

“Here is a modern reader’s edition of a classic Puritan work by a classic Puritan author. It is a powerful Trinitarian profiling from Scripture of the truth that fellowship with God is and must ever be the inside story of the real Christian’s life. The editing is excellent, and the twenty-seven-page introduction and the thirty-page analytical outline make the treatise accessible, even inviting, to any who, with Richard Baxter, see “heart-work” as the essence of Christianity. John Owen is a profound teacher on all aspects of spiritual life, and it is a joy to welcome this reappearance of one of his finest achievements.”

—J. I. Packer, the Board of Governors’ professor of theology, Regent College

“Among English-speaking theologians and pastors, John Owen and Jonathan Edwards run neck and neck for the first place in profound, faithful, fruitful displays of the glory of God in the salvation of sinners. Not only that, they are both running for first among the ranks of those who show practically how that glory is experienced here and now. Owen may have the edge here. And *Communion with God* is his most extraordinary effort. No one else has laid open the paths of personal fellowship with the three persons of the Trinity the way Owen does. It is simply extraordinary. What an honor it would be to God if more of his children knew how to enjoy him the way Owen does.”

—John Piper, pastor for preaching and vision,  
Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota

“Owen is not for the faint of heart or for the impatient or for the lazy. But for those who want to deepen their understanding of God’s greatness and how we walk with him, this book will repay, many times over, the effort its reading requires.”

—David F. Wells, Andrew Mutch distinguished professor of historical  
and systematic theology, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

“This is just the right time for a republishing of John Owen’s great work. There is renewed interest in the Trinity these days, and there is also a deep hungering for genuine spirituality. Owen combines the two in a powerful manner, pointing the way to a vital relationship with the triune God. It good to have this classic available again—and to have it introduced by gifted interpreters of Owen’s life and thought.”

—Richard J. Mouw, president;  
professor of Christian philosophy, Fuller Seminary

“John Owen’s treatise is remarkable in many ways. It is one of the finest examples of Owen’s massive output. It is a landmark in Western Trinitarian thought, uniquely wedding profound theology to Christian piety. It vividly thrusts before us the Holy Trinity as the one object of our worship. Kapic and Taylor have removed many of the difficulties of seventeenth-century writing in this edition, making accessible an old classic to a new audience. This book could revolutionize your thoughts of God, your worship of him, and how you live in today’s world.”

—Robert Letham, senior tutor in systematic and historical theology,  
Wales Evangelical School of Theology

“Union and communion with God the Holy Trinity lies at the heart of reformation theology. John Owen was one of the greatest expositors of this, and a new edition of his classic work on the subject, updated for modern readers, is long overdue. This is exactly the kind of teaching we need to revitalize the church in our generation. As Owen’s experience of the living God becomes ours we shall be set on fire with longing to know God more deeply and serve him more faithfully in a world which needs him as much now as it did in Owen’s day.”

—Gerald L. Bray, research professor of Beeson Divinity School,  
Samford University

“John Owen’s *Communion with God* is the best thing there is on “relational theology.” In a nuanced and biblically rich way, Owen develops the believer’s responsive engagement with God the Holy Trinity through study, worship, and meditation. This is a remarkable book that will surprise and challenge. Kelly Kopic and Justin Taylor have nicely rewrapped it, making it accessible to a new generation.”

—Paul Helm, Regent College

“Owen’s exceptional work is partly a biblical and dogmatic treatise, partly a searching reflection on the practice of fellowship with the triune God. This new edition deserves to claim many new readers for a classic of Protestant practical divinity.”

—John Webster, chair of systematic theology,  
King’s College, University of Aberdeen

“John Owen was perhaps the greatest of the Puritan theologians and this new edition of his classic study of Trinitarian spirituality will be a blessing to all who read it. God’s self-revelation as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is not a teaching to be checked off and shelved away for doctrinal safekeeping. It is rather the ultimate basis of prayer, ethics, worship, and Christian life itself. No one presents this truth more powerfully than the great Owen, and Kelly Kopic and Justin Taylor’s new edition of *Communion with God* gives us fresh access to his mind and heart.”

—Timothy George, dean, Beeson Divinity School,  
Samford University; senior editor, *Christianity Today*

# COMMUNION WITH THE TRIUNE GOD

JOHN OWEN

EDITED BY  
KELLY M. KAPIC AND JUSTIN TAYLOR

FOREWORD BY  
KEVIN J. VANHOOZER

CROSSWAY BOOKS

WHEATON, ILLINOIS

*Communion with the Triune God*

Copyright © 2007 by Kelly M. Kopic and Justin Taylor

Published by Crossway Books

a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers

1300 Crescent Street

Wheaton, Illinois 60187

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher, except as provided for by USA copyright law.

Reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Cover design: Josh Dennis

Cover illustration: Bridgeman Art Library

First printing 2007

Printed in the United States of America

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Owen, John, 1616–1683.

Communion with the Triune God / by John Owen; edited by Kelly M. Kopic and Justin Taylor; foreword by Kevin J. Vanhoozer.

p. cm.

