

# The Economy of God in First Corinthians 6:17

by David Yoon

Throughout the history of the church, certain biblical verses have attained particular prominence in various Christian groups. When believers articulated and disseminated the divine revelation embodied in these verses, the light and truth that emanated from them renewed and revitalized many lives. Lutherans hail Romans 3:28 for its revelation of faith as the unique way for sinners to be unfettered from the bondage of the law and to be justified by God. Fundamentalists prize John 3:16 for its revelation of the love of God, who offers sinners the gift of eternal life. Evangelicals highlight Matthew 28:19-20 for its revelation of the “great commission” to disciple all the nations for the spread of the glad tidings. Though these verses were selected by believers possessing divergent theological views, they share three common themes which reveal the source of their power. First, these verses speak clearly of God’s desire to have a relationship with man. Second, they unveil how God carries out His desire; that is, they point to the means whereby He obtains and deepens this relationship. Third, they implicitly speak of an eventual goal in God’s relationship with man.

Romans 3:28, John 3:16, and Matthew 28:19-20 all share these three themes. Romans 3:28 reveals that despite the barrier of man’s sin, God so ardently yearned to interact with man that He paid the wages of sin through the redemptive death of Christ and provided faith as the means through which sinners could be justified by God. John 3:16 shows that God’s deep love for the world caused Him to give perishing sinners His only begotten Son so that by believing into the Son, they could receive the eternal life. Matthew 28:19-20 unveils that God longs to extend His salvation, commissioning the believers to disciple the nations through baptism and teaching for the consummation of the age. These verses have served believers well in reviving many lives, standing as landmarks of the church’s advancement throughout history. Since the church should be ever growing “in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18), a timely question should be posed: After nearly two millennia of church history, does another verse embody the intrinsic essence of the Scripture by revealing further light and truth concerning the basis, means, and goal of God’s relationship with man?

First Corinthians 6:17 provides the most intimate view of God’s intended relationship with man, shows the clearest means of His interaction with man, and reveals the ultimate goal of His interaction with man: “He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” Even though this verse is not very prominent in the writings of many commentators, it unfolds God’s good pleasure to have an intimate organic union with man through the mingling of the divine Spirit and the human spirit for the building up of the Body of Christ as the corporate expression of the Triune God.

## The Basis of God’s Relationship with Man— The Union of Life

First Corinthians 6:17 unveils God’s desire to have an organic union with man through two key words: *joined* and *one*. Heinrich Meyer points out that this verse denotes the “inward union of life with Christ” (142). Contrary to traditional teaching that emphasizes a portrait of God who stands aloof from His creation to be revered from afar, this verse highlights the yearning in the heart of God to make Himself one with man and man one with Him in an intimate life union. Ironically, however, this verse is located at the center of 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, a passage in which Paul sternly admonishes the believers in Corinth about the sin of fornication. Corinth was so notorious for her profligacy and debauchery that its name “actually passed into the vocabulary of the Greek tongue; and the very word ‘to Corinthianise,’ meant ‘to play the wanton’” (Conybeare 376). Accustomed to such social mores that countenanced all manner of immorality and gripped by their sinful flesh, the Corinthian believers largely condoned the evil of fornication. As an anxious father (4:15), Paul countered this evil by presenting a core truth of the New Testament.

First Corinthians 6:12-20 is generally considered one of the most abstruse passages in Paul’s Epistles. Expositors find the passage “elusive” (Fisk 540), “unfinished,” “disjointed,” “obscure” (Héring 47), “imprecise” and “incoherent” (Burkill 118). The issue at hand is the believers’ abuse of their physical body, as evidenced by the fact that *body* is mentioned eight times in the passage. More often than not, particularly in the Pauline corpus, theological insights and spiritual revelations are found not in the problems that Paul addresses, but in the way he

deals with them. And the response Paul offers in chapter six unveils God's central intention with man.

It is worth noting that when dealing with fornication in this passage, Paul neither appeals to moral themes or precepts of Greco-Roman culture nor invokes the Jewish Torah, which specifically forbids fornication. Rather, in verse 16 Paul cites Jehovah's utterance in Genesis 2:24: "The two shall be one flesh"; Paul thus hearkens back to God's original intention to be united with man as one entity. Jehovah's decree in Genesis 2:24 intimates that He longed to have an intimate interaction with man, a marriage union with man. Elsewhere Paul states that Adam, a man created in the image of God, is a type of Christ, the image of the invisible God (Rom. 5:14; Col. 1:15). Hence, when Jehovah told Adam, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper as his counterpart" (Gen. 2:18), He also was indicating that there is a yearning within His own heart to join Himself with man. Here the marriage of Adam and Eve also typifies the *life* union of Christ with His believers. Eve came out of Adam's side, thus sharing the life and nature of Adam as bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, and became one flesh with Adam on the basis of a life union (vv. 21-24). Likewise, the believers share the life of Christ (Col. 3:4), partake of His nature (2 Pet. 1:4), and become one spirit with Him on the basis of a union of life (1 Cor. 6:17).

