and hinderances of our fellowship with our beloved Saviour.

Christ's sister-spouse must be "a garden inclosed." She must be separate from the world in order to have the joy of communion with her Lord. If the garden of the church becomes an unguarded common, trampled by foot of the unclean, and made a place of deposit for all manner of filth; or if the soul of the believer lies thus open to what is unholy and profane, no north wind awaking, and no south wind coming and blowing upon such a garden, can cause perfumed spices to flow out; and there can be no pleasant fruits to invite the Beloved to come into the garden and eat.

When the church and the believer have covenanted to be the faithful bride of Christ, their engagement is to keep true to their character as those who are *called out* or separated from the world. They are yet *in* the world, but they are not *of* it. Here is the injunction of their marriage covenant: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you." To be in covenant relation with Christ means the maintenance of this separation from

all iniquity. To indulge in sin is to drink the cup of devils, and partake of the table of devils, or to have communion with them. Whosoever does this cannot drink the cup of the Lord; nor be a partaker of the table of the Lord; he cannot share in the communion of the body of Christ and in the communion of his blood, and at the same time partake in fellowship with the Saviour's enemies. But he who covenants to have no fellowship in any relation of life with unrighteousness; no communion with darkness; no concord with Belial; no part with an infidel; no agreement with idols; and who accordingly keeps himself separate from all the uncleannesses of the world, shall be able to say, out of the fullness of his own soul's blessed experience: "My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies."

Confession of sin, with a view to the more complete separation from it, has always been an essential part of covenanting. And such confession will always be made appropriate to the circumstances of the covenanters. The sins of the land and of the day; sins to which there are special temptations at the time; sins which in existing circumstances peculiarly endanger the welfare of God's children, and publicly dishonor Christ, and from which the covenanters should therefore keep themselves with the most scrupulous care, will be particularly noticed in connection with the more general confession of covenant renovation. Covenanting will thus greatly aid in keeping the follower of Christ on his guard against the sins into which he would otherwise be liable to fall, and in this way will remove many and great hinderances, and bring the believer into more intimate and soul-satisfying fellowship with his Redeemer.

How conscious are we all of the effect of sinful thoughts and desires and acts upon our fellowship with the Saviour? When our heart, instead of being a "spring shut up, a fountain

sealed" against such pollution, is defiled with currents of impurity pouring in, we may not expect the Lord to come to such contaminated waters for refreshment and delight. But the more entirely separated we are from sin, the closer and sweeter shall be our union and communion with the Beloved. Yes! his left hand shall rest more affectionately under our head, and his right hand shall more lovingly embrace us, when our own hands are kept most clean and free from sin; and he shall kiss us with the most ravishing kisses of his mouth when our lips are purified from guile.

Intending communicants, have you covenanted to separate yourselves from all sin, and are you conscientiously regarding your covenant engagements? Have you come out from all relations that dishonor your Saviour? Do you keep aloof from all worldly pleasures and pursuits that hinder communion with your Lord? Do you refuse to strike hands in any compact that will withhold from your Saviour King the glory which is his due? As his covenanted people under sacred bonds to maintain, in all individual, domestic, social and political relationships, consistent separation from everything that fails to give to our Lord the glory that is rightfully his own, are we faithful to our vows? If so, we shall not fail to feast with him at his holy table to-day, and in such steadfast keeping of our covenant we shall make our whole life a service of joyous fellowship with our Beloved.

4. *Covenanting quickens the gracious exercises in which communion positively consists.*

The true happiness of wedded life is something more than freedom from disturbance. It must include something beyond negative exemption from hinderances to home communion. It must be positive in its character. Active virtues and graces must be roused to their full exercise. Husband and wife must minister to each other's joy and pleasure in the positive activi-

ties of conjugal affection. They must live for each other. By word and deed they are to help and serve one another and rejoice together in mutual exchanges of love. Their blessed communion consists in its most positive aspect in the reciprocal communications of satisfaction and delight. This is the meaning and obligation of their marriage vow. It binds them to use all possessions and powers for each other's welfare and happiness. It is such a view of the marriage relation that has led one of the sweetest and most home-loving of English poets to exclaim—

“O wedded happiness! thou only bliss
Of Paradise that hast survived the fall!”

