

## THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

BY

PATRICK J. O'MAHONY



IN Scripture there are revealed mysteries so deep as to defy man's unaided reason. Unless God himself had revealed them, man would never have come to know them. But such is the conflict between the depths of these sublime mysteries and the merely human language that cloaks them that often it seems that Scripture is proposing for our belief some impossibility. Our faith tells us that this cannot be so, but we might be tempted to think that the expression of these truths is not exact, nor what it should be. This again is not true; what is true, however, is that we have to use God-given reason to lay bare still more God's revelations. Then we see that God's revelation is in no way an impossibility and that Scripture's expression is exact. A striking example of this fact is furnished by the revealed doctrine of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. There are many passages in Scripture where we find a revelation of this mystery. St Paul writing to the Romans says 'But you live the life of the Spirit not of nature; that is, if the Spirit of God dwells in you. A man cannot belong to Christ unless he has the Spirit of Christ.' (Rom. 8, 9.) Again in the Epistle to the Corinthians we find 'Do you understand that you are God's Temple and that God's Spirit has his dwelling in you? If anyone desecrates the Temple of God, God will bring him to ruin. It is a holy thing this Temple of God which is nothing other than yourselves.' (I Cor. 3, 16-17.) In these texts and in others we are told this stupendous fact, that in a man who enjoys the state of grace the Holy Spirit dwells as in a home. That grace, in other words, *causes* the Holy Spirit to live in a man and that when grace is lost, the Holy Spirit no longer dwells in a man's soul; that by sanctifying grace the Holy Spirit is sent into a soul.

Reason immediately puts forward a difficulty. By reason we know that God is everywhere, that God is in all things in three ways, by his essence, by his power, and by his presence, that the Holy Spirit for our particular purpose is in all things. Moreover, when we say that God is present in three ways we are not speaking in metaphors

—God is really, substantially present. To give but one proof. God is the cause of being, moreover, he does not only cause a thing to be but he causes it to continue to be. The being of any creature is, as it were, a constant effect of God's causality. Hence, God's power must always be in contact with or present to his effect—*being*. Anything that is or has been, has within it God's power. But God is simple—God is his power. Therefore, in all created things God is substantially and physically present. The difficulty is that the Holy Spirit is within all men whether they are justified or not. How then can his indwelling be described as a special consequence of grace? God cannot change, he is always the same. There cannot be one kind of God in one person and another in another. To put the difficulty in more technical language, how can the Holy Spirit be sent or given to the soul that has received sanctifying grace when he is already substantially present in that soul?

St Thomas has the answer to that difficulty in the *Summa Theologica* (I, Q.43, A.3); in a previous article (Q.43, A.1) he shows that 'sending' can imply one of two things; either that someone is sent so that he begins to be where before he was not, or in so far as he begins to be in a different mode where he was before. An example may help to clarify this distinction. A man has been attending his office for many years as a clerk. In the office there is also a director of the firm. This director dies and there is great speculation in the office as to who will be sent to take his place. To their amazement they find that the new director is none other than the clerk. Now the new director cannot be said to be sent to the office in the sense that he was not there before, but he can be said to be sent in the sense that he is now there but in a new capacity or in a new mode. In a very true way a new person has come to the office, a person who was not there before. St Thomas shows that the Holy Ghost can be sent in this second way, insofar as he begins to be in a new mode where he was before. As we shall see later this implies no change in God. From this we see that it is possible for the Holy Spirit to be sent into the soul of a justified man, if grace brings it about that the Holy Spirit begins to be in that soul in a different way from that in which he was there before. We begin to see now why Scripture uses terms which mean that the Holy Ghost lives within the man who has received sanctifying grace. This is the new mode of being brought about by grace. Before the reception of sanctifying grace the Holy Ghost is within a man; after its reception the Holy Ghost *lives*

within a man. St Thomas shows that this is no mere juggling of words, that there is a special mode of the Holy Ghost's existence which is peculiar to a man in a state of grace. God is present within such a man *sicut cognitum in cognoscente et amatum in amante*. Not only does God live within the just man but he lives with him. For he is present to him as the object of his knowledge and love. In a man without grace, the Holy Spirit is present independently of that man's consciousness. He is there as one person of the inseparable Trinity, the cause of that man's being. True, he is substantially present within that man but he is not substantially present as an object which can be known and loved. The natural man may know God and then in a certain sense God may be said to be in him as the known is in the knower, but this merely expresses an ideal presence—the presence of an idea—a likeness of God in his mind. But he can have no communion with the God within. Grace makes this communion possible, it makes a man capable of consciously appreciating the God within him, it brings about a change of relationship so that God is present within him and to him as the object of his knowledge and love.