Paul deliberately alludes to God's desire to have an organic union with man to contrast it with a believer's illicit union with a prostitute. Paul's allusion to Genesis 2:24 serves a dual purpose in the passage. On the one hand, it clearly substantiates Paul's claim in 1 Corinthians 6:16 that fornication of a believer with a prostitute makes them one body. On the other hand, it indicates that a believer's union with the Lord as one spirit is holy marriage. Hence, verse 17 enunciates the very fulfillment of God's longing expressed in Genesis 2. As John Calvin puts it, Genesis 2:24 is employed in chapter six of 1 Corinthians to make clearer "the effect and dignity of the spiritual union (*coniugium*) existing between us and Christ" (130). Paul's reference serves as an apt transition to bring the reader from the valley of the portrayal of fornication to the apex of the revelation of the Lord's organic union with a believer.

Some readers might wonder how a verse that provides the most intimate portrait of the believer's life union with the Lord could be juxtaposed with so vivid a depiction of a most heinous sin. Yet the Holy Spirit saw fit to inspire Paul to declare a believer's oneness with the Lord against this dismal backdrop, for Paul's description of fornication serves as the darkest background against which the believer's life union with the Lord shines with radiant glory.

This is in keeping with Paul's customary use of antithesis to accentuate glorious truths of the divine economy; for

instance, sin abounding versus grace super-abounding (Rom. 5:20). Likewise, here *he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit* stands in contrasting parallel with *he who is joined to a prostitute is one body*.

The contrast between the believer's carnal union with a prostitute and the believer's spiritual union with the Lord is enormous. A believer's carnal union with a harlot is degrading because through his union with her, he becomes a member of a prostitute, partaking of what she is in her baseness. R. C. H. Lenski observes, "What the harlot is in her vice and degradation he becomes who joins himself to her. Of his own volition he descends to her in her filthiness" (265). In contrast, a believer's life union with the Lord is deifying. By virtue of his organic union with the Triune God, a believer participates in His communicable attributes to become God in life (John 3:15; Col. 3:4) and nature (2 Pet. 1:4) but not in the Godhead. Such deification ultimately uplifts man and fully glorifies God in transformed humanity. In countering fornication, Paul presents the stark contrast between these two unions, and in this portrayal of antipodes, 1 Corinthians 6:17 should not be considered a disjointed piece but an indispensable component.

Paul echoes the same motif in Ephesians 5 from a broader perspective. Consider the structure of verses 31 and 32: "The two shall be one flesh. This mystery is great, but I speak with regard to Christ and the church." This closely resembles the structure of 1 Corinthians 6:16-17: "The two shall be one flesh. But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit." First Corinthians 6:17 reveals that Christ and the church in Ephesians 5:32 fulfill the type in Genesis 2:24 preeminently on the basis of a life union of believers with Christ. Seeing this nexus between these two passages, Witness Lee says, "Christ and the church as one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17), typified by a husband and wife as one flesh, are the great mystery" (Recovery Version, Eph. 5:32, note 1). Paul's allusion to Genesis 2:24 in Ephesians 5 is significant because he emphatically refers to it as a *great* mystery. In fact, two chapters earlier in the Epistle, when revealing the purpose of his commission, Paul spoke of "the economy of the mystery" as the universal plan of God hidden in His being, thus intimately associating and identifying the mystery with God's economy (3:7-9). In Paul's understanding, the divine economy is the grand plan of God to carry out His eternal will (1:9-10), and even descriptive of the entirety of his teaching (1 Tim. 1:4). Burdened to make known the economy of the mystery, Paul explicitly states that this great mystery is Christ, the mystery of God (Col. 2:2), and the church, the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:4-6). Hence, Christ being organically joined to His believers as one spirit is tantamount to the union in life of Christ and the church. The magnitude of this captures the full compass of Paul's teaching and encapsulates the contents of God's New Testament economy.

