

THE BIBLE
GOD'S INSPIRED BOOK
VERSUS
DIRECT HOLY SPIRIT GUIDANCE

BY: PERRY B. COTHAM

INTRODUCTION

It is with pleasure that the work in this tract introduced to good and honest hearts who will profit from this study (Luke 8:15). No subject in times past or in our times has contained such interest suffered such misunderstanding, and caused so many departures from Truth as the operation of the Holy Spirit in the lives of men today. With the Bible as our only guide and the only source from which we may know about things here and eternal beyond the grave, sound understanding may be gained on this and every other important subject that pertains to life and Godliness (II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:3). Just as the theories and doctrines of men confuse the minds of men, so the Bible brings clarity of understanding. The Bible cannot be rightfully blamed for the confusion existing on the work of the Holy Spirit.

Brother Perry B. Cotham has been an astute student of the Bible for many years. He has been a close brother and friend of my late father, R. L. Colley, and to this writer. His many writings, extensive preaching work, and being in demand a lecturer over our nation and in many foreign lands, completely qualifies him for knowing the Truth on this subject. He has been acquainted with the real giants of our brotherhood and the debates they held on this subject for more than a half-century. He goes right to the heart of the difficulties by dealing scripturally with Acts 2:38. This is the starting point for many if not all the fallacies of today, shaded by Calvinism, on the mode of operation of the Holy Spirit upon and within the heart of man.

It is our prayer that preconceived ideas that may hinder the honest study of this subject may be laid aside. Superstition and the unproven theories of men have no rightful place with revelation, faith, and reverence, which come as a result of confinement to the Word of God (Romans 10:17)

Therefore with these thoughts before us, we commend your thinking and consideration to the study of this tract. May God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit be ever at the helm of our earthly walk as we wend our way toward the beauties of eternity!

- Gary Colley

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THE BIBLE – GOD’S INSPIRED WORD

VERSUS

DIRECT HOLY SPIRIT GUIDANCE

The Bible is the world’s most precious Book. It came from God. The apostle Paul wrote: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God” (II Tim. 3:16). This literally means that the Holy Scriptures are “God-breathed,” or “breathed from God.” The Bible is inspired in all of its parts. It did not come of human origin. The Bible is the inspired, final, complete, and perfect revelation of God – man’s only inerrant and authoritative Guide in all spiritual matters.

Many religionists, however, think that the Holy Spirit is today revealing, guiding, or in some way directing them in addition to the Word of God. They say that man needs something else above the Bible for his guidance in life. They sometimes base this conclusion on the promise that Peter gave on the day of Pentecost when he told believers to “repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38).

They think receiving “the gift of the Holy Ghost (Spirit)” meant receiving a direct indwelling of the Spirit, maybe at times to work miracles, and to give some special help or guidance, in addition to the written Word of God, or to assist them in living the Christian life. But does God reveal truths **directly** to certain ones today in addition to that already given in the Bible? If the Lord does this to all those who claim this special help, then He is the Author of confusion. But Paul declared that “God is not the author of confusion” (1 Cor. 13:33). God does not say one thing to one man and then something entirely different to some one else; God does not and cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18; Titus 1:2).

A misconception of the Holy Spirit and His work leads to all kinds of religious errors. There are great differences today relative to this subject. All that we can learn about the Spirit must come from the Scriptures, but often what the Bible teaches does not seem to matter only how one **feels** is important. The question of one’s receiving the “gift of the Holy Spirit,” therefore, has been a subject of special interest within the past few years due to the rapid rise of the Pentecostal (Charismatic) Movement. Some believe and teach that Christians now receive the miraculous gifts of the Spirit as did the Apostles and some of the early Christians. But, does this follow from the teachings of God’s Word? Hence, there is a need to have an overall view of how (in what sense) a child of God has “the gift of the Holy Spirit” today. This is the purpose of our study.

HOLY SPIRIT, A PERSON

It is of primary importance that we understand who (what) the Holy Spirit is. He is God, Deity, a divine Person, one of the Godhead (Acts 17:29). There is One God who consists of three distinct personalities: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; Hohn 4:24; 1:1-3, 14). The Holy Spirit is not a “force,” a “puff of wind,” or an “it.” The Spirit inspired men to give to us the Holy Scriptures (II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:21; John 16:7-13; I Corinthians 2:10-13; Ephesians 3:3-5; Acts 1:16; II Samuel 23:2). Thus being perfectly given, the Bible is an all-sufficient Book for man’s salvation (cf. II John 9; I Thessalonians 2:13; Galatians 1:8-9).

