

5. ESCHATOLOGICAL UNITY

Thesis: Christian oneness is the already realization of God's not-yet kingdom.

I. Our Present Struggle for Unity (semi-realized)

"...until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

"The point of view thus attained may be described as semi-eschatological....Living, then, in a world of semi-futurities there is every reason to expect that the thought of the earliest Christians should have moved backwards from the anticipated attainment in its fulness to the present partial experiences and interpreted these in terms of the former."¹

"To dwell above, with the saints we love, that will be glory. But to dwell below, with the saints we know, that's another story."²

A. The Present Reality of False Professing

"The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil" (Matt. 13:38-39).

"Though Christ has prayed for unity, and God has promised unity, yet the church will still be grievously torn, because some who are in the church are not of the church, and therefore they are not included in God's promise or Christ's prayer."³

B. The Present Reality of False Thinking

"...so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes" (Eph. 4:14). "I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10).

"The invisible church is more important than the visible church, and loyalty to the former may involve either expulsion or separation from the latter, and the formation of a new visible church."⁴

"Be deeply affected with the mischievous effects and consequents of schisms and divisions in the societies of the saints, and let nothing beneath a plain necessity divide you from communion one with another; hold it fast till you can hold it no longer without sin."⁵

C. The Present Reality of False Living

"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh" (Gal. 5:16-17).

¹ Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1994), 38, 43.

² Quoted in Luder G. Whitlock Jr., *Divided We Fall: Overcoming a History of Christian Disunity* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2017), 90.

³ Anthony Burgess, *Advancing Christian Unity*, ed. Matthew Vogan (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2019), 55.

⁴ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Basis of Christian Unity* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2003), 72.

⁵ John Flavel, "A Sermon on Gospel Unity" in *Works* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1968), 3:607.

"If there is one consideration more humbly than another to a spiritually-minded believer, it is, that, after all God has done for him...there should still exist in the heart a principle, the tendency of which is to secret, perpetual, and alarming departure from God...O, it marks the decay of love to God in the soul, when the heart beats faintly, and the eye looks coldly, towards any dear saint of God, because he belongs not to our party, and wears not our badge; when bigotry, narrow-minded selfishness, warps the mind, congeals the current of love, and almost un-christianises a believer."⁶

II. Our Future State of Unity (fully-realized)

"The wolf and the lamb shall graze together...They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain" (Isa. 65:25).

"It is hardly an exaggeration to assert that the expectation of a [perfectly] united church in this dispensation is an unwarranted anticipation of the new heaven and the new earth."⁷

"...the spiritual unity of all who believe in Christ is indeed a present reality, but its fullest realization and the attainment of its highest degree lie in the future."⁸

A. The Future Reality of Perfect Sight

"For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known" (1 Cor. 13:12).

"Jesus didn't ascend to heaven to prepare multiple dwelling places based on your creedal alliance or preference. There will be no lines of demarcation between churches, peoples, nations, or classes in heaven."⁹

B. The Future Reality of Perfect Love

"Love never ends...So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. 13:8, 13).

"...what rest is there in that world which the God of love and peace fills with his glorious presence, where the Lamb of God lives and reigns, and fills that world with the pleasant beams of his love; where is nothing to give any offense, no object to be seen but what has perfect sweetness and amiableness; where the saints shall find and enjoy all which they love, and so be perfectly satisfied; where there is no enemy and no enmity in any heart, but perfect love in all to everyone; where there is a perfect harmony, none envying another, but everyone resting and rejoicing in the happiness of every other."¹⁰
"In the local church, as the Spirit bears his fruit among us, we're called to offer little previews of the eternal world of love that heaven will be."¹¹

⁶ Octavius Winslow, *Personal Declension and Revival of Religion in the Soul* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2021), 1, 54-55.

⁷ Kuiper, *The Glorious Body of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), 51. Kuiper calls us to strive for visible unity with "idealistic realism."

⁸ R. B. Kuiper, *The Glorious Body of Christ*, 43.

⁹ Dustin Bengé, *The Loveliest Place: The Beauty and Glory of the Church* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2022), 172.

¹⁰ Jonathan Edwards, "Heaven Is a World of Love," in *The Sermons of Jonathan Edwards: A Reader* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 259.

¹¹ Matthew McCullough, *Remember Heaven: Meditations on the World to Come for Life in the Meantime* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2025), 129).