

PRAYER AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

The following are the responses of Bro Robert Roberts to a correspondent in 1893, and remain highly pertinent to present day issues:

QUESTION:-

“There is something that has been troubling me for some time. If we do not now receive the Holy Spirit, why the necessity of prayer, except to praise God and give Him thanks? Why do we ask for anything in prayer? And why do we pray for others? Is there any way God can come in contact with His creatures except by His Spirit?”

“In distress, temptation and perplexity, we pray for comfort, strength and guidance. How can these be given except by the direct influence of the Spirit of God? I have frequently heard Christadelphians make requests in prayer that I cannot understand the possibility of being answered except by the direct work of the Spirit of God on their minds, or on the minds of those connected with their circumstances. For example: A person is about to deliver a lecture to the alien. A brother, on opening the meeting, prays that the speaker may present the Truth in an acceptable manner, and that some of the hearers may be led to a knowledge of the Truth.

“At a morning meeting, a brother prays to God to be with the saints that are gathered together, that they may live in peace and love with one another (how can He be with them except by His Spirit?) and to be with the sick, afflicted and suffering to comfort, strengthen, or sustain (how can God comfort, strengthen, or sustain us in answer to prayer except by His Spirit?), to make their beds of affliction for them, to lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Do we not make each request in prayer daily? If they are answered would it not necessitate a daily supply of the Spirit? If it is only through the Word and by our own effort such prayers are answered, why do we not go to the Word at once, and use our own effort? What faith or reason can there be in such prayers if we do not receive the Spirit?” (HAC)

ANSWER:-

The difficulties exhibited in the foregoing are due to the mixing and confounding of the things that differ. Three things require to be carefully separated. **1.** God's action towards man. **2.** Man's action when God grants him the gift of His Spirit, and **3.** The prayers of men not sufficiently emancipated from forms of speech brought with them from the sectarian theologies of the day, forms of speech which owe their existence to the metaphysical theories of the Dark Ages, and not to Bible spirit or example. When men pray according to the Bible instead of according to the unenlightened jargon of the

cloister and the pulpit, there will be less occasion for the perplexities illustrated in the communication of HAC.

1. GOD'S ACTION TOWARD MEN

This is all by spirit; for God is spirit and everywhere present in the subtle, invisible and penetrating energy of the spirit. When He creates, it is by His spirit (*Job 26:13, Ps 104:30*). When he speaks, it is by His spirit (*Neh 9:30; 2Pet 1:21*). When He upholds, or directs, or guides, it is by His spirit (*Ps 17:5; 51:12*). But for everything there is a time and a season.

We know little of creation. The system we stand related to was created “in the beginning.” Creation in this sense is a past affair. The working of the system in the birth and death of generations, the rotation of the seasons on earth, the motion of the heavenly bodies among themselves, is not creation, but operation – all “in God”, but still not His direct work – not the result of His volition as creation was at the beginning. Cold freezes, fire destroys, without His direct action. Creation is His direct action.

We know as little experimentally of His speaking, except that we are in possession of the message, and of the momentoes and monuments of the fact that it is His message. When He spoke, it was by the spirit in the prophets and apostles. This was an impulse outside the human faculty. As Peter says, the message “came *not by the will of man*, but holy men of God *spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*.” “At sundry times and divers manners” God spake thus unto the fathers, as Paul declares in Hebrews 1:1. He has not so spoken for 1800 years. He certainly is not so speaking now, at least not in any case to which we have accessible knowledge. The men who profess to be under the influence of the Holy Spirit speak in total contradiction to God’s written message, which, on God’s authority, (*Is 8:20*), is proof that it is not His speaking at all, but the utterance of mere human sentiments brewed under various pressures and processes that are perfectly natural, though the unhappy subjects consider them spiritual.

There was a time for God to speak and He spoke. There is a time for Him to be silent, and He is silent; and our only access to His mind meanwhile is the diligent study of the records of His past wonderful works and words.

But is He, therefore, unregardful of those upon the earth, who, in such a time of drought as this, are seeking to slake their parching thirst after Him as the fountain of living water, which He has opened in the earth in the written oracles of His truth? The Bible itself forbids such a thought as this. It is not of any particular generation that it is written in the Psalms (*34:15*), “the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry.” Peter, ages afterwards, applied them in his day (*1Pet 3:12*). So Paul, in Heb 12:5, gives the widest scope to the words written a thousand years before his day. “My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.” At all times it is true “Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you,” except that there come times when, as in the case of Israel, He hides his face and will no more be found of a perverse and heedless generation (*Jer 14:10-16; 15:1-9*). Such a generation

is upon the earth now, and if it were not for the express revelation which we have that a people at such a time as this will be found alive at the Lord's coming, we might well doubt if God would look to any in the midst of such great wickedness. But having such a revelation, we may take courage, "coming out from amongst them and being separate", that God will still look to such as are of a humble and contrite heart, trembling at His word. In this courage, we may draw nigh from day to day with full assurance of heart – having such an high priest, come boldly to the throne, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need (*Heb 4:16; 10:21,22*).

In His response to these advances, He will work by His Spirit; but in what way we know not; we cannot know; we need not care to know. We know not what our present life is. No creature knows the essence or mode of its life. Yet all live it. How much more may we be content with the simple fact that in this higher relation of being which Revelation unveils to us. The simple fact is that God can cast down and lift up; He can prosper or hinder; He can comfort or afflict in a million ways, in which we shall not see His working hand, though we shall feel His work. The study of the ways of His providence as illustrated in Scripture history, and Scripture history alone will give us light and guidance here. All human story is unreliable. In the book *The Ways of Providence*, the divine story alone is brought to bear for the light it sheds on our own path.

But in all this, God is the worker. Man is the subject, without possessing in himself the Spirit of God as it was in the apostles and those who received it by the laying on of their hands (*Acts 8:18*). From this we have carefully to discriminate the idea expressed in our second item.

2. MAN'S ACTION WHEN GOD GRANTS HIM THE GIFT OF HIS SPIRIT

The modern idea that believers have the Spirit now as believers had it then is a fruitful source of spiritual mischief. It leads men to look within, instead of looking to God. It leads them to neglect the Bible and follow their own spirits. It leads, in fact, to darkness and death instead of light and life. When God granted the gift of His Spirit, the Spirit was in the control of those who received it (*1 Cor 14:32*) for the particular purpose for which it was bestowed. It was in the various men who received it, a supernatural power of wisdom, or prophecy, or interpretation, or miracle as the case may be (*1 Cor 12:8-10*). This dispensation of the Spirit was for a particular purpose, viz., for the attestation of the Apostolic testimony to the resurrection of Christ, and for the consolidation of the Apostolic work in the development of a people for the Lord (*Heb 2:4; Eph 4:11-13*). This manifestation has now lapsed. There is no reason to expect its revival till the Lord is actually here himself again. It would be an unspeakable source of comfort and strength to see the gift of the Spirit again restored. But it is only a weakness and a distress to suppose they exist when they do not exist, and to have offered in their place the weak, and effusive, and egotistic sentimentalism which mistakes the phosphorescent action of the human brain under "religious" excitement for "the power of the spirit of God" (*Rom 15:19*).

3. UNENLIGHTENED PRAYERS

On this subject, we can do no better than reproduce the following remarks from *The Christadelphian* for September, 1881:- “Men who do not know how to address their fellow men are not likely to excel in their approaches to the High and Holy One. The inability to pray is one of the acutest symptoms of the ungodly state of the present evil world. We see no remedy for it but in individual spiritual culture. The secret of true prayer is the conviction and realisation of the existence and universal presence of the Creator. Where a man lacks this, he speaks into the air, and is apt to have his utterances shaped by a sense of the presence of man rather than God. How is the right state of mind to be attained? We know of only one way in our age, and that is by daily familiarity with the Holy Oracles which bring God to bear on the understanding and heart. The process of their reading and study continued long enough will in the end make God a reality to the mind and impart reverence and grace of utterance to our approaches. The reading of the Scripture will teach us how to pray . . . There can be no doubt that many prayers are publicly offered which must be as offensive to God as He declares the prayers of Israel to have been. Many prayers are not prayers at all, but the mere recital of senseless remarks and phrase borrowed from the degraded religious communities around us. Prayer ought to consist chiefly of three things; the expression of our sincere adoration of God’s greatness and excellence, the giving of thanks for His goodness, as multitudinously manifested, both to the race and to ourselves individually, and supplication for the various things we need.