MEASURES OF THE SPIRIT

Christ during His personal ministry possessed the Spirit without measure (John 3:34; cf. Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38). This implies that others might possess the Spirit “by measures,” the “measure” being a portion of “power” bestowed by the Holy Spirit upon man (Luke 24:49). The New Testament mentions three “portions of power,” or “manifestations” (I Corinthians 12:7), or “measures” of the Spirit given to others.

1. Jesus promised the **baptism** of the Spirit to the Apostles to guide them into all truth (John 14:26,13; Acts 1:5,8). They received an overwhelming of the “power” of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, A.D. 33. This enabled them to speak in other languages (Acts 2:1-4, 6, 8), perform miracles to confirm the Word (Acts 2:43; 5:12; Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3-4), and to write Scripture (Revelation 1:11; 2:7).

Likewise, the Gentiles (Cornelius and his household) received “the like gift” some eight years later (Acts 10:44-47; 11:15-17) to prove that “God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34-35) and that the Gentiles could obey the Gospel, be saved, and be added to the Lord’s church upon the same terms as the Jews (Acts 2:47). Furthermore, we know by implication that the apostle Paul received this portion of power from the Holy Spirit as he “was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles” (II Corinthians 11:5; 12:12).

No one today has “the baptism of the Holy Spirit” as no one can do the miracles that the apostles did, e.g., speaking in tongues, raising the dead, etc. Therefore, Acts 2:38 does not teach that all those who repent and are baptized shall receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This portion of power given by Christ in sending he Holy Spirit served its purpose in the apostolic age by revealing the truth, confirming it, recording it, and spreading it into all parts of the world (Colossians 1:23). In A.D. 64, Paul said that there is “one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5). This is a water baptism for forgiveness of sins (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38; 8:35-39; 22:16; Mark 16:15-16). The baptism of Acts 2:38 is water baptism.

2. Certain members of the church in the apostolic age received **miraculous gifts** of the Spirit, bestowed by “the apostles’ hands” (Acts 8:14-19; Romans 1:11). Timothy had a gift by the laying of Paul’s hands (II Timothy 1:6). Nine of these gifts are mentioned in I Corinthians 12:4-11: miracles, prophecy, tongues, interpretation of tongues, etc. But all of these gifts were

to cease with the completion of God's revealed will (I Corinthians 13: 8-13; Ephesians 4:7-13), "the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). Since no apostle is living today, and those receiving them could not pass them on, no one can receive any of these miraculous gifts. Therefore, when the last apostle died and the last man died upon whom an apostle had laid his hands, all miraculous gifts ended, having served their purpose. So Acts 2:38 does not mean that all Jews and Gentiles who repent and are baptized will receive the miraculous gifts. No one has any of these gifts today. True, they were possessed by some members of the early church (Mark 16:17-18; I Corinthians 12:28-30). But no one today can perform those miracles—they have ceased!

The Holy Spirit operates upon the heart of man for his conviction, conversion, and sanctification through, or by means of, the inspired Word of God. The Gospel is God's power to save (Romans 1:16). "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul" (Psalms 19:7). One is "born again" by the Word, the "incorruptible seed" of the kingdom (I Peter 1:23; Luke 8:11). The Word of God is "the sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:17). The Word is our guide: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalms 119:105; cf. v. 130). The Word is able to save (James 1:21) and to build up (I Peter 2:2; Acts 20:32). There is no **direct operation** of the Spirit on man, over-and-above-the-Word, for his soul's salvation. This is accomplished only **through the Word given by inspired men** (Ephesians 3:3-5). The Holy Spirit, a Person, uses His Word, the instrument, to operate on the heart of man. The Spirit quickens, but only by means of the Word (John 6:63; Psalms 119:50). The Spirit leads us (Romans 8:14), but it is through the Word (Psalms 73:24). When an act is said to have been performed by a **person** and by a certain instrument, **it is clearly understood that the person did the act by means of the instrument.**

3. The Holy Spirit dwelt in the first century in the hearts of obedient children of God in a **non-miraculous** way, that is, through their obedience to the Word. Paul commanded, for example, the Ephesians to "be **filled** with the Spirit" (5:18), but in a parallel passage to the Colossians he said, "**Let the Word of Christ** dwell in you richly" (3:16). That the Spirit of God dwells in Christians is affirmed in I Corinthians 3:16; 6:19, and Romans 8:9-11. There is no denying the fact of the Spirit's indwelling. But there is a vast difference between the **fact** of the indwelling and the **method** or **manner** by which He indwells. **Is it direct or indirect?**