In this positive aspect of its character the marriage covenant happily illustrates the union between the church and her Head, or the believer and his Saviour. The pure pleasures of the wedded relation are but so many chaste illustrations to the spiritually minded of the highest graces and joys of the Holy Spirit. It is one of the highest attainments of the life of faith to enter into the full spiritual significance of Solomon's Song as a Song of Love, and to see in all the intimate endearments and positive tokens of affection, of which it so freely speaks, the pure emblems of the most delightful soul-communion between Christ and his people. Nowhere in all his Holy Word do the pure in heart see God himself and his ineffable love and grace more sweetly and fully set forth, than in this allegory, with its manifold expressions and manifestations of wedded love. And nowhere do such spiritually-minded Christians find stronger incentives to the faithful discharge of the duties devolving on them as the bride of the Lamb. They are here most powerfully reminded that their marriage covenant with Christ binds them not only to put away all sin which would hinder their communion with him, but also to use every power of body and soul in fidelity to their rightful Lord. This bride,

too, they are taught, must find her own pleasure and honor in honoring and pleasing her husband.

The removing of all hinderances is with a view to the more active exercise of those graces and virtues which present the positive side of communion with Christ. The believer is to be separate from all sin, and to die daily unto it, in order that he may live daily unto righteousness in the quickened exercise of every grace of the Spirit of life. The mercies of God are covenanted to him in Christ, and by these he is besought to present his body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto his Lord, which is his reasonable service. Hands, feet, lips—every faculty of body; memory, judgment, imagination, affections, will—every power of the mind, are all to be devoted to the Beloved. When the believer says, “I am his,” that means the consecrated use of all that he possesses and is. Bought with a price, he is bound by that ransom of blood to be no more his own, but to serve his covenant Lord with his body and spirit which are His.

In just such a quickening of gracious exercises is the most perfect communion possible in this world to be found. The believer loves what his Lord loves; desires what he desires; devotes himself to the accomplishment of the same purposes: and in this resemblance of character and correspondence of aim and life the highest communion essentially consists. And this is the comprehensive breadth of covenant engagement. It covers the whole will of Christ: “All that the Lord our God hath said will we do, and be obedient.” There can be no call to the more active exercise of any grace of the Spirit that is not included in the believer’s covenant. The more faithfully he covenants, therefore, and the more scrupulously and conscientiously he carries out his covenant obligations, the more like Christ will he become, and the more full will be his communion with his Covenant Head and King.

It is this aspect of the relations of covenanting and communion that received such timely illustration from our preparatory service of yesterday afternoon. We in substance renewed our covenant with our Lord, engaging to be true to all our solemn obligations as we accepted tokens of admission to the communion table. And prominent among our renewed covenant engagements is our vow of fidelity to our Saviour King as the Sovereign Ruler of the nations. Our sworn pledge is that we will not incorporate with the government of our beloved country until it shall be placed in right relations to Christ and his law. As Covenanters we must purpose in our hearts faithfully to carry out this, together with all other renewed engagements, in order to receive to-day large and satisfying portions through the emblems of the body and blood of our crucified but glorified and exalted Saviour King.

And the very trials of the life of faith will but serve to strengthen and quicken all these gracious exercises in which communion consists. Here, too, the figure of wedded love holds true. The shadows that fall athwart the home only serve as a dark background to bring out the active graces of husband and wife into clearer relief. Never do the home chords of sympathy and love vibrate with harmonies so sweet and full, as when smitten by the hand of affliction. How truly can husband and wife, faithful to their marriage vow, walking hand in hand amid life's sorest trials, say :

“Then come the wild weather, come weal or come woe,
We'll stand by each other however it blow ;
Disaster and trouble and sorrow and pain
Shall be to our true love as links to the chain.”