There are prayers which are childish. They are mostly of “orthodox” origin. They will disappear before Bible enlightenment. **The prayers that “we may be made truly thankful”: that “we may be in earnest”; that “we may have had an edifying time”; that the speaker (who perhaps has his address prepared) “may speak acceptable words”; that the hearers (who are already there just as they are) “may have good and honest hearts” &c., &c., are all prayers that smell of the old Roman cask; prayers that are unreasonable, that could not be answered, that are a mere rattle of words, and in their implications are an unintelligent shutting of the eyes to facts, and an insult to the majesty of God (*Emphasis ours - CAM*). They are mostly the result of “saying prayers” instead of praying; and of slavishly conforming to “pious” phrases instead of allowing the heart to open in a rational sense of our relation to the Eternal, and a true discernment of what we require of Him.**

Robert Roberts, *The Christadelphian*, August 1893

THE MORAL OPERATIONS OF THE SPIRIT

“A LEARNER” writes thus: “I frequently read your magazine with profit. I am not able to say I accept *all* you lay down as truth; for instance, what some have called your “unmitigated materialism.” You appear to admit a controlling providence, an ordering, and directing of things and circumstances *around* the man, but not *IN* him. What about the plain

statements of Scripture bearing on the direct operation of God on the human mind? Jesus is the *author* and finisher of our faith (*Heb 12:2*) “God having dealt *to every man* a measure of faith” (*Rom 12:3*). “For no man can come unto Christ, except it were *given* him of the Father (*Jno 6:65*), or as verse 44, unless “*drawn*” by him. Thus, if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God (*Jno 7:17*). Did not Peter say that Jesus was the Christ? To which Jesus replied, “Blessed art thou ... for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but *my Father which is in heaven.*” (*Mat 16:17*). “The Holy Spirit was to be given to them that asked the Heavenly Father for it” (*Luke 11:13*). The Spirit was also promised to that part of an innumerable multitude of people (*verse 1*) who confessed Jesus before men, when brought before the powers, “that he should teach them in that same hour (not through the written word, or prophetic messenger, but *in the same hour*) what ye ought to say” (*Luke 12:11*). Thus David prays for this direct power of God: “Teach me thy way, O Lord” (*Psa 27:11*); and Paul exclaims, “Thanks be to God, which puts the same earnest care into the heart of Titus” (*2 Cor 8:16*). Evidently considering that God works on the mind of men not only through the truth written and spoken, but *immediately* from Himself. I forbear further quotations, lest I intrude upon your time and space; but knowing that these I have made, present difficulties in the way of full acceptance of your theory of the truth, I hope they may be favoured with your attention.

We can do no better than to invite Learner’s attention to the following letter, recently written by brother D Handley, of Maldon, to a private correspondent who wrote to him on the same question. Brother Handley, it will be remembered, was one of those who go to the extreme in believing the Holy Spirit in its miraculous power to be within reach of the believer. His letter is, on this account, the more valuable:

Maldon, 12th January, 1870.

DEAR S.-

“In answering your letter, I will show you that your questions mix up three distinct things: first, Holy Spirit as given to the apostles; second, the spirit or mind of Christ; and third, the birth of the Spirit. It is important to know the truth of all these phases of the subject. As to the first (Holy Spirit) there is much talk about it, but very little knowledge of it, or its teachings. When the Deity has intended to do or reveal anything, He has done it by His Spirit through some medium. At the beginning, the Spirit moved upon the face of the waters (*Gen 1:2*). When the Lord wanted to make His mind known to man, He did it by His Spirit; “holy men spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (*1Pet 1:20*). Isaiah, speaking of the Christ (*Chapter 61*) says, “the Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,” &c.; and when Christ through the Spirit gave commandments to the apostles (*Acts 1:2*) to preach the gospel

of the kingdom, he told them to wait for that same Spirit, which was to ‘lead them into all truth’ (*Luke 24:49; Jno 16:7-13; Acts 1:8*). And we find that when they received it, it brought Christ’s sayings to their minds – (*Jno 14:26*), and taught them how to open the covenants of promise (*1 Cor 2:15*). The voice of the Spirit spoke in the prophets (*Neh 9:30*), and God witnessed by the same Spirit (*Heb 2:3*). Languages that the apostles had never learned were by the Spirit spoken by them so as to be understood by those who knew them. By the same power, they could both kill and make alive (*Acts 5:9; 9:40*). Many miracles were wrought by them in confirmation of the truth they taught (*Acts 14:3*). The things they taught were able to make a man wise unto salvation (*Rom 1:16*). And those who kept in memory the things spoken by them, were saved (*1 Cor 15:2*). In John 17:20, we see by the mouth of Jesus himself, that salvation comes through believing on Christ “through the word.” So that there wants no more revelation for a man to attain unto salvation. If there was anything more to reveal, then the Spirit would be given to someone in order that it be understood. The Spirit was not given to make the apostles brethren of the Christ, but to enable them to speak and confirm the word of the Deity, for the salvation of those who were ignorant.

Now, in our day, there is much talk about the ‘Holy Ghost’ as the people term it, or ‘spirit of power’ as others have it; but judge this ‘Holy Ghost’ by its fruits. John tells us to ‘try the spirits’ (*1 Jno 4:1*). If it is a churchman that has it, he is not led by it to contend for the truth as it is in Jesus, but for the party to which he belongs. If he is an Irvingite, he will tell us his new apostles have power to give it by the laying on of their hands; and the more he has of it, the more he will contend for Irvingism. If he is a Mormon, he will contend that the Irvingite apostles are liars, and that his party only are right, and that Joseph Smith was a prophet of the Most High. If it be a Methodist, he will contend that Methodism is of God, and baptism not essential to salvation, for it is ‘only believe’ and you shall be saved. If it is a ‘Peculiar,’ we shall find his ‘spirit’ differs from all the others, and the more he has of it the more ready he will be to condemn all others, and to contend for the views held by his brethren. Most singular of all, he will be bold to confess that he knows nothing about the covenant made with Abraham, or the inheritance for which Abraham hoped. He will talk freely about the never-dying souls of the people, and is a believer in dead men going to heaven or hell.

Now, I think this will show you what is called “Holy Ghost” is not the Spirit of the Deity. It does not “lead into truth,” as the Spirit led the Apostles. It does not open the understandings of those who possess it, to understand the writings of Moses and the prophets, as “the Lord the Spirit” did to his Apostles (*Luke 24:45*), nor does it lead them to obey the teaching of Christ and his apostles. The Quakers or Friends at one time had so much of this ‘spirit,’ that they were led to denounce both baptism and breaking of bread,

which Christ and his apostles have enjoined. The Quakers set them aside as things not to be attended to by those having the Spirit! We Christadelphians do not, as some say, “deny the spirit,” nor would we be found to kick against it, if again poured out by God for some especial work. But we do say God has made known the way of salvation, and it is for man to make himself acquainted with it, and walk therein. This he can do if he will. “The Scriptures are able to make a man wise unto salvation;” and all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, &c., that the man of God may be perfectly furnished unto every good work (2 Tim 3:15).

THE MIND OF CHRIST

You next refer to the spirit or mind of Christ being in us, or we are none of his. This is true; we cannot be Christians unless we have the mind of Christ, which is the mind of the Spirit, and we cannot have this mind of the Spirit unless we know what it is; and that mind has been revealed at different times in various ways, through the prophets and apostles. In order to be spiritually-minded, we must know and attend to the voice of the Spirit, in the word the Deity has, by His Spirit, made known to man. He has given us to know that our origin is of the dust, and that through sin, man is condemned to return to the dust. “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin” (Rom 5:12). “The wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23). This is the teaching of the Spirit. To oppose this, is to oppose the spirit. Eternal life is the gift of God to those who understand and obey the Truth as revealed by the Spirit. Those who believe men are immortal, cannot believe that Christ is the Lord of Life, or the Resurrection and the Life; but have a mind or spirit contrary to the teaching of Deity. Again, Abraham became heir of the world by faith (Rom 4:13); and those in the Christ are heirs with him according to the promise (Gal 3:29). Now, those who are looking for an inheritance beyond the sky have not attained unto the mind of the Spirit. When John preached the baptism of repentance, many attended to it. Among them we find the Christ saying “Thus it cometh us to fulfil all righteousness;” thus our Saviour himself evidenced that he knew the mind of the Spirit in the obedience of it. No man can be “spiritually minded” in the scriptural sense, unless he know the mind of the Spirit and do it. If he know and do it, then he has the mind or spirit of Christ; and if faithful to the end, will be heir with him.

As to John 3:3, if you read through that chapter, you will see in verse 6, it is stated that that which is born of the Spirit *is Spirit*; and in verse 8, it says “the wind bloweth, &c., *so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.*” It does not say, as many say; that the spirit silently operates upon the people like the wind – felt, but not to be seen by the people; but “*so is EVERYONE that is born of the Spirit.*” To be born of the Spirit, then, is ‘to be raised from the dead and attain unto a spirit-body;’ or for “this mortal to put on immortality.’ Christ was the first born from among the dead. While on earth, he was in the flesh,

but after his resurrection, he was changed to spirit. So will his brethren be, for ‘we shall be like him’ (1Jno 3:2). It would be well to ask those who talk so much about being born of the Spirit, to look at verse 8, and say if they can come in and go out, we hearing them, but not able to see them. Farewell.

D HANDLEY

OTHER PASSAGES

We will add a word or two to the foregoing by way of noticing those passages which “Learner” may not consider sufficiently dealt with:

Heb 12:2 The faith of which Jesus is the “author and finisher” is not the act of mind by which we lay hold of the gospel, but the system of truth described as “the common faith” (*Tit 1:4*), “the one faith” (*Eph 4:5*), “the faith that should afterwards be revealed” (*Gal 3:23*). If the act of faith were due to the volition of Christ acting upon us, there would be no need for the exhortation contained in the very place where the expression occurs: “Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, *looking unto Jesus,*” &c. If a faithful state of mind were preternaturally engendered from without, after the manner of inspiration, there would be no need for those precautions and exercises which tend to preserve us “grounded and settled, and not moved away from the hope of the Gospel” (*Col 1:23*).

