

The Son in His Sons

by Bill Volkman

When we know who we are in Christ, we function as gods. We begin by saying we are expressions of God, and end up by saying that because we are one with Him who is the I Am, we are gods that we too can say I Am. Does this mean that we can also say that the fulness of Deity dwells in us in our bodily form, just as it did in Jesus Christ? Does this mean that there is no distinction between the only begotten Son of the Father and His created co-sons? Isn't it heresy to say, "I am a god"?

The answers to all these questions are inherent in a proper understanding of ontology (the study of being or existence), which is a branch of metaphysics that deals with the differences between ultimate reality and phenomenal reality (reality as conceived by the five senses). Philosophers have long recognized that there is a difference between that which is absolute or self-existent and that which is derivative or dependent. Our physical consciousness of sensation of something is not the same as the "thing-in-itself." For example, the colors we observe are not the same as the light waves that cause our sensation. What are you really seeing when you see a red apple? Your senses tell you that the reality is the observed matter — the red apple. But philosophers say that the true reality is the light waves that cause the sensation of seeing. In an even more ultimate sense, they would say the true reality is in the thought or intuition concerning the observed data.

Any study of the being or existence of matter soon brings the philosopher to this question: "What is Reality with a capital 'R'?" Then the ontologist must face another question: "Is Reality one entity with a diversity of manifestations, or is Reality a multiplicity of entities?" As usual, man tends to see the answer to this question dualistically as either or " instead of "both/and. But maturity sees the truth in both sides of such a paradox without getting upset.

Maturity is seeing the merger into unity of every form of individuality without the loss of individuality. A drop of water is one with the ocean, but still it is individual in expression. Husband and wife are one in marriage, but they are still separate individuals. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one as the Godhead, but each Person individually expresses the Godhead. We are one with the only-begotten Son, but we are also individual expressions of Him to a duality-conscious world.

Light swallows darkness, but the validity of positive light does not necessitate the denial of the validity of negative darkness in this three-dimensional world. The darkness merely provides contrast to further validate the light. Ultimate good unquestionably swallows all temporal evil but the mature can still *distinguish* conceptual good and evil (Heb. 5:14). On the same basis, the Son absorbs all sons, though we still distinguish the only-begotten Son from the individual sons.

One distinction between the only begotten Son and we who are His sons is the difference in our beginning. Christ had no beginning (Heb. 7:3); rather, He *is* the beginning, the Alpha of existence. On the other hand, man had his temporal beginning, when the Godhead said, "Let Us make man in our image, according to our likeness ... And God created man."

The only begotten Son is the second Person of the Godhead — the Son in the Deity. But He was the first-born of many brethren. All humans start as created children of God many by faith receive the adoption of sons (Gal. 4:5), and some by faith graduate to the position of knowing they are heirs (co-sons) with all the inheritance of the only begotten Son. The

completeness of our union is inherent in the verse: “*And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into hearts, crying Abba, Father!*” When we have His Spirit, we have all of Him. Then how can we have less than the fulness of deity in us?

But notice that the unified Spirit of the Son within us also recognizes individuality in this dualistic world by crying out the words, “*Abba, Father.*” It is not surprising that the Spirit in us thinks, talks and acts just like the Spirit in Jesus. Jesus said both “*He who has seen Me has seen the Father*” (John. 14:9) and “*the Father is greater than I*” (John 14:28). How can the Father be the same as Christ, and then in the same chapter be called greater than Christ? Many writers have labelled this paradox as *diversity in unity*. I like the phrase *unified individuality*. Each of us has a distinctive, identifiable individuality (but the same Spirit), and my guess is that we always will.

Most of us would agree that in spite of the truth of unity or union life, a distinction must be maintained between the Creator and His creation. It is one thing to say that we are the glory of the Lord and that we are His created image: it is quite another to say that *we are God*.

Jesus Christ was God incarnate, God in flesh form, but that *form* was not God. “*For in Him all the fulness of deity dwells in bodily form.*” In like fashion, God the Holy Spirit dwells in our bodily form in the fulness of deity. But our manifested form is not God, or even a part of Him. Our form is merely a unique container of the one God. Do not confuse the treasure, which is inner being, with the earthen vessel, which is just a temporary outer form, shadow, or symbol. But what did Jesus mean when He said to a group of Jews, “*Has it not been written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods?'*” (John 10:34)? In what sense was Jesus putting the label of “gods” on the very men who were about to take Him by force?

Certainly Jesus was not teaching pantheism. Pantheism is the contraction of the three Greek words *pan — theo — ism*, which mean *universal — God — doctrine*; that is, the doctrine of the universal God. *Webster Universal Dictionary* defines pantheism as the “doctrine that the whole universe is God, or that every part of the universe is a manifestation of God.” The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines pantheism as “the religious belief or philosophical theory that God and the universe are identical (implying a denial of the personality and transcendence of God); the doctrine that God is everything and everything is God.” We do not believe that the sum total of all tangible things is God, or that each individual “thing” is a fraction of God. A created human is not a fraction of God any more than a living tree or a manufactured automobile is. God is not a “thing”, rather, God is Spirit, God is love, God is “I am”. On the other hand, we see God in all things, and all things as individual containers of the one God.

Last night I listened to a cassette tape taken at a Louisville Union-Life conference which included some insights I had shared about the path that God had taken me to bring me to see that I was the “Bill Volkman form of God”. I was almost embarrassed as I listened to myself on the tape. At least five times I said, with minor variations, “I have come to see that I am a god.” But as I reflect on this now, I do not regret any of my statements. It was necessary that I see absolute unity before I could see *unified individuality*. I had to see God as everything and myself as nothing before I could move into a more mature perspective of being a spontaneous, manifested form of God. Chances are that many of you will pass through a comparable phase of the “I am God” heresy before *unified individuality* dawns upon you.

There is no way to *mentally* comprehend Christ’s ultimate teachings in John 14-17. They must be spiritually discerned. First Jesus says, “*He who has seen Me has seen the Father*” (14:9); then He says, “*The Father is greater than I*” (14:28); and then He prays, “*that they might be*

one, just as We are one" (17:22). All through these chapters Jesus seems to alternate between unity and individuality. But His seeming mixture and inconsistency was in reality a mature faith seeing paradoxes merge. When we learn to read these chapters with "*a single eye*", with a mature perspective of *unified individuality*, every apparent contradiction will just bring more light.

Do not be surprised when you are accused of inconsistency and incongruity for seeing paradoxes with a single eye. As Christ was misunderstood, maligned and finally crucified, so it will be with us. "*A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master*" (Matt. 10:28). And do not be threatened by the accusations, nor recede from your full inheritance. Even when you are compared to Lucifer for labelling yourself as a god (2 Thess 2:4), do not budge an inch. "*If they have called the head of the house Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household. Therefore do not fear them*" (Matt. 10:25, 26).

Satan's desire was to exalt *himself*, our desire is to serve others. Filled with the negative spirit of error, Satan wanted to be equal to God; we know we are co-heirs, because we have His nature, the Spirit of truth. We can properly say, "*I am a unique expression of God*" because "*it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.*" We have been liberated to see that we are unique expressions of His life! From there we will move on to say, "I AM", and spontaneously be the unique human individuals we are.