

***The Work of The Holy Spirit.* By Octavius Winslow, Edinburgh, Banner of Truth Trust, 1984, 223 pp., paperback.**

Reviewed by Gerald Guduli

Octavius Winslow (1808-1878) was one of the renowned and celebrated evangelical preachers of the 19th century. He was ordained as a pastor on July 21, 1833 in New York and later moved to England. His prolific experimental Calvinistic knowledge was a ground for earnestness of his profound preaching.¹ He was a Baptist minister but in his last years of his time he seceded to the Anglican Church. “The Work of The Holy Spirit” is one of his inspirational writings.

SUMMARY OF THE BOOK

In the very beginning Winslow thought it beneficial to portray the Holy Spirit as one person of the Trinity. The biblical evidences confirm Spirit is a distinct personality not a mere influence as claimed by others.

Octavius’s arguments on the personality of the Holy Spirit includes the following factors: the Spirit is spoken of as a Servant (Jn.15:26-27); in the same text Christ spake of the comforter as a person with the use of masculine personal pronoun, He; the inclusion of the Spirit in the ordinances of baptism (Mat.28:19) (15). Not only that but also the bible present the Spirit as being speaking (Mk. 13:11); as having a revealing power (Lk.2:26) ; spoken as a witness

¹ The Octavius Winslow Archives. [accessed , November 25, 2011].

(Acts5:32); as having knowledge (1Cor.2:10,11), and as a mediator (Rom 15:19). These proof texts show the authenticity of His personality (15,18).

Then he unfolded the biblical truths of the Divinity of the Holy Spirit. To begin with, the names of the Deity are accorded to the Spirit such as: the Lord is the Spirit; is called God in Acts 5:3-4; the evidence of parallel usage of God's name being ascribed to the Spirit. Furthermore, the attributes and works of God are also ascribed to the Spirit, for instance, His eternity, omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, and sovereignty. And lastly it is viewed as a spirit of revelation. The Spirit in this context fulfilled Christ's prophetic office. His existence is co-essential, co-equal, co-eternal with the Father and the Son. Hence as believers we cannot advance without the Spirit.

In chapter two, Winslow unfolds the manner of the spirit's work upon the soul in conversion. The Holy Spirit plays a role of a quickener. In this ungodly state of the soul, the Spirit's work is as follows; firstly, the role of the Spirit in the breathing of the spiritual life in the soul. This is the first operation to an unbelieving soul. Hence the process of this operation is what we call regeneration.

Regeneration is not being reformed outwardly or baptismal regeneration as claimed by some heretics. Conversely, regeneration is to be "born again," "born of the Spirit," "quickened by the Spirit," "created a new in Christ Jesus," "made alive," "new creature" (33). Some further phrases for this birth include: passing from death into life, turning from darkness to light, restoration of the divine image, and change from enmity to love.

When regeneration is understood in this line of inner rebirth, then baptism and Lord's Supper are mere means of spiritual nourishment. He argued that baptism does not lead someone to salvation though an individual can possess eminent spiritual gifts. Having such a carnal mind, works, and will man holistically stands in enmity against God.

In the other hand, the regenerated believer bears godly fruits such as piety in prayer, has confidence in God not in self, strength, and goodness; the renewed soul possesses and acknowledges the new Savior who is Jesus, he is marked by a new and enlarged views of the Spirit and he comes to see Christ as a Teacher, Sanctifier, Comforter and sealer. Finally a renewed man is distinguished with new spring of action such as the will that God's Word is now his rule of action, the glory of God is his aim, the love of Christ and is his motivation. All these are possible because grace has been implanted in the heart of the regenerated person who has been quickened by the Holy Spirit.

After the soul has been quickened, then the writer moved on to the third chapter to discuss the nature of the soul after conversion. He pointed out that it's not all easy when God the Spirit enters the soul of the sinner. But the soul acts like the battle field between Satan, the world and the flesh on one side and the Father, the Son, and the Spirit on the other side. This is so because there is active resistance from man's natural inclinations. He argued that this does not mean that natural inclinations are more powerful than God. However, God is omnipotent, and able to overpower the reign of sin in the soul. Convincingly he alluded to the power God used in creation and in the resurrection of Jesus through the work of the Spirit. It is an infinite power. Further he goes on to say His influence is unquenchable while His power is irresistible.

Consequently, the nature of regeneration is sometimes sudden without preparation. Despite being sudden, the growth of this divine knowledge is slow and gradual. His work is sovereign and effectual stimulated by the free grace.

