

## **A Fully Restored Duality**

*by John Whittle*

Most of us begin our Christian journey with the Bible as our starting point. There we learn of Christ's redeeming work and are assured of our salvation. But we do not stop there. Our yearning heart moves through various stages to the ultimate place of rest for the lover in the Beloved—the experience of the heart ablaze. We remain biblically based, but spiritually afire; never released from adherence to Scriptural revelation, but profoundly illuminated by the Spirit of flame that touches and eventually engulfs the heart of the lover.

Someone has written, "To have found God and to still pursue Him is the soul's paradox of love, scorned by the too-easily-satisfied religionist, but justified in happy experience by the children of the burning heart." St. Bernard of Clairvaux expresses the same holy paradox in these lines:

*We taste Thee, O Thou living bread,  
And long to feast upon Thee still;  
We drink of Thee, the Fountainhead  
And thirst our soul from Thee to fill.*

To escape from the "dead sea" of mere mental knowledge of Bible truths and be immersed in the torrents of living water is the great gift of freedom given us by the Son. It is unmeasured, unstructured, unlimited. To emerge from the rigid observance of formal teachings and tenets of mere "churchianity" is indeed a gracious deliverance.

In the joy of new creation, we come to recognize who and what we are. We become released from the humanly authoritative schools of theological thought which tend to "capture God and put Him in a box and never let Him go!" (to paraphrase the ditty about the fox in a box). And even if the box is labelled "total truth," it won't do if it is still a box! There are no limits, for He is the ever self-revealing One and is always "beyond," while still being absolutely "in the midst!" *God alone is total truth in Himself and in us.*

It has been said that the visible world is the invisible slowed down to the point of visibility. Perhaps that is how we might see our biblical base: Christ slowed down to the point of visibility! If we neglect our biblical base, we will only cause confusion and lose the true authority of the Spirit. It stands solid and wholly satisfactory. It is a mirror of the eternal Being who also becomes our being, the reflection of who God is. There can be no severance between biblical truth and our ever-expanding, living consciousness of that Truth.

"*Knowledge on Fire*" is the motto of a fine college I recently visited in the Midwest. What a thrill it was to face a silent and respectful group of seven hundred young hopefuls and their faculty in order to share with them just what that fire was that could make the knowledge they had acquired a transforming power in their lives!: the Burning Bush; the fiery and life-changing visitation of Pentecost; the "zeal of Thine house," which Jesus said consumed Him; and the subject of Amy Carmichael's poem: "Let me not sink to be a clod, make me Thy fuel, Flame of God"—these are the glory of a joyous but costly union knowledge ignited by inner passion.

I was mildly shocked the other day when I read in a passage from *Union With Christ* by Smedes that Paul was not a theologian! Of course, upon reflection, I saw the point. Paul had no *system* of theology, no orderly exposition of doctrine. But from the depths of his profound insights there arose into his consciousness and flowed from his pen the blazing truths that he was personally experiencing in the hurly-burly of his missionary life. His writings sometimes looked untidy and unstructured, and they were meant to be so.

I am apt to worship orderliness, structure and preciseness (I seldom attain it!), but you will not often find these characteristics in the Scriptures. Look at another writer: John, in the second chapter of his First Epistle. Here we have the famous passage on the three stages of life: little children, fathers and young men. No careful order here! I always feel slightly annoyed when reading it that he did not put it in correct order. I am sure I could and would have put it better!

But no. God's manifestation is symbolized by such elements as water, wind and fire—all fluid and unstructured, not fitting any special pattern or system, but releasing all kinds of energy to be judged only in terms of the Living Truth. So the Bible is a fluid presentation, a flowing stream. Any attempt to systematize it causes the fires to die down and the life to ebb.

From outer biblical knowledge, which is fruitful indeed, we move into the even richer realm of *inner knowing*, an inward journey. The Person begins to reveal Himself and impress Himself upon us as wholly indispensable to our deepening sense of need. The progression is not felt as a horizontal journey but as an ascending spiral, for we have the sense of often coming around to the same place, but always at a higher level. *The Spirit's goal is incarnational living through union*. It starts with flashes of illumination and revelation concerning Himself and ourselves and how we relate as persons, but after various stages we finally arrive at a fixed awareness of our union with Christ.

Peter's encounters with the Living Truth as recorded in Matthew, chapters sixteen and seventeen, are worth noting. Peter suddenly saw by divinely-given insight who Jesus was. The Lord commented on this flash of revelation, and Peter no doubt felt that he was at the top of the class—the most likely candidate for the office of Prime Minister in the newly-emerging kingdom. But revelation itself does not bring us into the total realization of our redemptive humanity.

So Peter proceeds, in the euphoria of that illumination and the Lord's commendation, to protest the rather unattractive path of rejection and the Cross which Jesus reveals He is taking. This did not suit the plan Peter had in mind, for he was unaware that for Jesus it was not a plan, but a *passion*, that would bring about redemption. His advice therefore? "*God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You*" (Matt. 16:22).

Peter had a rude shock when he, the proud repository of this precious revelation of who Jesus was, was referred to as "Satan." Why and how could this be? Simply because *the counterpart of revelation is revolution!* Revelation will always lead to the Cross as part of total truth—the Living Truth. It was to take failure, Satan's sifting, and Christ's prayer for Peter, together with a mighty Pentecost, to bring him to the Spirit's goal. He then became gloriously fixed in a total awareness of his union. The Word had then become flesh in him by this fixed indwelling, and he then knew his ability to dispense divine blessing, as in Acts Three.

This painful path is taken by most of us. From occasional flashes of illumination, we come to accept the revolutionary aspect that we are totally for others. Like Peter, we come to glorious rest in who we are in Christ—fuel for the eternal flame. We are those who "*follow the Lamb, wherever He goes.*" And we know where He journeys—into the hearts of men by way of the Cross.

