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A Study of the Christian Doctrine of Assurance

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A STUDY OF THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF ASSURANCE

by

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

A. Statement of the Problem

The problem was to present a clear study of the nature, evidences, and validity of the witness of God's Spirit to regeneration and to entire sanctification. It was the writer's purpose to discover and report the conditions which man must meet before the Holy Spirit will come to witness in any degree at all, and before He will come and abide. It was felt that such a study should include the manner in which the witness of the Holy Spirit comes, the time at which it comes, the type of witness it is, its relation to the witness of man's spirit, and its relation to future security. Further, the writer has sought to meet the problem of a Scriptural basis for belief in the witness, and to distinguish between the true witness of the Spirit and presumption, the true witness of the Spirit and delusion, and the true witness of the Spirit and conscience. Thus, the problem may be stated: to find and report the Scriptural and theological ground for a sound doctrine of assurance, and the factors involved in bringing assurance of regeneration and assurance of entire sanctification to the soul.

B. Justification of the Study

The writer has found in his experience that though there has been much written upon the subjects of regeneration and entire sanctification, some people never receive a clear witness of the Spirit to

either work. And he has found that this situation exists because they do not understand the conditions upon which God's Spirit comes or abides; and so they have allowed the problem to vanquish their confidence that one may know if and when he is saved. Persons raised in the writer's own home church have questioned whether there is a Scriptural basis for belief in the witness, or whether one is not presumptuous or deceived if he claims to have this witness. The statement, "We will be saved if we do our best according to our conscience" has been heard frequently, and the writer has seen that discouragement, confusion, and dismay are often the result of such a philosophy.

Thus, it has been the purpose of this study to present sure grounds for Christian assurance that will establish seekers in the faith, and clear up any misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the Scripture. Those who believe the Scriptures to be God's Word do not doubt the importance of the truth of the Spirit's witness. The witness of the Spirit is revealed in the Bible expressly, solemnly and purposely, as one of the peculiar privileges of the children of God!

C. Objectives

It was the primary purpose of this study to try to determine clearly and accurately what is the true Scriptural and theological teaching concerning the witness of the Spirit. The general objective was to answer the questions commonly asked concerning the assurance of salvation and of entire sanctification for the soul, and thereby to establish the seekers in the faith. Specific object-

ives were the following:

1. To discuss the meaning, reality, psychology, and sources of assurance of sonship.
2. To describe the witness of God's Spirit, the Scriptural basis for the witness of God's Spirit, and the reasons for losing the witness of God's Spirit.
3. To show the direct and indirect witnessing of God's Spirit, or the relation between the witness of God's Spirit and the witness of man's spirit.
4. To distinguish between the true witness of the Spirit and presumption, the true witness of the Spirit and delusion, and the true witness of the Spirit and conscience.

D. Definition of Terms

The following terms have been used throughout the thesis in the sense in which they are defined below.

1. Salvation. According to Amos Binney, "By salvation is meant man's deliverance from the penalty, dominion, and pollution of his sins, his introduction into the divine favor in this life, and his eternal felicity in another."¹

2. Assurance. According to John Wiley, by assurance is meant "the persuasion or confidence of a believer in Christ that he is a child of God."²

3. The witness of the Holy Spirit. According to Amos Binney, by the witness of the Holy Spirit is meant "the testimony of the Holy Spirit to the spirit of believers of their sonship and acceptance with God."³

4. Justification. According to Amos Binney, by justification is meant, "the acceptance of one, by God, who is, and who confesses himself to be guilty, and who repents and believes in Jesus Christ."⁴

5. Regeneration. According to Amos Binney, regeneration is "that work of the Holy Spirit by which we experience a change of heart; the recovery upon the heart of the moral image of God."⁵

6. Adoption. Amos Binney gave the following definition of adoption:

This is an act by which one takes another into his family, owns him for his son, and appoints him his heir.

In a theological sense, it is that act of God's free grace by which, upon our being justified and renewed through faith in Christ, we are received into the family of God, called His children, and made heirs to the heavenly inheritance.⁶

7. Entire sanctification. Amos Binney gave the following definition of entire sanctification:

Entire sanctification is that participation of the Divine nature which excludes all original depravity or inbred sin from the heart, and fills it with perfect love to God and man - perfect love, the unction of the Holy One, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost.⁷

E. Limitations and Method of Procedure

Limitations. This was not a complete study of the subjects of justification, regeneration, adoption, and entire sanctification, but was limited to their relationship to the witness of the Spirit in His office of assurance.

Method of Procedure. Because this was a doctrinal study based on Scripture, the first step was to study the Biblical statements concerning the witness of the Spirit in giving assurance, especially those found in the New Testament and particularly in the writings of John the Apostle. A special study of important passages was made in the Greek New Testament for a more accurate interpretation, but the American Standard Version of the Bible of 1901 has been used primarily. Whenever another version was used this deviation was clearly indicated.

Further material was gathered through a study of writings of various Bible scholars concerning the witness of the Spirit. All the theological books available which contained any chapters or sections dealing with this problem were listed. In the study of the chapters and sections, special attention was given to the Scripture passages used, and to comments on these passages. Where an interpretation seemed inconsistent with the meaning of the passage, or with Biblical teaching as a whole, the inconsistency was noted.

In the theological study of the problem of assurance, the main extra-Biblical sources used were early Methodist writers. According to Dr. Eldon Fuhrman, the three main views of early Methodism were the doctrine of regeneration, Christian perfection, and the witness of the Spirit; and these views were largely proclaimed by Wesleyan writers.⁸ The two non-Methodist writers used were W. E. Biederwolf and A. J. Gordon.

The reception of the doctrine of assurance was a problem of John Wesley's day. He stated that fanatical men were claiming the voice of their own imaginations as the witness of the Spirit, while others

questioned whether the witness of the Spirit is the privilege of ordinary Christians at all. And still others formed such an idea of His presence within, that they could not perceive His witness, since it did not measure up to their expectations.⁹ Therefore, Wesley wrote much concerning the witness of the Spirit, and his writings and the writings of other Methodists presented much material for use in this thesis.

Very important help was obtained throughout the study from the faculty members of the Western Evangelical Seminary through class lectures and personal interviews.

F. Organization of the Thesis

In chapter two, the main body of the thesis was begun with a discussion of the meaning of assurance of sonship, in its relation to justification, regeneration, adoption, and to entire sanctification. The psychology of Christian assurance, the reality of assurance, and the sources of this assurance were set forth, in order to provide a sound foundation for the later discussion of the Spirit's witness.

In chapter three was discussed the witness of God's Spirit in relation to the type and time of His witness, and the conditions for His witness. Further, the extent and manner of His witness were dealt with, along with reasons for the individual's failure to keep His witness.

The question, "Is the witness of God's Spirit direct or indirect?" was answered in chapter four; and the relation between the witness of God's Spirit and the witness of man's spirit, and the witness of God's Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit was shown.

In chapter five the relationship between the witness of God's Spirit and presumption, the witness of God's Spirit and the delusion of the devil, and the witness of God's Spirit and conscience was set forth.

The summary and conclusions were given in chapter six.

CHAPTER II

ASSURANCE OF SONSHIP

Since the witness of the Spirit has as its end a definite assurance, it seemed fitting that the writing of this paper begin with a clear explanation of the term. This explanation includes the meaning of assurance in its relationship to justification, regeneration, adoption, and entire sanctification. Further, the reality of Christian assurance, the psychological basis of Christian assurance, and the sources of assurance have been included. It was hoped that this brief survey might form a foundation for the later discussion of the Spirit's witness itself.

A. Meaning of Assurance

John Miley defined assurance as "the persuasion or confidence of a believer in Christ that he is a child of God."¹⁰ And he went on to say that assurance of reconciliation with God, especially in its Christian form, is the privilege only of believers in Christ; the matter of assurance is definitely that of sonship.¹¹ This is especially true as it respects the assurance received from the witness of the Holy Spirit. The evidences of this assurance were found to be the following: "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God" (Romans 8:16). "And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6). "But we received, not the spirit of the world, but

the spirit which is from God: that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God" (I Corinthians 2:12). These are the classical texts on the witness of the Spirit, and are in themselves entirely sufficient for the present point. Justification and regeneration are closely related to this sonship. H. Orton Wiley stated:

We may say, then, that Christian righteousness and Christian sonship, involving justification, regeneration, adoption, and initial sanctification, are concomitant in personal experience, that is, they are offered as inseparable blessings and occur at the same time. The regenerate man is justified, and the justified man is regenerated. The terms are not, however, synonymous, and in the development of theological thought gradually became more sharply defined - justification being limited to a change in relations, and regeneration to a change in the moral state.¹²

Thus, regeneration and adoption are actually more nearly correlative than regeneration and justification. Regeneration describes sonship in its filial character, while adoption describes it as a filial privilege. The terms are united in sonship, but are not related as cause and effect.

Justification. Justification is a term which has been variously defined. According to Arminius it is

. . . a just and gracious act of God by which, from the throne of His grace and mercy, He absolves from his sins man, who is a sinner but who is a believer, on account of Christ, and His obedience and righteousness, and considers him righteous to the salvation of the justified person, and to the glory of the divine righteousness and grace.¹³

John Wesley defined justification as:

. . . that act of God the Father, whereby, for the sake of the propitiation made by the blood of His Son, He sheweth forth His right-

eousness (or mercy) by the remission of the sins that are past.¹⁴

Wakefield quoted favorably the definition of Dr. Schmucker, that

Justification is that judicial act of God by which a believing sinner, in consideration of the merits of Christ, is released from the penalty of the law, and is declared entitled to heaven.¹⁵

Article IX of the Articles of Faith of the Church of the Nazarene is definitive in nature, though intended primarily as a statement of belief:

We believe that justification is that gracious and judicial act of God, by which He grants full pardon of all guilt and complete release from the penalty of sins committed, and acceptance as righteous, to all who believingly receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.¹⁶

These various aspects of truth may now be summed up and expressed in Wiley's definition:

Justification is that judicial or declarative act of God, by which He pronounces those who believingly accept the propitiatory offering of Christ, as absolved from their sins, released from their penalty, and accepted as righteous before Him.¹⁷

Regeneration. The term "regeneration" is derived from the Greek word *παλιγγενεσία* (palingenesia) or *παλιγενεσία* which is compounded of *πάλιν* ("again") and *γένεσις* ("birth"), so that the word literally means "born again" ("the again birth"). Thus it is understood as a "reproduction" or a "restoration". It can then be applied to the moral change set forth in the Scriptures as "born again" (John 3:3,5,7; I Peter 1:23); "Born of God" (John 1:13; I John 3:9; 4:7; 5:1,14,18); "born of the Spirit" (John 3:5,6);

"quicken" (Ephesians 2:1,5; Colossians 2:13); and "passed from death unto life" (John 5:24; I John 3:14). Man is renewed or created anew in regeneration, that he might have the subsequent knowledge and assurance of righteousness and holiness.

John Wesley, in his Sermon on the New Birth, defined regeneration as:

That great change which God works in the soul when He brings it into life; when He raises it from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. It is the change wrought in the whole soul by the Almighty Spirit of God when it is renewed after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness.¹⁸

Dr. Wiley gives us a very simple definition in the sentence, "Regeneration is the communication of life by the Spirit, to a soul dead in trespasses and sins."¹⁹ It is, he says, a work wrought by the Holy Spirit in men's souls, when they repent and believe. It is therefore a moral change in man's moral and spiritual nature. Further, the whole man, not merely certain powers of his being, is spiritually renewed.²⁰ Regeneration is a complete work, perfect in its kind, and concomitant in experience with justification and adoption.

Bishop Merrill said that the outward manifestation of regeneration affects the consciousness and comes necessarily from the Holy Spirit, with immediate impressions. The inward manifestation of regeneration is God speaking to the soul by an inward voice heard in the individual's consciousness. God reveals Himself by the Spirit of sonship which He gives; and He also confirms this inward witness by the fruits of the Spirit in men's hearts and lives.²¹ Thus, the new heart has new and holy affections and emotions, and the mind, observing

these fruits, realizes that a change has been made.

Along with the subjects of justification and regeneration, the subject of adoption has also been considered. It is a large, comprehensive blessing concomitant with justification.

Adoption. Dr. H. Orton Wiley defined adoption thus:

Adoption is the declaratory act of God, by which upon being justified by faith in Jesus Christ, we are received into the family of God, and reinstated in the privileges of sonship.²²

Reverend Amos Binney gave a more lengthy definition:

This is an act by which one takes another into his family, owns him for his son, and appoints him his heir.

In a theological sense, it is that act of God's free grace by which, upon our being justified and renewed through faith in Christ, we are received into the family of God, called his children, and made heirs to the heavenly inheritance.²³

Ephesians 1:3-14 and I Peter 1:2-5 bear out this definition.

Sonship is attained by the "new creation", by being "born again" into the family of God, "born of the Spirit". This is the adoption. Said Merrill, "It has redemption beneath it, and divine life in it."²⁴

Adoption, as previously indicated, is concomitant with justification and regeneration, but in the order of thought, logically follows them. Wiley stated, "Justification removes our guilt, regeneration imparts spiritual life, and adoption actually receives us into the family of God."²⁵ The subject of adoption has been treated under the two following heads: 1., The Nature of Adoption, and 2., The Evidence of Adoption.

1. The Nature of Adoption. Adoption is the receiving of a stranger into a family, and the giving, to him, of all the blessings and privileges which belong to the legal, natural children. Children have thus been adopted in all ages and probably in all nations. Samuel Wakefield related that among the Romans adoption consisted in buying the child to be adopted from his parents for a certain amount of money. The parties appeared before the magistrate and five Roman citizens. The adopting father said to the child, "Art thou willing to become my son?" to which the child would answer, "I am". Then the adopter took hold of the child, saying, "I declare this child to be mine according to Roman law, and he is bought with this money," which was given to the father as the price of the boy. Thus, the son legally entered into the family of his new father, assumed his name, became subject to his authority, and was made heir to the inheritance, or to a share of it if there were any other sons.²⁶ In the same way men are acknowledged to be the children of God.

Adoption, like justification, is a relative change, a passing from darkness to the kingdom of light. But adoption means something more than the pardon of sin, which is the main thought in justification. It is God graciously receiving those who become justified and regenerated, and it is His acknowledgement that they are His people and He is their God.

The term "adoption" is applied to the Israelites as a whole, "to whom", says Paul, "pertaineth the adoption" (Romans 9:4), because God had acknowledged them to be His children and had entered into a covenant with them; but in its fullest meaning it is applied to believers in

Christ. "God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Galatians 4:4,5). Those who are so adopted are "no more strangers and sojourners, but . . . fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19).

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and on their heart also will I write them: And I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people" (Hebrews 8:10).

As in civil adoption the adopted son belongs originally to a different family, so mankind are by nature strangers to the family of God. They are "aliens from the common-wealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12). Unbelievers and sinners are of their father the devil, and they must renounce him before God can be their Father.

As in civil adoption the consent of the person to be adopted was demanded and publicly expressed, so in spiritual adoption men must personally accept it, with justifying faith. "As many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12).

2. The Evidence of Adoption. If it is admitted that man is justified, reconciled to God, and adopted into His family, upon repentance and faith toward Christ, it must also be admitted that man is left unaware of God's gracious act, or else that he will somehow know it. If the man that deeply and genuinely repents cannot know whether or not God forgives and receives Him, He will always be doubtful, fearful, and

despairing. Then Christianity can offer no comfort, joy, or liberty. But Wakefield stated that this conclusion contradicts all theologians of all Churches, and most of all, contradicts the Scripture.²⁷

Then how does man know when he is justified, regenerated, and adopted? The Bible teaches that God's children have an inward witness or testimony from the Holy Spirit to their adoption or sonship, and that this witness brings conviction or assurance that they are pleasing in God's sight.