Rom 12:3 In the apostolic era, gifts were bestowed according to a certain measure of faith, or divine principle of distribution. To one was given by the Spirit, the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another, faith by the same Spirit, &c.; to another, the gifts of healing, &c. (*1 Cor 12:8,9*). The object was “the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, the edifying of the body of Christ” (*Eph 4:12*). Paul, in Romans 12:4, exhorts the possessors of those gifts not to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, but according as God had dealt to every man the measure of faith. “Having” says he (*verse 6*) “*gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy let us*” &c. We must not confound this “measure of faith” with that without which it is impossible to please God (*Heb 11:6*) a faith which is not a spiritual gift, but the belief of which God has declared concerning himself and His purposes.

Jno 6:44, 65 True it is that no man can come to Christ except it is given him of the Father; but let us see where the “giving” begins, and what is the method of “drawing.” The first condition necessary to constitute a believer, is the possession of “good soil” or “an honest and good heart” (*Mat 13:23*). If a man have the brain of an idiot, he cannot be acted upon by the truth. If he have the honest and good heart that comes from a good phrenal organisation, he may, and this is “given” him, for truly no man makes himself. But there must be

more than this before he will “come” to Christ. His “good ground” will bring forth no fruit without seed, and the seed is “the word of the kingdom” (*Mat 13:19*). If he never hears this, he will remain as far from Christ as an Hottentot; but let him hear this, and then the words of Christ apply: “He that received seed into the good ground is he that *heareth the word and understandeth it*, which also beareth fruit,” &c. Now, the hearing of the truth is ultimately to be traced to the testimony of God by the prophets and apostles, for “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing (for if a man speak the truth, it is because he has learnt it) by the word of God” (*Rom 10:17*). A man with a good and honest heart, hearing the truth, is drawn by it to come to Christ, and as God speaks in the truth and has fashioned the heart of man, it is God that draws. This is the explanation Jesus himself gives: for he adds, “*Every man therefore that hath HEARD and hath LEARNED of the Father, cometh unto me*” (*Jno 6:45*). If the drawing were a sort of mesmeric attracting, no fault could be found with those who, not being so acted upon, did not come.

Jno 7:17 Those who were disposed to do the will of the Father did on their acceptance of Christ, “know of the doctrine” whether it was of God or Christ’s own invention. How? By the evidence vouchsafed to such, for as Jesus said, “He that believeth on me, the works that I do, *shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do*, because I go unto the Father” (*Jno 14:12*). To apply this statement to any experience of which a man may be subject now, is a great mistake. There is only one rule to work by in our day; “To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (*Is 8:20*).

Mat 16:17 It has been revealed to Peter that Jesus was the Messiah, and this revelation was the act of the Father; and not the information derived from flesh and blood in any form: but how was the revelation made? Not subjectively; that is, the Holy Spirit did not personally illuminate Peter as it did after the ascension of Jesus; for it is expressly testified that “the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (*Jno 7:39*). The Spirit was yet a matter of promise (*Acts 1:8, Luke 24:49*). How then had the revelation been made? By the witness which the Father gave to Christ. Of this witness, Jesus says; “I have greater witness than that of John: the works which the Father hath given me to finish, *the same works that I do bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me, AND THE FATHER HIMSELF, WHICH HATH SENT ME, HATH BORNE WITNESS OF ME*” (*Jno 5:36,37*). Did there not come from the excellent glory, a voice: “This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased,” on the occasion both of the baptism and transfiguration of Christ? In all these ways, the Father revealed the truth to Peter.

Luke 11:13; 12:11 The promise of the Spirit was to the obedient believers of the truth, and not to unbelievers that they might become believers. Men had to believe and obey first.- (*see Acts 2:38, 39; also 8:12-17*). The promise was fulfilled in the experience of believers of the apostolic era. “The

manifestation of the Spirit was given to every man to profit withal.” (1 Cor 12:7). It bestowed divers gifts that were extra to the powers of the natural man. These were necessary as a confirmation of the word preached (Heb 2:4; Acts 5:32; 4:29,30,33), and for the upbuilding of the community of the believers (1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11-16). When this purpose was served, the manifestation of the Spirit subsided with the death of those possessing it. Would to God it were renewed: but let us not deceive ourselves with a fancy, and surely the notion that the Spirit animates Christendom, is a fancy of the most outrageous kind, as pointed out in brother Handley’s letter. The Spirit subjectively taught the persecuted believers what to say *in the very hour* of their arraignment before the tribunals. Is anyone similarly inspired now? If so, where is he? When he is pointed out, we must try him by the word, whether he is of God. Mere loquacity is no evidence.

Ps 27:11 David was taught the way of the Lord, for his “last words” are: “*The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word is on my tongue*” (2 Sam 23:2). It would be a privilege to be taught as he was taught; but inspiration is not among our experiences in this Gentile night. We have, however, a “mighty deep” of inspiration, in which to bathe our souls continually, and that is the written oracles of the Spirit, which are able to guide us unto all truth, and shew us things to come. Let us keep close by the Bible, and not wander after the “will of the wisp” inspirations of modern superstition.

2Cor 8:16 If there was an earnest care in the heart of Titus, God put it there, for all things are of God, but please recognize *God’s method of doing His own work*. God first brought Titus on the scene with a certain constitution of mind, then placed him in relation to the truth by hearing; and to the Corinthian believers, by acquaintance; and the result was a certain solicitude in his mind on behalf of the Corinthians. “Immediate,” in the sense of direct bestowal of this solicitude, by the Spirit, is a clumsy suggestion. Mechanical benevolence of this sort would have been no pleasure to God, no refreshment to the Corinthians and no credit to Titus. God works widely, largely, wisely, and develops finer results than would follow the narrow ways ascribed to him by popular theology.

(The Christadelphian, April 1870)

THE SPIRIT, THE WORD —AND THE ANGELS

It is an often quoted, yet little understood teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, that men are drawn by the Father to him:

“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day” (*Jno 6:44*).

Speculations abound amongst men as to the precise mechanism by which a man becomes “drawn” to Christ; from theories of a mystical and magical invisible force turning a man’s mind towards the things of God, influencing his thoughts and directing his desires; to a conviction that such things are unknown and unknowable, and that it is best not to enquire or probe too deeply into such affairs.

But whilst it is a truth that as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are the Deity’s ways higher than man’s ways, and His thoughts higher than man’s thoughts (*Is 55:9*), it would be a grave error and folly in the extreme to disregard what the Father has revealed as being unknowable. Wisdom that is from above (*Jas 3:17*) has been revealed to man, so that he can make Yahweh’s ways his ways, and Yahweh’s thoughts his thoughts. Whilst the natural man cannot receive the things of the spirit of God which therefore remain unknown to him (*1 Cor 2:14*), those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern spiritual things ought to be able to see and hear the things revealed by the Father by His Spirit through the Apostles (*1 Cor 2:7,10*). We must not therefore dismiss a matter as being “unknowable” purely on the basis that we have not searched the Scriptures adequately enough to gain personal knowledge of it. As Bro Thomas wrote:

“no man has any right to set up his own ignorance as the limit of what God hath revealed. A thing may be unknown to such a man, but it doth not therefore follow that it is either absolutely unintelligible or a secret. He may not know of it, or, if explained to him, he may not have intellect enough to comprehend it, or his prejudices, or sectarian bias may darken his understanding - this by no means makes the thing unintelligible or mysterious to other people. All that such persons have a right to say is, “We do not know anything about it.” They may confess their own ignorance, and resolve to look into the matter, or not; but they are presumptuously overstepping the bounds of propriety to venture to do more” (*Elpis Israel, Part 1 Chapter 1*).

To the Word then, and to the Testimony must we go to be enlightened as to the ways and thoughts of the Father, leaving those in darkness to amuse themselves with their abstract thinking and self-confessed ignorance. And to begin with, we ought to examine more carefully the *context* of the Master’s words, for in the discourse which follows, the Master expounds his own saying and thereby relieves the learned theologians of their difficulty - if only they had eyes to see and ears to hear - by presenting the matter in great plainness of speech:

“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will

raise him up at the last day. *It is written in the prophets, and they shall all be taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me . . .*" (*Jno 6:44,45*).

As the prophets declared, men are "taught of God" (*Is 54:13*). But how? By some mystical influence filtering into their brains and directing their thoughts and inclinations Godward? Not according to the Master, for in his words, they who are taught are they who have "heard," the implication being that those who do not hear do not learn. Passive receipt of miraculous power is not what Christ describes in this place, but rather a *listening*, or *hearing* on the part those who would learn. But what do they hear? Words from the Father, words that proceed out of His mouth, which do not return to Him void (*cp Is 55:11*), but rather accomplish that which He pleases, namely the drawing of men to His Son, for thus wrote the Apostle:

"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And *how shall they hear without a preacher?* And how shall they preach, except they be sent? . . . So then, faith cometh *by hearing*, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, have they not heard? Yes, verily, *their sound* went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world" (*Rom 10:13-18*).

The matter is therefore laid plainly before us; a man becomes called, and "taught of God" by hearing the "sound" of those sent by him, namely the apostles (*'ones sent'*), or of those who preach the Testimony they taught. Accordingly, it might be written to them, as it was to those believers at Thessalonica, that they were chosen unto salvation through "belief of the truth; whereunto **He called you by our Gospel**" (*2 Thes 2:14*). This is how they become "drawn" of God - by the Gospel of Christ heard, understood, and believed. So it is by this means that many become "called according to His purpose" (*Rom 8:29*), to be conformed to the image of His son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren, ultimately forming single family of men and women who, by carrying their cross and following him, through being partakers of the likeness of his death by obeying the Gospel through baptism, shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. They shall "be like him" (*1 Jno 3:2*), both morally and physically, having their bodies changed that they become "fashioned like unto his glorious body" (*Phil 3:21*), immortal, free from sin and death, and fitted for the Kingdom of God.