Three positions are usually offered with reference to the Spirit's indwelling in the Christian today: (1) The Spirit dwells in the Christians directly, without medium, separate and apart and over and above the written Word; (2) The Spirit dwells in no one today, all passages dealing with the Spirit's indwelling have reference to the miraculous manifestation of the Spirit in the apostolic age, which ceased with the completion of revelation; and (3) the Spirit dwells in the Christian through the medium of the written Word. His Law (Romans 8:2), and by one's obedience to that Word. We reject positions numbers one and two as being false, but accept as true to the teaching of the Scripture position number three, a figurative indwelling [Compare Paul's statement to his beloved friends in Philippi: "I have you **in** my heart" (Philippians 1:7.)

Alexander Campbell correctly stated:

Christians are, therefore, clearly and unequivocally temples of the Holy Spirit, and they are quickened, animated, encouraged, and sanctified by the power and influence of the Spirit of God, working in them through the truth (emphasis mine, PBC)ⁱ

There is no such idea taught in the Bible as a non-miraculous direct, personal indwelling of the Spirit in the Christian. If the indwelling is personal and direct, it would be miraculous. Scripture does not so teach, but some think that there comes a direct indwelling upon one's baptism into Christ, based upon their interpretation of Acts 2:38.

GOD AND CHRIST INDWELL

God dwells in the Christian (I John 3:24; 4:12; 4:15; II Corinthians 6:16; John 4:24). But it is through one's obedience to the Word and not that the literal being of God dwells in the body of the Christian. Also, the Bible teaches that Christ dwells in Christian (Colossians 1:27; Galatians 2:20). But how? It is "by faith" (Ephesians 3:17), and faith comes by hearing "the Word of God" (Romans 10:17). It is not literally, directly, or in some way "conjunctively," and separate and apart from the written Word. Christ dwells in Christians when His teachings control their lives. So, the Holy Spirit dwells in the Christian in the same way that God and Christ dwell in him by faith, representatively.

It is a serious mistake not to understand that spiritual truths are often set forth in Scripture in figurative language. A few examples should be sufficient to show this. In instituting the Lord's Supper, Jesus "took **bread** and blessed it and said "Take, eat: **this is my body**. Then He took "the cup, and gave thanks" and said "... **this is my blood**..." (Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19-20). But was the **bread** Christ's actual, literal **body**? And was the **fruit of the vine** (the cup) His literal **blood** in His Physical body? Of course not!

Once Jesus said to his disciples: "**I am the vine , ye are the branches**" (John 15:5). Was this literal? No thoughtful one would so affirm! Christ said to the apostle John on the island of Patmos, "...the seven candlesticks which thou sawest **are** the seven churches" (Revelation 1:20). Were the seven churches of Asia seven literal candlesticks? Rather was not this also symbolic language to describe the influence of those congregations in a world of sin? Joseph in the land of Egypt in giving interpretation to King Pharaoh's dream, said: "The seven good kine **are seven years**, and the seven good ears **are seven years**" (Genesis 41:26). The seven cattle and the seven ears of grain represented seven years. However, some want to make literal what they want to be literal, and they make figurative what they want to be figurative.

Guy N. Woods commented:

The fact that the Scriptures assert that the Spirit dwells in the Christian does not justify the conclusion that this indwelling is personal, immediate, and apart from the Word of God.ⁱⁱ

Likewise, J. W. McGarvey correctly stated:

The fact that the Holy Spirit dwells in us is no proof that his action upon moral sentiments is direct or immediate.ⁱⁱⁱ

When Paul came to Ephesus, he found certain disciples. He asked them: “Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?” (Acts 19:1-3). This question had a reference to the receiving of miraculous gifts of the Spirit by the laying on of the apostles’ hands. Finding that they needed correct teaching concerning baptism, he taught them: “When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them: and they spake with tongues, and prophesied” (vs. 5-6). However, this has no reference whatsoever to a person’s receiving any of the miraculous gifts today after water baptism, since no apostle exists to bestow the gifts. Neither are they essential to salvation.