In our life of union, we come full circle to where we are conscious that we have received ourselves back and are to live spontaneously. We are completed, complete in Him: "*That you may stand perfect and complete*" (Col. 4:12). This does not mean that Christ has *added* something to us to make us complete, but that he fully replaces us as separate beings. "The divine usurper" has fully resolved man's false autonomy and has become our

true selves in union with our spirits. Dare we use that mighty phrase of Christ, "*It is finished*"? Man is fully replaced and has become the true expressor of God.

While thinking the other day about completion, I came across some lines from my favorite author, George MacDonald. They are taken from the anthology of his writings compiled by his great disciple, C. S. Lewis:

*The only perfect idea of life is a unit, self-existent and creative. That is God, the only One. But to this idea, in its kind, must every life, to be complete as life, correspond; and the human correspondence to self-existence is that the man should round and complete himself by taking into himself his Origin; by going back and in his own will adopting that Origin ... Then he has completed the cycle by turning back upon his history, laying hold of his cause, and willing his own being in the will of the only I AM.*

Through His indwelling and total identification with us, the "Eternal Knower" in us has brought all questing and questioning to an end. Not that we become statically satisfied. (Wigglesworth used to say, "I am satisfied with a gloriously unsatisfied satisfaction!") But in our completion and rest of spirit, we live in a God-filled universe that, with all its complexity, is wholly redeemed. All lovers and knowers have this confidence, that the travail of sorrow, suffering and sin that has occupied human history will all have eternal significance in ways that are presently beyond our comprehension. Christ's "*drinking of the cup*" has secured this, and we know that the universe is enriched by what we call "the human tragedy."

God made a universe with the possibility of wrong choices, but He also made Himself responsible for that seeming limitation, fashioning out of it a God-crowned humanity. Completion also means that we live daily in that sublime certainty: "*the manifestation of the sons of God*"—all things renewed, by a life out of death.

Is there anything left to be said to round out the realization of *completion*? Yes! There is no true enjoyment of completion until we have a fully restored duality!

Does this surprise you? Wasn't duality something from which we had to escape? Yes, we temporarily had to shun duality, because of the absolute necessity of experiencing union. But duality has to return as the stream of our life, when once we are fixed in our awareness of union. If it does not, there is a serious misconception of what life really is. We not only live by our awareness of union but, more importantly, by the consciousness of our eternal Lover.

Before our awareness of union we have a *false duality*, bound up with the feelings and experience of separation. The power of our union delivers us from that false duality. But there is a *true duality* which lies on the other side of union: this is the secret life we have with Christ, with union as its background.

Just as we received ourselves back through the realized work of the Cross, so we receive back in union this unalterable sense of duality. It is the full life of maturity in the Spirit. Don't be misled by the statement, "Forget God and live!" This only applies to the external life and the everyday matters that necessarily fill up our time, but it is by no means the total picture. The secret life of the true worshipper is "Remember God and adore!" If not, we will dry up and blow away.

The atmosphere which permeates a life in union is that of the "*marriage supper of the Lamb*." Maturity thrives "*in the secret place of the Most High, abiding under the shadow of the Almighty*." The apparently unitary life we live only conceals a secret love-life that we have with the adored Lord, as in the case of Jesus and His frequent references to the Father

who dwelt in Him. This is the life of holy contemplation, or the contemplation of the Holy, which must ever increase and become our normal milieu.

A final word should be said about "*the life I now live in the flesh.*" The inner contemplation of "the wholly Other" is the hidden part of the public life that is laid down for the brethren (1 John 3:16). The Cross, ever in the heart of God, is in the public life of the God-indwelt. It has a unitary appearance in which frequently God doesn't seem to be on the scene at all. Jesus experienced this on the Cross; there was a shattering absence of God in those sacrificial moments. But we are not left there, for Christ came through with the final utterance, "*Father . . .*" Duality right to the end!

The resurrection words of Christ, "*I ascend to my Father and to your Father, to my God and to your God,*" seem to be a triumphant echo of the two cries from the Cross—"Why have you forsaken Me?", followed by the call, "*Father, into your hands I commit My Spirit.*" Here is a beautiful reminder of His recognition and experience of an enjoyed duality, an established permanency for the life wholly lived in a state of inner tranquility.

So the fruitful and inwrought consciousness of union is no longer in the foreground, no more than justification is constantly in the forefront of our minds. What now fills the soul's horizon, so far as the inward state is concerned, is the constant and sometimes ecstatic communion with the Beloved. This is in no wise inconsistent with an outward life of intercession, but is in fact the positive empowerment for it. The fuel for the fire of an intercessory ministry is not my awareness of union, so much as it is *the contemplation of the One with whom I am united.* This is the message of the Christian mystics down through the centuries. Many of the mystics were amazing intercessors, but they were constantly fired from the inner "sea of tranquility," the adoration and worship of the Beloved.

The statement in the catechism, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever," perhaps falls upon our ears without much significance at first, but as we experience the divine unfolding within, the words begin to hold a rich meaning. Through a settled awareness of union we begin indeed to glorify God, becoming His expressors. Then in the living stream of our divine recognition, we "enjoy Him forever."

Can we turn it around and say that God's chief aim, so far as we can understand Him, is to glorify Him and enjoy Him forever? Yes, for He has glorified us with His own indwelling, making us repositories of the Wisdom personified in Proverbs 8:30-31, where He is "*delighting in the sons of men!*" How can there be any doubt about His enjoyment of us? So we stress this ultimate duality of divine intercourse and exchange as being our abiding experience and the sole glory of our redeemed humanity, only to be excelled and expanded when we see our Maker "face to face."

So let us wonder, love and adore in the power of a union which is perfectly expressed in duality!