For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God (Romans 8:15,16).

but when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father (Galatians 4:4-6).

The Spirit here spoken of is not merely a personified spirit or the genius of the Gospel, but the Spirit of God sent forth into men's hearts when they are redeemed from the curse of the law. He removes the fear caused by the "spirit of bondage" and directly testifies to their adoption, that they are the children of God. No wonder John the Apostle exclaimed, "Behold, what manner of love the father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God" (1 John 3:1).

Entire sanctification. Those who have been born of the Spirit become candidates for His baptism, for through Him men are to be blessed with "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in

Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). Entire sanctification means the transfer of holiness from God to man. It includes man's consecration or dedication of himself to God and His will, and God's act of accepting all of man and filling him with His Spirit, thus cleansing him from all sin and empowering him for service. Perfect love is completely fulfilled in the mind of the sanctified man, for he is led of God. Regeneration is referred to as initial sanctification, for the regenerated man is forgiven for, and cleansed from his past sin, being made a "new creature" in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17). Sanctification, then, should be referred to as entire sanctification, for it is the completion of God's whole work of grace.

Entire sanctification is an experience which sinners cannot obtain. Charles Ewing Brown stated:

In every one of these instances [of baptism with the Holy Spirit, as reported in the Scripture,] there is reasonable evidence that the persons thus baptised with the Holy Spirit were previously converted - were truly regenerate believers. Concerning the disciples before the day of Pentecost, no man would need to fear judgment with even less assurance of justification than they enjoyed. They were sons of God . . . acknowledged as saved by Christ: 'Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. I am the vine, ye are the branches' (John 15:3,5).²⁸

The disciples were in Christ, then; and the Scripture says, "Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature" (II Corinthians 5:17). Brown confirmed this point: "It is certainly straining a point to say that men called and sent by Christ to preach and cast out devils were not even converted themselves."²⁹

Yet it can be seen that even in the lives of these men who

had walked the closest to Jesus and had heard His words and had been taught by Him, salvation or regeneration alone was not enough. For they were fearful. They were fearful when Christ walked on the water (John 6:19), fearful when the sea became tempestuous (Matthew 8:26), and fearful when the soldiers came to take Jesus (Mark 14:50). Yet the apostle John, after he had been perfected in love by the baptism of the Spirit, wrote, "There is no fear in love: but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment; and he that feareth is not made perfect in love" (I John 4:18).

And so Christ prayed that these men might be entirely sanctified:

I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me; for they are thine: Sanctify them [or, as the Greek translates it, 'make them holy'] through thy truth: thy word is truth (John 17:9, 17).

And Christ sent the Comforter to them - and not to them only, but unto all believers in Him.

I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you (John 14:16,17,26; 16:7).

The Holy Spirit witnesses to the work of entire sanctification in the soul just as certainly as He does to the work of adoption. Thus, there is as great an assurance of this second work as there is of the first. Brown asserted:

We believe completely . . . that salvation consists of two crises; first, regeneration; and second, an anointing of the Spirit. . . . we believe that these experiences must be more than formal ceremonies and must be guaranteed by something more definite than the ritual of the church, namely, by the witness of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the seeker.³⁰

Effects resulting from entire sanctification, other than those of power, peace, and a holy separateness from the world, are a fixed assurance of one's acceptance in Christ, and evangelistic fervor. For "we speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen" (John 3:11).

Entire sanctification is in itself a large subject. It has therefore been referred to throughout this thesis only in its relation to the witness of the Spirit, or the doctrine of assurance. It has been shown, in chapters three and four, that the full consecration of man, and his sanctification has great effect on the witness of God's Spirit in its constancy and degree, and on the fruits of the Spirit which confirm the first witness.

According to Miley, assurance is like faith, but is actually the resulting persuasion of truth in what is believed. This persuasion can be as real and clear as was the definite act of faith which came first.³¹ Thus, the assurance of sonship is such a form of confidence. It is from the witness of man's spirit and so springs from an appropriate testimony, partaking of the nature of faith. And though the witness of God's Spirit is given in a different manner, it produces the same kind of assurance.

B. Reality of Assurance

The reality of assurance has received its clearest and fullest presentation in the chapter on the witness of God's Spirit and the witness of man's spirit. But here attention has been called to a few facts which combine in the proof of such a privilege.

As already shown, the matter of assurance is that of a state of salvation attainable through justification and regeneration, whereby man becomes a child of God. It is not reasonable that such an attainment should be hidden from man. If God forgives man's sins He will in some way assure him of the fact. Miley pointed out that when a criminal is pardoned, he is told of it; will not God then tell man when his sins are forgiven? Whenever Christ said, "Thy sins are forgiven thee" (Mark 2:5), He made known two acts. One was the act of pardon within His own mind; the other was an act of making the pardon known to the one to be forgiven. The first act would have been complete without the second, but the second naturally followed. It would not be like Jesus to hold back the assurance of forgiveness, and God is just as merciful. And man is just as in need of the information!³²

In the discussion of regeneration, the mighty change wrought within man at the new birth was set forth. The love of God replaces enmity; instead of condemnation there is peace with God; and the fruits of the Spirit replace the works of the flesh. Such a life of love toward God and man cannot be hid from man's personal consciousness, for it is in the nature of such a life to make itself known to him. And hence he would be assured of its possession. "He that believeth on the

Son of God hath the witness in himself" (I John 5:10,A.V.) - that the record which God has given of His Son is true. Walker declared that the form of this testimony is obvious. The mental exercises, - the hopes, fears, interests, states of mind, which those had who believed the truth in the apostolic age, are given in the New Testament. These exercises were produced by believing the truth as then revealed. And the Holy Spirit now gives the same truth to make the same promised state of mind in believers. The Christian knows that it is the same Spirit and the same truth that the apostles knew, because the same effects are produced in him, by the same cause. The promises of light, comfort, and strength which the Spirit gives are fulfilled, so that the Christian cannot doubt this assurance.³³

This is the assurance of the writer of Hebrews who said, "The Holy Spirit also beareth witness to us" (Hebrews 10:15). He based his words on the promise of the Old Testament, that in Christ's time the law should be written in the heart. This was fulfilled in him by the Spirit, and therefore he knew, by the highest of all evidence, that both the Old Testament promises and the New Testament experience were from God. And the presence of Christ by His Spirit is better evidence than was His presence by the pillar of cloud and fire. In the former, Christ is present to the soul, but in the latter only to the sense. Now "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Corinthians 4:6) is given unto us, through His Spirit.

Walker stated that the conscious testimony of the Holy Spirit is the only satisfactory evidence of faith in Christ. The external evidence of the truth of Christianity may convince the intelligence of some

men that the system has historical validity, but it will be true forever, that "no man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit" (I Corinthians 12:3).³⁴

The life of true assurance is possible, then. Man may know the "exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe" (Ephesians 1:19). This is salvation from doubt. Daniel Steele related that many testify today to this salvation as the blessed experience of years. Harassed and weakened by doubt they have opened the Bible and found the Promise of the Father, the Comforter who witnessed to the believer that he was saved. It is not surprising that many, believing the testimony of their brethren, are saying:

O, that I might at once go up;
No more on this side Jordan stop,
But now the land possess;
This moment end my legal years,
Sorrows and sins, and doubts, and fears,-
A howling wilderness.³⁵

Though it may be said that this salvation is only for those with whom faith is easy, it has been the purpose of this study to show that any who fully trust in Jesus may be lifted to the peak of assurance. Said Steele, "New Testament Christians abound in the joy of assurance as soon as they receive Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord."³⁶

C. Psychology of Assurance

The fact that Jesus lives and reigns over the believer rests on intuitive evidence. Dogmatic truths are not discovered in their abstract form, but they are concrete in Him, the Alpha and Omega. "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and

righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (I Corinthians 1:30).

Daniel Steele held that this intuitive truth stands all the criteria of primary truth, for to the believer it is incomprehensible, simple, necessary, certain, and universal. Of nothing is the mature believer, under the Holy Spirit, more certain, than that his Redeemer lives.³⁷

The writer has found many persons who feel that there is more room for doubt with respect to Christian experience than there is in the affairs of this life. But man can know God in Christ as he knows any facts in this world. Steele stated that:

The thoughtful believer is sometimes annoyed by the thought that God has nothing to do with inward religious emotions - that what seems to come from without, and to move so marvelously within the soul to assure of pardon and cleansing from sin, really arises from the hidden depths of our own mysterious nature while intently contemplating religious ideas, and that there is no manifestation of God at all as an objective existence. . . . But we may know that God manifests Himself in Christian experience by the testimony of our consciousness - the same testimony that assures us of the existence of the external world. . . . The soul illumined by the Holy Spirit is conscious, not only of its own subjective religious exercises, but of God, their external cause, impressing Himself mysteriously upon the Spirit. In other words, we may have, when our perceptions are quickened by the Holy Spirit, the same knowledge of God as we have of the external world.³⁸

And Steele quoted Pascal as saying, "The things of this world must be known in order to be loved, but Jesus Christ must be loved in order to be known."³⁹ This is only another form of the inspired words of John who taught that the heart is a faculty of knowledge: "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love" (I John 4:8). "The

love of Christ . . . passeth knowledge" (Ephesians 3:19).

D. Sources of Assurance

It has already appeared that there are two sources of assurance: the witness of the Holy Spirit, and the witness of one's own spirit. The fact of a witness of one's own spirit has been treated in chapter four. Sufficient proof exists for the witness of the Holy Spirit in the single text of Romans 8:16, and more still in other verses. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death" (Romans 8:2). Here the Spirit must mean, not the freedom given, but the Person Who gives it, ". . . if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you" (Romans 8:9b). This indwelling of the Spirit does not, cannot mean simply a spiritual state or disposition. It is in a far deeper sense of Scripture that Christians are "the temple of the Holy Spirit" (I Corinthians 6:19) and the "habitation of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:22). These facts must mean a personal presence or indwelling of the Holy Spirit. ". . . but ye received the spirit of adoption" (Romans 8:15). Here the spirit of adoption must mean, not the disposition of an adopted child, but the divine Spirit through whose agency we become the children of adoption. This meaning is thoroughly Scriptural, so that the words respecting the witness of the Spirit to our sonship must mean a distinct, direct witness of the Spirit Himself. The fact of such a witness of the Spirit will further appear in the treatment of His testimony in the next chapter.

This is not the only recorded instance of the personal agency of

the Holy Spirit. Doctor Miley stated that instances exist in the Scripture concerning the personality and divinity of the Spirit in the works of creation and providence, and especially in redemption. Through His personal agency men are born into God's kingdom and are made God's children. Therefore, the witness of the Spirit to one's sonship is an instance of His personal agency in perfect accord with His manifold offices in the work of redemption. The fact confirms the truth of His personal witnessing to adoption.⁴⁰

E. Summary

It was found that by assurance is meant the persuasion or confidence of a believer in Christ that he is a child of God. This assurance is not of the essence of justifying faith; the direct testimony or assurance of the Spirit to adoption follows justification and is one of its results. Justification removes guilt, regeneration imparts spiritual life, and adoption actually receives one into the family of God. It is this adoption to which the Spirit witnesses.

It was also found that those who have been born of the Spirit become candidates for baptism with the Holy Spirit, which is entire sanctification. The Holy Spirit witnesses to this work as well as to adoption.

The life of true assurance must be possible, for if God freely forgives man's sins, He will assure him of the fact; and so mighty a change as the new birth will surely make itself known. Any who fully trust in Jesus may have this assurance, and, under the full illumination of the Holy Spirit, know God in Him as they know any facts in this

world.

The sources of assurance are two-fold. The witness of the Holy Spirit and the witness of man's own spirit. Through the agency of the Holy Spirit, men are made children of God, and, therefore, His witness to it accords with His manifold offices in the work of man's redemption. This fact confirms the truth of His personal witnessing to man's adoption.

CHAPTER III

THE WITNESS OF GOD'S SPIRIT

This chapter has been organized into five main divisions dealing with the witness of God's Spirit to adoption and entire sanctification. Included in the first three divisions were definitions of the witness, names given to the witness, and the Scriptural basis for the witness. In the fourth section the nature of the witness was dealt with, showing that the witness is distinct, personal, immediate, variable and valid. An answer to the question, "Is the Spirit's witness constant or intermittent?" was given, including a discussion of eternal security. In the fifth division the manner of the witness was discussed. A summary of the chapter followed.

To the believer, the most important fact after adoption is the assurance given in God's Word that it is possible to receive from God a direct testimony to one's acceptance as a child. This testimony is hardly inferior to the adoption itself, because it brings comfort, joy, and strength against unbelief. In fact, adoption would lose much of its power as a doctrine if its existence as an experience were left to doubtful assumption. The relationship one has to God is something that he needs to know, so that he may presume that God has made some provision for such a conscious need. For God in His mercy has anticipated every real want of man's. And the provision for man's need of a witness to his adoption is found in the office and work of the Holy Spirit.

A. Definitions of the Witness

The following definitions of the witness of the Spirit have been cited, in order to clarify the subject under discussion.

Steele's Definition.

...the divine testimony in every normal religious experience, a simple, undoubted, satisfactory and sometimes very joyful assurance, like an intuition, by which we are notified as from some outer source, and made to feel that all is blessedly right between God and our own soul, that His wrath is turned away and He loves us. This comes in answer to the prayer of faith and in direction as if from the God to whom we pray and the Christ in whom we trust.⁴¹

Wesley's Definition.

...by the testimony of the Spirit, I mean, an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God immediately and directly witnesses to my spirit, that I am a child of God; that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me; that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God.⁴²

Wiley's Definition.

By the witness of the Spirit is meant that inward evidence of acceptance with God which the Holy Spirit reveals directly to the consciousness of the believer.⁴³

As has been pointed out in chapter two, the Spirit is not limited to the assurance of salvation, but witnesses also to subsequent entire sanctification.

What is the witness of the Spirit? The original word *μαρτυρία* (marturia) may be translated either (as it is in several places) the witness, or it may be given as the testimony, or the record. The last translation is given in I John 5:11, A.V., "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."

By "record" is meant the testimony, or the sum of what God testifies, in all the inspired writings. In this case it is given by the Spirit of God to and with man's spirit: God's Spirit is the Person testifying, and He testifies to man's sonship. The immediate result of this testimony is the fruit of the Spirit without which the testimony could not long endure. For, according to the Wesleyan viewpoint, the witness is inevitably destroyed by an inward or outward act of sin, a sin of omission of known duty, or by whatever grieves the Holy Spirit. In such an important matter then, the highest form of testimony to the salvation and entire sanctification of a soul is essential. If the Holy Spirit did not witness directly, the whole matter would be inference and darkness. But God, Who is Light, has given His Spirit that men may know the things which He has given them. Without this witness only doubts and fears could exist, but because of it there is fulfilled God's promise of a "peace that passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7) to guard men's hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus.

B. Names Given the Witness

Various names are given to the witness of the Holy Spirit according to the work of the Spirit, such as sealing of the Spirit, earnest of the Spirit, the Spirit of adoption, and full assurance.

The Holy Spirit is given to believers because they are sons, not to make them sons. He testifies to their sonship and acceptance with God after they have been born of the Spirit. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him" (1 John 5:10a). Thus, the witness of the Spirit is distinct from the work of the Spirit in

regeneration. It is something which is added to that work to make known in the heart the fact of its genuine presence. It is the approving "seal" which God places on His own; the "earnest" He gives them pledging the fulfillment of His covenant. "He has put his seal upon us and given us His Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee" (II Corinthians 1:22, R.S.V.). Merrill asserted that this sealing of the Spirit is the blessing of Abraham realized by faith; a comprehensive blessing which may be said to be the highest privilege of the regenerated this side of the resurrection of the dead.⁴⁴ "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed unto the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30).

