

Duality in Unity

by John Whittle

The happy calling of *Union Life* is to present to hungering and thirsting Christians the revealed truth of union with Christ.

With what immense stress and devotion to Christ's word and work has the fact of justification been hammered home to needy hearts throughout Christendom! In contrast, how hesitantly has any declaration concerning the joyous counterpart of redemption, the fact of union, been conveyed to them.

To realize the force of the statement "... *them He also glorified,*" we turn to Jesus' own statement in John 17:22-23: "*The glory You gave Me I have given them,*" going on to describe this gift as "I in them, and You in Me." What was this glory which the Father had given Him? It was not only justification. It was nothing less than the Father's personal indwelling, making Jesus the unique expression of the Father. This, says Jesus, is the glory He gives us.

Now each of us may boldly assert with deep thankfulness, "*I am a unique expression of the Father through the indwelling Christ.*" The transition we make, as we awake to the glorious fact of union, is from the recognition of Christ as *the* unique expression of the Father to seeing ourselves also as unique expressions of the Father. This is what it means to be glorified (in spirit, not now in body, as the body glorification will come later at what Paul calls "*the manifestation of the sons of God*"). Christ is the original Son; we are derived sons. But even now in our spirits we know this union and are seeing ever more and more fully the effects of this heightened consciousness.

The major effect of an awareness of union with Christ is that separation, the fruit of the fall, is overcome. Never again do I have to try to feel or try to find God, for He is joined to me in an indestructible union. It is more than an intimacy or a feeling of closeness with God, because the life in the Spirit is beyond that of feelings. It is a union in which separation is totally eclipsed, and I am aware only that He lives and that I am the means of His manifestation.

The wonder, delight and practice of this awareness fills the heart, and life is now lived in a new freedom. Not only is Calvary real to me, but now Pentecost is also real—"God has come" in addition to "God has given." The loss of a geographically-present Christ has made possible the inner Christ for each of us. Now we possess inner resources which are purely Christ being Himself within my human personality. How different this is from trying to become like Christ. Only Christ can be Christ. How wonderful that He does it in me.

But now to move on to the mature life in Christ. Those who live "in the Spirit" live nevertheless in an unalterable and deeply enjoyed duality, for we never become the transcendent God. This is a mystery—a paradox. God has graciously removed from us the misconception of the human self which had wrecked our peace and robbed us of power. Now we have come to a right concept of duality—a duality in union.

Jesus' whole life and ministry was embedded in this consciousness, which was expressed in so many ways at so many times. In saying, "*I and the Father are one,*" He was not ruling out a distinction, but denying any possible separation. Again, "He that has seen me has seen the Father" meant that He was the revealer of the Father. He did not say He was the Father. He also said, "*My Father who is greater than I,*" showing again His supreme consciousness of a "duality in perfect unity" out of which streamed His endless love and His redemptive works. The important revelation of His life was that, in addressing the Father, He was not addressing a distant person, but One who was the inner being of His human life. That is why He spoke to Philip about seeing the Father in

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Him. He constantly directed attention to Another, but this Another was inescapably a part of His own being, and by no means to be seen as separate from Him.

Even in nature man is seen as rooted in God (Acts 17:28). God is also referred to in Scripture as "*the Father of spirits.*" There is only one Life, as there is only one Creator. But how much more, and with what saving effect. This life is expressed by those who know they are rooted in God and know they are inseparable from Him. They are rooted in the love of God, not in His wrath.

So we endorse the words that God is "the Beyond in the midst"—always an inner reality, but always the transcendent God, beyond our comprehension and the mystery of all being. He does not parallel my existence; He is my existence—in nature and grace. So in union life we have emerged with a holy and happy duality—a duality within unity—a God within by whom we live. We are and yet we are not ourselves. There are writers who bend over backwards to avoid duality in expressing truth, but in so doing they lose the balance which Jesus carefully preserved for His disciples.

"Union with Christ" has no significance unless we understand that Christ is transcendent and far beyond our human limitations. God is the "wholly Other," and as such is the only authentication for our new identity in His beloved Son.