

The Holy Spirit

Buy N. Woods

Among those things "most surely believed" by us, and urgently argued by the ablest defenders of the faith, from the beginning of the effort to restore to a confused and bewildered world New Testament Christianity has been the view that the Holy Spirit---the third person in the godhead---exercises moral influence in the hearts and lives of men only through, or by means of, the Word of Truth, the Scriptures. By this it is meant that the inspired writings are the sole medium through which the Holy Spirit performs his operations in accomplishing the redemption of the race, in delivering sinful man from the thralldom of Satan, and in fitting him to live for ever in heaven.

On a thousand battlefronts this position has been ably argued and successfully defended. It is, indeed, one of the best known principles of the plea to return to the ancient order. Alexander Campbell in his historic debate with the Presbyterian Rice, affirmed that "In conversion and sanctification, the Spirit of God operates on persons only through the Word;" and, in more modern times, N. B. Hardeman in one of the most effective debates ever conducted, denied the affirmation of Ben M. Bogard of a direct, and an immediate, influence of the Spirit "in addition to the "written or spoken word."

It is important to observe that those who thus contend, do not deny that the Spirit operates, operates in conviction and conversion, operates on the hearts of sinners to accomplish their salvation, operates to sanctify, instruct and encourage the saints in their efforts to live the Christian life. What is affirmed is that all of these vital operations are exercised through the instrumentality of the Word of Truth---the Bible being the means of the Spirit in the accomplishment of his work in the hearts and lives of men. What is denied is that there is any direct, mechanical exercise of power wrought by the Holy Spirit apart from, and independent of the Scriptures, as saints or sinners, in which the mind is influenced and the life is controlled. The position, reduced to a simple proposition, is this: All influences, wrought upon the human mind by the Holy Spirit of God, are accomplished by means of the inspired Word of God. The impact of the Spirit on the heart of man is mediate, not immediate.

These views, once so confidently entertained, and boldly affirmed by the intellectual giants of the Restoration Movement, are, we are pained to say, no longer of universal acceptance among us. First timidly, and with much diffidence, but more recently with boldness, and from platforms providing virtually brotherhood wide attention, some brethren are now advocating, or otherwise encouraging, the view that the Holy Spirit, as it relates to Christians, is by no means, thus limited, in his operations, to the Word of Truth, but is today leading and directing individuals and movements by direct impact on the hearts and lives of those thus allegedly influenced. In its practical aspects, this theory merely revives the controversy which long raged between us and the denominational world, with some brethren now advocating, or otherwise encouraging the presentation

of the denominational concept, the only essential difference being that the denominational theologians contend for a direct operation of the Spirit just before conversion, and the brethren above alluded to, just after conversion, and thenceforth through life.

We are being told, by some of our brethren today, that we, as a body of people, have long limited the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and lives of men, and that our work of evangelism has been largely ineffectual because we were unwilling to allow him to influence us by direct impressions on the heart. Some, among us, actually allege that they have received, and are receiving such impressions. If this is so, these brethren are in position to perform invaluable service for those of us not thus blessed! If the Spirit, through them, has proved so effective in their projects, why should not the entire brotherhood be blessed by this guidance? We should not limit the potency and power of the Spirit to one project; let us all share in these divine impressions derived independently of the Word of God! The step is a short one to a fulfilled Mary Baker Eddy or a Joseph Smith who also claimed special direction. The view is a proving ground for a pope.

All such views are, as we shall abundantly show in articles to follow, an impeachment of the divine will, set out in the Scriptures. Any impression for good, not derived from the Bible, indicates that it is, to the extent, short of the sufficiency it claims. Moreover, those who entertain such views always go on to wilder and more visionary ones, assuming that impressions, inclinations, "hunches" are attributable to the Holy Spirit. Those thus influenced eventually come to believe that their "leadings" are the leadings of the Holy Spirit, and to oppose them is, in effect, to oppose the Holy Spirit!