In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1:13,14, R.S.V.).

Biederwolf pointed out that the allusion to the seal as a pledge of purchase would be peculiarly intelligible to the Ephesians, because Ephesus was a maritime city in which an extensive timber trade was carried on. After the merchant selected his timber, he stamped it with his own signet, an acknowledged sign of ownership. Often he did not take his possession with him then, but left it floating in the harbor with other timber. Then later he would send a trustworthy agent with the signet, and this agent would find the timber bearing a corresponding imprint, claim it, and bring it for his master's use.⁴⁵ In the same way the Holy Spirit impresses on the soul now the image of Jesus Christ, and this is the sure pledge of everlasting inheritance. And not only of inheritance, but it is also a pledge of the privilege

of being used of the Master.

Further, this witness is called the "Spirit of adoption" (Romans 8:15,16; Galatians 4:6), and it is called "full assurance".

that their hearts may be comforted, they being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, that they may know the mystery of God, even Christ (Colossians 2:2).

how that our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance (I Thessalonians 1:5).

let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience: and having our body washed with pure water (Hebrews 10:22).

"And we desire that each one of you may show the same diligence unto the full assurance even to the end" (Hebrews 6:11).

Further, Daniel Steel said that this witness of the Spirit is also called by the metaphorical designation, the "earnest of the Spirit". The "earnest" is derived from mercantile usage traceable to the Phoenicians, the founders of commerce. It assured the fulfillment of a promise. It could have been a part of purchase money paid in advance to bind a bargain, or it could have been an installment of the wages of a servant, paid at the time of hiring. The servant had to work for the master, and the master was obliged to pay the remaining wages after the service was done. Thus, both parties could enforce the contract. If the buyer did not take the goods, he forfeited the money advanced, and if the servant failed to complete the service, he had to refund the earnest he had taken.⁴⁶

The phrase "earnest of the Spirit" occurs only twice in the)

New Testament. Grammatically the words "the Spirit" are in apposition with the word "earnest", meaning that the pledge consists in the Holy Spirit bestowed upon the believer and dwelling in his heart. "And gave us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (II Corinthians 1:22). The full wage will not be paid "until the redemption of God's own possession" (Ephesians 1:14). Arminianism holds that it is a foretaste of a future heaven, and of a present heaven attainable by faith, especially in entire sanctification.

Joseph Parker has stated that "By mistaking the earnest for the fullness we run the risk of stating incomplete truths as final revelations."⁴⁷ The earnest of the Spirit is the assurance of the fullness of the Spirit in this life. It promises the future privilege of drinking evermore of "a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Revelation 22:1). But the fullness surely is promised for this life, for Paul prayed for it for believers (Ephesians 3:19; 4:13), and many in the apostolic church enjoyed it (Jude 1, Romans 15:29, I Peter 1:2). Also, the writer has heard many testify to this fullness in this succeeding generation.

The earnest of the Spirit lays an obligation upon those receiving it, this obligation being future service. Steele declared that if the service is not performed, the earnest will be withdrawn, but if the service is lovingly and willingly done, the gift will be increased even to the sanctification of the whole body, soul and spirit.⁴⁸

Further, Steele believed that the earnest implies identity in kind. If paid in silver, the whole would be paid in silver, or if

in gold, the wages would be in gold.⁴⁹ In the case of the believer in Christ, then, if the earnest is the Holy Spirit, then the fullness of the Comforter will be the believer's portion now and in future life. This is a joyful promise in both the Old and New Testaments. "I am thy exceeding great reward" was Jehovah's message to Abraham, in Genesis 15:1.

This doctrine of the immediate contact of God's Spirit with man's spirit rests upon many Scriptural proofs. As given by Steele, these proofs are the communion of the Holy Spirit, the revelation of Christ within the soul, the knowledge of God, the strengthened form of the Greek *ἐπίγνωσις* (epignosis), as in Colossians 2:2, giving a certain, clear, thorough and perfect knowledge of Christ, and full assurance, excluding all doubt.⁵⁰ In his First Epistle John stated "we know" and "ye all know" (I John 2:20) thirty-four times, compared to only five statements concerning not knowing - a firm Scriptural basis of this positive doctrine!

C. Scriptural Basis for the Witness

The Scripture testifies of many men who have had the witness of God's Spirit to assure them of their acceptance by Him. In Hebrews 11:4 God speaks of Abel who by faith "offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice . . . through which he had witness borne to him that he was righteous, God bearing witness in respect of his gifts." There was Enoch also, who "had witness borne to him that before his translation he had been well-pleasing to God" (Hebrews 11:5). Job knew that his Redeemer lives (Job 19:25), and David knew that his sins

were forgiven (Psalms 32:5; 103:3,12). To Isaiah the Lord said, "... thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin forgiven" (Isaiah 6:7b). And there are many more passages clearly teaching that the Spirit of God testifies concerning the relation of believers to God. Some of the New Testament promises have been quoted below:

And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth . . . He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him: . . . the witness that God hath borne concerning his Son. And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. . . . And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life (I John 5:7, 10, 11, 20).

"God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6). "For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:15,16). "... the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us" (Romans 5:5b). "... our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance" (I Thessalonians 1:5). "And ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it" (I John 2:20, 21). "And as for you, the anointing which ye received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any one teach you; but as his anointing teacheth you concerning all things, and is true, . . . ye abide in him"

(I John 2:27). "And he that keepeth his commandments abideth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he gave us" (I John 3:24). "hereby we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit" (I John 4:13). "We know that we are of God" (I John 5:19). "For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and the three agree in one. If we have the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for the witness of God is this, that he hath born witness concerning his Son" (I John 5:8,9).

D. Nature of the Witness

The nature of the witness can best be explained in terms of its characteristics. These characteristics have been expressed in this chapter in the following order: The witness of the Spirit is distinct, personal, immediate, variable, and valid. Other characteristics of the witness have been explained in answer to the questions, "Is the witness of the Spirit intermittent or constant?" and "Is the possession of the witness a duty or a privilege?" The witness of the Spirit to regeneration and to entire sanctification has been dealt with under the characteristics listed above.

The Witness Is Distinct. Two or more witnesses may jointly testify to the same thing, and still be distinct witnesses. The Holy Spirit is such a witness when He testifies to man's sonship and entire sanctification. "The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:16). The Greek word for "witness" here means two or more witnesses jointly yet distinctly testi-

ifying to the same thing. Since two are designated, the force of σύν (syn) with μαρτυρέω (martyreo) means that there can be no more or less than two. Συμμαρτυρεῖν (sum martyrein) means to be a fellow-witness, to witness the same thing that another does. Miley stated that the word constantly signifies this type of witness in Scripture, and is never used but where there is a concurrent evidence of two witnesses. Both classical and ecclesiastical authorities confirm this meaning.⁵¹

Then, since this is the meaning of the text, the Holy Spirit must be a distinct witness to adoption. Even if the sense of two witnesses were disproven, it would not prove that the text does not mean a distinct witness of the Spirit, but only that it does not mean a witness of man's own spirit. Then, according to Dr. Miley, the Spirit would witness to rather than with man's spirit, man's spirit simply receiving the witness of God's Spirit. But even so, the Spirit's distinct, personal witnessing would be meant. And it would still be true that one's own spirit witnesses to his sonship, though this particular text would not express it. But from either view a distinct witnessing of God's Spirit must be accepted as Scriptural and true.⁵² That is, the Holy Spirit must be a distinct witness to adoption, and therefore, logically, to entire sanctification. There would be no need for the type of witness to change. Another text proving a distinct witness to man's sonship by the Spirit is Galatians 4:6: "And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying Abba, Father."

The Witness is Personal. The Spirit's witness is personal as well as distinct. According to Dr. Wiley, the witness of the Spirit is vitally connected with the Spirit of adoption, for the latter is essential to filial love. Therefore, the witness of the Spirit is as much a part of the common salvation as adoption itself.⁵³ Since this is true, the witness of the Spirit must be the common privilege of all believers, their peculiar, God-given birthright. Believers may have perfect conviction of the truth which is in Christ, and entirely trust in the merits of His blood. For the Scriptures speak of the "full assurance of understanding" (Colossians 2:2), the "full assurance of hope" (Hebrews 6:11), and the "full assurance of faith" (Hebrews 10:22). And they refer to the fulfillment of the promise of a heavenly inheritance. Thus, it must be concluded that the full assurance of understanding, hope, and faith is the privilege of every Christian. The witness of the Spirit is a right of each of God's children, and a high calling to which each should press.

Further, as it was stated previously in this chapter, every Christian is sealed and has the earnest of the Spirit which is the Spirit Himself (II Corinthians 1:21,22; Ephesians 1:13,14; 4:30). Merrill said that every child of God is sealed with a sign which the Lord shall know when He comes. This is the fulfillment of both Old and New Testament promises. The Holy Spirit was to be the heritage of the Church throughout the dispensation.⁵⁴ And so Peter replied in answer to the question, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37), ". . .Repent ye, and be baptized. . .and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For to you is the promise, and to your child-

ren, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him" (Acts 2:38,39). The promise was made in the Abrahamic covenant: "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 22:18). This promise of blessing includes the gift of the Spirit as the permanent privilege of the Church under the Gospel. This fact is proven by Paul's application of the promise in Galatians 3:13,14: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us. . . .that upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." The "blessing of Abraham" is the blessing that God promised both to him and to his seed, and through his seed to all nations. To "receive the promise of the Spirit" is to receive the Spirit which was promised, and that Spirit is the blessing of Abraham. It is the Spirit Who is to abide with the Church, to witness to the truth of Christ's teachings, to guide the disciples into that truth and all truth, to be in their hearts as the Spirit of adoption, crying, "Abba, Father", and to infill them with perfect love. According to Merrill, the Spirit's presence in the soul, His manifestation to the consciousness, is the divine testimony to adoption and sanctification, even if no voice is heard and no process is revealed. The conscious presence of the Spirit is the voice of God bearing witness to man's acceptance and cleansing. Man does not need words or revelations before he can know that God owns him as His child, and abides in him. ⁵⁵ "But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God" (I Corinthians 2:12).

In Ephesians 1:13 believers are sealed with the promised Spirit, promised by God through Joel. Biederwolf declared, on the basis of this text, "Every genuine believer is sealed."⁵⁶ Then the witness of the Spirit must be personal. The next question was, "But when does the Spirit's witness come?"

The Witness Is Immediate. Closely related to the subject of the objects of the Spirit's witness - that is, individual believers - is the time of the Spirit's witness. The idea of a seal, said Biederwolf, includes both authentication and ownership or security.⁵⁷ In John 6:27 Christ spoke of the Father's seal upon Him, and it consisted in the miracles wrought by Christ through the power of the Spirit given to Him. That was authentication. This sealing for the believer is "next after faith" according to Professor Smeaton. Both logically and theologically, the Spirit witnesses right after faith.⁵⁸

Biederwolf declared that chronologically, the Spirit's witness and faith are practically simultaneous. Upon believing we are sealed. The faith is essential to, and the foundation of, the sealing.⁵⁹ The literal reading of Ephesians 1:13 is "having believed", not "after that ye believed, ye were sealed." G. Campbell Morgan was therefore right when he stated that the sealing of the Spirit is identical with regeneration. In fact he made it identical with the baptism of the Spirit, but in his mind this last was the same as regeneration.⁶⁰

The gift of the Holy Spirit, which the apostles experienced, was the object of all the instructions of the day of Pentecost. As it has already been noted, the answer to the question, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" - a question which arose under the preaching of the Gospel - was "Repent and be baptized. . . and ye shall receive the gift

of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). This gift does follow the remission of sins, and witnesses to the fact of adoption attending regeneration; but it never precedes pardon.

The disciples partly believed in Jesus before Pentecost, and Christ knew their hearts and their faith, and accepted them. But still, though their sins were forgiven and they were justified and regenerated, they did not have the seal or abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. Merrill stated:

Of course they had the blessings of the old dispensation and also other advantages from intimate fellowship with Jesus, but they lived as minor heirs, differing nothing in spiritual attainments from servants. Then came Pentecost, and under this baptism they obtained the freedom of children and went out from bondage with the mark of God's approval and the seal of His love upon them.⁶¹

Some of the influences of the Spirit are found in the heart before pardon and before repentance, it is true. His convincing, enlightening power precedes the soul's first movement towards God, and thus leads it toward repentance. And His life-giving power accompanies the forgiveness of sins, regenerating the soul. But the gift which is the witness, seal, and earnest is the heritage of justified believers only, testifying to regeneration and adoption.

Concerning the time of the Spirit's witness to entire sanctification, it can be said, logically, that it too must be after pardon. The Holy Spirit cannot dwell in a sinner; He abides in those who have been cleansed and regenerated. First He works in men the work of salvation, then He witnesses to their adoption, making them one with the Lord. And finally, when men yield fully to His sway and power, conse-

crating and yielding their all to God that they might be sanctified by Him, then they know the crowning glory of the Gospel dispensation. Graces like those of Jesus are matured and ripened into Christian perfection when God's Spirit controls, as well as immediately witnesses to man's sonship. And He will control as soon as He is allowed to after regeneration. The time of sanctification, even after pardon, varies greatly, for it depends upon the willingness of the individual to yield to God, and also upon the light he has received concerning the possibility of such an infilling. The writer speaks from his own experience.

The Witness Is Variable. Assurance varies not only in time, however, but in degree of strength, regarding both birth into sonship and entire sanctification. There are many reasons for this variance, a few of these being different temperament, former habits, and emotional makeup which varies from gentle to dynamic and intense. Psychology proves this, for it shows the effects of individual personality on every experience of life. Such differences reveal the reason for wide differences in the intensity of conviction and contrition, and therefore in the strength of assurance of adoption and entire sanctification. Miley asserted that the result is a like determining influence in the Christian life. Temperament especially affects Christian experiences, for the naturally timid, doubtful, and cautious will be hesitant respecting their own spiritual welfare; but those who tend to be joyful and hopeful will be more confident and so have more assurance.⁶²

Further, Miley stated that faith may not at first, or at all times, be equally strong, and so the testimony of the Spirit may

have its degrees of strength. Then persuasion or conviction will be proportionately regulated. Yet, God respects even the weaker exercises of faith, if it is genuine, and encourages it with comfort and degrees of testimony.⁶³

Dr. Eldon Fuhrman stated that the depths of experience and faith, the vividness of the truth preached, and the measure of consecration also create variety in the assurance of sonship.⁶⁴ Man's spirit cannot strongly assure him if his experience and consecration are slight, and the witness of the Holy Spirit must correspond in strength of degree with the witness of man's spirit. It would put a soul in great peril were the Spirit of God to strongly assure him when his Christian life was actually not deep or full. Thus, it becomes obvious that the strength of assurance depends upon the willful consecration of the individual child of God. The child of God who has yielded himself in utter surrender to the whole will of God and who has been entirely sanctified, filled with the Spirit, will have the strongest, most enduring, and most joyful assurance possible. He will not have a faint, wavering witness.

The Witness is Valid. Certainly the Holy Spirit is a completely competent and trustworthy witness. Since it is through His work that men are adopted into God's family, He must have perfect knowledge of the result of His work. Miley asserted that when He assures them of sonship, no error can exist. He gave prophets and apostles divine truth, by immediate inspiration, and produces conviction of sin and condemnation by direct action upon moral feelings. In the same

manner He gives to religious consciousness the assurance of acceptance with God. No mistake or deception can be in the Holy Spirit's work, and the assurance, the witness He gives, is therefore thoroughly valid.⁶⁵

Is the Witness Intermittent or Constant? The question may be asked, "But after the Spirit once witnesses to man's adoption, is His witness an intermittent or a constant one?" The answer to this question has been treated under the two following heads: 1., Intermittent in Carnal Christians, and 2., Constant in Entirely Sanctified Christians.