Believers derive the basis of their relationship with the Triune God solely from their organic union with Him. We are begotten of God to be His children by receiving Christ as life and believing into His name (John 1:12-13). We become joined to Christ as His wife on the basis of having His life and nature (1 Cor. 6:16-17; Gen. 2:21-24). First Corinthians 6:17 lucidly speaks of the foundation upon which all aspects of God's relationship with the New Testament believers hinge. According to Elias Andrews, "This fact of 'union with Christ' is never more explicitly expressed than when Paul affirms that 'he who is united to the Lord becomes one Spirit with him' (1 Cor. 6:17)" (81).

### The Means for God's Relationship with Man— The Mingled Spirit

To Paul, the union with the Triune God was not merely a transcendent point of truth in his theology; it was an experiential reality thoroughly wrought into his inward parts (Phil. 1:8) and interwoven with every facet of his daily existence. First Corinthians reveals that as one called into the fellowship with Jesus Christ (1:9), Paul was one with Christ in His mind (2:16), His ways (4:17), His work (16:10), and His love (v. 24). His subsequent letter to the Corinthians further unveils that as a "man in Christ" (2 Cor. 12:2), Paul was joined to Christ in His suffering (1:5), His person (2:10), His fragrance (v. 15), His speech (v. 17), His meekness and gentleness (10:1), His obedience (v. 5), His truthfulness (11:10), and His weakness (13:4). Paul lived in the reality of an organic union with Christ because he knew the very means for God's subjective interaction with man—the mingled spirit, that is, the mingling of the divine Spirit with the regenerated human spirit. First Corinthians 6:17 reveals this tremendous key to experiencing the organic union with the Triune God through a marvelous phrase—*one spirit*.

First Corinthians 6:17 states that *one spirit* is the joining of *he* and *the Lord*. To properly interpret the significance of *one spirit*, there is a need for a contextual understanding of *he* and *the Lord*. *He* refers to a regenerated believer. More specifically, according to the context of 1 Corinthians, a regenerated believer, like all other persons, is a tripartite being composed of spirit, soul, and body. Earlier in the Epistle, within just four successive verses (2:14—3:1), Paul points to this tripartite constitution by classifying believers into three categories according to the three parts of their being that can dominate and characterize their living—"spiritual man" (2:15), "soulish man" (v. 14), and "fleshy" man (3:1). Paul underscores the primacy of the human spirit as the organ that "knows the things of man" and a believer's need to become a spiritual man who interprets the spiritual things with spiritual words, discerns all things, and has the mind of Christ (2:11-16). Further,

Paul's conception of our trichotomous nature is reflected in 1:30, where he presents Christ as God's wisdom who meets the needs of the believers' three parts for their full salvation: righteousness by which the believers are justified in their regenerated spirit (Rom. 5:18; 8:10), sanctification by which they are being transformed in their soul (6:22; 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Pet. 1:22), and redemption by which they will be transfigured in their body (Rom. 8:23; Phil. 3:21). Paul's understanding of the believers' nature is confirmed in his prayer for the Thessalonians: "And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thes. 5:23). Hence, *he* in 1 Corinthians 6:17 refers to a tripartite believer with a regenerated human spirit.

In the immediate context of chapter six, *the Lord* in verse 17 refers to neither Jehovah in the Old Testament nor the incarnate Jesus in the Gospels but to the resurrected Christ (v. 14). More significantly, Paul states in 15:45 that "the last Adam," Christ in the flesh, "became a life-giving Spirit" in His resurrection. His second letter to the Corinthians also indicates that Paul is not averse to identifying the resurrected Lord with the Spirit who gives life: "The Spirit gives life....And the Lord is the Spirit" (3:6, 17). Unless it is assumed that there was a drastic alteration in Paul's pneumatology from his first to his second letter to the Corinthians, 3:17 should be interpreted in the light of 1 Corinthians 15:45. Richard B. Gaffin points out, "However we settle the exegesis of 2 Cor 3:17a ('the Lord is the Spirit'), the 'is' (ἐστίν) there is based on the 'became' of 1 Cor 15:45b" (584). In other words, since Christ *became* the life-giving Spirit in His resurrection, He *is now* the Spirit. To Paul, so thorough is the identification between the resurrected Lord and the Spirit that when referring to the resurrected Christ, he does so with a compound appellation—*the Lord Spirit* (2 Cor. 3:18). *The Lord* in 1 Corinthians 6:17 is not the physical Jesus, Jesus in the flesh, but the pneumatic Christ, Christ as the Spirit in resurrection. The Lord, who is joined to a believer, is the processed Christ, the Christ who underwent the processes of incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection to become consummated as the life-giving Spirit. As such a Spirit, He can now dispense Himself as life into His chosen and redeemed people's human spirit.