Grace alone can bring this about, grace alone can make God present in a different mode in the soul of rational man. For sanctifying grace brings about a new relationship between man and God. By grace man becomes the adopted son of God, he becomes the friend of God. Thus is God's position, as it were, changed within a man. God himself does not change, it is the man who changes. Because of the new relationship of son to Father, of friend to Friend, God substantially present within the soul now becomes someone to be known and loved. Grace gives man the right to know and to love God dwelling within him and makes him capable of knowing and loving God in the true intimacy of friends. Just as we saw in the example of the clerk it is as if a new person has been sent into the man. For God was present before by virtue of his efficient causality quite independently of the man's consciousness, now, although the same God is present still by virtue of his efficient causality, he is there as a friend, a Father, and as such, is present as someone to be known and loved, someone who has right to the man's knowledge and love, and someone to whose knowledge and love the man has a right. (Of course, the man can only be said to have this right in so far as God has given it to him.) Thus this new mode of God's presence within the soul can truly be called an indwelling and a co-dwelling. The following example may make

clearer both the change brought about by the adoption of grace and why the result of such a change is called an indwelling. Let us suppose that in one building there reside three people, a woman, her son, and another boy who is a lodger. Because of the relationship between them, the mother and her son are present to each other as the object of knowledge and love of the other. Each has a right to the knowledge and love of the other. They are said to live with each other because of this intimacy or the right to the intimacy which they have. The other boy may be just as much present to the woman as her own son, but he does not really live with her. He stays at her house in return for money. He has no such right to her knowledge and love as that possessed by her son. The woman may in actual fact come to know and love the boy and be known and loved in return, but this is, as it were, an accident; he is still merely a guest or lodger, he is present in her house by virtue of his quality of being a lodger. Her own son may be an infant who cannot yet know and love her, nevertheless the infant lives with her while the other boy does not, because the infant has a right to her knowledge and love and she has a right to his. But if the woman adopts the other boy, the whole position is changed. He is no more present to her than he was before, but now he is present as an object of her knowledge and love and with a right to her knowledge and love. This example is only a very imperfect one, but it may serve to show how grace, although not causing the Holy Spirit to be more present in the soul, causes him to be present, as it were (because the change is in the man), in a different mode. For by grace God adopts a man. This adoption gives a man a right to a common life, an intimacy with God; it gives him the right as it gave the boy to know and love God, and a right to be known and loved in return. Moreover, grace gives man the power and capacity to love God in this way. After grace, therefore, even if the man does not at once learn to appreciate the presence of the Holy Spirit within him, the Holy Spirit and the man can be said to live together as in one house.

St Thomas shows in another way (I, Q.43, A.3) how, by grace, the Holy Spirit comes to be in the soul of man. For before, although the Holy Spirit was within the man, he was not given to the man. For a thing to be given it must be able to be received or to be possessed or had. A thing is only truly possessed when the possessor can freely use or enjoy it. Now although the Holy Spirit is within

a man in his natural state, the man does not possess the Holy Spirit because he is not capable of enjoying him. Grace raises man to a supernatural state and makes him capable of a true knowledge and love of God. By grace a man possesses God by means of knowledge and love, but the choice of knowing and of loving is left to him. In this way, then, a man is given the Holy Spirit by sanctifying grace. He now has the Holy Spirit whereas before he did not have him. He can thus begin that partial enjoyment of God which will be his fully in the next life. In this way also we can distinguish between the modes by which the Holy Spirit is in the just man and in the natural man.

Although we say that the Holy Spirit becomes present in another mode, this does not, as has already been stated, imply a change in God. God is always the same, it is the man who changes. But because the man has changed from this point of view, God has changed also. A small example may do more than many words to explain how this can be. If a man wears tinted glasses the green grass may seem to be brown. If he takes off the glasses he sees that the grass is green. In the first place the grass was present to him in some brown substance. In actual fact, the grass has not changed at all. In the case of God within a man, it is as if the man were not wearing tinted glasses, but completely blind. God is present within him always, but before grace is given to him he cannot know and love God; he has not the power because he has not the right. With the reception of grace the scales fall from his eyes. He can know and love God now because he has been given the right. He may not at first—to continue the metaphor—be able to use his eyes, but already there has been a change, for he has the power to see and therefore God is present in a new way as someone who can be known and loved in an intimate fashion.

From the use of 'God' and 'Holy Spirit' in this article it can be seen that the indwelling is merely an appropriation to the Holy Ghost. The Three Persons dwell with the soul of a just man. Yet it is a very apt appropriation. For grace is a gift of God. It is, as all gifts, a sign of God's love. Grace is merely an external expression of the Holy Ghost. It is outside God what the Holy Spirit is inside God. It is then very apt that we should say that with the gift of grace, the Holy Spirit is given to man to dwell within him.