1. Intermittent in Carnal Christians. The direct witness of the Spirit is intermittent in carnal Christians. When the first joyful emotion of salvation vanishes, the new Christian must walk by faith. But, as Steele stated, "Before the fullness of the Spirit is received, there are occasional joyful experiences of the witness followed by intervals when doubts distract the soul."⁶⁶ When such Christians are seeking the abiding witness of the indwelling Comforter, their yearning for the permanent rather than transient Presence is overwhelming. It is well expressed by Charles Wesley, one of the eighteenth century hymn writers who gave due prominence to the Holy Spirit:

O that the Comforter would come!
Nor visit as a transient guest
But fix in me His constant home,
And take possession of my breast,
And make my soul His loved abode,
The temple of indwelling God!⁶⁷

In another hymn Wesley addressed the Holy Spirit thus:

Spirit of love, return
To every troubled breast

And comfort us who mourn
For permanence of rest.

Thou often visitest Thine own,
But in an hour or day
Our transitory guest is gone,
Our joy is fled away.

O might we always know
The Father reconciled!
Set up Thy throne below
In each adopted child. 68

Through experience the writer has found that when a man's Christian experience changes from sunshine to shadow, he is often tempted to cast away confidence in Christ and leave His service. Many men do yield to Satan's temptation, going back to the world instead of walking deeper into grace with Jesus. Some are told by stationary, shallow, or backslidden Christians that they will never be as happy as they were when they were first saved, and such a dismal outlook only increases their temptation. So quite a few converts turn away from following Christ, not knowing that their Christian experience should normally be better farther on.

Then just what causes the witness to be intermittent in most young Christians? The cause is not in God's will. Steele said the witness is intermittent in all in whom the Spirit's fullness does not abide.⁶⁹ ~~And the young Christian seldom gains this fullness immediately.~~
The new Christian usually undergoes a period of struggle for victory over sin in his own strength before he recognizes that he must have a source of power outside Himself in order to triumph. It is usually after he has walked the Christian way for awhile that he comes, sick of his sin and defeats, to yield all to God that he might be fully cleansed and fully indwelt by God's Spirit. This has been the writer's own

experience, and the experience of many he has known. Before this fullness of the Spirit is sought, and given, defeat is common. The Christian is carnal.

Unfortunately, the intermittent witness, caused by carnality, is not the experience of the new Christian only. Even some of those who profess Christianity for quite some time live on so low a level, remaining carnal, that they do not know what it is to have an abiding witness. And Daniel Steele gave the following reasons for an intermittent witness other than those previously stated: One is some physical condition into which one might be brought, such as a prostrated nervous system or a brain concussion which depresses the mind and obstructs conscious access to Christ. Another is sinful acts unrepented of, which obstruct one's view of God. And where sin is absent, but faith is wavering, the Spirit's witness will be intermittent. In this last case, the Christian does not have a firm grip on God's promises. Thus, the remedy would be to become more familiar with the Scripture and to personally appropriate the full heritage of the believer.⁷⁰ These last two reasons for an intermittent witness - sinful acts unrepented of and lack of faith - may also be stated as carnality.

Thus it can be said that the witness of the Spirit is intermittent in carnal Christians. Carnal Christians are those who are yet bringing forth the works of the flesh, such as strife and envy. Carnal Christians are those who are continually defeated by Satan, producing his work of sin. As Christians they are unstable and vacillating. Their hearts are not fixed; their feet are not established

in the ways of God. The Apostle Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians, described them thus:

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? (1 Corinthians 3:1-3, A.V.).

And Paul, in his letter to the Romans, also described his own instability when he was yet carnal:

. . .but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? . . .For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be (Romans 7:14-24; 8:6,7, A.V.).

The Holy Spirit of God, Who cannot dwell with sin, cannot witness to carnal Christians constantly. But this intermittency is not His will; it is of their own failure by instability and

vacillation. Said the Apostle James, "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. . . .Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded" (James 1:8; 4:8b, A.V.). "For", said Paul the Apostle, "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds" (II Corinthians 10:4, A.V.).

2. Constant in Entirely Sanctified Christians. When the Holy Spirit fully possesses man, Daniel Steele stated that there is no more interruption of the Spirit's testimony to man's sonship to God. For the Spirit has become his Sanctifier, the abiding Witness. Emotions may come and go, but peace and assurance abide forever.⁷¹ Said the Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Romans:

I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.
 . . .There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. . . .
 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you (Romans 7:25a; 8:1-6, 9a, A.V.).

Said Jesus, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever . . .ye know him: for he abideth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:16,17). "In that day ye shall know that I am in my father, and . . .in you. If a man love me, he

will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:20,23). "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love" (John 15:10). Christ's promises concerning the abiding of the Comforter are abundant, in Paul's epistles, in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters of John, and especially in the First Epistle of John, where mutual abiding is taught - God in man and man in God. In such a spiritual life, filled and penetrated by God, no vacuum or place of doubt is left. But there is a condition for this great privilege. "If ye keep my commandments" - ye shall receive the constant Presence; if ye love me and keep my words and yield in utter obedience and devotion to the Holy Spirit, then He will come in and abide, entirely sanctify and possess you. That is the constant witness!

Steele explained that the steps leading to this constant, more possessing witness are gradual. Man is joyful when first released from the bondage of fear, but he is not satisfied. He longs for something more. He is longing after God "as the hart pants after the waterbrooks" (Psalms 42:2). His "soul thirsteth for God" (Psalms 42:2), and he hungers after righteousness and purity. Then the young believer learns that Jesus promises the Living Water, and that Living Water is the Holy Spirit, Author of inward holiness, - "which they that believed on him were to receive: for the Spirit was not yet given" (John 7:39). "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever" (John 14:16). After this desirable gift has been pointed out to him, the young believer begins to seek after it, and then he is filled with the

Spirit. Walking in the light constantly, he is consciously cleansed from all sin, having joy unspeakable and full of glory. The Spirit of adoption, formerly intermittent, now becomes the abiding Comforter. And the Holy Spirit now gives not only direct assurance of sonship, but of entire sanctification and the fullness of Christ's love, that "We may know the things that were freely given to us of God" (I Corinthians 2:12). The perfect peace of God reigns, since disturbing emotions can not dwell in the presence of the Holy Spirit.⁷²

In connection with this constant witness, comes the question, "When once man has received the constant witness, can he be assured that he always will have it? That is, is such a present assurance a guarantee of eternal security?" Or, again, "Can a man who has the Spirit's witness to his salvation, but not to his entire sanctification, be assured that he is eternally safe?"

The answer to both questions is "No". There is always the possibility of losing entirely the Spirit, Who is the Witness. The possibility is greater in the saved than in the saved and sanctified person. The reason for this fact is that in those in whom the fullness of the Spirit does not abide, Satan will gain the victory far more easily. The sins which cause the witness to be intermittent in the immature Christian will cause the loss of the witness entirely if they are not repented of at all. But there is also the possibility of such sinning in the sanctified person. Therefore, salvation is conditional upon faith and obedience. And Daniel Steele has mentioned that, "Where vital interests are at stake it is very comforting to know that we are on the winning side."⁷³

When Paul spoke to two hundred and seventy-six sailors in the storm-tossed vessel on the coast of Melita, he said, "there shall be no loss of life among you" (Acts 27:22). This seems to be an unconditional assurance, representing the Calvinian assurance of faith, unconditional because grounded on the decree of election and the assumed perseverance of the saints. But Paul also added, when a few sailors sought to escape in a lifeboat, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved" (Acts 27:31). This represents the Arminian concept of the assurance of eternal security. It rests upon the small word "except" or "if". If the Christian perseveringly believes, he will be saved. Steele reported that, "Methodists apply the term 'assurance' to the consciousness of present salvation. It is the undoubted conviction of deliverance from the guilt and love of sin here and now."⁷⁴

Thus, the earnest and sealing of the Spirit implies absolute assurance of present salvation only. And this fact is true of entire sanctification also. The Spirit's work in itself is sufficient to insure eternal salvation and sanctification, but every believer has the freedom to so grieve the Spirit that He will withdraw finally and forever. "But they rebelled, and grieved his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be enemy, and himself fought against them" (Isaiah 63:10). "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30).

Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God; . . . lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin: for we are become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm

unto the end: . . . Today if ye shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For who, when they heard, did provoke? . . . And with whom was he displeased forty years? Was it not with them that sinned . . .? And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that were disobedient? And we see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief (Hebrews 3:12-19).

For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame (Hebrews 6:4-6).

For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries. A man that set a nought Moses' law dieth without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? (Hebrews 10:26-29).

For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the last state is become worse with them than the first (II Peter 2:20).

John Wesley explained that there are three main causes of

losing the witness of the Spirit. These causes are sin, temptation, and ignorance. The most usual cause is sin. A sin of commission so insults and abuses the goodness and love of God that one is immediately estranged from Him. The more frequently separating sins of omission include the neglect of private prayer, or the neglect of reproving one's

neighbor for his sin, and thereby becoming partaker with him. Or it may be enough if one does not stir up the gift of God within, nor obey the Holy Spirit in one of His promptings. And, again, if one does nothing more than not fight, he will fall before the onslaught of Satan. Unrighteous attitudes such as sinful anger, pride, and inordinate affections are other causes of Christians' losing the witness of the Spirit. And temptation may cause the loss of one's own spirit's witness.⁷⁵

John Wesley asserted that the force of temptation is greatly heightened if one thinks he is above it now, for a sudden attack of the enemy may well throw him then into great dismay. Particularly if he seeks to reason with the enemy rather than to call upon God.⁷⁶ In such a case the witness of man's spirit may be temporarily lost, or, if man falls into temptation, permanently so. And God's witness may also be lost if sin enters in.

The Holy Spirit Himself may drive a man to be tempted. It is written that the Holy Spirit drove Christ into the wilderness to be tempted (Matthew 4:1). Thus, there is a connection between the Holy Spirit and temptation. On this occasion the Holy Spirit drove Christ into the wilderness, after He had experienced baptism and the approval and testimony of God concerning His Sonship. Then it may be said, on the basis of this Scriptural account, and from the writer's own experience, that the closer a man walks to God the more liable he is to temptation from Satan who seeks to make him fall, and also the testings of the Spirit Who longs to strengthen and prove him. But the Lord surely means for him to stand unafraid and unwavering in the power of

the Holy Spirit's indwelling Presence. Christ prayed, "I pray not that thou shouldst take them from the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:15,16). And then the Lord asked that they be sanctified in the truth of God's Word (John 17:17). Kagawa suggested:

In order that the air may not be exhausted when a diver goes into the sea, it is well to put an air hose on top of the head of the diving uniform. We must have such a firm faith that even if we are on the brink of evil, we have a pipe line in connection with heaven, and so are all right.⁷⁷

And he went on to affirm that this is the sanctification of the Holy Spirit. In this way Christ gave separation in the midst of temptation. In the face of Satan the Spirit will still witness to man's spirit that he is a child of God.⁷⁸ And the Spirit's witness will not cease so long as the man stands true to Christ.

A third general cause of darkness is ignorance. John Wesley stated:

If men know not the Scriptures, if they imagine there are passages in either the Old or New Testament, which assert that all believers, without exception must sometimes be in darkness; this ignorance will naturally bring upon them the darkness which they expect. . . . Ignorance also of the work of God in the soul frequently occasions this darkness. Men imagine that if a state of light and joy is good, a state of darkness and dryness is better, and that by it alone can they be purified from pride, selfishness, and worldliness. They ought neither to expect or desire to walk in the light, then. Naturally such Christians walk in a dark, uncomfortable way, and soon lose the light of God if ever they received it.⁷⁹

The loss of the witness of God's Spirit is a terrible loss. For with it man loses the divine evidence, the satisfactory conviction of

things not seen. The Spirit no longer dwells within so that he can say, "And that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20). John Wesley stated this experience is as being in a wilderness:

The light of heaven does not now 'shine in their hearts', neither do they 'see him that is invisible'; but darkness is again on the face of their souls, and blindness on the eyes of their understanding. The Spirit no longer witnesses 'with their spirits, that they are the children of God'; neither does he continue as the spirit of adoption, 'crying' in their hearts, 'Abba, Father.'⁸⁰

Thus, they can no longer trust His love completely, nor come before Him with boldness. They are weak, and their hearts cannot say, "Though he slay me yet will I trust him" (Job 13:15). There is but one way to return to Him and regain the witness of His Spirit to sonship, and His Word describes that way: "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded" (James 4:8). "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap according to kindness; break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek Jehovah, till he come and rain righteousness upon you" (Hosea 10:12). "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; . . . "

(Isaiah 1:16,17). "let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteousness man his thoughts; and let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7). "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9).

Hence, it was found that for the sinner there is a way to forgiveness. But lest one take the loss of the witness too lightly, then, the great importance of its possession and the possible imperceptibility of its loss, was pointed out. Dr. Eldon Fuhrman declared that the Holy Spirit will not leave suddenly, but as a man continually grieves Him, He will be silently grieved away. And when the witness is lost, the work is lost also. It is possible, though, for one to lose the witness of the Spirit, and not know it immediately. The Spirit Himself is the Witness, so that when He goes, the witness goes also. But the Scripture says that when the Lord had departed from Samson, Samson knew it not (Judges 16:20). That is, for a while - it wasn't long before he found it out. And it would not be long before any man found it out, if he had lost the Spirit.⁸¹

It is true, then, that God's Spirit can be possessed only upon the conditions of constant faith and obedience. The next question, then, was, is this possession a duty or a privilege?

Is the Witness a Duty or Privilege? It has been pointed out under the topic, "The Witness is Personal" that the witness of God's Spirit to man's adoption and entire sanctification is his privilege and right. The promise is to every individual. But it should also be pointed out that God's gift or provision is one thing, while man's appropriation of the gift is another thing. And this refers to man's acceptance of both the Son and the Holy Spirit. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16). "But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12). These are the two

sides to salvation: the divine, offering the gift; and the human, which must accept the gift. The two are absolutely co-essential. The Spirit's witness is a privilege, but it cannot be had without the conditions for adoption being met first. Thus, Jesus Christ must be received consciously, definitely, and by appropriating faith.

And, just as Jesus is accepted, so the Holy Spirit in sanctification must be accepted. It seems equally clear from the Scriptures that it is still the duty and privilege of believers to receive the Holy Spirit by a conscious, definite act of appropriating faith. For, as Gordon stated, if the Holy Spirit is a Person, coming down at a definite time to make His abode in the church, for guiding, teaching, and sanctifying believers, He must be accepted for His special ministry just as Jesus is accepted for His. The gift of the Holy Spirit in His entirely sanctifying power is based on man's being a son by faith in Christ, resting on redemption in Him, and having already the Spirit's witness to adoption, His initial sanctification.⁸² But man must appropriate Him in all His fullness, in the same way he appropriated Christ. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). Twice in the Epistle to the Galatians the possession of the Holy Spirit is based on active appropriation through faith.

" . . . Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Galatians 3:2). "that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Galatians 3:14). These texts imply that as there is a faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, so there is a faith toward the Spirit for power and consecration. And they imply that this appropriation of the Spirit by believers is always for all, their

duty and their privilege.

Now when the apostles that were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit: for as yet it was fallen upon none of them: only they had been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. (Acts 8:14-17).

These believers had been baptized with water, but the Spirit of Pentecost had yet to be appropriated. And the prayer of the apostles that "they might receive the Holy Spirit" had to be followed by an act of believing acceptance and consecration on the part of each willing disciple. Only after such a consecration could their lives be full of power.