There is tacit admission of their abandonment of the faith in the usual statement of all such that we need to restudy our position, and that we must not assume that the people who preceded us have discovered all the truth in these matters. This statement sickens; the implication is that Alexander Campbell (whom General Robert E. Lee once designated as the man best suited to send to another planet as a demonstration of the finest of the human race), J. W. McGarvey (whom the London Times said possessed the most profound knowledge of the English Bible of any man on earth), David Lipscomb (who did more than any other man to stem the tide of digression in the early years of the present century) and a mighty host of other seasoned men who studied the Bible for a lifetime were deficient in knowledge of matters awaiting the "profound" pronouncements of men whose only claim to scholarship is that they have spent a few years at the feet of rationalistic denominational theologians--time which would have been much better spent studying the Scriptures, and the writings of men they now seek to disparage. We do not claim for Campbell et. al., infallibility; and he and the other giants of the faith were far from claiming such for themselves; but, we do deeply resent the insinuation that there are men among us today with a greater grasp of the Scriptures than was characteristic of them.

It is not without much significance that Burris Jenkins, Peter Ainslee and others in the first two decades of the present century were giving utterance to sentiments lately being heard among us, and which led to the excesses now characteristic of the Christian Church.

The lessons of history are, at this point, clear and unmistakable. Our allegiance to the "faith once delivered to the saints," is proportionate to our confidence in the Word of God as the final, total, and sufficient revelation to man. Any view of the Holy Spirit which requires one to question the totality of authority they wield in our lives leads to apostasy.

The Holy Spirit in Conversion

To deny, as we have done in an article preceding this one, that the Holy Spirit today exercises an influence of a direct, immediate and mechanical character on the hearts of human beings in effecting their conviction, conversion and sanctification, is very far from affirming that the Spirit does not operate at all or, in any manner, in these areas.

A sentiment, first uttered by one of the leading lights of the Restoration Movement, and often repeated, is that religion is begun, carried on, and completed by the personal agency of the Holy Spirit. All who regard the Scriptures as a divine revelation admit to the fact of the Spirit's participation; it is the manner or mode of his operations which has occasioned controversy. The question we raise is, How does the Holy Spirit operate in the conviction and conversion of men?

Far, far back in the ancient world when the wickedness of men had become exceedingly great, Jehovah said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man for ever, for that he also is flesh: yet shall his days be a hundred and twenty years." (Gen. 6: 3.) We thus learn that the Lord strives, strives by his Spirit, strives by his Spirit with "man," and that the limit on the occasion to which reference is here made was "a hundred and twenty years." The verb "Strive," is from a Hebrew root designating suasion by moral forces. The antecedent of "his" is "man," man contemplated as a race and not as an individual. Affirmed then is the fact that God's strivings with the race of men from the point at which the history begins until the end of probation (in this instance, the flood), would embrace the period of one hundred and twenty years. Inasmuch as approximately one hundred years intervened between births of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham and Jepheth, and the mighty deluge, there is a reversion to a slightly earlier period when Jehovah determined to set a definite limit for man to heed the strivings of the Spirit and turn back from his disastrous course. The period of probation terminated with the flood of waters which flowed over all the earth, destroying all flesh, save that which entered the ark. It follows, therefore, that the striving which ended when the flood of waters came, began and ended with the efforts which were put forth to bring the antediluvian world to repentance. This was attempted through the preaching of Noah, the only voice of righteousness in that corrupt age. Thus, God, through his Holy Spirit, sought through the preaching of Noah, to influence the race of men to turn to him in penitence. The Spirit, through persuasive effort, attempted to influence the minds of men in that distant day, not by irresistible force and without regard for the wills of those involved, but through instruction

and admonition in the preaching of Noah. It has ever been thus.

In a remarkable convocation set out in Nehemiah 9, numerous speakers extolled the name of Jehovah, recited the manifold acts of mercy which the Jews had experienced at the hand of God, and in a fervent prayer for forgiveness promised the Lord they would be more faithful in the future. (Neh. 9: 1-38). Among the blessings they had received at God's hand was the Holy Spirit: "Thou gavest also thy good Spirit to instruct them." This gift of God was for the purpose of instructing them; through the Spirit they were to learn their duties to God and to each other. Though they were the recipients of this blessing they were not always properly appreciative of it, and frequently listened to the tempting sirens about them, thus allowing themselves to be wooed from the right way. Emphasized, in the sacred narrative, is the long-suffering of God in their behalf. "Yet many years didst thou bear with them, and testifiedst against them by thy Spirit through thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the peoples of the lands." (Neh. 9:30.) We learn here that God testified against the people; he testified against them by his Holy Spirit; he testified against them by his Spirit through the prophets! He warned the people before the flood, by his Spirit, through the preaching of Noah; and he testified against his rebellious people "by" his "Spirit," through the prophets.