As explained above, in the context of 1 Corinthians, *he* refers to a believer with a vivified human spirit and *the Lord* is the life-giving Spirit. Within 1 Corinthians are many verses that attest to the existence of the two spirits, the divine Spirit (2:4, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 3:16; 6:11, 19; 7:40; 12:3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13; 15:45) and the human spirit (2:11; 5:4; 14:2; 14, 32; 16:18). Perhaps the existence of the two spirits is most unambiguously evidenced by 2:11: "For who among men knows the things of man, except the spirit of man [human spirit] which is in him? In

the same way, the things of God also no one has known except the Spirit of God [divine Spirit].” At the same time, however, in Paul’s Epistles and the rest of the New Testament there are numerous verses where it is difficult to ascertain whether πνεῦμα refers to the divine Spirit or the human spirit (1 Cor. 4:21; 5:3-4; Rom. 8:4, 9, 15; Gal. 5:16; 6:1; Col. 2:5). In his footnote on “in Spirit” in Romans 8:9, J. N. Darby remarks, “An instance of the difficulty of putting a large or small ‘S.’ It is clearly the state and characteristic of the believer; but it is so by the presence of the Spirit” (1357). James D. G. Dunn treats such references as instances of “the interface between human spirit and divine Spirit” (429). Commenting on “spirit of faith” in 2 Corinthians 4:13, Marvin R. Vincent observes, “*Spirit* of faith: not distinctly the Holy Spirit, nor, on the other hand, a human faculty or disposition, but blending both” (313).

**I**n speaking of *one spirit*, Paul identifies it with the joining of *he* and *the Lord*, and in so doing he succinctly articulates the means through which the believers realize their life union with the Triune God. The joining of the life-giving Spirit implied in *the Lord* and the regenerated human spirit intimated in *he* is equal to *one spirit*. In other words, *one spirit* is the “blending” (borrowing Vincent’s language) or mingling<sup>1</sup> of the human spirit of a regenerated believer with the divine Spirit of God. In Paul’s understanding, the uniting of the resurrected Lord with the regenerated believer is equivalent to the divine Spirit entering, enlivening, and indwelling the human spirit to make the two one spirit. Hence, *one spirit* is the mingled spirit, that is, a believer’s human spirit born of, indwelt by, and blended with the divine Spirit of the Triune God. It is through the mingling of the two spirits that Christ becomes inextricably joined to His believers. Hence, 1 Corinthians 6:17 shows the mingled spirit as the unique means through which the Triune God in Christ participates in a subjective interaction with His believers.

The mingled spirit is not only the means through which the believers realize their life union with Christ; it is also the source from which this union spreads throughout their entire being. Understood in this light, 1 Corinthians 6:17 is the interpretive key for verses 12 through 20. Here Paul clearly reinforces the importance of the body in the salvific work of God throughout the passage: “The body is...for the Lord, and the Lord for the body” (v. 13), “Your bodies are members of Christ” (v. 15), “Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you” (v. 19), “Glorify God in your body” (v. 20). In a context so pervaded by corporeality, Paul’s sudden switch from the body to the mingled spirit in verse 17 reveals that he is in a higher realm than the “fleshly” Corinthians were accustomed to (3:3). His intention in 6:17 is to bring them into the realm of the mingled spirit.

It is because of the life union with the Lord in the mingled spirit that the believers’ body is for the Lord and the Lord for their body. Apart from the organic union in the mingled spirit, the believers’ body has no value in God’s sight. What gives the believers’ fragile and mortal bodies their precious worth is God’s intention to develop the organic union from their mingled spirit, through their soul, into their body to take possession of their entire tripartite being. By dispensing Himself as life from the mingled spirit, the Triune God causes the divine life in the mingled spirit to penetrate the believers’ mind, making it the *spirit* of their mind (Eph. 4:23). This life will eventually permeate their body and conform it to the body of His glory (Phil. 3:21), making it a *spiritual* body (1 Cor. 15:44). Our entire being, including our body, becomes a member of Christ because we are organically joined to Christ in the mingled spirit who makes His home in our heart (Eph. 3:17) and gives life to our mortal body (Rom. 8:11).