Rev. ed. of: Of communion with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, each person distinctly in love, grace, and consolation.

Includes indexes.

ISBN 978-1-58134-831-6 (tpb)

1. Spirituality. I. Kopic, Kelly M., 1972– II. Taylor, Justin, 1976– III. Owen, John, 1616–1683. Of communion with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, each person distinctly in love, grace, and consolation. IV. Title.

BV4501.3.O93 2007

231.7—dc22

2007020762

DP	15	14	13	12	11	10	09	08	07
	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

O F  
Communion with God

The Father, Sonne, and Holy Ghost,  
*Each Person Distinctly;*

I N

Love, Grace, and Consolation:

O R

THE SAINTS FELLOWSHIP

With the Father, Sonne, and Holy Ghost,

UNFOLDED.

---

By JOHN OWEN D. D.

A Servant of JESUS CHRIST  
in the Work of the Gospel.

---

*God is Love.* 1 Joh. 4. 8.

*Tell me O thou whom my Soule Loveth where thou Feedest.* Cant. 1. 7.

*Make hast my Beloved,* Cant. 8. 14.

*Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are Sealed to the day of Redemp-  
tion.* Ephes. 4. 30.

*Now there are diversities of Gifts but the same Spirit. And there are differences  
of Administrations, but the same Lord, and there are diversities of opera-  
tions but it is the same God.* 1 Cor. 12. 4, 5, 6.

---

OXFORD,

Printed by A. LICHFIELD Printer to the University,  
for THO: ROBINSON. Anno Dom. 1657.

## FOREWORD

---

As one who has ploughed postmodern fields and cleared deconstructive hermeneutical thickets, it gives me particular pleasure to introduce and commend the work of a seventeenth-century theologian that takes us to the very heart of Puritan faith, hope, and love. Despite my extended forays into various kinds of postliberal and postconservative theology—or perhaps because of them—John Owen’s study of communion with the triune God strikes me as especially significant, even contemporary, and this for three, maybe four, reasons.

In the first place, much has been made of late concerning the “renaissance” of Trinitarian theology that began with Karl Barth and picked up steam throughout the twentieth century until it achieved “bandwagon” status around 1980. One of the most important present-day litmus tests for theologians pertains to how far one accepts (or understands!) Rahner’s Rule: “the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and vice versa.”

Read against the backdrop of the current discussion, Owen’s approach to the doctrine of the Trinity is impressive indeed. Owen walks a fine line that balances the oneness and the threeness, emphasizing our communion “with each person distinctly” while at the same time insisting that to commune with each person is to commune with the one God. Perhaps one advantage of Owen’s approach over more than a few contemporary approaches is that he is able to preserve the distinctness of the Father’s love while simultaneously focusing on Christ as the one alone who makes it known.

A second point. Christianity, it has been said, is not a religion but a personal relation. Owen agrees that theology is relational, but his account of our relation with God bears little resemblance either to the casual way in which it sometimes gets played out in dumbed-down theology and worship or to the reductionistic way it gets worked out in wisened-up theology that defines persons as “nothing but” relations and which views the God-humanity relation in terms of a flattened out mutuality. Owen’s *Communion with the Triune God* is indispensable reading for all those who want to go deeper into the meaning of relationality than one typically goes in the pop-theology boats that float only on the psychological surface of the matter.

The gospel is the good news that in Christ there is union and communion with God. According to Owen, communion involves “mutual relations” between God and humankind—a giving and receiving—but it does not follow that God and humankind are equal partners. Only God can bring about the union that establishes and enables the subsequent communion. Humans enjoy fellowship with God, therefore, only by actively participating in what God has unilaterally done for them in Christ through the Spirit. Owen may here have something to teach contemporary theology concerning the nature of human participation in God’s triune life, namely, that participation, like communion itself, is neither a legal fiction nor idle piety but rather the meat and drink of the Christian life. We appropriate the friendship God offers through the workings of his Word and Spirit in and through our natural human faculties.

The third significant feature is Owen’s emphasis on theology for right worship and faithful practice. Here too, twenty-first-century theology is playing catch-up with the Puritans as it seeks ways of coordinating theory and practice, both informally, in everyday life, and formally, in theological education. Owen’s work provides just the right balance, tempering spiritual experience with biblical exegesis, and argumentative rigor with pastoral application.

“I pray God with all my heart that I may be weary of every thing else but converse and communion with him” (letter to Sir John Hartopp). This prayer signals for me a fourth way in which Owen’s *Communion with the Triune God* has something to contribute, in this case to my own work in progress. As one who has seen great potential in the notion of Scripture as made up of God’s speech acts, I am encouraged and intrigued by Owen’s way of relating communion and communication: “Our communion . . . with God consisteth in his *communication of*

*himself unto us, with our return unto him* of that which he requireth and accepteth, flowing from that *union* which in Jesus Christ we have with him. . . .” To be sure, by “communication” Owen has in mind every kind of divine self-giving, not only the verbal and the cognitive. In this regard, Owen’s emphasis, some three hundred years before Barth, on Christ as the “medium of all communication” between God and us is particularly noteworthy.