The nature of this effectual call is both external and internal. The external call mostly occurs through gospel sermons and other means, while the special, direct, and effectual calling is the inward work of the Spirit known as internal call. This is necessary for salvation. Then the regenerated soul is sustained, nourished spiritually and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Holiness, denial to sin, and being reigned by grace are some of the new fruits. However Winslow objected to the notion of sinlessness of the believer. He argued that indwelling sin remains in a believer as claimed by Paul himself, “sin that dwelleth in me” (Rom.7:20). In this view Winslow concludes that in the new nature he does not give himself over sin, grace reigns not sin, sin dwells in him but does not govern, it has power but not rule and he has gained a victory over the world (77).

In the fourth chapter, Winslow designated the regenerated soul as a temple of God. It becomes the indwelling place of the Holy Spirit. This is the original state of man during creation before the fall. But after the fall the original moral image which resembled God was lost. Purity, justice, and truth were replaced by darkness, impurity, desolation and death. As well as the carnal mind was replaced by enmity against God.

Even though man was in such a state God showed love by restoring that lost glory of man. God did this through the incarnation of Jesus Christ and his death. The death which was legal, temporal and eternal marked the climax of His redemptive work and caused the church to exist. The Spirit in the soul of the believer does the following purposes such as manifestation of the Divine glory; it is ever living Spirit of all grace and comfort to the believer. Furthermore, it is

a deep and living well of all spiritual blessing as it dwells in the soul. And finally it is a permanent indwelling since it is an abiding Spirit.

In chapter five the writer unfolds the necessity and nature of true holiness which comes as a result of believer's sanctified by the Spirit. Sanctification is necessary in the life of the believer for various reasons. Firstly, holiness is the nature of God right away from the Old ... New Testament. Secondly, the work of Christ especially His death was to sanctify, pardon, and justify the believer.

In regard to the moral law, Winslow understands and defines sanctification as a growing conformity to the spirituality of the divine law. He further argued that the believer remains obliged to the law as a rule of obedience to Christ.

As pertaining to the will of God, Winslow observed that it was God's revealed will that His child should be holy; it is the revealed will of God that Jesus should walk in all things pleasing to Him. With respect to believers, it is God's will that believers should walk as obedient children. Sanctification includes a growing resemblance to the likeness of Christ. Hence the more the believer is growing like Christ, the more he is growing in holiness.

The writer also explained that sanctification varies in degrees among believers. To begin with, it led into a deeper acquaintance with the existence and power of the indwelling sin. Next it is by deepening and strengthening the divine life in the soul. Finally, the process of sanctification starts with the atoning work of Christ which lies as a foundation. The intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ pleads for and secures the sanctification of the believers.

In chapter six Winslow unveils the sealing of the Spirit in the life of the believer. In view of this work of the Spirit, a believer is like a sealed epistle. Both 2Timothy 2:19 and Songs of

Solomon 8:6 indicate the sealing of the believers. The sealing must be understood as a growth in knowledge of Christ, in sanctification of heart, in holiness of life, in an increasing and abiding moral certainty of believers' calling and election.

Consequently, sealing occurs in the following ways: First, it occurs in a sudden work of the Spirit, during conversion through different means like sermons. Second it may happen as the Holy Spirit reveals to the anxious soul the great truth that Christ is the Savior of the sinner. A third factor is that mostly the sealing is more gradual as a believer experiences the change step by step and stage by stage. There are degrees or progressive stages of the Spirit's sealing. The larger the degree we possess of the quickening, sanctifying influences of the Spirit, the more in proportion do we know of His sealing operation (141). However one must be aware that the process of sealing is not always a rejoicing state. As with David and Job joy may be absent. Once sealed, the believer will never lose the sealing of the Spirit. Every believer has a duty and privilege to seek the sealing of the Spirit which happens under God's election (143).

In the seventh chapter after a believer has been sealed he experiences the witness of the spirit. The Spirit is a witness to God's Word. On this point, Winslow states that "the Holy Ghost is deepening His work in the heart, teaching the soul more experimentally and guiding it more fully into the truth" (156).

The Spirit in witnessing to the glory of the person of Christ testifies to His supreme, absolute Deity. Next the Spirit witnesses to the personal glory of Christ as God-man. He emphasizes that Christ's humanity was pure humanity and the deity absolute Deity. Then the Spirit witnesses to the atoning work of the Christ in His priestly office. This atoning work is seen by leading the guilty, condemned, and broken-hearted sinners to rest on Jesus alone for salvation.