Stephen, the first to die in defence of the truth, in the Christian age, charged in his trial before the Jewish court that a rebellious spirit had characterized the people from the beginning. Said he, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your father did, so do ye. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? and they killed them that showed before of the coming of the righteous One." (Acts 7: 51, 52.) They resisted the Holy Spirit, by opposing the prophets who were directed, in their preaching, by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit, in the prophets, sought by teaching to influence the people to heed the voice of the Lord. (1 Pet. 1: 10, 11.)

Such continues to be the manner in which men are influenced today: "It was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe." (1 Cor. 1: 21.) "What then is Apollos? and what is Paul? Ministers through whom ye believed." (1 Cor. 3: 5.) "And it came to pass in Iconium that they entered together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake that a great multitude both of Jews and of Greeks believed." (Acts 14:1.) "For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith: as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith." (Rom. 1: 16, 17.) "For though ye have ten thousand tutors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I begat you through the gospel." (1 Cor. 4: 15.) "Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be kind of firstfruits of his creatures." (James 1: 18.) "Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so. Many of them therefore believed." (Acts 17: 11, 12.)

The conclusion irresistibly drawn from these passages, properly

considered, is that it through the gospel preached by faithful men that sinners are prompted to believe, and not through some mysterious, incomprehensible influence wrought upon the heart apart from, and independent of, the Word of truth. (Next, The Holy Spirit And Christians).

The Holy Spirit and Christians

We have, in earlier articles, observed that the Scriptures clearly teach that the Holy Spirit--the third person of the Godhead--is an active agent in the illumination, the conviction, and the conversion of every alien sinner. We shall now note that he is no less active in, and on behalf of, the faithful followers of Christ from the moment of their redemption to their deaths. There are repeated references to this fact in the inspired writings. "But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." (Rom. 8: 9.) "And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, saying, Abba, Father." (Gal. 4: 6.) "Ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." (Eph. 1:13.) These three familiar affirmations of Paul are representative of a great number of similar assertions, not only from his pen but also from other New Testament writers.

It follows therefore that the scriptures clearly teach that the Holy Spirit dwells in the hearts of those who are his own, an ever-present blessing to the enrichment of their lives throughout life. Among the manifold blessings which he daily provides are: assurance (Rom. 8: 15); transformation (2 Cor. 3: 18; and intercession (Rom. 8: 26); and, one day he will quicken out "mortal bodies" and bring them forth to life: "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8: 11.) What do these and dozens of other passages teach? The Holy Spirit dwells in the hearts of Christians today. What may be properly and logically deducted from passages asserting that "The...Spirit...dwelleth...in you?" That the Spirit is in us today! But do such passages designate the manner or mode of indwelling? They do not. Is it possible to learn from a passage merely declaring that the Spirit is in us, how he thus dwells? It is not. What then, was the design of inspiration in asserting that the Holy Spirit dwells in the followers of the Lord? To evidence the fact thereof; and, the consequent blessing; not the manner or mode of its accomplishment.

But, what is a common approach to such passages by many today? From the fact of the Spirit's indwelling, they assume whatever mode or manner of indwelling that suits their pre-arranged system of philosophy, ranging all the way from an alleged "indwelling" of which they are without sensible evidence, to the profession of having experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues and the endowment of miraculous powers. Such conclusions are fanciful, foolish and fatal in their implications, ultimately leading to wild,

enthusiastic notions regarding the "leadings" of the Spirit, and often to the utter abandonment of the Word of God as an infallible standard of authority in life.

Paul's words, for example, in Romans 8: 11, are, "through his Spirit that dwelleth in you." What do we learn from this statement "His spirit dwelleth in you." Does this say that this indwelling is literal? No. Personal? No. Direct? No. But, what manner of exegesis is sometimes followed by brethren among us today? The affirmation of Paul that "his Spirit dwelleth in you," teaches (teaches, mind you!) that there is an actual, personal, literal presence of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of Christians today! Such a conclusion is not the result of exegesis: the drawing out of proper deductions from a proposition; it is the unwarranted assertion of a conclusion not found in the premises.