E. Manner of the Witness

Miley declared that the manner of the witness is the assurance produced by the Spirit's immediate operation within a believer's mind. It is easier to state the result than to explain the manner. The result is the assurance of adoption and entire sanctification, and the Spirit is not revealed apart from His assurance. He does not reveal Himself by an outer voice, nor by any direct communication to our intelligence, nor always by an inward voice, but simply operates within the mind to produce assurance. Thus, it might be said that the manner of the Spirit's witness is the same as in His work of conviction.⁸³ His work of conviction has been described in St. John's Gospel:

And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of

judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye behold me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged (John 16:8-11).

In conviction, the fact of sin is brought home to heart and conscience. Some truth may be used - the Spirit may apply to the heart one or more texts of Scripture - but when no truth is present to the mind, and no event exists to provoke serious thought; when, stated Miley, even environment takes the mind farther from conviction of sin, then the Holy Spirit may speak directly to the moral being. He quickens the conscience and instantly brings a deep sense of sin and peril. And in a like manner and just as immediately, He produces in the mind and heart of a believer in Christ the conviction or confidence of sonship.⁸⁴ Then, as the heart was first stirred to tumultuous conviction, it now rests in the satisfaction that its iniquities are forgiven and its sin covered.

Man cannot really know the manner of the Spirit's work. However, because man is ignorant of the manner does not give reason for his questioning the fact that the Spirit does bear witness with his spirit. The fact is declared in God's Word and faith rests on that testimony so far as the common privilege of all believers is concerned. Further, Miley affirmed that the personal consciousness witnesses to the fact and discerns the presence of the Spirit. Man is able to distinguish Him from his own spirit and from every other spirit. He comes according to the Bible, on the condition the Bible prescribes, and impresses man's spirit so that he realizes His presence. Thus, His indwelling becomes knowledge, received without means of the senses, by direct impression

on inward sensibilities. The philosophy of this contact, the reason for its being hidden from bodily senses, may not be known, but the fact may be known as surely as anything that discloses itself within the consciousness.⁸⁵

However, when the consciousness of the Holy Spirit's presence is found within, the impression should not be depended upon entirely for knowledge of the fact. The impression is important, but so also are the conditions under which it comes, its accordance with the promise and relation to faith, and its tendency to lift the soul to a holier life. And the fruit of the Spirit should confirm the impression, unmistakably corroborating the primary, direct testimony. Thus, Dr. Merrill argued, the witness of the Spirit becomes a living, tested, verified truth which is dependable against all deception.⁸⁶ In spite of its mystery in manner, it is none the less real and precious.

The mysteries of the Spirit's methods are just as other mysteries. The fact is accepted on competent testimony and the mystery is left outside the range of man's thoughts. Miley stated that other works of the Holy Spirit are mysterious. His work of inspiration is mysterious, but the fact does not disqualify the truth He reveals. The mystery of His work of regeneration does not make the new spiritual life and sonship less real or precious. The perceptions of the ear and eye are utterly mysterious, but sounds and scenes are nevertheless beautiful and sweet. So it is respecting the assurance of sonship through the Spirit's witness.⁸⁷ "The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). "For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in

him? even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God" (I Corinthians 2:11). But the fact is known. Said John Wesley:

The Spirit of God gives the believer such a testimony of his adoption that while it is present, he cannot doubt the reality of his sonship any more than he can doubt the shining of the sun while he stands in the full blaze of its beams!⁸⁸

And Daniel Steele affirmed:

The manner of all knowledge is a mystery the attempted solution of which has given birth to all the philosophies, materialism, realism, and idealism. In all communications from one mind to another is the same mystery. The thought in my consciousness is conveyed to yours along a path which the wisest philosophers are unable to make out in their psychologies. Yet the mother looking down with a smile into the eyes of the babe a month old awakens a responsive smile. She has laid a cable to that little island and flashed the message of a mother's love. Cannot God do as much to a lost child seeking His face? Yes, assuredly!⁸⁹

F. Summary

It was found that by the witness of God's Spirit is meant the inward evidence of the forgiveness of sins and the acceptance with God which the Holy Spirit reveals directly to the conscience of the believer.

The names given the work of the Spirit were the "sealing of the Spirit", the "earnest of the Spirit", the "Spirit of adoption", and "full assurance".

It was found, also, that there is abundant Scriptural evidence for the witness of God's Spirit.

Concerning the nature of the witness of God's Spirit, it was

found to be distinct from the witness of man's spirit; personal in that every Christian may have the witness; immediate, following the work of regeneration and the work of entire sanctification wrought in the heart; variable according to the proportion of one's faith and consecration and temperament; and valid as a trustworthy witness.

It was found further that the witness of the Holy Spirit is intermittent in carnal Christians and constant in those who are entirely sanctified and continually walking in the Spirit. It was also found that sin will cause the loss of His witness. One might lose the witness of his own spirit through dire temptation, but the witness of God's Spirit would not be lost unless sin were entertained. Ignorance of God's Word or misconceptions of it may also cause the witness of God's Spirit to be lost.

The witness of the Spirit to adoption and entire sanctification is a privilege of every believer. But it is also dependent upon man's appropriation of the provisions of grace by faith. The Holy Spirit bears witness to this appropriation.

It was found that the exact manner in which the Holy Spirit's witness comes is a mystery, but His work is nevertheless real and His witness is true.

CHAPTER IV

THE WITNESS OF GOD'S SPIRIT - DIRECT AND INDIRECT

Is the witness of the Holy Spirit direct? Or is it only the testimony of man's spirit which arises from a consciousness of the fruit of the Spirit, and is therefore indirect? Much has been said on this question, but the writer has shown that the witness of God's Spirit is direct, and is also indirect as man's own spirit sees the result of His work within. This chapter has been divided into two parts. The first part proved that the witness of the Holy Spirit is direct, and pointed out the advantages of this directness. The second part showed that the witness of God's Spirit is also indirect. Illustrations of the process of the indirect witness were given, its validity asserted, and the joy and power resulting from the indirect witness were set forth.

A. The Witness Is Direct

The witness of the Holy Spirit is direct. It seems the plain, natural meaning of the text, "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God" (Romans 8:16). Here are two witnesses mentioned - the Spirit of God, and man's spirit - who together testify the same thing. Miley argued that if the Holy Spirit is a distinct witness to adoption, He must be a direct witness. Any other interpretation must merge His testimony into that of man's spirit; and thus there should be only one witness and one testimony

instead of two witnesses and a distinct testimony of each.⁹⁰

Nature of the Direct Witness. Miley stated that the witness of the Spirit is given neither through His work of regeneration which makes men children of God, nor through the fruits of the new spiritual life, but by an immediate operation within man's consciousness in a manner to assure him of sonship. The state of sonship is prior to this testimony.⁹¹ It is thus manifest that the Spirit's testimony cannot be given through the work of regeneration which constitutes the sonship, but must be given directly within the consciousness of believers in Christ.

John Wesley cited the mistaken interpretation of "the late Bishop of London" in his sermon on Romans 8:16. The Bishop stated that the testimony of man's spirit to his sonship is the consciousness of his own sincerity, or the consciousness of the fruit of the Spirit. The Bishop supposed the other witness to be man's consciousness of his own good works, which, the Bishop affirmed, was the testimony of God's Spirit.⁹²

However, John Wesley argued that man's consciousness of his good works is included in the testimony of his own spirit and in sincerity. In the verse, "This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity . . . we have had our conversation in the world" (II Corinthians 1:12), "sincerity" refers to man's words and actions at least as far as his inward dispositions. So the consciousness of his own good works cannot be another witness, but the very same, the consciousness of good works being only one branch of the consciousness of sincerity. Consequently, here is only one witness

still. If, therefore, the text speaks of two witnesses, one of these is not the consciousness of good works, or sincerity, but both of these are contained in the testimony of man's own spirit.⁹³

What then is the other witness? If Romans 8:16 seemed not to be clear enough, the answer might be found in the preceding verse: "Ye have received, not the spirit of bondage, but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." It follows, "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God." This is explained more fully in Galatians 4:6. John Wesley stated:

Is not this something immediate and direct, not the result of reflection or argumentation? Does not this Spirit cry, 'Abba, Father,' in our hearts the moment it is given, antecedently to any reflection upon our sincerity; yea, to any reasoning whatsoever? And is not this the plain, natural sense of the words, which strikes any one as soon as he hears them? All these texts then, in their most obvious meaning, describe a direct testimony of the Spirit.⁹⁴

And then Wesley said further that the testimony of the Spirit of God must in the very nature of things be antecedent to the testimony of man's spirit. Man must be holy in heart and life before he can be conscious that he is so. But he must love God before he can be holy at all, for this is the root of all holiness. Yet he cannot love God until he knows that God loves him. "We love Him because He first loved us" (I John 4:19). And man cannot know God's love to him until the Holy Spirit witnesses it to his spirit. Since, therefore, the testimony of God's Spirit must precede the love of God, and all holiness, it must precede man's consciousness of it.⁹⁵ To quote Wesley again, this fact:

. . . is confirmed by your experience and mine. The Spirit itself bore witness to my spirit, that I was a child of God, gave me an evidence hereof, and I immediately cried, Abba, Father! And this I did, (and so did you,) before I reflected on, or was conscious of, any fruit of the Spirit. It was from this testimony received that love, joy, peace, and the whole fruit of the Spirit flowed The fruit of the Spirit immediately springs from this testimony, but not always in the same degree, even when the testimony is first given, and much less afterwards. The testimony itself is not always equally strong and clear.⁹⁶

However, Miley questioned this last argument because it assumes a priority of the witness of the Spirit, as compared with that of man's spirit; assumes it as the necessary ground of the fruits of grace through which man's spirit witnesses. If the facts be such, or if the experiences through which man's spirit witnesses have their immediate and only source in the witness of the Spirit to man's sonship, then must the Holy Spirit be a direct witness.⁹⁷ This is Wesley's argument in summary. And it is Watson's argument too. For Miley has quoted Watson as having said in one of his sermons,

The graces which the apostle enumerates constitute 'the fruits of the Spirit;' but his very first work, on our believing, and that by which this fruit is produced, is to bear witness to our adoption into God's family, and thus to enable us to call God our Father. The fruits of the Spirit flow from the witness of the Spirit.⁹⁸

Miley pointed out that this argument of Wesley and Watson mistakes the source of the experiences through which man's spirit witnesses to his sonship. It attributes them to the witness of the Holy Spirit, whereas they actually come from His work of regeneration. The witness of the Spirit cannot produce them, because it is not in itself

renewing or sanctifying. Without the inner change wrought by regeneration no assurance of adoption could yield the spiritual fruits of peace, love, and joy. With their source in regeneration, the assurance of sonship through the witness of the Spirit may give them a deeper, richer tone, but it cannot be their original source. The mighty work of regeneration reveals itself in the consciousness of the soul, shedding abroad the love of God. When man believes, he is regenerated, by the Holy Spirit, into the image of God, before the Holy Spirit bears witness to his adoption. It is from the "renewing" and "regenerating" that the fruit is produced, not from the witness or assurance.⁹⁹ Watson appealed to the penitent: "You tell him that he is to examine himself, whether he has peace and joy. In this way he may be assured of divine favor."¹⁰⁰ But Miley argued:

The one thing for such a penitent to do is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, whereon he shall receive forgiveness and be born of God. Through this mighty change, whence the fruits of the Spirit so promptly spring, he becomes a child of God; and his own spirit will be instant with the Holy Spirit in witnessing to his adoption.¹⁰¹

The assumption is groundless which states that the experiences through which man's spirit witnesses to his sonship are the immediate fruit of the Spirit's witness.

Furthermore, Miley argued, the Scriptures are definite respecting sonship as the matter of assurance, but do not hold the Spirit to witness to anything else. But this argument includes a direct assurance of forgiveness, of the love of God therein, and of an heirship to eternal life. It is true that man receives the assurance of these blessings

with the assurance of sonship, but he does not without the witness of his own spirit. Further, if, as this argument holds, the fruits of the Spirit are the immediate results of His witness, it is but a short and easy step to the conclusion that His witness is given simply and only through these fruits. But this conclusion would merge His witness into that of man's spirit, and so lose the direct witness of the Spirit in the very argument seeking to prove it!¹⁰²

The mere testimony of man's spirit is nothing without that of God. Wesley stated that, "After being convinced of sin and feeling God's wrath abiding upon them, men cannot be satisfied with anything less than a direct testimony from His Spirit."¹⁰³ The writer has met many people out in the world who desire to please God, and try to do so, but consider it foolish for any to say that he knows his sins are forgiven. They are conscious of their own "sincerity" as the Bishop of London called it, and their own spirits testify that they are upright, but this brings them no knowledge that they are the children of God. In fact, the more sincere persons are the more uneasy, because they do not have assurance of salvation. Then knowledge of personal sonship cannot be obtained by the testimony of man's spirit alone; the Spirit of God must directly testify to the adoption also.

The voice of the Spirit within the believer is to all who know God the most real of all realities. The Methodist doctrine of assurance is grounded on this direct witness. The direct witness of the Spirit was a special emphasis of early Methodism, as evidenced by John Wesley's many writings on the subject. Methodism emphasized the fact that the Spirit of God cries in men's hearts, not in the Bible,

"Abba, Father." Said Steele, "His witness is of the nature of a spiritual intuition, the voice of mercy speaking comfort to a troubled soul."¹⁰⁴ It is the "white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it" (Revelation 2:17).

Advantages of the Direct Witness. The advantages of the direct witness are: 1. salvation from doubt on fundamentals; 2. certainty with respect to adoption and forgiveness; 3. the joy of the Lord; 4. the strength which always comes from that joy. It was the secret of Methodism and the source of her aggressive spirit and power, giving positiveness to testimony and safeguard against apostasy. Said Steele, "It is the greatest safeguard against apostasy next to the Spirit's work in entire sanctification."¹⁰⁵ A sudden conversion, glorious and joyful, is a towering monument to memory and a rebuke to the backslider. It was Steele's view that a Christian life with no spiritual birthday is not to be discounted, of course, for many - especially children - are converted without a marked transition; but the ideal new birth of the New Testament, since the day of Pentecost, has a date to it which only the direct witness of the Spirit can impress on the mind.¹⁰⁶

But this suggests another question which perplexes many: Is the direct witness necessary to salvation? It has already been noted that an inference from the marks of the new birth found in us cannot save from doubt. And it has been noted that eternal salvation depends on faith in Christ. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" (I John 5:10, A.V.). To the passage in his journal which declared that he was not converted himself when he went to convert the Indians, John Wesley appended as a note: "I am not sure of

this. I was a servant and safe, but knew it not; but now I am a son and safe and know it."¹⁰⁷ His final teaching on this point was this: "I have not for many years thought a consciousness of acceptance to be essential to justifying faith."¹⁰⁸ He ascribed the absense of a direct assurance in exceptional cases to bodily disorders or ignorance of the Gospel promises, however.¹⁰⁹

Objections to a Direct Witness: There have been an abundance of objections to a direct witness of the Holy Spirit, the chief of which have been considered here, and were noted by John Wesley.¹¹⁰

1. One objection is that experience is not sufficient to prove a doctrine not founded on Scripture. This is true, of course, and is an important truth, but it does not affect the question of a direct witness; for it has been shown that this doctrine is founded on a wide variety of Scripture. Therefore experience may be said to confirm it.

2. A second objection, which John Wesley noted, is that French prophets, madmen, and enthusiasts of every sort have imagined that they had this witness. This statement was true in Wesley's day, and is true in this day. But John Wesley testified that in his day these persons did not retain the witness long. And if they did not, this is no proof at all that others have not experienced it.¹¹¹ And because one person imagines himself to be something cannot prove that other persons cannot be that very thing; or because a madman imagines himself to have something he has not, does not mean another person cannot have it.