**O**ur body also becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit because Christ as the life-giving Spirit dwells in our human spirit, which is contained in our body. In the Old Testament type, the direct presence of the Holy God in the Holy of Holies distinguished the Jewish temple from all other houses and shrines. Likewise, what sanctifies our body from all other bodies and makes it the temple of the Holy Spirit is the reality of God in Christ as the Spirit mingled with our human spirit, the true holiest of all. Apart from the mingled spirit, the human spirit indwelt by the divine Spirit, our body has no sanctity. It is only by virtue of our union with Christ in the mingled spirit that our body can house the Holy Spirit as His dwelling place. Since the mingled spirit in 1 Corinthians 6:17 refers to the Holy God abiding in the holiest of all, to miss verse 17 is to miss the intrinsic reason for our body being a temple of the Holy Spirit.

We can glorify God with our body because the “Spirit of glory” (1 Pet. 4:14) mingled with our regenerated human spirit intends to spread through our soul into our body, culminating in the ultimate outraying of God’s glory through our transfigured body. Hence, Paul’s final imperative in the passage—“Glorify God in your body”—is much more than a simple exhortation to abstain from fornication. To “glorify God in your body” is, Witness Lee notes, “to allow God, who dwells in us (1 John 4:13), to occupy and saturate our body and express Himself through our body as His temple” (Recovery Version, 1 Cor. 6:20, note 2). Hence, the mingled spirit revealed in 6:17 is the base from which the Triune God develops the organic union throughout our entire being.

The mingled spirit in 6:17 is not only the crux of the passage in 6:12-20 but also the kernel of the entire Epistle of 1 Corinthians. Expositors rightly note that the subject of

the Epistle is the cross of Christ as an answer to the Corinthian believers' problems. Since the root cause of all the problems of the Corinthian believers is their divisive, lustful, and selfish flesh, Paul presents the crucified Christ, who alone can deal with their flesh by terminating it. How is the all-terminating effectiveness of the cross of Christ applied in the believers' experience? Paul's answer in the Epistle is the mingled spirit, the Spirit of the crucified and resurrected Christ mingled with the spirit of a regenerated believer. Elsewhere Paul speaks of the "the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:19), indicating that such a Spirit bears and transmits to the believers all that Christ is, has, and has accomplished in the process of His incarnation, human living, death, resurrection, and ascension. Paul echoes this in Romans 8:13, which says, "By the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body." This verse indicates that through the Spirit, into whom the crucifixion of Christ has been compounded, the believers can enjoy the effectiveness of the cross of Christ. Today the cross of Christ has been compounded into the all-inclusive Spirit of Jesus Christ, who is now mingled with the spirit of the regenerated believers as "one spirit." Since the reality of the cross of Christ is in the mingled spirit, the believers should live by the mingled spirit to experience "the cross on Calvary" wrought into their being to become "the cross within [them]" (Lee, *Experience* 204). Realizing that all the believers' problems stem from neglecting the mingled spirit, Paul presents the mingled spirit as the practical answer to all their vices. Therefore, the mingled spirit in 1 Corinthians 6:17 is Paul's all-inclusive answer to every problem in the Christian life.

### The Goal of God's Relationship with Man— The Body of Christ

The destiny of every believer is the full enjoyment of the union with Christ in the mingled spirit. Certainly *he* in verse 17 indicates that each individual believer can and should cultivate an intimate and personal enjoyment of the union with the pneumatic Christ. Yet the believer's union with Christ is not individualistic. According to the immediate context, *he* in verse 17 is a member of Christ in verse 15. As other commentators<sup>2</sup> note, *members of Christ* refers to the members of the Body of Christ (12:27). Hence, *members of Christ* suggests that the union of the Triune God with His believer in the mingled spirit has a corporate dimension.

The Body of Christ is the corporate Christ, Christ Himself as the Head organically united with His believers as the members. In the Body of Christ, all the members share the divine life and nature with the Head and depend on the Head for existence and function. Further, the Body of Christ clearly reveals the corporate oneness among the believers, for though there are many members with distinct measure and function, there is only one Body (12:12). As

a Body-conscious believer, Paul reminds the individualistic Corinthians that their bodies are members of the Body of Christ (6:15). In the same verse Paul rhetorically asks, "Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute?" To Paul, the Body of Christ is not a metaphor but an organism of the Triune God, a glorious corporate entity. The utter incompatibility of this divine organism being joined to a prostitute induces Paul to voice his unequivocal disapproval: "Absolutely not!" For Paul, fornication is not an affair that merely involves an individual believer; it is a matter that affects all the members of the entire Body of Christ. In actuality, every individual believer's action, whether negative or positive, is a Body matter, for all the believers of Christ are related to and dependent upon one another, being "members one of another" (Rom. 12:5). The mutuality that exists among the members of the Body of Christ is such an organic reality that Paul declares that "whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Cor. 12:26).