The Scriptures assert, with equal emphasis and clarity that God, the Father, and Christ, the Son, are in us. "And what agreement hath a temple of God with idols? for we are a temple of the living God; even as God said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (2 Cor. 6: 16.). "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God." (1 John 4: 15.) "Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Col. 1: 27.) No thoughtful person from thence concludes that there is an actual, literal, personal, bodily indwelling of God the Father, or of Christ, the Son, in us today. It is readily recognized that all that may be properly deduced from such statements is that in some manner they direct and influence our lives by the power they exercise upon us. How God and Christ do this, we must learn from other passages. (E.G., Eph. 3: 19; Lev. 26: 3-15, faith in his word, and obedience to his commandments.) Paul, indeed, sharply rebuked the Corinthians for thinking that Christ can be divided! "Is Christ divided?" Literally, Is Christ broken up into small bits??? Were they so foolish as to think that each group in Corinth could have a little portion of Christ in their midst? But, is not this precisely what is claimed for the Spirit by those who contend for an actual, literal, bodily presence of the Holy Spirit in Christians today? Are the passages in column 1, below any less emphatic and clear than those in Column 2?

"God said, I will dwell in them."
"God abideth in him."
"Christ in you."

"The Spirit dwelleth in you."
God sent the Spirit...into your hearts."

It seems certain that God, Christ and the Holy Spirit dwell in the hearts of faithful disciples in exactly the same manner, i.e., through the word of truth. He who can see a personal, literal and actual "indwelling" in the words, "The Spirit dwelleth in you," but nothing more than a representative "indwelling" in the words, "God dwelleth in him" (1 John 4:15 ASV), unless he is in possession of some secret and supernatural system of interpretation not available to ordinary students, has abandoned all reasonable exegesis.

Fortunately for us all, the Holy Spirit through Paul, has settled the question for all who regard inspiration as the final word

on all religious matters. The apostle to the Gentiles inquired of the Galatians, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? (Gal. 3:2. This statement is rhetorical, put in this form for emphasis. Its meaning is, "You did not receive the Spirit by the works of the law; you did receive the Spirit by the hearing of faith." The phrase, "by the hearing of faith" is, literally, by the message of faith (margin, American Standard Translation.) Faith here is a synecdoche, for the gospel--a usage frequently characteristic of Paul (Gal. 2:16; 3: 23, 24, 25, 26.) The "gospel" embraces the entire system of salvation. Thus through the Christian system the Spirit came to the Galatians. But how was this system of faith made available to the Galatians? Through the preaching of the word. (Romans 10: 17: "So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.") It follows, therefore, that as the Galatians received the word of Christ into their hearts and were influenced thereby they were, to this extent led by and influenced by the Holy Spirit which gave them the word. (2 Tim. 3: 16, 17.) But, this is precisely the way in which Christ dwells in Christians today: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (Eph. 3: 17.) As his word enters the heart and influences the life of the Christian, Christ dwells there. Not literally. Not personally. Not actually. But, representatively. When the Holy Spirit is allowed to control the thoughts and direct the life of the person thus influenced, the Spirit dwells there--dwells there by means of the word which motivates the life. There is, indeed, no other way in which the Spirit exercises moral suasion on the mind except by means of the word of truth. One would not know that there is such a person as the Holy Spirit, were it not for the word which reveals him. Paul informed the Corinthians that "No man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit." (1 Cor. 12: 3.) How does the Holy Spirit reveal the lordship of Jesus? Through the Word of Truth--the Scriptures. But for the Bible we would have no information whatsoever regarding his identity. He who is able to see in the statement, "The Spirit dwelleth in you," (Rom. 8:11), a literal, actual, bodily presence of the Spirit, but in the statement, "God dwelleth in him," (1 John 4:15), nothing more than a representative indwelling, confesses to a conceit which we do not covet! The Holy Spirit dwells in Christians today through the word which he inspired. Consider carefully the following parallel from Paul:

"And be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit; speaking one to another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs..." (Eph. 5:18.)

dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace..." (Col. 3:16.)