And may not believers say in the time of their trials: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” “Nay, in all these things we are more than con-

querors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The shadows, no doubt, will gather upon the soul that is in union with Christ. Afflictions and tribulations will come to the church and to her members. But the shades of night shall scatter, and the morning light shall break; and in confident expectation of this the church will say, and every believer as well, to the apparently absent Lord: "Until the day break and the shadows flee away, be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether." And in answer to these anticipations of a living faith, and these quickened desires for Christ's comforting presence amidst the shadows of the valley of weeping, the Beloved will come with the fleetness of the roe upon the mountains of separation, and with abounding consolations, to the side of his afflicted bride.

Bride of the Lord Jesus, be of good cheer! Our own covenanted Zion, even now in the dark shadows of Baca's vale, dry your tears! You are mourning over your condition as that of a city with its walls already partly broken down and its gates here and there overturned, and with enemies rejoicing in view of coming complete overthrow and desolation. But listen to the comforting voice of your covenant Saviour. Even now he is saying to you: "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children." Does not thy Maker, thy Husband, give thee "songs in the night?"

5. *By covenanting the believer is brought into special fullness of fellowship with Christ as the Covenant Head of all his people.*

The figure of the marriage relation still serves for illustration, in some measure, as we come to this closing aspect of our subject. While the husband and the wife give themselves exclusively to each other in the marriage covenant, they are at the same time, nevertheless, and by that very bond, brought into closer relations with the whole circle of each other's connections. The kindred and friends of the bride become the kindred and friends of the husband. All that are near and dear to him become also near and dear to her by her union with him. And her communion with him is thus made fuller and more complete because of her closer connection with all his friends in him. Her fellowship with them as his friends, and because they are his friends, is in reality a part of her fellowship with him whose honor and pleasure she holds supremely in view.

In all this we may see a suggestive illustration of the union by covenant of the church and of the believer with the divine Bridegroom. In entering into covenant with Christ the believer is united with him as the Covenant Head of the whole body of his people, and thus comes into fellowship with all that glorious company in him. Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham is not only in fellowship with Abraham, but also in the fellowship of Christ, and of all who are children of Abraham by faith in the Saviour. And John, leaning on the bosom of the Saviour, is in fellowship with all who love the Lord.

To be in communion with Christ, as we have before seen, is to love what he loves, and to labor for the accomplishment of the purpose which he has set before himself. The entire body of his chosen people is the object of his infinite love, and his all-comprehensive purpose in the administration of his mediatorial government is the eternal redemption of this ransomed

host. Not one of all that chosen heritage shall be lost. The dead who have already entered into glory; the living, struggling amid the conflicts of this world; the generations of his children yet unborn—all, without any exception, the Lord has taken into covenant union with himself. And by laying hold of that everlasting bond in an act of personal covenanting for ourselves, we come into union and communion with all who are one with our Covenant Head.

The Covenanter church, by virtue of this very ordinance of covenanting, enters into the most comprehensive fellowship of the saints. The fullest possible unity with Christ in this world is by a complete self-surrender; by separation from all sin, and by most solemn and faithful engagements to do all that he commands in every relation of life. This full fellowship with Christ the Head is the true communion of the saints. Yes! Christ's followers on earth will yet be organically and visibly one. But how? Not simply by occasionally sitting together at one communion table. Not merely by an outward public profession of being organically and visibly united. More than this, and something more fundamental than this, is necessary. There must be a union of hearts and souls and lives in holding to the great truths that concern the Redeemer's honor and the welfare of men. There must be consistent separation, maintained when necessary by discipline, from all that is opposed to the kingdom and law of Christ. Such an organic oneness may exist in the midst of manifold diversities of opinion, but it demands a formulated creed based upon the Scriptures, and a covenant with God and between the members of the church to express and help maintain their visible unity. In such covenant relations with their Lord and with each other the followers of Christ are manifested to the world to be one even as the Father and the Son are one. And with such manifested unity the world will believe that the Father hath

sent the Son as the Redeemer and Head of his universal church.

