

# The New Testament Believers' Incorporation of the Triune God in Their Full Salvation

by Kerry S. Robichaux

*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;  
for it is God who operates in you both the willing  
and the working for His good pleasure.*  
(Phil. 2:12-13)

For the past few years I have been very interested in what seems to be a pervasive phenomenon in the New Testament, what I, following Witness Lee (*Issue 21-22, 24-26, 40-42*), have characterized as incorporation. By the term *incorporation* I (and Witness Lee) wish to refer to the principle that when any one of the three of the Divine Trinity acts, all three operate. In other words, when any one of the three acts, He incorporates the operation of the other two in His action. What is manifest is the action of the one, but in that manifest action there is the incorporate operation of the other two. Thus, every distinct action of God, of Christ, and of the Spirit is an incorporation of the operations of the Triune God. Even in actions that have been traditionally associated with only one of the three (for example, the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ), all three are in operation in the one manifest action of the one, the one incorporating the operations of all three. Certainly, the distinctions between the three are preserved, and thus, we should rightly understand, for example, that it was the Son of God who became flesh, died for our redemption, and rose from the dead. Yet at the same time we should recognize that in what are distinctly the Son's manifest actions, the Father and the Spirit operate by the Son's incorporation of them in His being and doing. The same is true of the actions of the Father and the Spirit.

The Gospel of John is especially rich in showing the incorporate operations of the Triune God in the manifest actions of Christ, and perhaps one example from it will help to more clearly illustrate the principle. In John 14:10 the Lord Jesus says,

Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak from Myself, but the Father who abides in Me does His works.

Here two discrete aspects of the relationship between the Son and the Father are explicitly referred to, and a third is implied. These three aspects more finely define what I wish to describe by the term *incorporation*. The implied aspect is one of mutual interdependence of existence, whereby the Son is the Son in the Godhead because there is a Father in the Godhead, and the Father is the Father in the Godhead because there is a Son in the Godhead. In terms of classical Latin theology this mutual interdependence of existence is called *coinherence*, or *circuminsession*. But also in this verse we explicitly see the mutual indwelling of the Son and the Father: "I am in the Father and the Father is in Me." This aspect of the relationship between the Son and the Father has more technically been called *perichoresis* (Greek for "mutual interpenetration") in Greek theology and *circuminsession* in Latin thought. Here the point is not a mutual interdependence of existence but a mutual interpenetration of hypostases and a dynamic fellowship in the divine life that exists among the persons of the Trinity. But also John 14:10 explicitly refers to the hidden mutual operation of the Father in the manifest action of the Son on the earth. When the Son spoke on the earth, He did so not only by virtue of His own agency but also through the operation of His heavenly Father, who abides in Him and does His work in Him. The Son's action of speaking, and the effectual benefit of His speaking, occurred because the Father operated ("does His works") in the Son. The mutual operation of the three in every action of any one of the Divine Trinity is no doubt the most obvious aspect of incorporation to be found in the Gospel of John, because so much of the Gospel of John relates to the actions of the Son. But it should be noted that the mutual operation of the three in the Godhead manifests and depends on