"Let the word of Christ

To be "filled with the Spirit," was, in the inspired apostle's concept, to allow "the word of Christ" to "dwell in you richly."

No one will be so foolish as to charge Paul with teaching that the Spirit and the word are the same. Why then, should we, when we assert that the Spirit dwells in the heart through, or by means of, the Word, be thus charged?

The Holy Spirit and Providence

There is, we rejoice to believe on the basis of ample evidence in the Sacred Writings, a special providence operating on behalf of all of the faithful followers of the Lord everywhere. By "providence," we mean that deity actively participates in the affairs of men today; and by "special providence," that there are bountiful blessings available to the children of God not vouchsafed to others. And, that the Holy Spirit-himself deity-is continuously engaged in providing this providential care we cannot doubt.

We must, however, avoid the fallacy, often adopted, that such a conclusion is in conflict with the view that in conviction, conversion, and consecration the Spirit exercises no influence on the hearts of people apart from, and independent of, the word of truth-the Scriptures. There is a vast difference between what the Holy Spirit does TO us, and what he DOES IN BEHALF OF, or FOR us. We read, for example, that "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered; and he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." (Rom.8: 26,27). The Spirit (a) helps us; (b) helps us in our weakness; (c) helps us when we do not know how to pray as we ought; (d) helps us by making "intercession for us," and he does so by bearing our groanings before the Father who, knowing the mind of the Spirit, sees there our need, and provides for it. All denominational preachers, (and some brethren) subscribe to the view that the "groanings" of this passage are the groanings of the Holy Spirit. (We could never believe it!) The word "groan," derived from the Old English *gronen*, to weep, is defined by the New World Dictionary, "to utter a deep sound expressing pain, distress, or disapproval. 2. To make a sound like this; as the wind groans. 3. To suffer deeply from cruelty, oppression, etc. 4. To be loaded or weighted down. V.T. to utter with a groan or groans. N. Noun, a sound made in groaning." Surely no prudent person can contend that the Holy Spirit ever expresses pain, distress, or disapproval; or, that he makes a sound like this; or, that he suffers "deeply from cruelty, oppression, etc." It is not the Spirit who does the groaning. The groaning is done by the burdened soul who, not knowing in his distress what to pray for, can only groan in spirit, and say, "Lord, Lord!" and the Holy Spirit picks up these groanings and interprets them to the Heavenly Father in terms of the soul's need. The Father, knowing the mind of the Spirit, sees there this need, and provides for it on the basis of the Spirit's intercession.

It is vitally important to note that the intercession which the Spirit thus does is an operation for us before the throne of grace, and not upon us. It is indeed impossible for finite man to know all of the marvelous works of deity, whether of the Father, the Son or the Holy Spirit, in the unspeakable vast reaches of creation: and, we may be sure that the workings of providence have as their aim the glory of God and the ultimate happiness of man. As a matter of fact, the last designated act of the Holy Spirit involves our resurrection from the tomb: "He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you." (Rom.8:11.) Here, again, the action will be in our behalf and supernatural in nature; none would, we think, thenceforth argue that the Holy Spirit will "give life" to the dead bodies by moral influences wrought independently of the word! These two passages (Rom.8:11; 26,27), representative of numerous others of similar significance in the Scriptures, are not pertinent to the question of how the Holy Spirit influences the Christian today.

Moreover, circumstantial events, whether they be regarded as accidental or providential, may not properly be classified as leadings of the Holy Spirit. Moral influences are never wrought upon the hearts of people-whether saints or sinners-except by means of the word of truth. In an excellent article in a recent issue of the Gospel Advocate entitled "I Missed a Fishing Trip," W.A. Bradfield, one of our best and most effective preachers, tells of a fishing trip he passed up on Chesapeake Bay in 1944, remaining home, wrote his famous tract, "The Way to Heaven," nearly 2,000,000 copies of which have been printed, and distributed, influencing the lives of multitudes by bringing them to a knowledge of the truth and thus resulting in inestimable good-good, however, which resulted from the truth in the tract. Peter's preaching on Pentecost brought forgiveness to 3,000 people; their lives were influenced by the gospel, and not by a mysterious operation of the Spirit apart from the word. Moral influence began with Peter's preaching.