Rejoice, then, O covenanting communicants, as you come to sit together at the Lord's table to-day, that your fellowship is so truly catholic and comprehensive. There is indeed a restriction to the outward communion necessary in a denomination in present circumstances to the maintenance of the discipline of the visible church of Christ. But that very devotion to the honor of your Covenant Head brings you into closer fellowship with him, and therefore also into fuller communion with the whole glorious body of his chosen and ransomed people. You sit with the Master of the feast himself, and therefore with the general assembly and church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven. You are side by side again to-day with the friends and brethren, the fathers and mothers, the husbands and wives, the brothers and sisters, and the beloved children, who have exchanged the temptations and burdens of this earthly service for the service above that knows no night of sin and sorrow. You sit in heavenly places together with your Lord and with the apostles who were about him when he instituted this supper. You sit together with the whole white-robed multitude before the throne; with patriarchs and prophets, and martyrs on whose brows are coronals, and in whose hands are palms of victory.

Nor does the true catholicity of your communion stop here. The genuine Covenanter may be censured by the "liberality" of these loose days for being narrow and close in his ideas of ecclesiastical fellowship. But the restriction is not in him or in his principles. He is ready for the unity of the visible church on the only basis on which organic unity is possible. The Covenanter church pleads in her covenant for that organic unity as no other fragment of the visible church in the wide world pleads for it. And she holds herself ready for the fellow-

ship that will include every true believer in Christ, under the inherent law of the body of Christ which permits no schismatic or sectarian division.

May the Lord hasten the day when the visible church, united in covenant bonds, shall be one from the rising to the setting of the sun; when followers of Christ of every race and condition, the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the learned and the unlearned, shall be in one organic body, with the Lord's name one and his praise one; when this one organic body shall, without compromise of any truth, or disregard of the good order and discipline of the house of God, be in visible communion, and be able in any and every land to have the one children's table, under one Lord, and with one faith and one baptism. That blessed time is sure to come, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. But until that time does come, let us rejoice that even now, in measure as our fellowship is full and complete with God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son, even the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, we may and do come here on earth into communion with the entire body of which our Covenant Saviour is the Head. When we shall pass through the gates into the heavenly city, and drink from the river of life that is before the throne, our fellowship in that blessed abode, though purified from all taint of sin, and though flowing like the river that makes glad that city with a fullness and depth that earth can never know, will be no broader in principle and spirit, and no more comprehensive of the travail of the Redeemer's soul, than our fellowship here to-day when we say in faith and covenant fidelity, "My beloved is mine, and I am his; he feedeth among the lilies."

What practical lessons does this subject of the relations of covenanting and communion suggest to us on this sacramental Sabbath?

1. *It teaches us to seek a firmer hold by faith upon the provisions*

of the covenant of grace. God the Father, the Head of that Covenant, entered into its engagements from all eternity with our Covenant Head, the well-beloved Son. By the provisions of that eternal covenant all the blessings of salvation become the believer's. The blood of the covenant cleanses him from all sin. The righteousness of the covenant is unto and upon him. The Holy Spirit, as the sanctifying and comforting Messenger of the covenant, dwells in his soul. Do we accept this full provision as it is freely offered to us in Christ? This must be the foundation of all our personal covenanting, and thus of all our communion with our Lord and with each other in him. We shall prove faithful to our covenant engagements only as we rest our souls upon the covenant of grace itself, and plead its rich provision for self-ruined sinners. Making our approach to God in all our acts of covenanting on the basis of that everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, our communion seasons shall be genuine feasts of love. Having respect to the sin-offering provided in that covenant, we shall "eat the fat and drink the sweet" in the full fellowship of the feast of our New Testament peace-offering.

2. *It suggests to us how we may make our whole life a season of communion with our Lord.* These sacramental Sabbaths come and go. They are but transient seasons of fellowship with Christ. Only two or three times in the course of a year do we sit at the Lord's table. But the covenant relation is permanent. Covenant obligations are upon us, and covenant duties address their call to us during the intervals between sacramental seasons as well as during these seasons themselves. Every Sabbath should be in this sense a communion Sabbath, and every day of our life a day of fellowship with our Saviour in conscious acknowledgment of our covenant relation, and in the faithful discharge of covenant duties. According to this view of the connection of covenanting and communion, our sacramental

seasons will not stand out, as it is to be feared they too often do, as something quite distinct and different from the rest of the Christian life. They will simply be times of quickened pulsations of the believer's heart. It will be the same current of spiritual life, only with a fuller and an intenser throb.