Though Owen was born the year Shakespeare died, his writing is somewhat less accessible. Yet what we have in Owen is ultimately a holy sonnet with an extended introduction and a protracted analysis: “Let me not to the marriage of true minds / Admit impediments.” Communion with the Father, Son, and Spirit begins with God’s love for us and ends in our love to God. Communion with the triune God is sweeter yet more profound than human friendship or any human relationship.

In sum: Owen’s work anticipates key modern and postmodern developments without falling into some of the traps to which these later movements are prone. While John Bunyan probably did not have John Owen in mind when he wrote about the House of the Interpreter in *Pilgrim’s Progress*, Christians today may nevertheless find Owen to be a reliable guide to the triune way of the Word.

Kevin J. Vanhoozer  
Research Professor of Systematic Theology  
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois

# A NOTE ON THIS EDITION

---

JUSTIN TAYLOR

Our goal in this volume has been to produce an unabridged but updated and accessible edition of Owen’s *Communion with God*. This work, therefore, is neither an abridgement nor a paraphrase.<sup>1</sup> Instead, our goal has been to retain the original content, making adjustments and adding helps for the sake of the modern reader. Our base text has been that of the 1850s edition of Owen’s *Works*, edited by William Goold,<sup>2</sup> though we have also consulted the original 1657 edition as necessary.

What changes have we made to the original edition of Owen’s works? We have:

- broken some of Owen’s large paragraphs into smaller units;
- footnoted difficult vocabulary words or phrases (at their first occurrence) and collected them into a glossary;
- Americanized the British spelling (e.g., behaviour to behavior);
- updated archaic pronouns (e.g., thou to you);

---

1. For an example of such, see John Owen, *Communion with God*, Puritan Paperbacks, ed. R. K. Law (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1991).

2. We gratefully acknowledge the work of Christian Classics Ethereal Library (<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/communion.html>) and AGES Software (“The Works of John Owen” [Rio, WI: Ages Software, 2000]) for producing digitized versions of Goold’s edition.

- updated other archaic spellings (e.g., hath to have; requireth to requires);
- corrected the text in places where the nineteenth-century edition incorrectly deviated from the original;
- modernized some of the punctuation;
- placed Owen's Scripture references in parentheses and modernized the citation method;
- added our own Scripture references in brackets when Owen quotes or alludes to a passage but does not provide a reference;
- transliterated all Hebrew and Greek words, and provided a translation if Owen doesn't provide one;
- translated all Latin phrases and quotes that Owen leaves untranslated;
- provided sources for quotations and allusions where possible;
- removed Owen's intricate numbering system, which functioned as an extensive outline embedded in the body of his work;
- added headings and italics throughout this volume, and extensive outlines of our own at the beginning, to aid the reader in following the flow of Owen's thought.

An example of our limited modernizing can be seen in examining a reproduction of an original paragraph from the 1657 edition:

I. The love of God is fo. Zeph. chap. 3. v. 17. *The Lord thy God in the middest of thee is mighty: he will fave; he will rejoyce over thee with Joy, he will R E S T in his love, he will joy over thee with Singing.* Both these things are here assigned unto God in his Love; R E S T and D E L I G H T. The words are יְהִרִישׁ בְּאַהֲבָתוֹ: he fhall be *filent because of his love*. To reft with contentment is expreffed by being *filent*; that is, without repining, without complaint. This God doth upon the *account* of his own *love*. fo full, fo every way compleat & abfolute, that it will not allow him to complaine of any thing in them whom he loves, but is *filent* on the account thereof. Or *reft* in his Love, that is, he will not *remove* it; he will not feek farther for another Object.

Using our editorial principles, the paragraph has been rendered in this edition as follows:

The love of God is so. “The LORD your God in the midst of you is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over you with joy, he will rest in his love; he will joy over you with singing” (Zeph. 3:17). Both these things are here assigned unto God in his love—*rest and delight*. The words are, *yacharish b’<sup>e</sup>ahabato* —“He shall be silent because of his love.” To rest with contentment is expressed by being silent; that is, without repining, without complaint. This God does upon the account of his own love, so full, so every way complete and absolute, that it will not allow him to complain of any thing in them whom he loves, but he is silent on the account thereof. Or, “Rest in his love”; that is, he will not remove it—he will not seek further for another object.

### Outline and Sources

Two features merit additional comment. First, readers familiar with the 1850s Gould edition will note that Owen’s detailed numbering system—whereby virtually every paragraph is assigned an outline mark—has been removed. Adapting this system we have produced a detailed outline at the beginning of this book. We highly recommend consulting this outline while reading the book in order to achieve the fullest understanding of Owen’s structure and argumentation. Each point of the outline is cross-referenced with the page in the main text for maximal convenience.