First Corinthians 5 illustrates the principle of the "mutual influence of the members" (Nee 69). Here Paul judges a sinful believer and commands the Corinthian believers to remove him from their midst. Again in dealing with this brother, Paul endeavors to bring the self-centered Corinthian believers into a Body-consciousness. He reminds them that "a little leaven leavens the whole lump" (v. 6), indicating that one individual believer's sin of fornication can corrupt the entire church. Further, he tells them to "purge out the old leaven" that they "may be a new lump" (v. 7), showing that the removal of a sinful brother is not merely due to his moral turpitude, but is primarily for the preservation of the health of the entire Body of Christ. Both in chapter five and six Paul, in countering fornication, brings to the Corinthian believers a view of the organic corporate entity.

By intimating the corporate dimension of the believers in chapters five and six, Paul is laying the groundwork for his full-length treatment of the Body of Christ in chapter twelve. In the first eleven verses of this chapter, Paul clearly emphasizes the manifestation of the Spirit, mentioning the *Spirit* nine times. Yet beginning with verse 12, he starts to emphasize the Body of Christ, referring to the *body* eighteen times in the remainder of the chapter. Paul thus indicates that all the believers' gifts as manifestations of the Spirit are not merely for the profit of the individual believer but for the benefit of the Body of Christ. In showing the Spirit's role in the constitution of the Body, he declares, "For also in one Spirit we were all baptized into one Body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all given to drink one Spirit" (v. 13). The emphasis in this verse is not "the rite of baptism" but "one Spirit," which is repeated twice (Dunn 451). The believers who are baptized in *one Spirit* and who drink the

*one Spirit* constitute the *one Body of Christ*. In other words, the believers are constituted as the one Body of Christ through their mutual experience of the one Spirit, in whom they have been immersed once for all and whom they drink perpetually. Hence, the intrinsic essence of the one Body is the one Spirit, without which the Body cannot exist. The Body of Christ is formed by the believers' initial baptism in one Spirit and is constituted by their continual drinking of one Spirit. Here the believers' being immersed in one Spirit and drinking one Spirit refers to their enjoyment of the organic union with Christ as the Spirit in their spirit. First Corinthians 12:13 emphatically shows that our experience of the union with Christ in the mingled spirit is not for the cultivation of individualistic spirituality but for the formation and constitution of the Body of Christ, the corporate expression of the Triune God.

First Corinthians 6:17 is a banner verse of the eternal economy of God, the unique focus of the apostles' teaching. This verse embodies the heart of the divine revelation in the New Testament. In His economical participation with man, the Triune God desires to unite Himself with man as life through the mingling of the divine Spirit and the human spirit for the producing and building up of the Body of Christ. This is the central vision of God's economy and the key to the entire Bible.

When viewed from the vantage point of 1 Corinthians 6:17, all Scripture can be charged with profound meaning, as seemingly disparate verses are harmonized with the intrinsic essence of verse 17. For example, Romans 3:28 shows that judicial redemption is a necessary procedure to reach the goal of God's organic union with man. John 3:16 reveals the love of God as the impetus that motivated Him in His desire to be organically joined to man even at the tremendous cost of the death of His Son. Matthew 28:19-20 unfolds God's desire to herald the teaching of His economy across the earth and to immerse many from every tribe, tongue, and nation into a life union with Him. First Corinthians 6:17 presents the peak of the revelation of the eternal economy of God—living and walking according to the mingled spirit for the producing and building up of the Body of Christ. Therefore, this marvelous verse occupies a central place in the apostles' teaching and in the divine economy. [AFC]

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>This is not to suggest, however, that the mingling of the two spirits produces a third entity that no longer retains the distinct characteristics of the divine Spirit and the human spirit. The New Testament does not warrant a view that in the mingling of the two spirits, the human spirit becomes completely absorbed into the divine Spirit, thereby losing its distinct identity. The New Testament consistently maintains the distinction

between the Holy Spirit and the human spirit (John 3:6; 4:24; Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 2:11; 1 John 4:2). In fact, the close examination of 1 Corinthians 6:17 reveals that though the life-giving Spirit and the human spirit are mingled as "one spirit," the identity of both "he" and "the Lord" is preserved.

<sup>2</sup>I.e., W. E. Vine, Heinrich Meyer, and James Oliver Buswell in *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*.

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