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THE HOLY SPIRIT TESTIFIES WITH THE CHRISTIAN'S SPIRIT THAT HE IS A CHILD OF GOD.

BY CHARLES HARRIS NASH, D.D., GREENSBORO, N. C.

“ἀντὶ τὸ πνεῦμα συνμαρτυρεῖ τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν ὅτι ἐσμὲν τέκνα θεοῦ.”—
Romans, 8:16.

THE SPIRIT HIMSELF TESTIFIES WITH OUR SPIRIT THAT WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD.

To *whom* do these two spirits testify? Every interpretation that I have seen makes the testimony here *subjective*, in the *Christian's heart*. Some early Protestant interpreters were influenced partly by Roman Catholic interpreters who denied the scriptural authority for a personal consciousness of salvation. Naturally, Protestant interpreters would be inclined to the *subjective* interpretation and find here a proof text for their position and contention. The minds of some would be filled with the thought of the preceding context, which does give the *subjective* influence of the Holy Spirit in the Christian's heart, and would find here in this veres confirmation of previous teaching. I humbly submit a different, *objective* interpretation, and beg for a fair, faithful consideration, remembering that God strangely sometimes “withholds these things from the wise and prudent and reveals them unto babes” in Christ. “A little child shall lead them.” I gratefully and firmly believe in the “witness of the spirit” in the heart of the Christian, and find this distinctly revealed in the preceding verse, “For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” This “spirit of adoption” is in the heart of the Christian, and abides there, and is allsufficient, convincing *him* that he is a child of God and leading *him* to cry to God in loving assurance, “Abba, Father.” The following verse before us is not a “vain repetition” of testimony by the

Holy Spirit in the heart of the Christian, who has *himself* already been previously assured by the Holy Spirit of his personal relation to the Father, but is testimony to *others* that he is a child of God. A witness does not testify to *himself* to convince *himself* of a fact, but testifies to *others* to convince *them*. Here are two witnesses who testify together to the same fact and to the same persons. The personal spirit of the Christian testifies, but not to *itself*. Then neither does the Holy Spirit here testify to the spirit of the Christian to convince *him*, for the Holy Spirit is here a *co-witness*, and testifies to the same thing and to the same persons that the Christian's personal spirit testifies. "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit." WITH here means "*association*," "*fellowship*," and does not mean *in*, or *into* or *to*. If the Holy Spirit inspired the words "*συνμαρτυρεῖ τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν*" but let us be careful to ascertain their precise meaning and application and interpret strictly and faithfully in accordance with the meaning of *σύν*= "*association*," "*fellowship*," and not interpret as if the inspired words were, "*ἐνμαρτυρεῖ*," or "*προσμαρτυρεῖ*." The translation of "*συνμαρτυρεῖ τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν*" is without challenge in every version, "*beareth witness with our spirit*." What then is the meaning, force, application of Romans 8:16? The personal spirit of Paul, "*our spirit*," is the inner, conscious, spiritual being, "*the new creation in Christ Jesus unto good works*." This spirit testifies through the character, words and works of loving, self-sacrificing, saving service that Paul is a child of the loving, son-sacrificing Father in Heaven. Paul is no longer Saul, a natural son of Adam; nor a son of Abraham, a Jew; nor "*the son of a Pharisee*" in formal orthodox religion, but is an apostle or missionary of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and is born anew, "*not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*." Not only is there most manifest this most marvelous change in his own spirit, but the Holy Spirit "*beareth witness*"

with his spirit in beneficent, miracle-working power. In the Old Testament when a prophet came to Jehovah's people with a message from Jehovah he was authenticated by miracle-working power. So in the New Testament here the all-loving, son-sacrificing Father testifies to his people by miracles that the self-sacrificing, soul-saving servant of Jesus is a child of God. Since the apostolic age, after the firm establishment of Christianity, the physical miracle-working power seems no longer necessary and has ceased. Now the spirit of the Christian must testify by loving, self-sacrificing, soul-saving service, and thus manifest kinship to the son-sacrificing Father and the self-giving Son of God. Then the Holy Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God. Not now by giving us physical miracle-working power, but by the "still, small voice" impressing and convincing those to whom God sends us with the loving word of salvation that we are "born of God" and come from the Father as children of God. How precious, how beautiful, how glorious the truth! "Lo"—"lo, I am with you always." "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God." "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."