Owen’s footnotes are often rather cryptic for modern researchers and readers. They are filled with Latin quotes, often from obscure sources or with no source cited at all. Furthermore, the standards have changed since Owen’s time with regard to the necessity of reproducing exact quotations. These factors combine to make the task of perfectly conforming Owen’s citations to modern practice all but impossible. We have sought whenever possible to locate an original source,<sup>3</sup> as well as a published English translation<sup>4</sup>—though there are times when we have been unable to locate either.<sup>5</sup> When a published translation is less than accurate to Owen’s quoted material, we have edited the translation and prefaced the citation with the notation “cf.”

---

3. Citations of PL and PG refer respectively to *Patrologia Latina* and *Patrologia Graeca*.

4. Citations of ANF and NPNF refer respectively to *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* and *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. Superscript numerals after NPNF indicate whether it is the first or second series.

5. For future editions of this work, further bibliographic suggestions are welcome and may be directed to [johnowen.org@gmail.com](mailto:johnowen.org@gmail.com).

## PREFACE

---

Christian Reader,

It is now six years past since I was brought under an engagement of promise for the publishing of some meditations on the subject which you will find handled in the ensuing treatise. The reasons of this delay, being not of public concern, I shall not need to mention. Those who have been in expectation of this duty from me, have, for the most part, been so far acquainted with my condition and employments, as to be able to satisfy themselves as to the deferring of their desires. That which I have to add at present is only this: having had many opportunities, since the time I first delivered anything in public on this subject (which was the means of bringing me under the engagements mentioned), to reassume the consideration of what I had first fixed on, I have been enabled to give it that improvement,<sup>1</sup> and to make those additions to the main of the design and matter treated on, that my first debt is come at length to be only the occasion of what is now tendered<sup>2</sup> to the saints of God. I shall speak nothing of the subject here handled; it may, I hope, speak for itself, in that spiritual savor and relish which it will yield to them whose hearts are not so filled with other things as to render the sweet things of the gospel bitter to them. The design of the whole treatise you will find, Christian reader, in the first chapters of the first part; and I shall not detain you here with the perusal of any thing which in its proper place will offer itself

---

1. good or profitable enhancement, completion.

2. offered

unto you: know only that the whole of it has been recommended to the grace of God in many supplications, for its usefulness unto them that are interested in the good things mentioned therein.

J. O.  
Oxon.<sup>3</sup> Christ Church College  
July 10, 1657

---

3. Oxford (Lat. Oxonia)

PART I

OF COMMUNION  
WITH EACH PERSON  
DISTINCTLY—

OF COMMUNION WITH THE FATHER

---

# Chapter 1

---

In the First Epistle of John, the apostle assures them to whom he wrote that the fellowship of believers “is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1:3),<sup>1</sup> and this he does with such an unusual kind of expression as bears the force of an asseveration<sup>2</sup>—whence we have rendered it, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

The outward appearance and condition of the saints in those days being very mean<sup>3</sup> and contemptible—their leaders being accounted as the filth of this world and as the offscouring<sup>4</sup> of all things<sup>5</sup>—the inviting [of] others into fellowship with them and a participation of the precious things which they did enjoy, seem to be exposed to many contrary reasonings and objections: “What benefit is there in *communion* with them? Is it anything else but to be sharers in troubles, reproaches, scorns, and all manner of evils?” To prevent or remove these and the like exceptions, the apostle gives them to whom he wrote to know (and that with some earnestness of expression), that notwithstanding all the disadvantages their fellowship lay under, unto

---

1. Gk. *kai hē koinōnia de hē hēmetera*, etc.

2. solemn and emphatic assertion, declaration.

3. despicable, vile, lowly.

4. refuse, filth scoured off and cast away.

5. Gk. *hōs perikatharmata tou kosmou*. Cf. 1 Cor. 4:8–13; Rom. 8:35–36; Heb. 10:32–34. *Christianos ad leones*. *Et puto, nos Deus apostolos novissimos elegit veluti bestiariorum*. [“To the lions with the Christians!” Tertullian, *Apology*, ANF 3:47; PL 1, col. 825B; “And, (I think) God hath selected us the apostles (as) hindmost, like men appointed to fight with wild beasts.” Tertullian, *On Modesty*, ANF 4:88; PL 2, col. 1006B.] Acts 17:18; Gal. 6:12. *Semper casuris similes, nunquamque cadentes*. [“[we are] always like those about to fall, and never falling.”]

a carnal view, yet in truth it was, and would be found to be (in reference to *some* with whom they held it), very honorable, glorious, and desirable. For “truly,” says he, “our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

### The Saints Have Communion with God

This being so earnestly and directly asserted by the apostle, we may boldly follow him with our affirmation, namely, “*That the saints of God have communion with him.*” And a *holy and spiritual* communion it is, as shall be declared. How this is spoken *distinctly* in reference to the Father and the Son, must afterward be fully opened and carried on.