But an example of men having the non-miraculous indwelling of the influence of the Holy Spirit in life is found in the account of the selection of seven men to serve tables in the Jerusalem church. Among the men selected was Stephen, “a man full of faith **and of the Holy Ghost**” (Acts 6:3-5). Then the apostles laid their hands on them (v. 6) to impart the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. “And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great miracles among the people” (v. 8). But this was **after** the apostles had laid their hands on him. However, he was a spiritual man prior to this (vs. 3,5). J. W. McGarvey made this observation:

The circumstances, that up to this time no miracles had been wrought, so far as we know, by any but the apostles, and that, immediately after the appointment of the seven, Stephen appears “doing great wonders and miracles among the people,” seem to indicate that they were merely full of the Holy Spirit in the ordinary way, but received miraculous powers when the hands of the apostles were laid upon them.^{iv}

David Lipscomb concurs with McGarvey:

“Full of the Holy Ghost” does not necessarily mean miraculously filled and endowed with the Holy Spirit...It most likely meant men whose hearts were fully imbued with the Spirit, and who were wise and prudent.^v

Gareth L. Reese is very clear in his explanation of Stephen being “full of the Spirit” prior to his appointment of serving tables:

“Full of the Spirit” must then mean “full of the fruit of the Spirit as respects a holy life, “men whose lives are bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit.”^{vi}

True, Luke’s account of this is the first mention of laying on hands in the early church. The expression “full of the Holy Spirit” evidently does not mean that the seven men were endowed with miraculous gifts then, but that they were under the influence of the Holy Spirit’s teaching, or who were of distinguished piety, bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit in their lives (Galatians 5:22-23). Furthermore, Philip later went to the city of Samaria and preached Christ, confirming his message by performing many miracles (Acts 8:5-13). But he did not have the power to bestow any of the miraculous gifts; only the apostles could do this (vs. 12-24).

By obedience to the inspired Word of God, therefore, the children of God have the **fruit-bearing** influence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. They do not have “the baptism of the Spirit”, or “any of the miraculous gifts” of the Spirit, or a “personal, direct indwelling of the Spirit.” As they are motivated, moved, and molded by the influence of the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit’s

teachings, the Spirit indwells. But Deity does not literally reside within their physical bodies (cf. Philippians 2:5).

David Lipscomb, commenting on the Spirit's operation through the written Word, correctly stated:

The only spiritual instruction, guidance or influence possible to man is to be gained through coming to the word of God and taking it into the heart...and guiding our feelings, thoughts, purposes, and lives by its sacred teaching. In this way the Spirit that dwells in the word, introduced into our hearts, infects, pervades, and molds our feelings, thoughts, purposes, lives.^{vii}

In his historic debate with Ben M. Bogard in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1938, the scholarly N. B. Hardman said:

But how does the Spirit operate? This is the question. My answer first, last and all the time, is that he influences through the gospel, which is God's power. The word is the medium through which the Spirit accomplishes His work.^{viii}

RECEIVING THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Now, since receiving "the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38) does not mean either (1) receiving the baptism of the Spirit, or (2) receiving the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, or (3) receiving a personal, direct indwelling of the Holy Spirit, it then must mean a metaphorical indwelling spiritually, with one receiving blessings in Christ, through the Word.

Some get the idea of a personal, direct indwelling of the Holy Spirit immediately after baptism for the forgiveness of sins, which is based on erroneous translation of the Bible. For example, the *Today's English Version* (TEV) of Acts 2:38 reads "...and you shall receive God's gift, the Holy Spirit." Likewise, the *Living Bible Paraphrased* says: "...then you also shall receive this gift, the Holy Spirit." Both are a mistranslation and are, therefore, unjustified. The forty-seven scholars of the *King James Version* (1611) said, "...and ye shall receive **the gift of** the Holy Ghost." The 101 scholars of the *American Standard Version* (1901) said "...and ye shall receive **the gift of** the Holy Spirit." Likewise, does the *New King James Version* and the *New American Standard Version*. This is the correct translation. Hence, Peter did not say that the ones baptized would receive the Holy Spirit **in Person** as an indwelling gift. Even the outpouring of the Holy Spirit's power on the apostles on the day of Pentecost was not the receiving of the **Person** of the Spirit. They received the fulfillment of the promise of the power of the Holy Spirit on that day (Luke 24:47-49).

We should compare the phrase "**the gift of** the Holy Spirit" with the phrases "**the gift of** God" (John 4:10; Romans 6:23) and "**the gift of** Christ" (Ephesians 4:7). They mean a gift **from** God and a gift **from** Christ not God and Christ **as a gift**.