One may indeed, through accidental circumstance, come into contact with the gospel, on a trip, by a visit, from idly turning a radio on: but this may not properly be attributed to any "leading" of the Spirit. The first convert of Paul's on European soil was Lydia, a seller of purple, who was on a business trip to Philippi and came into contact with the gospel, and had her heart opened by means of the truth. Those who think that Lydia was directed to Philippi by some power wrought upon her of divine origination, will please explain why deity does not lead all of lost humanity, by direct influences wrought upon the mind, to a source of truth. Uncounted millions of perishing souls are going into eternity, never having heard of the gospel of Christ. God is no respecter of persons; how, then, can we conclude that what we would describe as an accidental circumstance is, indeed, not accidental, nor a circumstance at all, but the leading of the Holy Spirit, by which some men (but not others) are led to a knowledge of the truth? Are we to be told that only those who yield to the will of the Spirit are thus led; and, that those who are passed by are those who would reject the Spirit's direction? If so, is it not strange that none in benighted heathen

lands are, by the Lord, regarded as "worthy of eternal life," since none of these is influenced by the Spirit until some preacher carries the gospel there?

It is, of course, very true, that people are prepared through circumstance, to listen to the gospel-because of an accident, the death of loved one, the realization of approaching death-but this is an inducement to all to be led by the light which has already shone around about them, and may not be properly attributed to the leading of the Spirit, except, of course, as the Spirit leads through the word. The impact of deity on the human heart is undeniable; said Paul, "For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure." (Phil.2:13.) God works in us all. God is in us all who do His will. (2 Cor. 6:16.) Christ is in us. (Eph.3:17; Col.1:27.) Literally, actually, personally? Then, incarnation was not limited to Christ! If there is an actual, literal, inhabitation of deity in us, whether by the Father, the Son or the Spirit, we are part God. The very suggestion is, to this writer, shocking, and borders on blasphemy. Deity dwells in us through- by means of - the truth. As we walk in harmony therewith, we are led by that which produced it - the Holy Spirit.

Indwelling of the Holy Spirit -A Review

A regular writer in a contemporary religious journal, under the heading, "Indwelling of the Holy Spirit," has revealed his views thereon, as follows:

"Some recent writings on the subject of the Holy Spirit have raised the question: Does the Spirit dwell in us in exactly the same way the Father and the Son dwell in us? I believe the Father and the Son dwell in us? I believe the Father and the Son dwell in us representatively in the person of the Holy Spirit, but that the Holy Spirit dwells in us personally."

We have earlier noted, in this series on the Holy Spirit, that the Bible abounds with affirmations establishing, beyond reasonable controversy the fact of the habitation of deity in the hearts of the faithful followers of the Lord. The Father (2 Cor.6:16), the Son (Col.1:27), and the Holy Spirit are all expressly declared to be in us. Thus, the issue is not, Does the Spirit dwell in us today? The writer whom we above quote says: "I believe the Father and the Son dwell in us representatively in the person of the Holy Spirit, but that the Holy Spirit dwells in us personally." Do the Scriptures assert that the Father and the Son dwell in us "representatively in the person of the Holy Spirit, but that the Holy Spirit dwells in us personally"? No. On what ground does the writer attempt to establish this? Because Paul said that we are "builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit." (Eph.2:22.)

This passage is not germane to the matter at hand. Here, the apostle is discussing the church-contemplated as a building-as the habitation of God, not individual Christians. Our writer, recognizing and admitting this fact, attempts to reason from one to the other, on the ground that God dwells in the church, only as he dwells in each individual Christian. (a) This is lame logic, and involves fallacious reasoning. God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit all sustain relationships with the body of believers, not characteristic of individuals. Our Lord said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt.18:20). Is he in the midst of one disciple in the same way??? (b) Moreover, our writer's logic denies to Christ a "personal" relationship with his church, making it a representative one only. Said he, "I believe the Father and the Son dwell in us representatively in the person of the Holy Spirit..." Why does he "believe" this? Paul said we are "builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit!" This is, by him admitted, to refer to the church. Therefore, neither God, nor Christ, dwells in the church personally today! Of course, our good brother does not believe this absurdity, but to it his logic irresistible leads.