But not all who are "drawn" by the Father to the Son will be granted the glory, honour and immortality for which the faithful seek. Though many be drawn to Christ, some cannot endure the straitness of the Way he requires them to walk along, and they allow themselves to be tempted, and drawn *away* of their own lusts, and enticed (*Jas 1:14*). So it is, that "many be called, but few chosen" (*Mat 20:16*). Many are called to be partakers of many things; they are called into Grace (*Gal 1:6*), into Liberty (*Gal 5:13*), unto a kingdom and great glory (*1 Thes 2:2*), unto Eternal Life (*1 Tim 6:12*), out of darkness into light (*1 Pet 2:9*). But they are also "called to be saints" (*1 Cor 1:2*), holy ones unto the Deity who gave His Son that they might have life. And that is something many cannot be. As dogs, they return unto their own vomit, and as swine to their wallowing in the mire (*2 Pet 2:22*). They cannot abide life in the Light, as their works become manifest by it and open to reproof (*Jno 3:19*). They cannot abide the constant washing of the water of the word whereby their way might be cleansed, for they take too much delight in the defiling ways of the flesh. So it happens unto them according to the true

proverb; they turn back into the darkness and defilement of the world, and so judge themselves to be unworthy of eternal life.

But why is this? If it is true, as some claim, that the believer's life becomes governed by direct Holy Spirit operation upon the brain-flesh of men, why is it even possible for some to fail? Why do some fail, whilst others do not? There are those who claim that some inscrutable influence renews men's hearts, causing them to believe, and that unless they have had an "experience" of the sudden swooping of this power upon them, they cannot believe. But such a magical excitation finds no place within the pages of Scripture, which declares that a man becomes "renewed by knowledge" (Col 3:10). As Bro Thomas wrote:

"When a man is renewed by the truth, he is renewed by the spirit, and not before. There is no such thing in the scriptures as a renewed ignorant man. Ignorance of the testimony of God, and regeneration, are utterly incompatible. The truth is the purifier to those only who understand and obey it (1Pet 1:22); and there is no moral purity, or sanctification of spirit before God, without it (Elpis Israel Pt 1 Ch 2).

Another idea held by some, is that at the time of baptism, men are given a dose of strength from the mystical influence they call the Spirit. For instance, in his book entitled *James and Other Studies (1st Edition)*, Duncan Heaster postulates that at the time of baptism, believers are endowed with "a gift of heavenly health", a "once off gift of the Holy Spirit", and are later given the further opportunity of drawing upon the Spirit in order to receive Divine help in their Bible study. Thus, under the heading, *Holy Spirit at Baptism?* he writes:

"... this approach to the subject makes more sense of the passages which imply that ***there is a once off gift of spiritual strength in our lives***. Israel's passage through the Red Sea was a clear type of our baptism and subsequent wilderness journey (1 Cor 10:1). Miraculously, "there was not one feeble person among their tribes" (Ps 105:37) - of about four million people. ***This gift of physical strength after their Baptism surely prefigures our 'gift of Heavenly health' after our immersion ... Grammatically this must imply a once off gift of the Spirit to each believer ... Despite having had this Spirit gift at baptism, the utmost personal effort is still required in responding to it***"

Again he writes:

"Surely there is no point in praying to understand God's word if our own unaided intellect is all that is required (Ps 119:18). ***Such prayers are surely for God's help to act upon us to assist us in our efforts to understand. Seeing that all God's work is accomplished through His Spirit, it follows that we are asking from the help of His Spirit to understand the word.***"

Here then, is the claim presented in clear and unambiguous terms; when they are baptised, believers are given the Spirit of God as a "once off gift" of "spiritual strength". And further, this Spirit may be also drawn upon as required, to give assistance in understanding the Father's Word. But what saith the Word?

In order to describe this idea, which is not in itself taught in Scripture, expressions not from

Scripture are employed. For instance, there is no passage in Scripture that speaks of “heavenly health,” let alone a “once off gift” of it. Nor does any passage of Scripture state that a believer ought to ask the Father to use His Spirit in order to give them understanding of the Word. As the writer himself admits, at best, the ‘proof’ texts he advances can only “imply” the points he makes. And in actual fact, whilst the writer considers the physical provision made for Israelites in the desert as being a “prefigure” of each believer being given a “once off gift of the Spirit,” Scripture itself does not make that comparison. Rather, in its plain teachings, it refutes such an idea.

THE POWER OF THE WORD

Rather than speaking of some mystical endowment of “heavenly health” at baptism, the Oracles of the Most High declare that the Word itself gives strength to believers, being a power in its own right:

“the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are (being) saved, *it is the power of God*” (1Cor 1:18).

“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for *it is the power of God unto salvation* to everyone that believeth” (Rom 1:16).

“wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the grafted (implanted) word, *which is able to save your souls*” (Jas 1:21).

“when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, *which effectually worketh* also in you that believe” (1 Thes 2:13).

The power, that works within the believer, most “effectually”, is therefore the influence of the Word itself. As Bro Roberts expressed it, the Word:

“lays hold of the entire mental man, creating new ideas and new affections, and, in general, evolving a “new man”. In this work, the Spirit has no participation, except in the shape of *the written word*”. This is the product of the Spirit—the ideas of God reduced to writing by the ancient men who were moved by it. It is, therefore, the instrumentality of the Spirit . . . by this men may be subdued to God—that is, enlightened, purified, and saved, if they receive the word into good and honest hearts, and “bring forth fruit, some thirty-fold, some sixty, and some a hundred” (Christendom Astray, Lecture 6, 1884 edition).

The Psalmist prayed, “my soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me *according to thy word*” (Ps 119:28). That is the prayer of the faithful; to pray for strength to be given in accordance with what the Word teaches. To pray for a strength which the Word does not promise, or to look for power in a different place to where the Creator has provided it, is bound only to leave the petitioner weak and in need of true spiritual strength.

The Master, in his Parable of the Sower clearly described what source of spiritual growth and health is sown in the believer’s heart. “The seed is the Word of God” (Luke 8:11). Notice, the seed is sown *alone* in the heart, the onus being on the individual to allow it to germinate and

take root there. The Master describes no additional element being sown with the seed to help the recipient in some other way, it is down to the nature of soil, and disposition of the individual as to whether, or how that seed grows. Neither does the master describe the soil being especially prepared to receive the seed; but rather it falls on both good and bad ground, and grows where the conditions are right.

This seed so sown is that “implanted Word” which “effectually worketh” within the believer, an “incorruptible seed” (1 Pet 1:23) which, is the germ of a new Spiritual life – a “new creature” (2 Cor 5:17), and is a virile ‘power’ mighty to save. Indeed, it is that seed which is able to strengthen the believer to resist sin (1 Jno 3:9), and which is “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: *that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works*” (2 Tim 3:17).

"THAT THE MAN OF GOD MAY BE PERFECT"

This latter passage is most instructive for our present considerations – the Word is a power able to reprove, correct, and instruct “that the man of God *may be perfect*”. Why then, do some consider there to be a need for an additional influence/strengthening power from elsewhere? Are we to suppose that the man of God may become more perfect than “perfect” by such additional “spiritual strength”? Nay, the Word itself, after the pattern of the Manna of old is sufficient for the believer to feed upon, even though it may be but “light bread”, and insufficient for the murmurers.

Contrary to the claims with which we are being presented, possession of the Holy Spirit was not in any case, a source of “heavenly health” strengthening the possessors to be obedient. This we know, for though it gave the First Century possessors miraculous powers and abilities, it was still needful for Paul to exhort and warn the spirit-endowed elders at Ephesus that:

“of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, ***and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up***, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Acts 20:30-32).

The arising of apostate leaders was certain – but what was needed to edify the body to remain faithfully resistant to these? Mystical supplies of “spiritual strength” from above? No – the Word itself. These were men who certainly did possess the Holy Spirit already, but it was not that Spirit which gave them strength to resist the apostates, but the Word, understood, believed and acted upon. It is a power of construction, able to build a firmly founded edifice which cannot be shaken in the day of evil. The Spirit, whilst it gave miraculous powers, did not in itself impart an moral awareness, or cause a moral regeneration for the recipients thereof, as witnessed by the manner by which certain at Corinth abused their miraculous ability to speak in tongues (1 Cor 14). Judas is another case in point, he, as the other disciples were sent forth with the Holy Spirit to cast out demons and perform miracles in the name of Christ (Mat 10:1-5). And again, there will be many who were recipients of the Holy Spirit power rejected in the coming day of judgement:

“Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (*Mat 7:22,23*).

Only a Divine power impressed upon the fleshly tables of the heart can achieve moral results, and it has so pleased the eternal Creator to have that power contained within the written Word.

Bro Thomas was quite plain in his exposition of these things:

“For myself, I believe that the Holy Spirit is the only authoritative, infallible, efficient and sufficient teacher of the Christian religion, in all its parts. If I be asked, what is the manner in which He teaches this religion? I reply, in the same way that all teachers convey instruction to their pupils: *by words, either spoken or written*. Hence, it is by the sacred Scriptures that He convinces men of sin, righteousness, and judgment to come in these times, and indeed, in all the times subsequent to the apostolic age. God is simple in all His plans.”