ACTS 2:38 AND ACTS 3:19 COMPARED

Furthermore, if we compare Acts 2:38 with Acts 3:19, given in Peter’s second sermon, it will help us understand the meaning of “the gift of the Holy Spirit.” The two verses are parallel, having the same meaning. Note the two verses and see after a person is baptized and is forgiven of his sins, he begins to enjoy all of God’s spiritual blessings.

| Acts 2:38 | Acts 3:19 |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Repent | 1. Repent |
| 2. Be Baptized | 2. Be converted (turn again, ASV) |
| 3. Remission of sins | 3. Sins blotted out |
| 4. Gift of the Holy Ghost (Spirit) | 4. Times of refreshing from the Lord |

Thus, receiving the blessings, or “refreshing” from the Lord (a figurative expression), is the same as receiving “the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Both statements refer to receiving the spiritual blessings that follow after one is baptized into Christ and receives the forgiveness of his past sins. All “spiritual blessings” include every blessing that Christians receive in living the Christian life. Now compare Acts 2:38 and Acts 3:19 with Paul’s language in I Corinthians 12:13:

For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

The verse means that by the teaching of the Holy Spirit we are immersed in water (Romans 6:4) **unto** the remission of sins, or **into** the one body, the church, whether we be Jew or Gentile, whether we be bond or free, and have all been privileged to drink into the benefits of the **one** Holy Spirit of God. This passage of Scripture helps us to understand what receiving “the gift of the Holy Spirit” means. Evidently, it is the Spirit’s gift and refers to all spiritual blessings in Christ.

Gary G. Colley, Sr. wrote this comment:

“The gift of the Holy Spirit” is equal to the “seasons of refreshing” and refers to what the Holy Spirit gives to obedient believers. The Holy Spirit is not a “season of refreshing,” but he gives that gift... And “the gift of the Holy Spirit” or the season of refreshing,” means the Holy Spirit’s gift or the blessings of salvation in Christ.^{ix}

Therefore, **assuming** and **asserting** that Acts 2:38 means receiving a direct, personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit does not prove it! One preacher was asked, “When do we actually receive the Holy Spirit, before, during or after baptism?” The preacher replied, “Peter promised us that at baptism we are given the Holy Spirit. We are forgiven at baptism, and it is then that we receive the Holy Spirit.”^x But Peter said we receive “the gift of the Holy Spirit” after baptism.

So, as our study has shown, the Lord promises every baptized penitent believer those spiritual blessings (after pardon) from the Holy Spirit, as one lives obediently to the Word, in

the body of Christ, in this life, and **eternal life** in the world to come. This is provided, of course, that one continues to live faithfully in the Lord's service (cf. I Corinthians 9:27; II Peter 1:4-11; Revelations 2:10). "For... the gift of God is **eternal life** through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). These blessings are offered to all people through Christ. Peter, therefore, says, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children," meaning these blessings of salvation are offered for all the Jews and their descendants, "and to all that are afar off," means these same blessings are also for the Gentiles, to those of other lands, the whole human race. "Even as many as the Lord our God shall call" means that God calls by the Gospel (II Thessalonians 2:14), and that this call, to both Jews and Gentiles, will continue from generation to generation down through the ages, to the end of time. The word "For" refers back to what is mentioned in verse 38, so the two verses cannot be separated.

The statements of James W. Zachary, a pioneer Gospel preacher, confirm what we have studied concerning the direct indwelling of the Holy Spirit:

The Bible teaches that God dwells in Christians, that Christ lives in Christians, and that the Holy Spirit abides in Christians; but it does not teach that either God, Christ, or the Holy Spirit exists in any mans I the sense of real personality...The personal habitation of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit is in heaven, and they only dwell in Christians by faith and through the influence of wisely adapted means and medium.^{xi}

Yet, the receiving of some kind of direct influence of the Holy Spirit to assist the Christians, or to give some new revelation, in addition to the written Word, is the very heart and core of denominational teaching, especially among the Charismatics. For example, Ellen G. White, one of the leaders of the Seventh Day Adventist Movement, wrote: "Yet the fact that God has revealed His will to man through His Word has not rendered needless the continued presence and guiding of the Holy Spirit."^{xii}

However, no revelation or communication has come from the Holy Spirit since the last word of the New Testament was written. The Bible is complete (II Peter 1:3; Jude 3; Revelations 22:18-19).

Therefore, it is by an obedient faith that we receive the "promise of the Spirit," the Holy Spirit's blessings. As the Scriptures speak about "our common salvation" (Jude 3), even so this measure or "gift of the Holy Spirit" is common to all Christians through faith, and it is not miraculous. It is the ordinary measure and common gift of God to all who through faith, obey Him. And, thus, God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit lives today in the obedient child of God by means of the Word (cf. Galatians 3:2; 4:6).