By nature, since the entrance of sin, no man has any communion with God. He is *light*,<sup>6</sup> we *darkness*; and what communion has light with darkness [2 Cor. 6:14]? He is *life*, we are *dead*—he is *love*, and we are *enmity*; and what agreement can there be between us? Men in such a condition have neither Christ,<sup>7</sup> nor hope, nor God in the world (Eph. 2:12), “being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them” (Eph. 4:18). Now two cannot walk together unless they be agreed (Amos 3:3). While there is this *distance* between God and man, there is no *walking together* for them in any fellowship or communion. Our first *interest*<sup>8</sup> in God was so lost by sin,<sup>9</sup> as that there was left unto us (in ourselves) no possibility of a recovery. As we had deprived ourselves of all *power* for a return, so God had not revealed any way of *access* unto himself, or that he could, under any consideration, be approached unto by sinners in peace. Not any *work* that God had made, not any *attribute* that he had revealed, could give the least light into such a dispensation.<sup>10</sup>

The manifestation of grace and pardoning mercy, which is the only door of entrance into any such communion, is not committed unto any but unto him alone<sup>11</sup> *in* whom it is, *by* whom that grace and mercy was

6. 1 John 1:5; 2 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 5:8; John 5:21; Matt. 22:32; Eph. 2:1; 1 John 4:8; Rom. 8:7.

7. *Magna hominis miseria est cum illo non esse, sine quo non potest esse.* [“And so it is the especial wretchedness of man not to be with Him, without whom he cannot be.” Augustine, *On the Holy Trinity*, NPNF<sup>1</sup> 3:192; PL 42, col. 1049.]

8. share in, claim of.

9. Eccles. 7:29; Jer. 13:23; Acts 4:12; Isa. 33:14.

10. arrangement, provision, ordering.

11. John 1:18; Heb. 10:19–21. *Unus verusque Mediator per sacrificium pacis reconcilians nos Deo; unum cum illo manebat cui offerebat; unum in se fecit, pro quibus offerebat; unus ipse fuit,*

purchased, *through* whom it is dispensed, who reveals it from the bosom of the Father. Hence this communion and fellowship with God is not in express terms mentioned in the Old Testament. The thing itself is found there; but the clear light of it, and the boldness of faith in it, is discovered in the gospel, and by the Spirit administered therein. By that Spirit we have this liberty (2 Cor. 3:17–18). Abraham was the *friend* of God (Isa. 41:8); David, a man after his own *heart* [1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22]; Enoch *walked* with him (Gen. 5:22)—all enjoying this communion and fellowship for the substance of it. But the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was standing (Heb. 9:8). Though they had communion with God, yet they had not *parrēsian*—a boldness and confidence in that communion. This follows the entrance of our High Priest into the Most Holy Place (Heb. 4:16; 10:19). The veil also was upon them, that they had not *eleutherian*—freedom and liberty in their access to God (2 Cor. 3:15–16, etc.). But now in Christ we have boldness and access with confidence to God (Eph. 3:12).<sup>12</sup> This boldness and access with confidence the saints of old were not acquainted with. By Jesus Christ alone, then, on all considerations as to being and full manifestation, is this distance taken away. He has consecrated for us a new and living way (the old being quite shut up), “through the veil, that is to say, his flesh” (Heb. 10:20); and “through him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father” (Eph. 2:18). “You who sometimes were far off, are made nigh<sup>13</sup> by the blood of Christ, for he is our peace,” etc. (Eph. 2:13–14). Of this foundation of all our communion with God, more afterward, and at large. Upon this new bottom<sup>14</sup> and foundation, by this new and living way, are sinners admitted into communion with God, and have fellowship with him. And truly, for sinners to have fellowship with God, the infinitely holy God, is an astonishing dispensation.<sup>15</sup>

---

*qui offerabat, et quod offerebat.* [“The same One and true Mediator Himself, reconciling us to God by the sacrifice of peace, might remain one with Him to whom He offered, might make those one in Himself for whom He offered, Himself might be in one both the offerer and the offering.” Augustine, *On the Holy Trinity*, NPNF<sup>1</sup> 3:79; PL 42, col. 901.]

12. Gk. *Parrēsian kai tēn prosagōgēn en pepoithēsei.*

13. near

14. basis

15. *Philōn men ontōn, ouden dei dikaiosunēs dikaiōi de ontes prosdeontai philias.* [“If men are friends there is no need of justice between them; whereas merely to be just is not enough—a feeling of friendship also is necessary.” Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 453.]

## Communion in General

To speak a little of it in general: Communion relates to *things* and *persons*. A joint participation in any thing whatever, good or evil,<sup>16</sup> duty or enjoyment, nature or actions, gives this denomination<sup>17</sup> to them so partaking of it. A common interest in the same *nature* gives all men a fellowship or communion therein. Of the elect it is said, *Ta paidia kekoinōnēke sarkos kai aimatos*,<sup>18</sup> “Those children partook of” (or had fellowship in, with the rest of the world) “flesh and blood”—the same common nature with the rest of mankind; and, therefore, Christ also came into the same fellowship (*kai autos paraplēsiōs metesche tōn autōn*).

There is also a communion as to *state* and *condition*, whether it be good or evil; and this, either in things *internal* and spiritual—such as is the communion of saints among themselves; or in respect of *outward* things. So was it with Christ and the two thieves, as to one condition, and to one of them in respect of another. They were *en tō autō krimati*—under the same sentence to the cross (Luke 23:40, *ejusdem doloris socii*<sup>19</sup>). They had communion as to that evil condition whereunto they were adjudged,<sup>20</sup> and one of them requested (which he also obtained) a participation in that blessed condition whereupon our Savior was immediately to enter.