And all the trials of the believer's life will but help make all his days a more constant season of communion. With James Renwick, wandering "in dark and stormy nights through mosses and mountains," he will still be able to say: "I cannot express how sweet times I have had when the curtains of heaven have been drawn; when the quietness of all things in the silent watches of the night has brought to my mind the duty of admiring the deep, silent and inexpressible ocean of joy and wonder wherein the whole family of the higher house are everlastingly drowned; each star leading me out to wonder what He must be who is the Star of Jacob, the bright and morning Star, who maketh all his own to shine as stars of the firmament." Hunted like partridges on the mountains, and hiding in dens and caves of the earth, rarely having the opportunity to hear the preaching of the Word, and still more rarely to sit at the Lord's table even in the solitudes of the moorland waste or rocky glen, the whole life of such suffering heroes, in their faithful keeping of covenant engagements, was in holy fellowship with the Lord. May our life, in these days of trial when fidelity to the truth brings the reproach of Christ in essence as of old, be for that very reason in closer communion with the Saviour King for whose crown and sceptre we contend!

3. *Our subject to-day points us to the perfect union and communion of the heavenly home.* Not until that home is reached are the conditions of perfect fellowship fulfilled. Our communion with Christ must be at its best imperfect in this world, because the duties of our covenant relationship are at

the best imperfectly performed. The work of sin in the believer's heart and in the church, more or less hinders fellowship with the Beloved while this earthly life lasts. Even when the bride of the Lamb is most devoted here, she is constrained to mourn over remaining hinderances to her communion with her Lord. Every believing soul that knows its own condition in this world confesses that it fails to give itself wholly to Christ; that it must lament with Paul: "I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."

But the interruption and marring of the believer's and of the church's communion with the Lord shall have an end. Christ shall perfect his work in every believing soul. The eternal day shall break. The shadows of sin and sorrow shall forever flee away. Over every mountain which separates his own from Christ he will come, and finally separate them from all that can hinder their communion with himself. His own in covenant relation, he will make them every one his own in every faculty and purpose and desire and activity. And then the marriage supper of the Lamb in all its fullness of glory and happiness will have come, and the bride, made ready for it, will know through the eternal ages the inexhaustible meaning of the words: "My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies."

At the communion service in the afternoon, the exercises of special self-examination in debarring or "fencing the tables," and the exposition of the words of institution in 1st Corinthians 11: 23-29, were conducted by the pastor, who also served the first table. Other tables were served by Dr.

R. J. George, Prof. D. B. Willson, D.D., and the Rev. D. C. Martin. In all 243 communicants sat down at the Lord's table, while many looked on with deep interest, among whom were an unusually large number of little children. In the evening the following Memorial Sermon was preached by Dr. R. J. George.

Memorial Sermon.

THE HEAVENLY VISION.

BY THE REV. DR. R. J. GEORGE.

"I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."—ACTS 26 : 19.

Words are sometimes deceptive. This phrase, "the heavenly vision," suggests visions of glory, such as the shepherds had, when the flaming seraphim swept across the midnight sky and sang the rapturous song of the nativity; such as came to the beloved disciple in the isle of Patmos, when he saw a throne set in heaven, and he that sat thereon was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone, and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald." But Paul's "heavenly vision" was very different from these. He is telling again for the hundredth time the story of his conversion; and he describes it by this significant term, "the heavenly vision." It was "heavenly," because it came from heaven; it revealed heavenly things; it led Paul into a heavenly way; and through him it brought multitudes to the heavenly home.

Religion delights in reminiscence. A memorial service is profitable because the believer's life is *full of God*. It is made up of three things: what God has wrought *for him*; what he has wrought *in him*; and what he has wrought *by him*. There