Consequently, the indwelling of Deity in an individual is merely an expression that denotes one who is directed by and is living in obedience to the Word. It is the same idea as God walking in him and dwelling in him (II Corinthians 6:16). And Paul's command to the Ephesians to be "filled with the Spirit" (5:18) means to keep on being filled with the Spirit by means of the Word. It is not direct or miraculous (cf. Galatians 5:16; I John 4:6). The Holy Spirit is not "an influence," but He certainly exerts an influence in the believer's heart (Luke 8:15).

CONSEQUENCES OF PERSONAL, DIRECT INDWELLING TEACHING

The belief that the Holy Spirit dwells directly today often leads to all kinds of “experiences” and “feelings”. In fact, there is no end to this false doctrine if and when it is carried to its logical conclusions.

Some, however, who believe that the Holy Spirit dwells personally and literally in Christians say that by this direct indwelling, He does not do anything for them by this indwelling and that all leading, guidance, etc., is done only through the Word of God. But, if so, then why does the Spirit lie dormant in the heart of the Christian? Nevertheless, many of those who hold to this belief usually will, sooner or later, come to believe that at times the Holy Spirit **is** actually doing something to them in a **direct** way, over and above the Word of God. This comes as a natural **consequence** of the direct indwelling idea. But, if that be true, we would ask that person, “What does He do that is not accomplished through the Word of God? And how do you know that it is the Holy Spirit that is thus leading and guiding you in this direct way?” This idea of direct indwelling and guidance of the Spirit opens the door to every species of imposition as wide as the speculations of men may desire it! But the words of the Spirit are written in the Scriptures, and the Holy Spirit operates upon and within the heart of man **only** through the Word. In the Bible, the Spirit speaks to us, and He does not speak to us through any other medium (Revelation 2:7). Those who teach a direct, personal, non-miraculous indwelling and operation of the Spirit today in the heart of the Christian, apart from the Word of God and **in conjunction with the Word**, are holding to religious error. Thus, when the Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of the obedient child of God, it is an expression of speech called a **metonymy**--- the cause for the effect. The cause is named, but the effect is meant.

Hence, the three “measures” or “manifestations” of the Holy spirit to man, spoken of in the New Testament, are each called the “gift” of the Holy Spirit—namely, (1) the baptism of the Spirit (Acts 1:4; 2: 1-4; 10:44-45; 11:15-17), (2) the miraculous gifts of the Spirit bestowed on some of the early Christians by the laying on of the apostles’ hands (Romans 1:11; II Timothy 1:6; Acts 8:14-18), and (3) the non-miraculous gift of the Spirit possessed by all obedient children of God (Acts 2:38; 6:3). But all these “measures” do not mean or indicate that same **portion of power** from the Holy Spirit. The word “gift” does not tell which “manifestation” of the Spirit is under consideration. The context must determine which **gift** is meant. However, not every statement in the Bible that mentions the Holy Spirit refers to the baptism of the Spirit, or to the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. For example, one might give to one person a gift of one dollar according to his need, and that would be as much a gift as if he would give to another man a gift of ten dollars and to another a gift of fifty dollars, according to their needs.

GOD'S PROMISE TO ABRAHAM

In the long ago God made a promise to Abraham, saying, "In thus seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 22:18; cf. 12:1-3). The "seed" referred to is Christ (Galatians 3:14, 16), and this "promise" is fulfilled in this Christian age (cf. Galatians 3:26-29; Acts 13:22-23; 2:39).

Paul in Galatians 3:14 states: "That the blessings of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

Consequently, the work of the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Godhead, in man's conversion and sanctification is not a great mystery, neither is it miraculous. The Holy Spirit through the Holy Scriptures reveals the work of God in man's salvation. God the Father planned the great scheme of redemption (Ephesians 3:8-11); God the Son came into the world to execute the Father's plan by dying on the cross for all mankind (John 3:16; Philippians 2:5-11; I John 4:9-10, 14; 2:2); and God the Holy Spirit came in power to reveal the Gospel plan of salvation, to confirm it, and to record it for all future generation (John 16:13; Ephesians 3:3-5; Revelations 2:7). Thus,

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (II Timothy 3:16-17)

What more do we need? God "hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (II Peter 1:3). Hence, "If any man speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God" (I Peter 4:11; cf. II Timothy 4:1-2). The Lord promised and sent His Son Jesus Christ to save both Jews and Gentiles from their sins, by His grace, if they would obey Him (Titus 2:11; Hebrews 5:9; Revelations 22:14) Hence, we can say with David:

Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way (Psalms 119:128; cf. v. 160).