3. A third objection is that many have fatally deceived themselves by the direct witness, and so placed themselves above all con-

viction. But a doctrine of Scripture cannot be objected to merely because some men abuse it and deceive themselves by it. A truth will still abide, though some do not believe it.

4. A fourth objection is that the fruit of the Spirit is the witness of the Spirit and is sufficient proof. But there is not any need for any other witness if this fruit of the Spirit is sufficient. And it is not sufficient when the fruit of the Spirit is totally absent, which the fruit is when the direct witness is first given. And the fruit of the Spirit is not sufficient when man does not see it. But so far as the person under consideration is concerned, the direct witness may shine clear when the indirect one is not seen.

5. A fifth objection is that the witness only proves that man's profession is genuine, and it does not prove this. But such is not the purpose of the direct witness. It is antecedent to man's making any profession at all except that of being a sinner. The direct witness is to assure those to whom it is given that they are adopted by God, "justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). It supposes that they were sinners in heart and life, or otherwise God would be justifying the ungodly, and their own works would be counted unto them for righteousness. Men who believe that God imputes to all that are justified righteousness without works, will not find it hard to believe that the direct witness of God's Spirit precedes the fruit.

6. A sixth objection is that the tree is known by its fruit, not by a witness. Man is to prove himself. And this is true. Therefore, every man who believes he has the witness in himself should see

whether it be of God by watching whether the fruit follows it. If the fruit follows it, the witness is true and proven to be of God.

In connection with this it may be argued that the direct witness by itself is never referred to in Scripture. Perhaps not as a single witness, but it is referred to as giving a joint testimony with man's spirit. The writer noted II Corinthians 13:5: "Try your own selves, whether ye are in the faith; prove your own selves. Or know ye not as to your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you?" This verse does not clearly say that they did not know this by a direct as well as a remote witness. Could they not have known it by an inward witness first, and then by the fruits of the Spirit?

7. A seventh objection is that a witness that must have something else to prove what it asserts cannot be trusted, and so the direct witness of the Spirit deceives men. But actually, to secure a man from all delusion, God gives him two witnesses that he is God's child. And when these two witnesses are joined, their testimony is dependable, needing no other proof. In the words of II Corinthians 13:1, "...At the mouth of two witnesses or three shall every word be established." And God's Spirit witnesses with man's spirit to his adoption.

8. An eighth objection is that the fruit of the Spirit is enough testimony. However, God's children are sometimes so tried that it would be impossible for them to keep their confidence in God, without the direct witness of His Spirit. The writer speaks from his own experience. Two things will be granted, and they greatly strengthen the argument for a direct testimony of the Holy Spirit. First, that these fruits are found only in those who have been received, by the

remission of their sins, into the favor of God. "And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof" (Galatians 5:24). To be Christ's, and to be in Christ are the same as to be justified, for "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). Second, these graces are fruits of the Spirit of adoption. "-if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law" (Galatians 5:18). "To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:5,6). These fruits of the Spirit, then, presuppose man's pardon previously witnessed to him by the Spirit of adoption whose work is the foundation of the fruits.

Nor can the fruits themselves reveal man's pardon, for they cannot exist until the work from which they spring exists and is witnessed to. Wakefield asserted that by the argument of those who make the fruits of the Spirit the media of ascertaining the fact of forgiveness and adoption, man must be supposed to love God while feeling His wrath; to rejoice while fearfully apprehensive of the punishment for his sin. This is impossible. Then the foundation of love, peace, and joy is pardon revealed and witnessed to, directly and immediately by the Spirit of adoption. Thus it is proven that the witness of the Spirit is direct, not mediate.¹¹²

9. A ninth objection is that repentance plus pardon is evidence enough of man's adoption. It could not be repentance alone, since that supposes that man is still under condemnation. But, states the argument, repentance and faith are enough, since man is justified by faith

and whoever believes shall be saved. However, argued Wakefield, though man should become conscious of both repentance and faith, either by the help of the Holy Spirit or by his own mind, forgiveness would still not be evidenced. Because justification is an act of God's Own mind, no one can know when he is justified without some direct testimony from God, unless the Bible says that when repentance and faith have reached a definite degree clearly pointed out, pardon may be gained. But even if this were so, man would have to be expressly authorized to judge when they have reached this degree and so to conclude his justification. But he has not been so authorized, and the apostle, in Romans, has assigned that office to the Holy Spirit.¹¹³

Further, it can not be said that repentance and faith are evidences of pardon because they are the conditions of pardon. Man has God's promise of pardon to all who repent and believe, but repentance is not pardon, and faith is not pardon. Pardon, therefore, stated Wakefield, must have the authorization of higher authority of a distinct kind. Thus, either the authority and the direct witness of the Holy Spirit must be acknowledged, or a painful uncertainty as to the required degree of repentance and faith must exist throughout life.¹¹⁴

B. The Witness Is Also Indirect

Daniel Steele asserted that the indirect witness of the Holy Spirit is an inference from the discerned presence of the fruit of the Spirit, and this witness follows the direct witness in order of time. In early Christian experience the direct witness is frequently intermittent; then the indirect witness is of immense value to keep one from

casting away his confidence in Christ.¹¹⁵

Nature of the Indirect Witness. This indirect witness is the testimony of man's spirit, and consists in a consciousness of his having received, in and by the Spirit of adoption, the inward graces mentioned in the Bible as belonging to God's children. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control; against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22,23). "(for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth)" (Ephesians 5:9). Wesley described the indirect witness as a consciousness that one is inwardly conformed, by the Spirit of God, to the image of Christ, and that one walks before Him in justice, mercy and truth, doing the things which are pleasing in His sight.¹¹⁶ But, said Wakefield, this testimony is not to the fact of man's adoption directly, but to the fact that he has truly received the Spirit of adoption and is not deluded.¹¹⁷

Said Wakefield, man's own spirit cannot know whether his pardon is in the mind of God, and cannot bear witness to the fact. The Holy Spirit alone knows the mind of God, knows whether man is pardoned, and, knowing, can witness of it to man. But man can competently witness from his own consciousness that a regenerate work has been wrought within him which the Holy Spirit alone can produce.¹¹⁸ And thus man has the testimony of his own spirit that the Holy Spirit is with him and in him, and that He bears witness to his adoption. And it is a testimony based partly on the Word of God and partly on his own experience. The Word of God says that everyone who has the fruit of the Spirit is a child of God; experience tells man that he has that fruit, and so he

concludes that he is a child of God.

Furthermore, as has been before inferred, this indirect witness is confirmatory rather than fundamental. Wiley asserted that filial love springs from the knowledge of filial relationships, and that the direct witness of the Spirit must therefore come before the indirect. But the indirect is not thereby of less consequence. It is as indispensable as the first, for by it the direct testimony of the Spirit is confirmed.¹¹⁹ The two kinds of witness must go together. The first safeguards against distressing doubt, and the second safeguards from delusion and presumption. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee" (Isaiah 26: 3). "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Romans 8:14). Both witnesses are necessary and both should be constant, but as has been previously noted in this chapter and in chapter three, the first is often intermittent in those in whom the fulness of the Spirit does not abide. Then the second is all the more needful. As Steele stated:

There are cloudy days in the spiritual realm, when the sun is veiled and there is no ray of direct light. Then it is comfortable to walk in the light reflected from the clouds.¹²⁰

Illustrations of the Indirect Witness. Wiley gave a list of

characteristics of those who are born of God. These were peace, love, brotherly love, and obedience. And the writer has included these also under the later heading of the fruits of the Spirit.

1. Peace. "Sonship is a state of peace with God", said Wiley.¹²¹

"Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through

our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). On the one hand is condemnation, while on the other hand is peace. The difference is so real that man can readily distinguish as to which is his own state. If he finds within him a sense of real peace with God through Jesus, that peace witnesses to his sonship.

Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before him: because if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, we have boldness toward God (I John 3:19-21).

2. Love. God is loved by His children. "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God . . . for God is love (I John 4:7,8b). Miley asserted, "Brotherly love is foremost in this text, but it also obviously means that those who are born of God love Him."¹²² Man therefore tests himself. "The carnal mind is enmity against God" (Romans 8:7), but the man who knows he has been born of God knows that such is not the state of his own mind. Rather, he knows that his is the experience that "love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God" Thus, man's love for God witnesses to his sonship.

3. Brotherly love. The children of God love one another, so this test is easy to apply. "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren" (I John 3:14). "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us" (I John 4:12). "If a man loves God's children because they are His, then he shall have the witness of his own spirit to the truth of his

adoption", Wiley stated.¹²³

4. Obedience. A spirit of obedience to God is the characteristic of all who are regenerated, and is the proof of their regeneration. "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one also that doeth righteousness is begotten of him" (I John 2:29). The consciousness of such a sonship within man is another evidence and witness that he is a child of God, affirmed Wiley.¹²⁴

5. Fruits of the Spirit. The children of God are led by the Holy Spirit, and the life of anyone so led must produce the fruits of the Spirit, rather than the works of the flesh:

that the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk nott after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace. . . .and they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness (Romans 8:4-6, 8-10).

Dr. Wiley defined the fruit of the Spirit thus: "The fruit of the Spirit is the communication to the individual of the graces flowing from the divine nature, and has its issue in character rather than in qualifications for service."¹²⁵ It is the outflow of divine life following necessarily from the Spirit's abiding presence. He is the life of the vine, giving the fruit its character and quality, and anything obstructing the flow of life affects the fruit. Therefore, "he cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit" (John 15:2).

According to Wiley, the fruit of love, joy, and peace is in relation to God, the fruit of longsuffering, gentleness and goodness is in relation to others, and the fruit of faithfulness, meekness, and self-control is in relation to ourselves.¹²⁶ These, obviously, are in contrast to the works of the flesh. Said Wiley:

Fruit grows by cultivation. It receives its life from the vine and takes its character from that life. Works are the result of effort and human striving; fruit is the consequence of the Spirit's abiding. It is not of man's producing; it grows by the life that is in the vine.¹²⁷

Thus, whether a man lives the life of the flesh or the life of the Spirit must reveal itself to his personal consciousness, and the lives are so very different that he may readily know which he is living. If he walks by the Spirit he shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh, "for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other" (Galatians 5:17). And the two lives are given very separate characterizations in the Scripture (Galatians 5:18-25). But he whose life demonstrates the fruits of the Spirit is led by the Spirit, so that everyone whose life is consciously such must have the witness of his own spirit that he is a child of God.

~~But it should be noted here that of course the child whom the~~
Lord has sanctified will produce much fruit, whereas he who has not as yet so completely yielded himself as to be filled with the Spirit, will merely bear fruit. The young Christian will certainly see the fruits of the regenerate life, and his spirit will therefore witness with God's Spirit that he is a child of the King. But he will soon

feel a need which cannot be filled and a lack of spiritual production which cannot be accomplished until he has surrendered to Christ and been entirely sanctified. The first fruits are the result of initial sanctification, or regeneration. But the full fruits, the rich harvests, are not seen until entire sanctification has been the experience of the Christian. There are cloudy days for the unsanctified Christian, but the sanctified Christian, having the constant witness, knows cloudy days only because of sore trials and sorrows, and even then he may shout, "But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 15:57).

Process of the Witness. As the nature of the witnessing and the illustrations of the witnessing reveal, the process of the witnessing is a logical one. But, affirmed Miley, this does not mean it must be formally conducted before man's spirit can give its assuring testimony. The peace and joy received in conversion are anticipated, and so bear instant testimony to adoption. The witness of man's own spirit may be given immediately in the Christian life, though he needs more evidences of sonship if his religious experience is shallow and his consecration not very full. In such a case a wider comparison of experience and life, with the Scripture describing this state, is needed in order to gain the assuring witness of his own spirit. And the same is true in a time of temptation or trial when the soul is heavy with doubt. Usually however, if the experience and consecration are real, the witness of man's spirit is so immediate that his assurance seems less of a process than an abiding state of mind.¹²⁸

Validity of the Witness. The Scripture describes sonship so

truly and fully that man may know if he is a son of God, if his experience is like the Scripture's description. He can know if he has come into such an experience because the change whereby man enters into sonship is a great one. Miley explained it :

There is a transition from darkness to light; from death into life; from the bondage of sin into the liberty of the Gospel; from condemnation into peace with God; from the unrest and trouble of sin into a reposing trust in his love.¹²⁹

Such a transition must manifest itself in man's consciousness at once, and continue to, abidingly, in the daily experiences of his Christian life.

John Wesley declared that so many Scriptures describe the marks of the Christian, that if one meditates upon them before God in secret, or converses with those that have knowledge of His ways, he may know if his own spirit witnesses that he is the Lord's. God has given him reason and understanding which religion does not extinguish but rather perfects.¹³⁰ Thus, according to the apostle, "Brethren, be not children in mind: yet in malice be ye babes, but in mind be men" (I Corinthians 14:20). Every man who applies those Scriptural marks to himself may know whether he is a child of God. Thus, if he knows first that "as many as are led by the Spirit of God" into all holy tempers and actions, "they are the sons of God;" (which he has the assurance of from the Bible), and if he knows that he is thus led, he will then conclude that he is a son of God.

The apostle John agreed with the above statement, in his first epistle. "And hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his command-

ments" (I John 2:3). "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that everyone also that doeth righteousness is begotten of him" (I John 2:29). "Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected. Hereby we know that we are in him" (I John 2:5). "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren" (I John 3:14). "Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before him" (I John 3:19), because we love one another not "in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth" (I John 3:18b). "Hereby we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit" (I John 4:13). That is, of his loving Spirit. And, "Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the obedient Spirit which he gave us " (I John 3:24).

John Wesley said that there probably never were any children of God more advanced in the knowledge and grace of Christ than the apostle John when he wrote this epistle, nor than the fathers in Christ to whom he wrote. Yet they constantly applied these marks of God's children to their own souls for the assurance of their faith.¹³¹

In response to the question, "How does it appear to us that we have these marks?" John Wesley answered, "How does it appear to you that you are alive? And that you are now in ease and not in pain? Are you not immediately conscious of it?"¹³² And then he went on to say that by the same immediate consciousness men may know if their souls are alive to God and if they are saved from the pain of wrath, having the ease of a meek, quiet spirit; and if they love their neighbor as themselves, are kindly affectioned to mankind, and are full of gentleness and longsuffering. In regard to the outward marks of God's

children, men undoubtedly know if they are keeping His commandments, which, according to John, is the sign of sonship. They know if they possess their body in sanctification and honor, and if, whether they eat or drink, they do all to the glory of God. To quote Wesley:

It is he that not only worketh in us every manner of thing that is good, but also shines upon his own work, and clearly shows what he has wrought. Accordingly, this is spoken of by St. Paul, as one great end of our receiving the Spirit, 'That we may know the things which are freely given to us of God:' that he may strengthen the testimony of our conscience, touching our 'simplicity and godly sincerity;' and give us to discern, in a fuller and stronger light, that we now do the things which please him.¹³³

Then the Christian cannot doubt his being a child of God.

Miley stated that the Christian has as full an assurance as he has that the Scriptures are of God; and of his loving God he has an inward proof nothing short of self-evidence.¹³⁴ When, therefore, man compares the known facts of his experience with the Scripture's description of divine sonship, and finds their close agreement, then the witness of his own spirit that he is a child of God must be thoroughly trustworthy. And with the joint witness of God's Spirit, assurance itself is completely valid.

Two inferences may be drawn from the whole. The first is that no one should ever rest in a supposed testimony of the Spirit which is separate from the fruit of it. If the Spirit of God really does witness that a man is a child of God, the immediate confirmation of His work within man will be the fruit of the Spirit.