In the remaining two chapters Winslow concludes his writing with the Spirit as the Author of prayer and a Comforter. Winslow says when approaching God in prayer a believer must bear in mind these two things. One must focus upon the contemplation of the character of the divine existence rather than relying on his own mind. The second point is that the mind of the believer should view God in Christ.

The Spirit is the Author of any true prayer and He leads the soul to an acquaintance with its wants, He stirs up the slumbering spirit prayer, He teaches the believer to plead the atoning blood of Jesus, their relationship between God the Father and the Spirit.

Sometimes prayers are blocked and ineffective because of a wrong request, asking in wrong way, giving God a time-frame to reply to his prayer and dictating to God the mode of his answer.

As Winslow winds up his book, he concludes with the Spirit as a Comforter. He is the abiding Comforter of both the believer and the church. In times of deep sorrow, hopelessness and grief the Spirit is the only Comforter. In seasons of temptation the Spirit's role is to comfort. When sin is overcome by the Spirit is a great comfort.

ASSESSMENT OF THE BOOK

After reading Winslow's book, I have observed the following strengths. First, the genre of the book is devotional. It's so inspiring and theologically rich in content. Someone says "it warms the soul and inflames the heart of the readers."² As you read it one could feel the presence of the

² The Octavius Winslow Archives. [accessed, November 25, 2011].

Spirit. It is more like a preached sermon especially at the end of every chapter. The style of the writer was to spend some paragraphs as he drew closer to the end of a chapter addressing the reader as if in physical contact with his readers.

Second, the book is Christ-centered. From the beginning up to the very end he did not depart from the truth of the gospel which is Christ Himself. It invited the lost souls to surrender and bow down before the throne of Christ who is the only Savior of the sinner. “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shall be saved” (Rom.10:9).

Thirdly, the book is biblical which is the nature of any sound doctrine. He presented the nature of Reformed view of *sola scriptura* and that has helped his readers to avoid false doctrine. You can trace in Winslow’s book that any aspect he brings in, is justified by scriptural references. His arguments are not based on man’s knowledge but the truth of the gospel. I believe this has constituted to achieve the core objectives of this book. The usage of holy and infallible Word of God in this doctrine served as a tool to convince its readers.

Fourthly, the book being devotional in nature is valuable to both unregenerated and regenerated souls. This is so because it beckons the sinner to repentance as he realizes his depravity. After his conviction he should believe by the regeneration of the Spirit. This is the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke19:10). While to the regenerated souls it taught them to grow deeper and deeper in

their illumination with the Holy Ghost. It also enhanced their spiritual understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit. Backsliders are not spared as it strikes their souls for rejuvenating. When approached it with lowly state as well as spiritual mind and heart, this book is of great significance.

Then lastly on this list, the topics are orderly and chronologically presented. The Spirit's work from its commencement and completion in the soul are well arranged which has merited it easy to read and follow.

Personally, I do agree with Winslow in many areas of Spirit's work of convicting the soul and his subsequent roles. But just to single out one area is his interpretation on the concept of the sinlessness of believers. Man is a sinner by nature but after regeneration, the indwelling spirit sanctifies the believer daily. I am of the view that sanctification serves this purpose of cleansing the regenerated soul. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:16, "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." Paul means that regeneration is followed by daily cleansing of the soul. Furthermore Christ's high priestly prayer was in line with daily cleansing. "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Hence Winslow is correct to say that a believer after regeneration the indwelling sin remains in a believer. He argued against the dissenting view which asserts that who is born of God does not sin (75).

However, two significant aspects of the Spirit's work are missing from this book: the outpouring of the Spirit and the grieving of the Spirit. These doctrines are of great value to the regenerated soul. The book would be much better if the reader could find in it all the aspects of the Spirit's work.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it has been noted that Winslow wrote this profound and inspiring book from his heart. There is no doubt that he was himself a believer and a practical Christian. His writing is so distinct from other theological books in the sense that his purpose was to serve lost souls. Not only that but also, it aims at showing love, reverence and praises to Christ. The sinner must realize that because of his corrupt nature, he needs the Holy Ghost to plant His seed in the soul for his salvation. The believers must always be guided by the Spirit. The Spirit is really our Quickener, Indweller, Sanctifier, Sealer, Witness, Author of Prayer and Comforter leading us to Salvation. *Soli Deo Gloria.*