Were we grant (as some teach) that receiving "the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38) refers to some of the early Christians receiving the miraculous gifts or the Spirit (which we do not), this would in no wise cause us to believe that the Holy Spirit today personally, literally, and directly dwells in Christians, to give any additional help or guidance over and above and in addition to God's Holy Word. The Spirit indwells the child of God only through the inspired Word.

Neither does this discussion include teaching on God's Providence, the Lord's working "behind the scenes" by natural law, as it were, for the accomplishment of His purposes (cf. Genesis 50:15-20; Esther 4:13-14; Philemon 15). Nor does this study include the Spirit making "intercession for us" (Romans 8:27-28, or Christ "who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us (Romans 8:34).

There is a difference in what the Holy Spirit does to a person and what He does **for** a person. It seems that one cause of confusion in the minds of some is a failure to distinguish the difference between the providence of God and the indwelling or leading of the Holy Spirit. Providence is God's part, a blessing usually recognized only in retrospect. Man's part is to walk as the Spirit gives instruction through the Word. **Only** by this can we **know** that we are being led by the Spirit s the Father and the Son command. But receiving "the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38) means receiving every benefit of salvation available to the Christians from that day forward—such as, the privilege of prayer, the assurance given in Romans 8:28, the hope of heaven, and all other promises made to obedient children of God. All these blessings are indeed "times of refreshing from the Lord" (Acts 3:19), the Holy Spirit's gift of blessings of salvation in Christ.

Ian McPherson, a Gospel preacher, made these statements regarding this point of our study:

There are many who claim that "The gift of the Holy Ghost" refers to the Holy Spirit Himself given as a gift from God to dwell personally in the bodies of those who have been baptized..."The gift of the Holy Spirit" is a figure of speech that refers to the blessings that flow forth from the Holy Spirit as people obey the gospel.

Since the Hly Spirit is Deity, those who believe the personal indwelling idea would have to logically conclude that Christians are incarnate (i.e., God in the flesh), as Christ was. Although they do not usually admit this, it is a necessary inference because the Spirit Himself is Deity. The only incarnate person who ever lived is Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:23). It was this attribute that made Him an acceptable object of worship (cf. John 9:38).

The Scriptures are conclusive that the place of the indwelling of the Spirit is in the heart (Galatians 4:6; II Corinthians 1:22), which is the seat of intellect and emotion. In II Corinthians 7:3, Paul said to the Corinthians, "Ye are in our hearts." All of us recognize that this does not mean that either the Corinthians or their spirits were literally and actually in Paul. This was simply an expression showing how the Corinthians had embedded themselves into his mind and affected his life. Those who believe in the personal indwelling are forced into the conclusion that the indwelling Spirit works directly on the heart (intellect) of man, and therefore (by inference) they endorse the direct activity of the Spirit on the minds of believers (thus making the Word insufficient).

Acts 2:38 teaches us that when a person repents and is baptized, he receives the gift from the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the given of the gift, not the gift itself. A parallel verse is Acts 3:19 which has an identical meaning. The expressions, "The gift of the Holy Ghost" and "The times of refreshing" both refer to the blessings received through the gospel by the Holy Spirit. Neither refers to a direct indwelling of the Holy Spirit.^{xiii}

Ashley S. Johnson, a nineteenth-century preacher, in his Book, *The Holy Spirit and the Human Mind*, correctly stated the work of the Holy Spirit on the human mind by saying:

Every theory of the Holy Spirit's work in conversion and Christian growth that eliminates the thoughts of God expressed in human language and recorded in human language in the Scriptures, and that eliminates the human understanding from conversion and Christian growth, is a delusion and a snare!^{xiv}

Indeed, we must resist every effort to represent the “leading” of the Holy Spirit—in conversion, or in the life of the child of God—as a “feeling,” an “impulse,” or some other form of non-verbal communication besides, or in addition to, the inspired Scriptures. The Spirit leads, guides and directs man today only through the Word, and He indwells in the heart of the faithful child of God only through the inspired Word.

H. Leo Boles in his Book, *The Holy Spirit*, says, “...***the Holy Spirit dwells in us through His agent, the ward of truth, ... When the word of Christ dwells in Christians, the Holy spirit dwells in them, ... Neither God nor Christ dwells personally in us.***”^{xv}

CONCLUSION

To summarize, all power of the Holy Spirit exercised today on the heart of man is only through the inspired written Word of God. In this manner the Spirit indwells the Christian the same way in which God and Christ indwell. As children of God cherish the Spirit’s message in their hearts and live by it, the Holy Spirit dwells in them, and collectively in the church. Everyone who becomes obedient to the Lord receives the benefits—the blessings—provided by the Spirit in this Christian dispensation and “in the world to come eternal life” (Mark 10:30; cf. Titus 1:2; Romans 8:24-25; Revelation 22:14). These are the blessings that were to be brought by Christ our Redeemer.