He goes on to say (quoting 2 Tim 3:15):

“What more do we want than wisdom in relation to this matter? If the sacred Scriptures are able to make us wise, we need no other instrumentality. The Holy Spirit *by the word*, without infusing a single idea into it, more than it actually and ordinarily contains, and without any collateral influence, teaches us all wisdom and knowledge that is necessary... Why, then, my friends, can we not be content with the means within the grasp of everyone who owns the volume of inspiration? If the ecclesiastical world were content to learn the truth from ‘the Bible alone’, and it honestly desired to obey the Messiah, there would soon be an end to Presbyterian and every other ism, by which ‘Christendom’ as it is called, or ‘anti-Christendom’, as it should be termed, has been for ages desolated.” (*The Apostasy Unveiled, The Christadelphian, December 1870*).

HELP IN UNDERSTANDING

We saw earlier how it is claimed that believers ought to pray for the Father to give them Spirit help to understand: “Surely there is no point in praying to understand God's word if our own unaided intellect is all that is required (*Ps 119:18*). *Such prayers are surely for God's help to act upon us to assist us in our efforts to understand ... it follows that we are asking for the help of His Spirit to understand the word*”. Such are the sentiments of many.

“Surely” it must be so – but why? No verse of Scripture states that believers should pray for the Holy Spirit to aid their Bible study – those terms are not used. On the contrary, even prophets to whom the words of the Spirit came direct, had to exert much effort themselves in seeking out their meaning: “Of which salvation the prophets have *enquired and searched diligently*, who prophesied of the grace which should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” (*1 Pet 1:11*). These

inspired prophets received the Spirit – it operated through them to give us the words of Scripture, yet they did not understand the import of those words, and how they testified of the coming Messiah. The Spirit did not give them understanding of what they themselves wrote. They had to show themselves to be “workmen that needeth not to be ashamed” (2 Tim 2:15), seeking to rightly divide the Word of Truth – as do we. The way to understand the Word, is to “search diligently”, following the example of the prophets of old, not to pray for a source of understanding they did not have, and which the Father has not promised. And why should it be otherwise? “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the honour of kings is to search out a matter” (Prov 25:2). True, it may be attractive to the flesh to suppose that though we be workmen, we do not have to work hard, that we are, in some mysterious way, “helped” to understand, so saving us hours of thoughtful meditation, but that is not the revealed way of the Most High.

AN UNVEILING

One passage of Scripture, which is often employed as a prop to sustain the argument, as in this case, is Psalm 119:18: “*Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy Law*”. But much is assumed regarding this passage that is not stated. For instance, the Holy Spirit itself is not directly spoken of. David does not pray for the Holy Spirit to help his understanding – those are not the terms he uses, even if others may assume that to be his meaning. David simply besought Yahweh to “open his eyes”.

Interestingly, the Hebrew for “open” used here by the Spirit literally signifies, *to uncover; to reveal*. The idea is that of the eyes being covered over, David’s prayer being that this covering may be removed, so that the “wondrous things” contained within the Mosaic Law might be seen. Hence, Rotherham renders the verse thus: “*unveil thou mine eyes that I may discern wondrous things out of thy law*”. But what are those wondrous things? David certainly knew and understood the Law very well, for later in the same Psalm he says: “O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day. *Thou through thy commandments hast made my wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me*” (Ps 119:97,98). Already having been given understanding and wisdom (notice, from the commandments, not Holy Spirit bestowal), there was yet something contained within the Law which was veiled from his sight, and which he sought to “see”.

The Apostle speaks similarly of Israel, and their inability to see the wonderful things testified of the Master: “seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: And not as Moses, which put a *vail* over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which was abolished: *But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament ... even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart*” (2 Cor 3:15). That which is veiled from Israel even today, is an appreciation of how the Law spoke of the Lord Jesus. Their minds are blinded to this; there is a need for them to have their eyes opened, and their hearts unveiled in order for them to recognise the Messiah who came to fulfil the Law. Even so with David; yet he sought to have that vail removed.

This is something which was indeed revealed to David by Divine Revelation, for he was a prophet: “*being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He*

seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ" (*Acts 2:31*). But D Heaster is not a prophet, and neither is anyone else today! Why then should it be supposed that we can pray for the same manner of Revelation as David? When we cite a verse, we must pay attention to its historical context, or we become no better than the Apostasy who pick out verses to wrest to their own destruction.

Here then, we see the prayer and its fulfilment. David prayed that he might *see* wondrous things; and being a prophet those things were shown to him, that "seeing this before", he might speak of the resurrection of Christ. The revelation which he sought came both in the "oath" sworn to him through Nathan the prophet, as recorded in 2 Sam 7, and also through prophetic vision which he received himself – *which things we do not experience today*. David, as other men of old had direct communication from the Most High, whereas we do not. He then, was placed in a unique position greatly different to ours, whereby he could pray to have things revealed to him. For our part, we must be content with the Divine injunction to use personal effort, to "search diligently" that we might show ourselves workmen that need not be ashamed.

THE WORD – A SPOKEN, THEN WRITTEN REVELATION OF THE SPIRIT

What we have endeavoured to show, is that the power of the word itself imparts understanding to the hearer. As the voice of Wisdom crieth: "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee ... *then shalt thou understand* the fear of Yahweh, and find the knowledge of *elohim*. For Yahweh giveth wisdom: *out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding ...*" (*Prov 2:1-6*). Out of the mouth of Yahweh, that is, via His spoken Word, understanding and knowledge was given to His prophets, and they wrote it down for others. We obtain knowledge of the Most High by heeding that revelation, not by seeking another spirit-revelation to, in some way clarify the first. But the word itself is a power of the Spirit because it is the product of the breath, or Spirit of Yahweh, as we touched upon earlier. Thus Paul spake to the Corinthians of the formerly concealed mysteries of the Gospel: "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit ... for what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God" (*1 Cor 2:10,11*).

So then, "no man" can know the things of God, but by the Spirit of God. But how? By a mystical impartation of understanding? By no means, as we have already established, it is by the *words* taught by the Spirit, for this is how the apostle spake of the revelations given to him, and committed to paper: "now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in **the words** which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth, comparing Spiritual things with Spiritual" (*v 12,13*). So, true, we can only know of Divine things from the Spirit. That is, through the words which the Spirit teaches in the pages of our Bibles. What we must do therefore, rather than to give petition for additional power from the Father, is to attend to that which He has already imparted by the Spirit, and encapsulated within the word. We must shun the words which man's wisdom teaches, and give ear to the oracles of God, that showing ourselves "workmen" who need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of Truth, we might be given a spirit-nature, being heirs of the promises contained within that word.

There are those who glibly dismiss the above as “Word-Only Extremism”. That scoff at the idea that in these evil days of darkness when the love of many waxes cold, and iniquity abounds, that the only source of help we have been granted is words in a printed book. But such remarks merely serve to demonstrate the point made earlier, that natural men receive not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto them (*1 Cor 2:14*). Rather than to address the points of Scripture raised, instead an attempt is made to discredit particular teachings by bestowing inaccurate and derogatory labels upon them.

MINISTERING SPIRITS

The Scriptures do not teach that the only source of help provided to those who would be heirs of the kingdom is the Word, powerful though that be. Indeed, such a dogma, were it to exist, ought to be resisted with equal force as belief in possession of a Divine Power that the Father has, in fact, not granted, for it would be to deny another vital source of aid to the believer, namely the work of the angels. It is a source of much comfort and consolation to the faithful that as they walk on their weary journey through the wilderness of life towards the city that hath foundations, they are not alone. They have Divine Ministers to attend to their needs, for concerning the immortal messengers of Yahweh, it is written, “are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” (*Heb 1:14*). Indeed, the Master himself referred to the presence of these, as a reason not to speak evil of his little ones: “Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of the Father which is in heaven” (*Mat 18:10*).

The patriarch Jacob, father of the 12 tribes recognised the help granted to him by the angelic hands moving in the circumstances of his life. Accordingly, he bestowed a blessing upon Joseph’s sons: “*Elohim*, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the *Elohim* which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads . . .” (*Gen 48:15,16*). Here is a most striking example of a man who recognised the hand of Yahweh in his life. But notice, rather than to speak of spirit-bestowals giving him understanding to direct his ways away from, and out of evil, he spoke of the direct intervention of the angel, the ministering Spirit sent forth to minister to him. It may be argued that our circumstance differs from his, in that men today do not personally see their divine ministers. But though they go unseen, the reality of their presence and actions is readily seen by those who possess an eye of faith. There are those, like Elishah’s servant who will not believe until they see, and who are therefore fearful at the troubles which might come. Others, however, like Elijah go forward in faith, trusting that what Yahweh has promised, he will give - trusting in the promised angelic ministration. “Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them” (*2 Kings 6:18*), is the spirit of those who trust in the deliverance of Yahweh. “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” (*Rom 8:31*).

True it is, that times of difficulty, tribulation and evil come upon the Sons of Yahweh, for such are brought upon them for the purposes of their chastisement and refinement (*Heb 12:5-7*). As it is written “many are the afflictions of the righteous . . .” (*Psa 34:19*). It is through much tribulation that the Sons of Yahweh shall enter the kingdom, for as gold is tried in the fire, even so their faith must be tried and purified by trial (*Acts 14:22; 1Pet 1:7*). But they are

not alone in their trials, for the Psalmist continues “... but Yahweh delivereth them out of them all”. But how? By imparting His Spirit that they may be in some way strengthened, and helped by it’s influence? By no means; Yahweh knows how to deliver them that trust in Him (*2 Pet 2:9*), and this same Psalm reveals how He is pleased to do such a thing, in response to their cries:

“This poor man cried, and Yahweh heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of Yahweh encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them” (*Ps 34:6,7*).