Said he,

"There are those among us who affirm that the Holy Spirit dwells in us 'through the word.' Of course, they do not have any passages which teach this in so many words."

Had our brother, in the foregoing quotation, substituted the word "say" for the word "teach" we would have no serious objection to his statement. The Scriptures do not, of course, have to "say" a thing in so many words in order to teach it. It was his intention to controvert the affirmation of "those among us" who "affirm" that the Holy Spirit dwells in us "through the word." Hence, our brother believes that the Holy Spirit dwells in us apart from, or independent of the word! So do all denominational preachers throughout the land. The only essential difference between them is that our brother herein quoted contends for a direct operation of the Spirit immediately following conversion; whereas denominational theologians contend for it immediately preceding! We believe that the view we are refuting is a dangerous one; and, that it is an easy step from the concept of a personal, literal, indwelling of the Spirit in the heart - independent of and apart from the word of truth - to fanciful leadings, alleged divine impulses and intimations now believed by some among us to proceed from the Spirit which is by them believed to dwell in the heart actually, literally, personally-apart from the word.

Our writer under review is in error in asserting that "Of course they do not have any passages which teach this (the Spirit dwells in the hearts of Christians today through the word, GNW), in so many words"; We have, in earlier articles, offered numerous instances of such, and to which we now refer the reader, and shall not here repeat. We do wish to direct attention to a remarkable passage found in Eph.3: 16,17, where Paul, in a prayer for the Ephesians, said, "that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." We thus learn that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith, but that such is conditioned on our being strengthened with power through his Spirit.

The strengthening process is through the Spirit; the resultant blessing is Christ in our hearts through faith. "Through faith," is explanatory of "through his Spirit." But, how does faith come? By hearing the word of truth. (Rom.10:17). Thus, by hearing the word of truth, we are strengthened with power "through his Spirit" (who gave the word) and Christ dwells in our hearts through faith! There is indeed no other way by which either God, Christ or the Holy Spirit dwells in us.

But, our writer asks,

"Is there proof that receiving the word is not receiving the Spirit? Yes! People who received the word were baptized (Acts 2:41), but they received the Spirit after they were baptized."

The implication is that those of us who believe that the Spirit, in conviction and consecration operates only by means of the word of truth, think that receiving the word is receiving the Spirit. It would from this be a short step to the charge that we believe the Spirit and the word are the same! We confess to neither. There is, of course, a sense in which a sinner is led by the Spirit in following the steps which lead to salvation; but under contemplation in these studies is the extent to which those who are his children are under the influence of the Spirit, and the means used to affect this influence. All of us will concede that if we have obeyed the gospel, Christ is, in some measure, in us; yet, the extent of this is susceptible of wide variation. "My little children," Paul painfully wrote to the Galatians, when they were acting unworthily, "of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you." (Gal.4:19.) But, how would Christ "be formed" in them? By a return, on their part, to the truth which the apostle had preached to them. Christ dwells in the heart, "through faith" (Eph.3:17); faith comes by means of the gospel (Rom.10:17); thus the means by which the Galatians would experience the forming of Christ in them would be their submission to the truth. God dwells in us through his Spirit, because it is by the agency of the Spirit that the heart is prepared for a habitation of God. This is far from meaning that the way in which God dwells in us differs from the manner in which the Spirit dwells. Deity, whether the Father, the Son or the Spirit, inhabits the heart "through faith"; the ground on which our faith in deity rests. (Heb. 11:1-6) This faith, in turn, rests on the inspired record, which the Holy Spirit, through those who penned his message to the world, made available. It was Paul who said, "No man can say, Jesus is Lord but in the Holy Spirit." (1 Cor.12:3). But, were it not for the Bible we would never have known that Jesus is Lord: "But these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name." (John 20:31.) Thus, the way the Holy Spirit enables us to say that "Jesus is Lord" is by means of the truth which he supplied. We conclude, therefore, that the Holy Spirit influences, motivates, and lives in the hearts of those who follow his teaching; that such is also characteristic of the Father and the Son; and, that deity dwells in the hearts of people today in no other fashion.

(The End)