The Bible closes with the gracious invitation: “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come ... And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelations 22:17). Peter on the day of Pentecost, speaking by inspiration, closed his sermon by exhorting his listeners to be saved by obedience to the will of the Lord. He urged them to submit to God’s way of salvation which he had just explained (Acts 2:40-41). We plead with all men everywhere today to do the same. “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive **the gift of the Holy Ghost**” (Acts 2:38).

So in Acts 2:38, Peter is not promising the “baptism of the Holy Spirit,” or any of the “spiritual gifts” of the Spirit, or a “direct guidance” of the Spirit over and above, and in addition to, the inspired Word of God, by a personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Bible teaches the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, but it is not in some direct, personal manner. The teaching of a “personal indwelling” is a personal opinion. Deity does not dwell in Christians personally. “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith” (Ephesians 3:17). “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17). God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit dwell in the Christian’s heart through faith and direct him by means of the inspired Word. All influence of the Spirit on the heart of man for conviction, conversion, and sanctification (edification) is only through the influence of the revealed Word of God.

The teaching of a personal indwelling of the Spirit is but the gradual opening of the door for a direct operation of the Holy Spirit. Many false doctrines in the religious world result from testimonials given by those who have, as they claim, experienced some sort of special leading from God, but no one today receives any special, direct guidance of the Spirit in addition to the

inspired Word of God. All who claim to be guided directly by the Holy Spirit, as were the Apostles of the New Testament, are deceived (Matthew 7:15).

Batsell Barret Baxter is very clear in explaining how the Holy Spirit dwells in every Christian:

The Holy Spirit dwells in us just exactly in the same way that Christ dwells in us...as you and I meditate upon God's Word, understand the teachings from God and Christ and the Holy Spirit, open our lives unto them and imbibe the spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit dwells within us... Since the Holy Spirit comes into our lives exclusively through God's Word, the Holy Spirit does not speak to us directly.^{xvi}

END NOTES

ⁱ Alexander Campbell, *The Christian System*, (Nashville Gospel Advocate Company, 1912 edition, Section VIII) p 68

ⁱⁱ Guy N. Woods, *Commentary on I John* (Nashville Gospel Advocate Company, 1954) p 286

ⁱⁱⁱ J. W. McGarvey, *Commentary on Acts* (Nashville Gospel Advocate Company, Eight Edition, 1983, of original commentary), p 143

^{iv} *Ibid*, p 76

^v David Lipscomb, *Commentary On Acts* (Nashville Gospel Advocate Company ((1896) p 73

^{vi} Gareth L. Reese, *Commentary on Acts* (Joplin: College Press, Sixth Printing, 1986) p 251

^{vii} David Lipscomb, *Salvation From Sin* (Nashville McQuiddy Printing Company, 1913) p 93

^{viii} N. B. Hardeman, *Hardeman-Bogard Debate* (Nashville Gospel Advocate Company, 1938) p. 21

^{ix} Gary G. Colley, Sr., *Christian Worker* (Austin, Vol 79, No. 11) p 2,6

^x David Thurman, *Gospel Minutes* (Ft. Worth: Vol 44, No. 16) p 4

^{xi} James W. Zachary, *The Witness Of The Spirits* (Nashville Gospel Advocate Company, reprint edition, 1954) pp 50-51

^{xii} Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ And Satan* (Nashville Southern Printing Ass'n.)pp vii, viii

^{xiii} Ian McPherson, "The Holy Spirit In Prophecy and Fulfillment." *Love the Brotherhood* (Belllerville, Tasmania, Australia. Vol. 2, No. 7, August 1995)

^{xiv} Ashley S. Johnson, *The Holy Spirit and the Human Mind* (Delight, AR., Gospel Light Publishing Company, n.d. reprint edition) p 74

^{xv} H. Leo Boles, *The Holy Spirit, His Personality, Nature, Works* (Nashville, TN., Gospel Advocate Company, 1942) p 207

^{xvi} Batsell Barret Baxter, *The Holy Spirit* (Rossville,GA: o'Neal Publishing Co., N.D.) pp 17-19