That is where David’s trust was, as with Jacob. Not in an unknown and unknowable mysterious influence, but in the reality of angelic activity. He trusted in Yahweh, he cried unto Yahweh, and Yahweh saved him out of his troubles.

DELIVERANCE FROM EVIL

There is another principle we would do well to note, from Psalm 34. Notice, the angel did *not* prevent evil from coming. There are those who suppose that if believers have angelic ministers with the power of the Almighty watching over them for their good, that therefore no evil should come. We have even heard it taught that the fact of brethren in many cases enduring many hardships is evidence that it is a mistake to assume the angels are with us. However, again, such reveals a lack of familiarity with what Yahweh has promised; as we have already seen there is no promise that tribulation will not come; on the contrary, if we do not experience such, the Scriptures declare that we are illegitimate, “and not sons” (*Heb 12:8*). However, the promise is that when troubleous times are upon us, there will also be deliverance: “There hath no temptation (*trial*) taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted (*tried*) above that ye are able; but will with the temptation (*trial*) also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (*1 Cor 10:13*). And this, as seen in the examples of David and Jacob, is work which falls within the scope of angelic ministration.

By way of conclusion then, when consulting the Word of the Most High, we do not find prayers for Holy Spirit help and guidance, or exhortations for believers to offer such prayers. Literally all of the passages employed to suggest this (we have considered but one in this section) do so *by inference only*. But by contrast, we have shown that the Word itself is a living power, able to impart wisdom from above, able to draw the hearer to the Christ, and make him “wise unto salvation”. And deliverance from evil is not from some unknown and unknowable, undefined and undefinable influence imparting an armchair injection of ‘strength,’ but is via angelic ministration. This highlights the vital importance of giving heed to the power Yahweh has given unto us via the Word. Should a man fail to heed it, believing in some other source of power that is not given, for it is not promised, he will not be found labouring in the Word and in the Doctrine to build for himself a foundation that can withstand the stormy blasts of life’s turbulent periods. Not heeding the exhortation given, he will not know enough of the word to perform it, and act upon the wisdom of its ways. Being founded upon the uncertainty of sandy foundations instead of the Rock of the word, his house will not stand: “and great will be the fall of it”.

Chris Maddocks

"BE WITH THE SPEAKER ."

As this booklet has shown, the Christadelphian community, since its inception, has rejected doctrines of the possession/reception of a mystical indwelling/influence of the Holy Spirit upon the minds of men providing moral strength and guidance, adhering to the simple Bible teaching that the provision of such is exclusively the function of the Word, within the framework of angelic oversight.^A Yet it is an irrefutable fact that a significant number of brethren and sisters have rejected sound Biblical teaching pertaining to the function and operations of the Holy Spirit and have embraced tenets of evangelical theology. Indeed, it is evident that there is a widespread confusion in our midst concerning exactly how God works in the life of a believer, allied with a viewpoint, already fairly entrenched, that considers it perfectly legitimate to cherish a personal doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Many so called 'problem passages' relating to the Holy Spirit have only attained to this status as a result of the general apathy toward personal Bible study which has permeated the Brotherhood and, as usually happens, false prophets have arisen to cater for those with itching ears (2 Tim 4:3; Jer 5:31).

PRAYER

It is evident that the false doctrines percolating the Brotherhood outlined in this compilation, have impacted upon ecclesial prayer. Indeed, few ecclesias are immune from the influences of such in this respect. The following are a sample of petitions regularly heard from the platforms of the majority of ecclesias, which are unscriptural and dangerous:

- That the speaker will be guided to speak words of wisdom or be given such words¹
- That the speaker will be enabled to present his material well
- That God will be to the speaker "all that he needs" as he speaks

¹ Mark 13:11 is often appealed to in an attempt to justify such petitions: "... take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak but the Holy Spirit." To apply this Scripture to contemporary speaking brethren involves serious errors of exposition. The promise was specifically given to the disciples (v. 3) in the context of a prophecy of the impending dissolution of the Jewish state in AD 70 and the signs of the days leading up to that momentous event. It was to those who would be delivered up before councils, beaten in synagogues, brought before rulers and kings who would "in that hour" speak by Holy Spirit (vv. 9, 11). The historical narrative of the apostolic labours contained in the book of Acts details its fulfilment (Acts 4:8; 6:10).

If brethren really do believe that God has given the speaker his words then they are logically committed to accept that he has been inspired and therefore that the substance of his address is infallible. Clearly, this is arrant nonsense.

- That the hearts of the alien may be made receptive to the Gospel during the lecture (this also applies to Sunday School scholars in their lessons)^B
- That as the bread/wine is passed around or consumed brethren and sisters may feel certain emotions or think certain thoughts; e.g. think about the sacrifice of Christ, be thankful etc
- That as brethren and sisters leave the meeting they may feel certain emotions or think certain thoughts; e.g. feel glad, joyful etc
- That brethren and sisters may be ‘strengthened’ by some abstract influence²
- That the audience may be enthusiastic
- That certain thoughts may be banished from the minds of the ecclesia during the meeting³

Aside from the first (which is requesting inspiration), it is irrefragable that the above supplications could only be fulfilled by the direct operation of God’s power upon the hearts and minds of the subjects, mysteriously injecting moral strength and emotions and predisposing men to accept the Word – concepts foreign to Scripture, but familiar to pagan religions.

It must be stressed that most brethren offering such prayers, when confronted, would *deny* belief in the possession of Holy Spirit gifts or the reception of an invisible influence of the Holy Spirit upon the mind.⁴ Remarkably, such unsound prayers are heard from the platforms of ecclesias that have even incorporated extra

² The Son of God, at the most trying time in his life in the garden of Gethemane was desperately in need of strength. In what form did this come? Luke’s record informs us that: “*There appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.*” (22:43). The comfort administered to the Lord Jesus did not come in the form a mystical effluence, but by the Word spoken and by the visible presence of one of the heavenly host. It was “*for the joy set before him*” of sitting at the Father’s Right Hand (Psalm 16:11) and the inheritance of the Kingdom (Psalm 21) that he endured the stake (Heb 12:2). Surely no brother or sister would claim that they had access to a ‘superior’ channel of strength/comfort than the Son of God? It is interesting to note that the apostle Paul in 2 Tim 4, where he is set forth as a retrospective type of Messiah in his agony in Gethsemane, narrates a similar experience: “the Lord [angelically manifested] stood with me, and strengthened me” (v.17; Acts 27:23; 23:11; 18:9). It was exhortation from the Word that sustained the apostle likewise.

³ This error is taught in Hymn 240. See, for example, verse 3: “Still every hard, rebellious thought ... That we the cup may drink with joy, That we the bread in love may break”.

⁴ Frequently, when one endeavours to tackle brethren who *do* believe in the reception of an invisible influence of the Holy Spirit upon the mind, recourse is had to narrating personal experiences of assumed direct Holy Spirit activity (as do the evangelicals). However, an appeal to subjective experience is irrelevant in the determination of Truth. Scripture emphatically declares that Truth is measured *objectively* (Deut 18:22; Isa 43:9; John 14:29). We must be prepared to follow the example of the apostles and “reason *out* of the Scriptures” (Acts 17:2), not into them.

clauses on the Holy Spirit into their Constitutions refuting the very errors that their prayers endorse! Truly, “*a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*” (Gal. 5:9). Many brethren challenged have admitted that they had simply adopted phraseology from other brethren without giving due thought to the meaning of such requests. However, this does not ameliorate the situation. To offer such prayers is more serious than simply ‘asking amiss’ (James 4:3), they constitute “strange fire” (Lev. 10:1). Scripture typology is eloquent in this matter. It is manifest that the incense offered in the Tabernacle and the Temple represented the prayers of the saints (Psalm 141:2; Apocalypse 5:8; Luke 1:10). The law *demand*ed that the incense be made according to precise specification in respect of the ingredients employed and the weights thereof (Exodus 30:34-38). The introduction of foreign components was unacceptable to YHWH. This emphasises the great care that needs to be exercised in praying according to the teaching of Scripture. YHWH will be sanctified in them that come nigh unto Him (Lev. 10:3). He *hates* the theology of the Roman Catholic Jezebel, her Protestant daughters and abominable non-conformist offshoots (2 Thess 2 and Apocalypse 17). For brethren of Christ to incorporate the outpourings of inebriated Babylonians in their prayers is not honouring to the Father. In fact, such petitions could only be fulfilled *if God’s Word was untrue*, since they militate against its simple teaching on moral regeneration/strengthening and guidance. Consequently, they cannot be endorsed by an “amen” from faithful brethren. A **positive antidote** to this situation is a greater incorporation of Scripture, in context, in prayers and the avoidance of woolly clichés.

The following quotation powerfully demonstrates the fundamental principle:

“If we can understand the principles involved in Divine assistance on a natural plane, this will enable us to understand it on a spiritual plane. The proposition before us is that: God does not perform for us, things which we are capable of doing for ourselves. His assistance consists of furnishing us with the means of doing things. This is the basis of Divine assistance except in miraculous cases.