There is also a communion or fellowship in *actions*, whether *good* or *evil*. In *good*, is that communion and fellowship in the gospel, or in the performance and celebration of that worship of God which in the gospel is instituted, which the saints do enjoy (Phil. 1:5), which, as to the general kind of it, David so rejoices in (Ps. 42:4). In *evil*, was that wherein Simeon and Levi were brethren (Gen. 49:5). They had communion in that cruel act of revenge and murder. Our communion with God is not comprised in any one of these kinds; of some of them it is *exclusive*. It cannot be natural; it must be *voluntary* and by consent. It cannot be of state and conditions; but in actions. It cannot be in the same actions upon a third party; but in a return from one to another. The infinite disparity that is

16. *Quemadmodum enim nobis arrhabonem Spiritus reliquit, ita et a nobis arrhabonem carnis accepit, et vexit in caelum, pignus totius summæ illuc quandoque redigendæ.* [“For as ‘He has given us the earnest of the Spirit,’ so has He received from us the earnest of the flesh, and has carried it with Him into heaven as a pledge of that complete entirety which is one day to be restored.” Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, ANF 3:584; PL 2, col. 869A.]

17. name, designation.

18. Owen has reversed the terms *aimatos* and *sarkos*.

19. Lat. “Sorrows of the same thing [i.e., condemnation] [were] shared.”

20. sentenced, judged, settled judicially.

between God and man made the great philosopher conclude that there could be no friendship between them.<sup>21</sup> Some distance in the persons holding friendship he could allow, nor could exactly determine the bounds and extent thereof; but that between God and man, in his apprehension, left no place for it. Another says, indeed, that there is *communitas homini cum Deo*<sup>22</sup>—a certain fellowship between God and man—but the general intercourse<sup>23</sup> of providence is all he apprehended. Some arose to higher expressions; but they understood nothing whereof they spoke. This knowledge is hid in Christ; as will afterward be made to appear. It is too wonderful for nature, as sinful and corrupted. Terror and apprehensions of death at the presence of God is all that it guides unto. But we have, as was said, a *new* foundation and a *new* discovery<sup>24</sup> of this privilege.

Now, communion is the mutual communication of such good things as wherein the persons holding that communion are delighted, bottomed<sup>25</sup> upon some union between them. So it was with Jonathan and David; their souls clave to one another (1 Sam. 20:17) *in love*.<sup>26</sup> There was the *union* of love between them; and then they really communicated all issues<sup>27</sup> of love mutually.<sup>28</sup> In spiritual things this is more eminent: those who enjoy this communion have the most excellent union for the foundation of it; and the issues of that union, which they mutually communicate, are the most precious and eminent.

Of the union which is the foundation of all that communion we have with God I have spoken largely elsewhere, and have nothing further to add thereunto.

---

21. *Akribēs men oun en toioutois ouk estin borismos, heōs tinos hoi philon pollōn gar aphaïroumenōn, eti menei, polu de chōristhentos, hoion tou theou ouk eti.* ["It is true that we cannot fix a precise limit on such cases, up to which two men can still be friends; the gap may go on widening and the friendship still remain; but when one becomes very remote from the other, as God is remote from man, it can go on no longer." Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 478.]

22. Perhaps an oblique reference to Cicero's complaint to Epicurus concerning how man is to relate to the gods if the gods have no regard for humans: *cum homini nulla cum deo sit communitas?* ["If god and man have nothing in common?" Cicero, *De natura deorum*, trans. H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 110–13.]

23. communication

24. revelation

25. grounded

26. *Panta ta tōn philōn koina.* ["Friends hold everything in common."]

27. proceedings

28. *Kai hē paroimia, koina ta philōn, orthōs, en koinōnia gar hē philia.* ["Again, the proverb says 'Friends' goods are common property,' and this is correct, since community is the essence of friendship." Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 485.]

## Communion with God Defined

Our communion, then, with God consists in

his *communication of himself unto us*,  
*with our return unto him* of that which he requires and accepts,  
 flowing from that *union*<sup>29</sup> which in Jesus Christ we have with him.

And it is twofold: (1) *perfect and complete*, in the full fruition of his glory and total giving up of ourselves to him, resting in him as our utmost end; which we shall enjoy when we see him as he is; and (2) *initial and incomplete*, in the firstfruits and dawnings of that perfection which we have here in grace; which [is the] only [aspect] I shall handle.

It is, then, I say, of that mutual communication<sup>30</sup> in giving and receiving, after a most holy and spiritual manner, which is between God and the saints while they walk together in a covenant of peace, ratified in the blood of Jesus, whereof we are to treat. And this we shall do, if God permit; in the meantime praying the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—who has, of the riches of his grace, recovered us from a state of enmity into a condition of communion and fellowship with himself—that both he that writes, and they that read the words of his mercy, may have such a taste of his sweetness and excellencies therein, as to be stirred up to a further longing after the fullness of his salvation and the eternal fruition of him in glory.

