

1 Timothy 6:13-16

Sec 3. “This communion which the saints have with Christ, doth not make them in any wise partakers of the substance of His Godhead; or to be equal with Christ in any respect: either of which to affirm is impious & blasphemous.”

A. I am not sure of any current, religious group that would claim to partake of the substance of the Godhead or to be equal with Christ in any respect.

B. You may run into some individuals who hold to a form of pantheism.

1. This word “pantheism” is made up of “*pan*” (all) & “*theos*” (God), claiming, “All is God.”
 - a. “At its most general, pantheism may be understood positively as the view that God is identical with the cosmos, the view that there exists nothing which is outside of God,...”¹ (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy).
 - b. “Although it should be added that, far from being limited to high culture, pantheistic themes are familiar, too, in popular media, for example in such films as *Star Wars*, *Avatar*, and *The Lion King*.”²
2. Rather than a Christian claiming he or she shares in the substance of the Godhead, a pantheist believes all created things share in God’s substance!

C. To make sense of sec 3, we must review Sec 1 which says, “All saints, that are united to Jesus Christ their Head, by his Spirit, & by faith, have fellowship with Him in His graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, & glory: & being united to one another in love,...”

1. This is an amazing, beautiful truth of God’s grace in that we have a true, spiritual union with Christ & with other Christians.
2. In order to prevent this doctrine from being carried too far, the Westminster Assembly gave us sec 3.

D. 1 Tim 6:13-16 is a key passage that exalts God far above us, making it impossible for even the most godly Christian to share in the substance of the Godhead. → Look again at 1 Tim 6:13-16.

1. To say that share in the substance of the Godhead is to say we also possess immortality yet this passage says He “**alone possesses immortality.**” He alone possesses immortality because every created being (angels & men) are finite because each had a beginning point.
2. God is above us. These verses speak of God’s aseity. According to Dr. John Frame, “God’s aseity means that he is sufficient to himself, independent of anything outside himself... God is the owner of all things, the ‘possessor of heaven and earth’ ([Gen 14:19, 22](#); cf. [Psa 24:1, 50:10-12](#)). He is the owner because everything other than God is his creation ([Exod 20:11](#), [Psa 146:5-6](#)). Creatures do have possessions of their own, but only by divine gift.”

¹ <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pantheism/>

² *ibid.*

Sec 3 “Nor doth their communion one with another, as saints, take away, or infringe the title or propriety which each man hath in his goods & possessions.”

A. The language here is illustrated in a scene from the movie, Dr. Zhivago.

B. Turn to **Acts 2:44-47** for a passage some want to abuse.

1. G.I. Williamson wrote, “Concerning this, three comments may be made:”³

- a. “First, there is no indication that this practice was commanded by God as normative for believers.” In other words, this activity was voluntary yet not commanded by God.
- b. “Second, there is evidence that even at that time the right of private property was still recognized by the apostles (Acts 5:4).” **Acts 5:3-4: “But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land? ⁴While it remained *unsold*, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control?’”**
- c. “And finally, this attempt at communal property did not work out satisfactorily even in the Apostolic Church (Acts 6:1).” **Acts 6:1 “Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the *native* Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food.”**
 - 1) The sole answer to this problem wasn’t that the church needed the office of deacon. It truly did!
 - 2) The communal Christian arrangement has not done well in history. Some groups have died out (Shakers) while modern communes have been involved with sexual scandal (Jesus People, USA).

2. There has been a “Christian communism” movement in history & at the present time:

- a. “Christian communism is a theological view that the teachings of Jesus Christ compel Christians to support religious communism as the ideal social system. Although there is no universal agreement on the exact dates when communistic ideas and practices in Christianity began, many Christian communists claim that evidence from the Bible suggests that the first Christians, including the apostles, established their own small communist society in the years following Jesus’ death and resurrection.”⁴
- b. One troubling article is from Roman Montero, entitled, “*The Sources of Early Christian Communism*”. *Church Life Journal*. (University of Notre Dame). ⁵

C. Turn to **1 Tim 6:17-19** for a godly, balanced alternative to the practice of Christian communal living.

³ Williamson, G.I. The Westminster Confession of Faith for Study Classes, p.258

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_communism#cite_note-1

⁵ <https://churchlifejournal.nd.edu/articles/the-sources-of-early-christian-communism/>