In the natural sphere God does not perform for man the numerous actions upon which his bodily happiness depends. He furnishes only the capacity and the means of performing them. God plows no man’s field; He sows no man’s seed; He reaps no man’s harvest; He grinds no man’s grain; He bakes no man’s bread; He plants no man’s vineyard; collects no man’s grapes nor converts them into wine; He manufactures no man’s cloth; nor cuts nor sews it into garments. But he provides the bacteria which can work on loose soil; He provides the sunshine and nutrients which cause the seed to grow, mature and ripen; He provides the food value in the grain which makes it worth grinding; He provides

the latent heat in the fuel and the process of combustion to bake the bread plus the process which causes the bread to rise; He causes the grapes to grow and fermentation. The above points clearly prove the proposition.

Likewise God does not perform any of those mental actions which enable the advancement of human happiness because He has qualified the human mind to perform these when it desires. God has furnished the means for sight, hearing, tasting and smelling but He does not do these actions for man. God thinks, meditates, reasons and judges for no man; nor does he perform for any man the mental actions of imagination, memory, attention or conscience. Also God does not read, comprehend, believe, repent or reform for any man; nor does he love, hate, sorrow, rejoice or feel any emotions on behalf of any member of our race. No, all these actions man must and does perform for himself. But if the man must perform all these actions for himself, what does God contribute towards their performance? He furnishes only capacity, means and motives."⁵

Here, "capacity" signifies natural endowment of intellect; "means", the providential exposure to the written Word and the opportunity to assimilate its teaching; and "motives", the things set forth in the Word inducing a man to obey the Truth.

SOURCES OF CORRUPTION

The question must be posed, Why does such a confused situation predominate?

Undoubtedly, one of the greatest sources of corruption was the 1964 *Hymn Book* which introduced in the Brotherhood compositions promoting apostate notions of the activity of the Holy Spirit. A number of these have been carried through into the 2002 *Hymn Book*. With regular use, our minds naturally become accustomed to the phraseology of our hymns, which inevitably finds its way into prayers offered at meetings. Thus, gradually, the ideas embodied in the hymn become part of our mental processes. Familiarity breeds acceptance. The net result is that many Christadelphians regularly sing hymns and offer prayers containing sentiments and petitions that are an integral part of "another gospel" (Gal 1:6-8). In many quarters this has eventuated in the acceptance of that gospel.

The following specimen unequivocally exhibits a number of the common errors:

⁵ *The Bible Student*, vol. 5, p. 198. Quoted by Bro Alec Crawford in *The Spirit: A General Exposition on New Testament Usage*, p 23.

Christ, whose glory fills the skies,
 Christ, the true, the only Light,
 Sun of Righteousness, arise,
 Triumph o'er the shades of night:
 Dayspring from on high, be near:
 Daystar, in my heart appear.

Dark and cheerless is the morn
 Unaccompanied by thee:
 Joyless is the day's return,
Till thy mercy's beams I see;
Till they inward light impart,
Glad my eyes and warm my heart.

Visit then this soul of mine,
Pierce the gloom of sin and grief;
Fill me, radiance divine,
Scatter all my unbelief;
More and more thyself display,
Shining to the perfect day.

There is no ambiguity about the teaching of this hymn. It constitutes a request for “beams” sent from Christ imparting “inward light”, in-working pleasant emotions and a appeal for Christ to “visit” the heart and mind to “fill” the suppliant with a ‘divine radiance’ which will dispelling unbelief, sin and grief. This divine influence will manifest itself in greater intensity as time passes right up to a point styled “the perfect day”. Examples of such blatantly doctrinally unsound hymns in the 2002 hymnbook could be multiplied.⁷ The issue cannot be dismissed by stating that preference/dislike for certain hymns is a purely subjective affair. While this may be a valid concept in other contexts, the hymns criticised stand in diametric opposition to the Truth. Ecclesias currently employing the either the 1964 or 2002 Hymn Books should exercise great care in the choice of hymns, for it is a melangé of Truth and error; truly, “*there is death in the pot*” (2 Kings 4:40). Only hymns firmly based on passages of Scripture or faithfully reflecting the sentiments thereof should be upon the lips of the Covenant people.

Exacerbating the problem are a number of publications containing fundamentally unsound teaching on the Holy Spirit in circulation among us, authored by prominent, respected brethren. Such works include, *Peter: Fisher of Men* by Alfred Norris (chapter 20) (published by the CMPA and currently sold by *The Christadelphian Office*), *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles* by Harry Whittaker, and *James and Other Studies* by Duncan Heaster.⁸ It should be remembered that sundry other works containing doctrinal poison, though ‘out of print’, are

⁶ Hymn numbers correspond to the 2002 *Hymn Book*

⁷ Numbers 135, 137, 139, 150, 152, 153, 156, 163, 165, 170, 173, 185, 199, 203, 205, 208, 209, 240 fall into this category.

⁸ See previous article, pp. 13-14.

exhibited on the Internet, and are thus freely accessible, exerting a pernicious influence upon brethren and sisters.

EDITORIAL DILUTIONS

It is sobering to realise that robust, Scripturally sound exposition of the Holy Spirit contained in a number of key publications has over the years been editorially diluted, thus leaving the proverbial door open for the currency of deviant views on the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer. The following comparative tabulation details some of the evidence.

Christendom Astray

Brother Roberts comments upon the development of the spiritual mindedness:

1884 Edition, p.149	1951 Edition, p.86
“In this work, the Spirit has no participation, except in the shape of the written word. ”	“In this work, the Spirit operates through <i>the written word.</i> ”

The shift of emphasis is striking. While the revised statement expresses truth, the door has been opened for brethren to advance theories on the direct operation of the Spirit *outside* of the written Word. The question must be asked: Why was it felt that this alteration was necessary? Were brother Roberts’ beliefs no longer palatable? We note that no acknowledgement is made in the publication of this alteration.

The Declaration:

Original	1974 Revised Edition
“ <i>The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God in special manifestation. This is a mode of description almost peculiar to the New Testament. ... The foregoing testimonies make plain the New Testament meaning of being baptized with the Holy Spirit, which is a very different meaning from that attached to it by professors of popular theology. It means an immersion or enswathement in spirit power, conferring miraculous gift. No baptism of the Holy Spirit now takes place. All that can be done is to preach the Word, and this having been given through the agency of the Spirit, working in ancient prophets and apostles, is the Spirit’s instrument – the Spirit’s sword, by which the Spirit makes war on the natural mind, and hews it into the similitude of the mind of the Spirit.</i> ”	“ <i>The Holy Spirit is the same power of God directed to fulfil any special purpose, as in His redeeming work. Thus by the Holy Spirit God’s revelation was made through the prophets: by the Holy Spirit Jesus was begotten and enabled to do his mighty works and speak the Father’s words: by it the apostles were guided into all truth and were able to attest their message by wonderful works. Special gifts of the Holy Spirit were granted in the early church, and by the Holy Spirit God dwelt among the believers.</i> ”

The same obtains here. A lucid definition of the operation of the Holy Spirit, refuting the notions of moral regeneration and strength via an unperceived divine influence is excised and replaced with generality. We ask the question, What motive has been driving this revisionism?

A CORRUPT TREE BRINGETH FORTH EVIL FRUIT

Isolating, exposing and refuting the ideas gaining ground in the Brotherhood is not merely an academic exercise, it is spiritually imperative: there is an intensely practical objective. Our perception of what the God-given agent of moral fortification and guidance is will directly impact upon our spiritual welfare. It is in examining the corollaries of this evangelical doctrine that its vileness is fully manifest. It diminishes ones dependence upon the written Word as the source of strength, guidance, wisdom unto salvation, doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness, making the man of God complete and throughly furnished unto all good works (1 Jn 2:14; 3:9; Psalm 17:4; 43:3; 73:24; 119:24, 105; Prov 6:20-23; 2 Tim 3:15-17). The Bible teaches that is the **only** source available for such help in living the Truth. To lessen ones application of the mind to the Word, relying upon a non-existent invisible divine influence to perform such tasks is tantamount to spiritual suicide. This baneful doctrine renders nugatory the need to strive against sin by learning and obeying the commandments of Almighty God (Ps 119:11). It leaves the proponent the prey of his imagination for spiritual direction, believing that the choices he makes *must* be God's will because he has prayed for guidance, when in reality the written Word is the only lamp to his feet and light to his path (Psalm 119:105). Instead of being led by the Spirit (via the Word), he will be led by the Flesh (Rom 8:1, 14). Thus by its fruits it is known (Matt 7:15-20). Masquerading as a benevolent father liberally bestowing loves and fishes to feed his hungry children, it is found, when scrutinised by the light of Scripture, to be a murderer, dispensing nothing but stones, which cannot sustain or strengthen the inner man, and venomous serpents which will bite him to death at the last (Matt 7:9-11). However, this false doctrine inevitably finds wide acceptance since it is pleasing to the flesh; it obviates the need to labour in beating out the oil of the Word for consumption in the mental lamp (Lev 24:2), enabling the radiation of the light of the attributes of the Deity. It is by this oil, that the children of light (Eph 5:8) manifest the character of the Father of lights (James 1:18; 1 Jno 1:5).