---

29. *Nostra quippe et ipsius conjunctio, nec miscet personas, nec unit substantias, sed affectus consociat, et confœderat voluntates.* [“And certainly our union and his neither mixes our persons, nor unites our substances but joins our affections and binds our wills together.” Owen attributes this quote to Cyprian, *De Coena Domini*. Though formerly attributed to Cyprian, it is (chap. 6) in a work by the twelfth-century abbot Arold of Boneval entitled *De cardinalibus operibus Christi usque ad ascensum ejus ad Patrem ad Adriam IV Pontificem Maximum*; PL 189, cols. 1609–1678A. For the quote in Cyprian’s writing, see *Sancti Caecilii Cypriani opera* (Luteiae Parisiorum: Apud Viduam Mathurini Du Puis, viâ Iacobæâ, sub signo Caoronæ, 1648), 425.]

30. *Magna etiam illa communitas est, quæ conficitur ex beneficiis ultro citro, datis acceptis.* [“Another strong bond of fellowship is effected by mutual interchange of kind services.” Cicero, *De Officiis*, Loeb Classical Library, trans. Walter Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), 58.]

# GLOSSARY

---

- accidental.** Nonessential, incidental.
- acquittal.** Acquittal, discharge, release.
- adjudged.** Sentenced, judged, settled judicially.
- adjunct.** Association, thing attached.
- affiance.** Trust.
- afford.** Supply.
- aggravates.** Adds to the weight of.
- amplitude.** Largeness
- annexed.** Joined, added, united, attached.
- anon (1).** Presently, soon.
- anon (2).** Again.
- appellations.** Names, designations.
- approbation.** Praise, approval, commendation.
- appurtenances.** Apparatus, instruments.
- asseveration.** Solemn and emphatic assertion, declaration.
- assignation.** Assigning, assignment.
- astonishable.** Measured to astonish and surprise.
- aversation.** A moral turning away; estrangement.
- becomes.** Suits; is fitting.
- behoof.** Use, benefit, advantage.
- betroth.** Commit to marriage.
- bewail.** Wail, cry out, lament.
- bleatings.** Cries, especially from a sheep.
- bottom.** Basis.
- bottomed.** Grounded.
- brake.** Past participle of *broke*.
- breach.** Gap.
- catch.** Eagerly grasp.
- caul.** Membrane; the pericardium.
- cause.** Action or person who brings about the desired result.
- chimera.** Vain, fanciful illusion.
- close.** Unite, settle, consummate.
- closer.** Union.
- coincident.** Matching point for point; in exact agreement.
- comeliness.** Attractiveness.
- comminations.** Denunciations, threats.
- commutation.** Substitution, exchange.
- compass.** Delimitation, measure.
- compassing.** Attaining, achieving.
- conduces.** Leads, contributes.
- conjoin.** Join together, unite.
- conjugal.** Marital.

- consanguinity.** Kinship, relationship by blood or common ancestor.
- contemn.** Despise with contempt, scorn, disdain.
- contexture.** Structure, composition, texture, fabric.
- conversation.** Way of life.
- covert.** Shelter.
- cross.** In contradiction, against.
- cruciate.** Torment, torture.
- dainties.** That which is sweet, delicious.
- days-man.** Arbiter, mediator, umpire.
- dehors.** Exhorts in order to dissuade.
- denomination.** Name, designation.
- deportment.** Conduct, behavior, demeanor.
- desert.** That which it deserves, punishment.
- destinated.** Destined, ordained.
- determinate.** Determined, resolved, settled.
- disannul.** Annul, cancel, make void.
- discover.** Reveal, uncover.
- discovery.** Revelation.
- dispensation.** Arrangement, provision, ordering.
- disquietment.** Disturbance, uneasiness, anxiety, unrest.
- earnest.** A payment, installment to secure a contract, a pledge.
- economy.** *Generally:* administration; *specifically:* the administration of the plan of salvation.
- efficient cause.** The means or agency by which something comes into being.
- endued.** Endowed.
- energetical.** Emphatic, powerful.
- enlargedness.** Liberation, freedom.
- ensue.** Follow.
- entertainment.** Act of upholding, maintaining, receiving; providing for; spending time with.
- espousals.** Wedding, wedding feast.
- evince.** Prove, evidence, make manifest.
- excrescences.** abnormal growth on a plant (or animal)
- exinanition.** Abasement, humiliation.
- expatiate.** Write at some length; enlarge upon; extended discussion.
- expostulate.** Reason earnestly with someone so as to dissuade them.
- exurgency.** Urgent force
- eye.** Look, Gaze upon.
- facile.** Effortless.
- fain.** Eager, well-disposed; be delighted to.
- flagon.** A large, spouted vessel for holding and pouring liquids, usually wine.
- filial.** Pertaining to a son or daughter.
- froward.** Stubbornly contrary, obstinate.
- furniture.** Endowments, qualities, capacities.
- galleries.** Tresses, long hair.
- giddiness.** Incapable of serious thought or attention, akin to intoxication.
- haply.** Perhaps, perchance.
- illapses.** Permeations, descents.
- illatively.** Inferentially.
- impetration.** Act of obtaining by entreaty or petition.
- import.** Signify.
- importance.** Import, meaning.
- improvement.** Good or profitable enhancement, completion.
- incumbent.** Obligatory.
- indigent.** Lacking, impoverished, deficient.