The second inference is that none should rest in any supposed fruit of the Spirit without the witness. Foretastes of joy, peace,

love, longsuffering, and other fruits, may come truly from God long before man has the witness in himself or the witness of God's Spirit that he has "redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of trespasses, according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1:7). But if man is wise, he shall be continually crying to God, until God's Spirit cries in his heart, "Abba, Father"! This is the privilege of all the children of God, and without this they can never be assured that they are His children. "But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you" (Romans 8:9).

Joy and Power of the Witness. One of the greatest joys of a Christian is that his existence, his very self, is closely connected with God; he feels the love of God and knows that he has received the Holy Spirit from God.

When one lives a life filled with the Holy Spirit, and his own spirit testifies of the fact, even though there is sorrow on the surface, God's joy is within. Kagawa explained that God is in the background and absorbs those sorrows as a blotter does the ink spot. The parts that appear on the surface are small, but in the unseen background are things great and eternal. In it is the life filled with the Holy Spirit.¹³⁵

Christ said in regard to His life, "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38). Where there is no water, civilization does not flourish; but when living water flows out like a river, many people receive life. Kagawa stated:

When one man is converted there flows out a river of influence by which many people

receive life. This is one of the fruits of the Spirit. By the conversion of Jerry McCauley, Bradley was saved. By this influence, Merle Trotter, who had served ten sentences in prison, was saved. Then Billy Sunday was saved, and by his influence tens of thousands were converted. That is what it means for rivers of living water to flow from us. It is not merely influence. It is the influence of the Holy Spirit which draws the lineage to one after another, until it is wonderful to trace.¹³⁶

When man is in the Spirit, truly great movements become possible.

Christ promised this power, and he who knows that he has the witness of the Holy Spirit in himself, claims that power. Kagawa exclaimed: "The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. That is for the intellect. He is the Spirit of joy and of victory. That is for the emotions. And He is the Spirit of sanctification. That is for the will."¹³⁷ He is a personal, indwelling power from Whom man's assurance of sonship comes, and from Whose work man's good fruits spring.

C. Summary

The conclusion as to whether the witness of God's Spirit is direct or indirect is that it is both. When God's Spirit performs His regenerative work within a man, He witnesses directly to man's spirit that he is a child of God. However, He witnesses indirectly also, through the results of the work He has wrought within. That is, the fruits of the Spirit are not a result of His witness, but of His regenerative work. Then man is able to look at these fruits and, seeing that he is doing those things which are pleasing in God's sight, he finds the witness of his own spirit that he is a son of God. Both witnesses are necessary, for the testimony of man's spirit confirms

that of God's Spirit, while at the same time men are all liable to trials when the testimony of their own spirits will not be sufficient, and God's direct witness alone will assure. Though there are objections to the direct witness these can be refuted; and though many fancy they experience what they do not, this is no prejudice to real experience which is sufficient to confirm a doctrine well grounded on Scripture.

CHAPTER V

THE WITNESS OF GOD'S SPIRIT

IN RELATION TO PRESUMPTION, DELUSION, AND CONSCIENCE

The final thing to be considered was how the joint testimony of God's Spirit and man's spirit may be clearly distinguished from the presumption of a natural mind, from the delusion of the devil, and from conscience. It is an important subject to all who do not want to be deceived concerning the true salvation of God through Christ. For, if one is led into error concerning these distinctions, he seldom discovers his mistake until it is too late to remedy it.

A. The Witness in Relation to Presumption

How may the real witness of the Holy Spirit with man's spirit be distinguished from presumption? As has been noted in previous chapters, the Scriptures describe very plainly the circumstances going before, accompanying, and following the genuine witness of God's Spirit with the spirit of the believer. When these descriptions have been carefully weighed and heeded, the difference between the real and the pretended witness of the Spirit will appear so wide that there will be no danger of confusing them.

Past Experience and Presumption. The past experience of a professing Christian will reveal to him whether he has basis for believing he has the witness, or if he is presumptuous. For the Scriptures describe repentance and conviction of sin as constantly going before

the witness of pardon and sonship. "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). "Repent ye, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins" (Acts 2:38). "Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19). God has promised to forgive sins only if men heartily repent and turn with true faith unto Him.

But if one is only presuming to have the witness of God's Spirit to sonship, he will realize, upon reading these verses, that he is a stranger to this repentance. John Wesley described him thus:

He has never known a broken and a contrite heart, for he was never grieved over the remembrance of his sins. 'The burden of my sin rolled away' is not his testimony, for he never felt such a burden, and thus never rejoiced at its removal. If he ever repeated such words he did not mean them. Therefore, if he has never been convicted of sin, if he has never been repentant for his sin, he has never had pardon for his sin and thus cannot have the witness of God's Spirit that he is a child of God.¹³⁸

Furthermore, a great change is wrought within man when he is born of God, born from above. This change, the "new birth", has been also likened, in Scripture, to a resurrection from the dead, the passing from darkness into light, from death unto life, and from bondage to freedom. The man is no longer a servant, but a son. Such a great change as this could not be wrought within the soul without the one in whom it was worked knowing of it. "And you did he make alive, when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). "but God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he

loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ" (Ephesians 2:4,5). But the presumer does not know of any great change wrought within him that would be at all comparable to these Scriptures. According to John Wesley, he believes he has always been a Christian and has never needed such a change as this! In this difference, then, he could see that he is not born of God, nor has ever really known God. He has mistaken the voice of nature for the voice of the Spirit.¹³⁹

Present Experience and Presumption. Present experience and present marks also distinguish a child of God from a presumptuous self-deceiver. The joy of the Lord is a joy which humbles and sweetens the soul in itself and in its contact with others. And with such lowliness and humbleness of heart, meekness, patience, gentleness and long-suffering also dwell. But these fruits of the Spirit do not belong to the man who presumes to have the witness of the Spirit. He is confident of God's favor, and so thinks of himself far more highly than he ought to think, such attitudes expressing themselves in a haughty, assuming character. He will not be reproved nor contradicted, and he will not learn of anyone. John Wesley described him thus:

Instead of being more meek, and gentle, and teachable, more 'swift to hear, and slow to speak,' he is more slow to hear, and swift to speak; . . . more fiery and vehement in his temper, and eager in his conversation. Yea, perhaps, there will sometimes appear a kind of fierceness in his air, his manner of speaking, his whole deportment, as if he were just going to take the matter out of God's hands, and himself to 'devour the adversaries'.¹⁴⁰

Further, the Bible teaches that the sure mark as to whether or not a man is born of God or loves Him is whether he keeps His commands.

"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3). "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John 14:21). "And he that keepeth his commandments abideth in him, and he in him" (1 John 3:24a). Love rejoices to obey the loved one. To love, no command is grievous, for love is eager to do whatever the loved one asks. Thus, a true lover of God rushes to do His will, but the person who only pretends to love Him, or who presumes to do so, does not want to keep His commands. Rather, he feels that because he is no longer under the law, he has the liberty to disobey and break the Lord's commands. Further, as John Wesley expressed it, this presumer is less zealous of good works, less careful to abstain from evil or watch his own heart and tongue, and is not in fear of the wrath of God. It is true that his whole life has changed in that he fancies himself to be at liberty, traveling an easy path to Heaven. He surely cannot have the testimony or witness of his own spirit that he is a child of God. Nor can he be conscious of having the marks of a Christian, for they are not present. Lowliness, humility, meekness and obedience are foreign to him.¹⁴¹ Then the Spirit of the God of Truth cannot bear witness to a lie and testify that he is a child of God, for he is of his father the devil! Well might he be urged in the words of John Wesley:

Discover thyself, thou poor self-deceiver! -
 thou who art confident of being a child of
 God; thou who sayest, 'I have the witness
 in myself,' and therefore defiest all thy
 enemies. Thou art weighed in the balance

and found wanting; even in the balance of the sanctuary. The word of the Lord hath tried thy soul, and proved thee to be reprobate silver. Thou art not lowly of heart; therefore thou hast not received the Spirit of Jesus unto this day. Thou art not gentle and meek; therefore thy joy is nothing worth; it is not joy in the Lord. Thou dost not keep his commandments; therefore thou lovest him not, neither art thou partaker of the Holy Ghost.¹⁴²

It is certain and evident that the Spirit of God cannot bear witness with the spirit of such a one, that he is a child of God. The presumer must first know himself as he is and receive the sentence of death in himself, that he might be made alive unto Christ. Then shall his sins be forgiven him, and his faith shall make him whole.

The True Witness and Presumption. It has been shown how a man presuming only to have the witness of the Spirit can be shown to be false in his presumption. But how may one who has the real, the true witness, distinguish it from presumption? The answer lies in the inherent, obvious, essential difference between the two which, if the spiritual senses are in tune with God, may be easily perceived. For the true witness and presumption stand in contrast like the day and night, or like spiritual light and spiritual darkness.

It is not possible to describe certain rules or marks by which man may say he has heard the voice of God. John Wesley stated:

Even those who know Him best cannot give a philosophical account of it. Suppose when Paul answered before Agrippa, the wise Roman had said, 'Thou talkest of hearing the voice of the Son of God. How dost thou know it was his voice? By what criteria, what intrinsic marks, dost thou know the voice of God? Explain to me the manner of distinguishing this from a human or angelic voice?' Can you believe, the apostle himself would have once attempted to answer so idle a

demand? And yet, doubtless, the moment he heard that voice, he knew it was the voice of God. But how he knew this, who is able to explain? Perhaps neither man nor angel.¹⁴³

It is reasonable to believe that when God speaks to a soul saying, "Thy sins are forgiven thee", He intends that that soul should know His voice, or else He would say it in vain. And He has the power to do whatever He intends to do. Further, according to John Wesley, the soul to whom God speaks is absolutely assured that the voice is the voice of God, though, having the witness in himself does not mean that he will be able to explain it to someone who does not have it.¹⁴⁴ In fact, the Scriptures say, "Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged" (I Corinthians 2:14).

Finally, said John Wesley, he who has the witness in himself may know that this is true, know that his spiritual senses are rightly disposed and in tune with God, by the witness of his own spirit. If he has the fruits of the Spirit, he shall know by them the witness of the Spirit of God.¹⁴⁵ The immediate fruits of the Spirit are found in Galatians 5:22,23. The outward fruits of the Spirit are the obedience of God's commands, a life of love toward one's fellowmen, and the answer of a good conscience. And the witness of man's spirit with that of God's Spirit, a joint confirmation, will reveal to him if he is presumptuous.

B. The Witness in Relation to Delusion

By the same fruits of the Spirit men are able to distinguish the voice of God from any delusion of the devil. The devil will not

soften hearts to repentance, melt them before the love of God and humble them before Him. Satan would not want man to turn from his own work of sin. As John Wesley expressed it, Satan would not cause man to love his neighbor and do good to those who despitefully use him, nor bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. Therefore, if a man's spirit bears him witness that his life is holy, then as surely as holiness is from God, and sin is of the devil, that man has the witness of God's Spirit within.¹⁴⁶ It is the voice of the Son of God Who came to destroy the works of the devil!

And ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and because no lie is of the truth. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God; every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not Jesus is not of God: and this is the spirit of the antichrist . . . in the world already. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he who is not of God heareth us not. By this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning his Son. We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the evil one. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. (I John 2:20,21; 4:2,3,6; 5:7,10, 19,20).

There is no delusion here, but a definite knowing of the things and the voice of God. And still the Lord makes it plainer:

My little children, let no man lead you astray: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. he that doeth sin is of the

devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. . . .he that loveth not abideth in death. But whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him? . . .love in . . .deed and truth (I John 3:7-10, 14b, 17, 18b).

There is no room for delusion here, for man knows his own heart, and the deeds of his life. And ". . .if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things" (I John 3:20), but "if our heart condemn us not, we have boldness toward God" (I John 3:21). Jesus told the Jews that His works testified of Him; so man's works witness whether he is born of God.

To the man who is deluded by Satan the Word of God will mean nothing. For though the Word is truth, it is the Spirit of Truth Who makes it the Living Word. Satan is the Father of all liars and is a liar himself! Samuel Chadwick declared that man must have an interpreter, an infallible teacher, a trustworthy guide, and the interpreter of God's Word is the Spirit of Truth.¹⁴⁷ To quote Chadwick:

The mere grammarian cannot find it, nor the controversialist explain it. The critic cannot know its secret, nor the carnal mind perceive it. The natural man cannot possess it. But the spiritual man who has the Spirit within him can see, for the Spirit that revealed illumines; and He that inspired the Word can interpret it.¹⁴⁸

Further, asserted Chadwick, the work of Satan is to cause God's Word to be scoffed at, cursed and ridiculed. But the Spirit of Truth honors the Word of Truth, consenting to be tried by it.¹⁴⁹ Illuminations

from Him are in harmony with the Word, but suggestions from Satan clash immediately with it. To those who are convinced by Satan that they have assurance of salvation, the Holy Spirit brings conviction, challenge, and condemnation. There is no transformation of their lives; they are not led by Him. But, as Brengle described Satan's work:

. . .instead of leading 'into all truth',
he leads the unwary soul into deadly error;
instead of directing him on to the highway
of holiness, and into the path of perfect
peace, where no ravenous beast ever comes,
he leads him into a wilderness where the
soul, stripped of its beautiful garments of
salvation, is robbed and wounded and left
to die, if some good Samaritan, with patient
pity and Christlike love, come not that way.¹⁵⁰

However, the sons of God are led, by the Spirit of Truth, into the deep things of God which are revealed by no other means than the Spirit Himself. "For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him? even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God" (I Corinthians 2:11). Man knows God, and he knows that he knows Him because man has an anointing of the Holy Spirit Who takes of the things that are God's and reveals them unto him. Said Chadwick: "Our wisdom cannot discover Him; He is not discovered but received, not achieved but believed; and the things of God are not taught but revealed."¹⁵¹ He Who has the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit, then, shall discern the voice of his Good Shepherd, and shall not be deceived by the voice or the wiles of the Evil One.

C. The Witness in Relation to Conscience

According to Walker, when the Holy Spirit witnesses that a man is a child of God, He begins to influence conscience. However defective may be some of the intellectual powers, the conscience will be enthroned and the affections will receive new life; and these moral powers raised by faith to lead the soul, will determine motives and will. Righteousness and the love of God will be manifested in different phases, and fruits will be matured in different degrees and qualities, but in the life of every Christian conscience and love will rule.¹⁵²

For our glorying is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and sincerity of God, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we behaved ourselves in the world (II Corinthians 1:12).

Such is the voice of every true believer in Christ as long as he walks in the life of faith and love.

Conscience Defined. According to John Wesley, to remember or bear witness to either past or present is only one office of conscience. Its main office is to excuse or accuse, to approve or disapprove, to acquit or condemn. It is Scriptural because it is the word which the Spirit of God chose to use in the inspired Word. And, according to the way it is usually used there, especially in Paul's Epistles, it may be understood to be, in every soul, a faculty or power of perceiving what is right or wrong in one's own heart or life, in his tempers, thoughts, words, and actions.¹⁵³ H. Orton Wiley defined conscience thus:

Conscience . . . is the self apprehending the world and thereby distinguishing itself from the world; . . . is the self apprehending God and thereby distinguishing itself from God. It knows further that as a person it is made for fellowship with the Supreme Person.¹⁵⁴

And Wiley quoted Dr. Bresee as saying it is a "vital, concrete personal Presence, and it cannot exist without a Personal Object in the timeless and eternal order."¹⁵⁵ Further, Wiley stated that:

. . . conscience . . . is . . . a judge presiding over a court, deciding if this desire, affection, purpose, or moral deed is in accordance with moral law and therefore right. When it decides, a feeling corresponding to the judgment follows, either causing the person to act in accordance with the feeling and decision, or preventing him from acting out of harmony with them.¹⁵⁶

Conscience as the Regulative Factor in Christian Experience.