As has been demonstrated, a distinctive hallmark of this false doctrine is the minimisation of the providential role of the holy angels in the lives of the saints, almost to the point of regarding their ministry a superfluity.⁹ This chimes in with the nigh-ubiquitous neglect of studying Bible prophecy, which focuses attention upon the signs in the political firmament, brought about by angelic manipulation of circumstance in the Kingdom of Men (Dan 4; 10:20-11:1; Prov 21:1). When the Ecclesia ceases to be

⁹ It was with horror that the present writer heard a respected senior speaking brother, presiding over a young persons' study group, nonchalantly state, "We don't really know how God works in our lives, so we tend to put it into the lap of the angels".

interested in latter-day prophecy and fervently monitor the signs of the times (Apoc 16:15), it inevitably becomes inward looking and absorbed with the here-and-now. Thus the soil is fertile for the implantation and germination of the false doctrine that, in some sense, the Kingdom of God has a present existence/aspect as a state of grace in men's hearts. Lamentably, this noxious weed is thriving in some quarters of the Brotherhood. Without contradiction, "where there is no vision the people perish" (Prov. 29:18).

THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER

Guidance and spiritual strength *are* available if we will but avail ourselves of them by persistent and diligent study and meditation upon the written Word. Moreover, if we faithfully apply our hearts unto wisdom and strive to implement the principles we have learnt from Scripture in daily life we can be sure that the angelic ministers (Heb 1:14) will be active in shaping the circumstances of our lives for our eternal benefit, in chastisement and encouragement (Ps 119:67,71; Heb 12:5-11).¹⁰ Let us give diligence to that end.

True Christadelphians believe that: "*Salvation depends upon the assimilation of the mind to the divine ideas, principles and affections, exhibited in the Scriptures. This process commences with a belief of the Gospel, but it is by no means completed thereby; it takes a life-time for its scope, and untiring diligence for its accomplishment. The mind cannot be brought at once to the Divine Likeness. This is a work of slow development, and can only be achieved by the industrious application of the individual to the means which God has given for the purpose; viz., the expression of His mind in the Scriptures of Truth. Spiritual-mindedness or a state of mind in accordance with the mind of the Spirit as displayed in these writings, can only grow within a man by daily intercourse with that mind, there unfolded. Away from this, the mind will revert to its original emptiness. The infallible advice, then, to every man and woman anxious about their salvation is – **read the Scriptures daily.** It is only in proportion as this is done, that success may be looked for. The man who sows sparingly in this respect will only reap sparingly. Much spiritual fructification is only to be realised in connection with the fructifying influences of the Spirit in the Word.*"¹¹ There is no middle ground. Let us not pray "as the heathen do" (Matt 6:7).

Paul Moore

¹⁰ See *The Ways of Providence* by Brother Robert Roberts for lucid exposition of these concepts and illustration thereof in Scripture history.

¹¹ Brother Roberts, Preface to *The Bible Companion*.

END NOTES

^A See, for example, Dr Thomas: "Ye are clean", said Jesus to his disciples, "through *the word* which I have spoken to you" (Jn 15:3). This word, which is defined to be "the law and the testimony" (Isa. 8:20), is the great instrument of holiness and purification. It changes men's minds; loosens their attachment to earthly things; causes them to place their affection on things above; creates a new and right spirit within them; diffuses the love of God abroad in their hearts; separates them from sinners; leads them into Christ; and develops in their lives, fruit, characteristic of that repentance which needs not to be repented of. . It is by this word that an individual is renewed or renovated; so as, in an intellectual and moral sense, to become a "new man"; as appears from what the apostle says to the brethren at Colosse: "Ye have put on the new man, which is *renewed by knowledge* (Col. 3:10) after the image of Him that created him." This renewing affects the spirit of the mind (Eph. 4:23-24), which may be known to be renovated, by a man having turned from his natural subserviency to "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life", to "righteousness and *true holiness*." When the mental disposition called "the heart" is renewed, it becomes a mirror, as it were, in which one skilled in the word of the kingdom, can discern the spirit or behold a reflection of the Divine Nature. This image of God in a man's character can only be created by the word of the truth of the gospel of the kingdom. . . . Now, the "testimony of God" came by the Holy Spirit, by which God testified in His prophets (Neh. 9:30); and, in the last days, spoke through His son (Heb. 1:1-2; Jn. 3:34; 5:47; 6:63; 7:16; 12:48-49) and the apostles (Matt. 10:19-20). Hence, the effects of the word believed are attributed to the spirit; and because the word sets men to breathing in God's moral atmosphere, it is termed "spirit and life". These remarks will explain the saying of the apostle to Titus, "according to His mercy God saved us through the laver of regeneration, and *renewal of the Holy Spirit*" (Titus 3:5). This is parallel to the saying, "sanctified and cleansed in the laver of the water *by the word*" . . . when the heart is the subject of renewal, it is by the knowledge of the written testimony of God, or the word. . . . When a man is renewed by the truth, he is renewed by the spirit, and not before." (*Elpis Israel*, Part 1, chapter 2).

^B Such sentiments set forth a new process of salvation in opposition to that revealed in Scripture and believed by Christadelphians. The conversion of Lydia (Acts 16:13-15) has always been wrested by those who claim that a man cannot believe the Truth presented in the Word of God unless an invisible Spirit influence operates upon his mind first (styled 'Prevenient Grace' in theological discourse). In commenting upon this text Harry Whittaker wrote: "*There is no other passage in the whole Bible so explicit in its declaration of an unperceived guidance from God. Lydia has a Bible and a knowledge of the fundamentals of the Jewish faith. More than this, she now has access to the wisdom of the world's finest expositor of Holy Scripture [i.e. the apostle Paul]. But in addition the Lord opened her heart, that is ... her mind, so that there was eager attention to the message. ... It was only because of this divine influence that she gave heed to Paul's teaching.*" (My emphasis) (*Studies in the Acts of the*

Apostles p. 243). Not only does this contradict the BASF (see *Doctrines to be Rejected* No. 25), it makes an absolute mockery of the salvation process, robbing Lydia of free will and showing contempt for the power of the Word of God (Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 1:18). Contrast this with the Christadelphian position: “*The scrutiny of testimony, and a conviction that it is true, is faith; and that faith so operated is the Lord’s “putting his laws into our minds, and inscribing them upon our hearts”; it is in this way, by the testimony of the Holy Spirit, written or spoken, that the world is “convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgement”; and he who believes what is written, and obeys, may say with the Apostle, “We are built on the testimony of Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the foundation corner stone”. Faith, then, results from the examination of testimony; not an infusion, and therefore, not wrought in the heart by any supernatural and indefinable process. Those who profess to have been the subject of this process are credulous, and their theological system superstition*” (Dr Thomas, *The Apostolic Advocate*, 1835). For a Scripturally sound exposition of the conversion of Lydia see, *Faith and Conversion* by bro. John Allfree, pp. 6-9 and [The Origin of the Ecclesia in Thyatira](#) in *Eureka* vol. 1, chapter 3, section 4, by Dr Thomas.

Appendix

GOD IN THE BELIEVER'S LIFE – A SUMMARY

The following statement sets out Biblical teaching, in its positive and negative aspects. It is the Christadelphian position.

POSITIVE

1. The foundation of belief is the Scripture written by the agency of the Holy Spirit, and therefore an infallible and truthful guide.
2. This Scripture is the written record of the things God has done for our salvation, instructions as to how avail ourselves of that salvation, and prophecy showing how that salvation will ultimately be brought about.
3. The Scripture is the voice of God and His Son, and as such is powerful to change the characters of those who come to it with an honest heart.
4. It does not, however, reveal its secrets to those who are not prepared to read it in its natural sense. Those who expect hidden meanings to be divinely revealed will 'receive' varied and often extraordinary interpretations not obvious to a reasoned study.
5. Christ is formed in us through a careful reading of the record about him, and through keeping his commandments. In this way we can understand his character, his words and his works and so come to grow more like him. He dwells in our hearts by faith, i.e. through our belief in the things concerning him.
6. Of great importance in the altering of our characters is the knowledge that Christ will return bodily to the earth. Until that time we are guided as to right and wrong only by the Word.
7. We are, however, under the control and guidance of angels, who watch providentially over the lives of all believers, and control the circumstances of their lives. But within that framework of angelic control we are left to ourselves (with help and guidance from the Word) to deal with the situation.

NEGATIVE

SCRIPTURE DOES **NOT** TEACH THAT:-

1. There is a divine influence which, entering into our hearts, causes us to understand Scripture.
2. There is any influence received direct from God which improves a believer's character, or helps him to overcome sin.
3. Men are unable to do good even when they accept the Scripture until the Holy Spirit has acted upon them.
4. Men in our age receive the Holy Spirit directly, as in the First Century, either:-
 - (a) before they can repent
 - (b) after they repent
 - (c) when they are baptised
 - (d) when they are converted
 - (e) whenever they pray for it.

RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING:

John Allfree

Faith and Conversion, Bible Study Publications. Available from 1 Penrith Place, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, NG19 6NE.

John Allfree, Geoff & Ray Walker

Bible Teaching about the Holy Spirit, Bible Student Press. Available from 44 Colindeep Lane, Sprowston, Norwich, NR7 8EQ.

Reg Carr, Edward Whittaker

'Spirit' in the New Testament, The Testimony.

Aleck Crawford

The Spirit, Logos Publications.

Stephen Green

The Work of God on Men's Hearts, Bible Student Press. Available from 44 Colindeep Lane, Sprowston, Norwich, NR7 8EQ.

Stephen Palmer

Do We Need the Spirit to Understand the Bible?, *The Christadelphian*, January 1992, p. 15.

Graham Pearce

The Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit Gifts, Logos Publications.

Robert Roberts

Christendom Astray, Chapter 6, Logos Publications.

The Ways of Providence, CMPA.

John Thomas

Clerical Theology Unscriptural, Logos Publications.