- indisposedness.** Disinclination, unwillingness.
- inlet.** Entrance.
- inquest.** Inquiry, investigation.
- insensible.** Imperceptible; barely able to be perceived.
- instantly.** Insistently.
- intended.** Stretched, increased.
- intendment.** Intention.
- intercourse.** Communication.
- interest.** Share in, claim of.
- interposition.** Interjection, intervention.
- intervenience.** Intervention.
- intimate.** Communicate, make known.
- invocated.** Invoked.
- iota.** The ninth letter of the Greek alphabet, referring to a tiny portion.
- issues.** Proceedings.
- Judaical.** Jewish.
- lasciviousness.** Inclination to lust, wantonness.
- lees.** Wine that has been laid down for a significant period of time so that it ages properly.
- malefactor.** Criminal.
- manuduction.** Guidance (by the hand).
- mean.** Despicable, vile, lowly.
- meanest.** Lowliest, most debased.
- meet.** Fitting, appropriate.
- metathesis.** Transposition of letters, sounds, or syllables within a word.
- metonymy (metonymical).** A figure of speech whereby one term is substituted for another term which is closely associated with it.
- mind.** Remind.
- napkin.** To hide or to neglect through not using.
- nigh.** Near.
- nitre.** Native sodium carbonate.
- obdurate.** Hardened, unyielding, obstinate.
- obediential.** Obedient.
- oblation.** Offering, sacrifice.
- obnoxious.** Liable, subject to, exposed, made susceptible to harm.
- odoriferous.** Fragrant.
- offscouring.** Refuse, filth scoured off and cast away.
- operose.** Laborious, tedious from being elaborate.
- ornament.** Adornment.
- owning.** Admitting, acknowledging, confessing to be true.
- papists.** Negative label for Roman Catholics, due to their belief in papal supremacy.
- paraphrast.** Paraphraser.
- paschal.** Passover.
- pathetical.** Affecting, moving.
- peculiar.** Particular, characteristic, in its own way.
- pitch.** Level, degree.
- popish.** Negative label for Roman Catholicism, relating to belief in papal supremacy.
- procured.** Gained, obtained.
- procuring cause.** Action or person who brings about the desired result.
- profession.** Confession.
- professors.** Ones who make a religious confession.
- progenitors.** Ancestors.
- promiscuously.** Indiscriminately.
- quickenig.** Giving life to.
- quits.** Discontinues, ceases.
- raiment.** Garments, clothing.
- rapine.** Pillage, robbery, plunder.
- rectitude.** Uprightness.
- redounds.** Results in some advantage.
- regardless.** Disregarding.

- repining.** Discontentment, fretting, grumbling.
- reposes.** Brings relief, respite.
- retirements.** Privacy and seclusion, usually leisure.
- retrievement.** Retrieval.
- satiated.** Satisfied.
- scholiast.** Scholar who writes explanatory notes.
- servilely.** Submissively, cringingly, slavely.
- shed.** Poured forth.
- signal.** Significant, striking, remarkable, notably out of the ordinary.
- stations.** Positions.
- stay.** Sustain.
- stead.** Place.
- straitenings.** Constrictions.
- straits.** Difficulties, distresses.
- subduct.** Remove from use, influence.
- subservient.** Subject.
- subsistence.** Mode or quality of existence.
- succor.** Assist, relieve.
- suffered.** Allowed, permitted, tolerated.
- suffices.** Satisfies, is enough for.
- sullied.** Polluted, soiled.
- sundry.** Various, particular, distinct.
- sup.** Eat, have supper.
- supererogation.** Roman Catholic doctrine that actions going beyond the call of duty and the requirements for salvation produce a superabundance of merit deposited in a spiritual treasury of the church and are used by ordinary sinners for the remittance of their sins.
- susception.** Reception.
- temper.** Character, constitution, quality.
- tempered.** Balanced.
- tender.** Careful.
- tenders.** Offers.
- tergiversations.** Evasions, falsifications.
- tittle.** A small distinguishing mark, such as a diacritic, accent, or the dot over an *i*.
- tumultuating.** Agitation, disturbing, stirring up.
- unacceptation.** Unacceptability.
- unction.** Anointing.
- unctions.** Ointments.
- usurping.** Seizing, taking control with power and force.
- variance.** Dissent, discord.
- velleity.** Inclination, mere desire, wish.
- vesture.** Garment, covering, robe.
- vexation.** Annoyance.
- want.** Lack.
- wantonness.** Unrestrained rebelliousness.
- wax.** Grow, become.
- well-head.** Source, spring, fountain.
- without.** Outside, external to.
- wonted.** Accustomed.
- wroth.** Wrathful.