

MAKING ROOM FOR THE SPIRIT TO INFILL

By David L. Burris

For the serious Bible student – the present operation of the Holy Spirit is a subject most complicated. Once we understand that the era of the supra-natural miraculous gifts has expired, we wonder at the still open promised Gift of the Holy Spirit – what can it be? Is the gift of promise an arrangement natural or is it something supernatural? Moreover, because ideas have consequences, the Modern Debate as to Spirit Indwelling has major implications potentially invasive of God's Other Gift of Human Free Will – Are our conceptual choices limited to Identity versus Entity & Spiritual Influence versus Spiritual Intervention?

Jim Puterbaugh at the 1982 FCC Lectures delineated three discernable approaches & arguments to the discussion. The first position has been captioned as the **Simplistic Argument** because the Gift of the Spirit is seen simply as the Holy Spirit Himself being given both literally & personally; Its adherents believe their position requires no deeper discussion of the Divine method and in debate do not offer any extra insight. The second position Puterbaugh offers for consideration is delineated due to its Deductive Rationale & defense in two-part logic. The **Deductive Argument** is usually expressed along these lines: 1) Neither God or Christ dwell personally in us. 2) As God & Christ dwell in us through the Holy Spirit, so the Holy

Spirit dwells in us through His agent, the Word of Truth. In finishing his 1982 remarks - Brother Puterbaugh advanced another third approach – an opinion outlined ten years before by Robert Turner in a previous 1972 FCC Lecture on Romans 7 & 8 – **The Definition Approach.**

Robert Turner suggested scripture on the subject of indwelling is best harmonized by focusing on our definition of terms. Brother Turner stated: “The indwelling of the Spirit (is) as a means of describing the close fellowship that exists between God & His creatures who earnestly desire and endeavor to ‘partake of the divine nature’ (2nd Peter 1: 4)... The Greek word ‘dwell’ (*oikeo*) in Romans 7: 18 – 20 is defined as: ‘The dwelling of sin in man denotes its dominion over him... Paul can speak in just the same way, however, of the Lordship of the Spirit’.”

Brother Puterbaugh connects with Brother Turner and follows through with these observations: “In Romans 7 sin controls the persons in whom it indwells. The question of whether the ‘sin’ is ‘literally’ inside the body is not a relevant question. Does sin have a ‘geographical’ location within a person? Or does sin have ‘fellowship’ with a person? Romans 8 is not affirming the “geographical” location of the Holy Spirit. It is affirming that the person who has obeyed God’s word (Romans 8: 4-8) is in fellowship with the Holy Spirit.”

By the standard of scripture – the comparative strength and weakness of the first two indwelling arguments are obvious.

There are several Greek words for “spirit” and their meaning in each case is to be determined grammatically by sentence structure & contextually by verse. According to Vine’s Expository Dictionary - PNEUMA in primary meaning designates spirit qualities invisible, immaterial, & powerful; PHANTASMA – is always in meaning as an apparition usually utilized when needful to distinguish between the words for spirit & soul. Both of these terms are applied to refer to the Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost – depending on the context. Even a detailed verse topical analysis of “abiding”, “dwelling”, & “indwelling” awards equal weight to both the simplistic & deductive arguments. However, an expository sub-topic study of verses regarding – the body a living sacrifice & a temple(2nd Cor 5:1-4), grieving the Spirit(Ep. 4:30), the Spirit’s Leading(Galatians 5: 16-18) & Prevenient Grace in Drawing(John 6: 44) - seriously call into question the “word only” deductive argument. Moreover, in 1st Cor 6:18-19 the Apostle Paul explains the indwelling issue from the factual indicative to the imperative command – whereas “word only” proponents reason oppositely – compliance being conditional to indwelling.

Historically, these two positions were of a classic existential debate with Socrates & Aristotle differing as to how the heart or emotional center changes – to be (good), is to do (good) or to do, is to be. Similarly, The First Protestant Martin Luther – Presupposing Augustine on Original Sin – “proved” imputed righteousness by way of the counter-factual test. Likewise, Calvinistic Reformers followed with the 5 Tenet TULIP – all of

which are indwelling interdependent. According to Calvinism - only the indwelling holiness of Deity Itself can overcome the total moral depravity inherent in the creature's fallen nature.

Unfortunately, those scriptures seen as supporting both of these arguments have been historically weaponized – sowing much discord in the brotherhood. Accepting this partial truth of binary choice in moral philosophy & received religion has been of great injury to the 1st Century Restoration Movement and specifically as regards the churches of Christ during the last century. In the early 20th Century R.H. Boll of the Gospel Advocate – convinced the human heart as unregenerate - preached a Semi-Pentecostalism; In the late 20th Century Tom Roberts in *Neo-Calvinism in the Churches of Christ* wrote of several evangelists preaching a reformed version of imputed righteousness.

In my opinion, the argument against “Word Only” is correct but the argument for the “Simplistic” explanation falls short. It seems to me that both parties are engaged in a textual “Amplification” of the original meaning – a tendency for which Tertullian warned of in the 2nd Century – a process by which we cloth excessive layers upon the Body of Truth.

Regarding this controversy, it is beyond my comprehension that those of the Restoration Heritage have not defaulted to the Three-Tiered Decision Science @Abductive Inference.

Furthermore, I find it very strange that I cannot find a single church commentator who points to the audience addressed for

the most likely original understanding of “Indwelling Deity.” To find these answers I will direct to Renovare’s Chris Webb’s John 1: 1 comments: “In Greek Culture *The Word* would be understood both intellectually & spiritually – dwelling far above the grimy realities of this earth...*The Logos* not as some impersonal force but as a person, one who lives & brings life, one whom we might enter into *relationship*.” Therefore, it is my conclusion, that the **Word Plus** or “Definition Approach” putting emphasis on the **Fellowship Relationship** is the best & most likely interpretation of the Biblical terminology of **Holy Spirit Indwelling**.

By the standard of outcome – The Fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5 – all three arguments & approaches have merit. However, if the Christian is objectively not being Fruitful – with high probably it is because they have not been **Making Room For The Spirit!**