Conscience is an integral part of vital religious experience. Paul stated, "But the end of the charge is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned" (I Timothy 1:5). Thus, Wiley affirmed, Christian experience should be a stream of love from a pure heart regulated by a good conscience, and kept flowing by unfeigned faith in Christ.¹⁵⁷

Conscience and the Law. Wiley asserted that conscience derives its authority from the law, enforcing the requirements of the law, for it is the law of God which gives validity to the decisions of conscience. Its decisions are always from a just, incorruptible judge, and the law by which it abides is the inner moral law of man's nature. However, its decisions will not always be in accord with reason, for man's moral being is perverted because of original sin. For this reason God has given man an external law - His Word. Man's moral judgment is

true only in that it is enlightened by God's Word, so the Scriptures are the only authoritative rule of faith and practice. A good conscience is one enlightened by God's Spirit of Truth, thus always deciding according to the standards of God's Word.¹⁵⁸ Thus, the Scriptures state, "in a pure conscience" (II Timothy 1:3), "from an evil conscience" (Hebrews 10:22), "conscience. . . defiled" (Titus 1:15), "seared in their own conscience" (I Timothy 4:2), and "conscience being weak" (I Corinthians 8:7). H. Orton Wiley stated:

In its objective sense, conscience may be distorted by ignorance or vice, and so form erroneous judgments; and as subjective, it may justify and bring peace as the effect of goodness; or it may condemn by the pangs of remorse. . . . earlier moralists spoke of it as the *synteresis* (*syntaresis*) or 'inner guard' which kept watch over the hidden sources of the will.¹⁵⁹

Thus, a good conscience is one void of offence, for in one Scripture Paul stated, "I have lived before God in all good conscience" (Acts 23:1), and in another he said, "Herein I also exercised myself to have a conscience void of offence toward God and men always" (Acts 24:16).

The Intimate Relation Between the Witness and Conscience. When Paul asserted his love for the Hebrews, his "kinsmen according to the flesh" (Romans 9:3), he declared that his conscience was "bearing witness . . . in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 9:1). Such a statement implies an intimate relation between the Holy Spirit's abiding witness and conscience. The power to distinguish between right and wrong, as has been said, inheres in every sane mind. Said Steele, "On questions relating to immutable morality all such minds agree in their decisions, such questions being few and theoretical, not modified by circumstances."¹⁶⁰ These questions are such as, "Is it right to punish the innocent?"

And Steele went on to say that all self-evident truths are the activity of God in the human spirit, so that the moral intuitions, immutable and invariable, are the voice of the Spirit immanent in all men irrespective of regeneration or indwelling. In a sense the Spirit of God is upholding nature, but men are not conscious of this immanent substratum of their being. However, when the Holy Spirit is bestowed upon the believer, he is conscious of His presence within, just as Paul was. The effect is a marvelous addition to the power that impels toward righteousness, and a clarified moral perception. For the conscience has a three fold power: (1) discrimination, (2) impulse toward the right, and (3) after the act, approval or disapproval, according as the act is right or wrong. The Holy Spirit's work intensifies these functions, the second more than the first, and the third more than the second.¹⁶¹

The maintenance of a good conscience toward God is essential to the life of faith, and so to the constant witness of the Spirit. The believer must be satisfied with nothing less, for it is within his reach. Even the Old Testament saints had the witness that they pleased God. Of course, a good conscience means an unaccusing conscience, as has been pointed out, not the assurance that man is exempt from misjudgments. It is the consciousness that his intentions and aims are unselfish and holy. And, according to Steele, true spirituality cannot exist without scrupulous conscientiousness and the will to do right at any cost. If their lives are what they ought to be, believers will find as the Christian life goes on, that the testimony of conscience and the voice of the Holy Spirit become identical. In nature,

conscience is the activity of God's Spirit as the Creator and Preserver; in regeneration and sanctification the Spirit acts as the Reconstructor of what sin defiled.¹⁶²

The relation of the Holy Spirit to conscience in the work of regeneration and sanctification is interesting to note. Steele pointed out that man's spirit must be the holy of holies in which God dwells, and his conscience must be the ark of the covenant which carries God's law, for man was created to be God's temple. The scheme of redemption, then, must refer to the purifying of the conscience, since sin defiled that sacred ark and rendered it offensive to God.¹⁶³ In his letter to the Hebrews, chapter nine, verse nine, Paul intimates that Mosaism did not make him that did the service perfect, as touching the conscience, but exhorts the believer to draw near, having his heart "sprinkled from an evil conscience" (Hebrews 10:22). Said Steele, the conscience is relieved of guilt through faith in Christ's atonement, and afterwards prompts obedience, being the spiritual dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. Here He guards carefully the living law in the heart, constantly witnessing to the believer that he is a child of God.¹⁶⁴ Wesley affirmed that peace, the fruit of the Spirit, can dwell only with a conscience void of offence; and that holiness, the work of the Spirit, is witnessed to by the conscience, or man's spirit.¹⁶⁵

It should be noted here that whereas it has been previously stated that the Word of God is the guide of conscience, it is also stressed and understood that this Word must be correctly understood through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, before it can be perfectly followed. For it is impossible that man should walk by a rule, not

knowing what it means. But only the Spirit, as He dwells within, can so illumine the Scriptures that man may understand and apply them to himself. Thus, a man must first meet God's requirements for sonship before he can have this teaching Spirit. By faith he receives the Holy Spirit ^{Who} brings his soul into entire agreement with God's perfect, holy law, and his thoughts into captivity to obedience to Christ.

Safety Guards Respecting the Witness and Conscience. Steele pointed out that safety guards need to be set up against the danger of a fanatical conscience, which is sometimes associated with extreme and erroneous views respecting the witness and guidance of the Spirit. It should be remembered that the Holy Spirit dwelling in and witnessing to the heart, does not replace the activity of reason, judgment, and conscience in deciding practical questions. While the Holy Spirit's witness to adoption, including pardon, is direct and infallible when corroborated by the fruit of the Spirit, His guidance in the conduct of life is connected with the Bible, common sense, divine leading, and godly judgment. His guidance will not collide with the Bible, and if it seems to, the Bible should be obeyed. His office is to create and conserve holiness, so that He will never lead into sin, nor agree with a conscience hardened to sin, nor lead to doctrines belittling sin by denying its exceeding sinfulness and certain punishment. He will rather prick conscience and convict, leading to repentance. He will not allow a substitute for the new birth and holiness either. And of course He will not deny the deity and holiness of Jesus Christ.¹⁶⁶

In practical matters, when fallible intellect and coarse conscience

lead to erroneous conclusions, it is then a species of fanaticism to ascribe the conclusions to the Spirit's witness or guidance. Steele declared: "It is a form of fanaticism to consider conscience as infallible beyond the sphere of motives, dispositions, and principles, and to insist on infallibility in all practical decisions and in the realm of mutable ethics."¹⁶⁷ And he went on to the thought that it is self-deception to believe that the decisions of intellect in respect to all moral subjects are always right and authoritative. And it is an analogous mistake to insist that the Holy Spirit's infallibility, manifested in His direct witness to adoption and entire sanctification, be carried into all questions of daily life, when the questions actually involve intellectual research and practical reason.¹⁶⁸

The Relation Between the Witness of Man's Spirit and Conscience.

If a man is to have a conscience void of offence before God, he must have a true knowledge of himself, both of his heart and life, inward disposition and outward conversation. And he must know if his heart and life agree with the Word of God. If they do not, his conscience must be an evil one, but if they do, and he has an inward perception of this, then his conscience is a good one. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit" (Matthew 7:18). As the believer's heart is, then, so is his life. If they are conformed to God's commands he may say with the apostle:

For our glorying is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and sincerity of God, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we behaved ourselves in the world (II Corinthians 1:12).

This includes every thought, word, and deed, every use of man's powers and faculties, and every talent he has received. Wesley asserted:

. . .it implies . . .that we do, in fact, speak and do all to the glory of God; that all our words are not only pointed at this, but actually conducive thereto; that all our actions flow in an even stream, uniformly subservient to this great end; that, in our whole lives, we are moving straight towards God, and that continually; walking steadily on in the highway of holiness, in the paths of justice, mercy, and truth.¹⁶⁹

And this is to be done "in the world", not only among God's children, a comparatively little thing, but among the devil's children also.

They war against God's children's souls, seeking to bring them again into the snare of the devil. Therefore, the sons of God cannot behave themselves in holiness and godly sincerity by any natural strength of understanding or knowledge, or good sense, good nature, or good background. Paul himself, with all the advantages of training and education he enjoyed, could not be holy in his natural state. "Not in fleshly wisdom, but in the grace of God" alone can man converse with good conscience in the world. He can attain to that end only in the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit "who witnesses to him and works in him both to will and to do God's good pleasure. Said Wesley, "Now is this the proper testimony of our own spirit: even the testimony of our own conscience, that God has given us to be holy of heart and in outward conversation."¹⁷⁰ Thus, the witness of man's spirit and conscience are identical. If man produces the fruits of God's Spirit, he has a good conscience, and his own spirit witnesses to that fruit; but if he produces the works of the flesh, then his conscience is evil, and his spirit must witness to that, instead.

The Joy of the Witness of Man's Spirit, or Conscience. It is easy to see that the man who has the witness of a good conscience, the witness that he is bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit, will have joy evermore. God's Spirit bears witness with his spirit that he is bought with the blood of the Lamb and that God loves him. And the same Spirit causes him to love God, and for Christ's sake to love his neighbor. He has the witness that the mind of Christ dwells in him, and that through Christ he is renewed in the image of God. Wesley expressed it that through the light which the Holy Spirit pours upon it, conscience bears witness that man walks worthy of the vocation wherewith he was called, and that through the Spirit's inspiration all man's works are wrought in God.¹⁷¹

This joy is not a natural joy, for it abounds ever more, in pain, sickness, affliction as well as prosperity, and in physical want and tribulation. In fact, said Wesley, "it may be stronger in these cases than in hours of ease and enjoyment."¹⁷² And Wesley went on to say that this joy does not arise from any blindness of conscience, inability to discern between good and evil. Rather, until spiritual senses are fitted to discern good and evil keenly, man is a stranger to this joy. Now every trace of sin is visible. Neither does this joy arise from callousness of conscience. There is a numbed insensibility of a hardened conscience from which a kind of joy (in the freedom to sin) may arise; but the Christian's joy is in the tender, sensitive conscience which he could never have without the indwelling of God's Spirit. The joy of loving to obey the commandments of God, of loving God Himself in holiness of heart, of running with strength the course He has set

before him - this is the joy of a good conscience, joy in the Holy Spirit!

D. Summary

It is important that the joint testimony of God's Spirit and man's spirit be clearly distinguished, in the minds of both Christians and non-Christians, from the presumption of a natural mind, from the delusion of the devil, and from conscience.

Concerning presumption, the Scriptures describe very plainly the circumstances going before, accompanying, and following the genuine witness of the Spirit of God with the spirit of the believer. A little reflection upon the Word will reveal if the marks of the witness are or ever were found in the soul. Further, When God speaks to the soul in the true witness, He intends that it should hear, and will cause it to hear. And His Spirit will witness with man's spirit that he has the fruit of the spirit, evidence of His indwelling Presence. Thus, either presumer or Christian may discover if the witness he claims is true.

By the same fruits of the Spirit men are able to distinguish the voice of God from any delusion of the devil. For the fruit of the Spirit is manifestly different from the works of the devil, or flesh, and man knows which life he is living. Man's spirit bears him witness if his life is holy, and if the Spirit illumines and honors God's Word within him.

In the life of him who has the witness of the Spirit, conscience and love will rule. Christian experience is regulated by a good conscience which the Holy Spirit enlightens by God's Word, and which de-

cides in favor of its standards. The Spirit's witness is dependent upon the maintenance of a good conscience toward God; and if their lives are what they ought to be, believers will find as the Christian life goes on, that the testimony of conscience and the voice of the Spirit become identical. This is the proper testimony of man's spirit or conscience, that God has sanctified him and he produces the fruits of the Spirit. The Christian's joy is in the tender, sensitive conscience produced by the indwelling Spirit of God.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A. Summary

The purpose of this study was to present the nature, evidences, and validity of the witness of God's Spirit to regeneration and to entire sanctification, and thus to secure a right understanding of the Christian doctrine of Assurance. It was also the purpose of this study to prove that the witness is both Scriptural and experiential, as well as essential.

In chapter two it was found that assurance is the persuasion or confidence of a believer in Christ that he is a child of God. It was also found that this assurance is given through the direct witness of the Spirit of God to our adoption, following justification. It was also found that those who have been born of the Spirit become candidates for baptism with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit witnesses to this work as well. It was proven that the life of true assurance is possible, and that the sources of this assurance are two-fold: the witness of God's Spirit, and the witness of man's spirit.

In chapter three it was found that by the witness of God's Spirit is meant the inward evidence of the forgiveness of sins and the acceptance with God which the Holy Spirit reveals directly to the conscience of the believer. It was also found that there is much Scriptural evidence for the witness of God's Spirit. Concerning the nature

of this witness, it was found to be distinct; personal, immediate, variable, and valid. It was also found to be intermittent in carnal, unstable Christians, and to be constant in those entirely sanctified. The Spirit's witness may be lost, it was found, through sin and ignorance. And it was found that this witness is both a privilege and a duty of appropriation, and that it is very real, though it is mysterious.

In chapter four it was found that the witness of God's Spirit is both direct and indirect. The Holy Spirit witnesses directly to man's adoption and to man's entire sanctification. But He also witnesses, it was found, indirectly through the result of the work He has wrought within. It was found that the fruits of the Spirit are not a result of His witness, but of His regenerative work. It was also found that when man sees that he is producing the fruits of the Spirit, he finds the witness of his own spirit that he is a son of God. It was also found that both witnesses are necessary.

In chapter five it was found that the joint testimony of God's Spirit and man's spirit may be clearly distinguished from the presumption of a natural mind, from the delusion of the devil, and from conscience. It was found that the Scriptures describe very plainly the circumstances going before, accompanying, and following the genuine witness of the Spirit of God with the spirit of the believer, and that a little reflection upon the Word will reveal if the marks of the witness - the fruit of the Spirit - are or ever were found in the soul. By the same fruits of the Spirit men are able to distinguish the voice of God from any delusion of the devil. The Spirit's witness is dependent upon the maintenance of a good conscience toward God; and if

their lives are what they ought to be, believers will find as the Christian life goes on, that the testimony of conscience and the voice of the Spirit become identical.

B. Conclusions

1. The Christian doctrine of assurance is Scriptural, and the life of assurance is possible.
2. Two sources of assurance are necessary: the witness of God's Spirit, and the witness of man's spirit.
3. The nature of the witness is such that every Christian may have and recognize it immediately.
4. Christians may accept the Spirit's witness as real and valid.
5. The witness of God's Spirit is limited to intermittency in carnal Christians because they are double minded and unstable.
6. Other than mental disorders, sin is the ultimate cause for failure to receive or keep the witness of God's Spirit. Ignorance leading to sin is a secondary cause.
7. The constancy of the Spirit's witness plus abundant fruit assure of Christian maturity or entire sanctification.
8. The Spirit's direct witness, to adoption and to entire sanctification is a privilege, is conditional, and is retractable.
9. One may distinguish between the witness of God's Spirit and presumption, and the witness of God's Spirit and delusion.
10. The testimony of conscience and the witness of God's Spirit can and should become identical.
11. The witness of God's Spirit brings joy, peace, victory, and evangelistic fervor.

C. Suggestions for Further Study

1. The work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the witness of the Holy Spirit to the birth, baptism, anointing, and sealing with the Spirit.
2. The terminology of Assurance.
3. A comparison of the Wesleyan and Calvinistic interpretations of the doctrine of Assurance.
4. A comparison of the Wesleyan and Calvinistic interpretations of the doctrine of Eternal Security.

FOOTNOTES

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