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GOD'S INDWELLING PRESENCE

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE
OLD & NEW TESTAMENTS



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AUTHOR PREFACE

This book originated as a dissertation done at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary under the direction of Dr. Thomas R. Schreiner, whose influence on me extends well beyond the parameters of this project. He knows the depth of my gratitude, but I gladly express it again here. I am also grateful for the other members of the committee, Drs. Robert H. Stein and William F. Cook. I count it a privilege to have been one of the last students to write under Dr. Stein.

I praise God, too, for the churches whom I now serve and who sustain institutions such as Southern Seminary. Southern is blessed to be led by its president, R. Albert Mohler Jr., who has fostered a fertile place to study in Louisville. We owe thanks for Dr. Mohler and to the leadership of men such as Paul Pressler and Paige Patterson, who is now the president of Southwestern Seminary. I am grateful also for Southwestern Seminary, where I now serve under the leadership of Dr. Patterson thanks to our Provost, Dr. Craig Blaising. The churches of the Southern Baptist Convention have given a sacred trust to the faculties and students of the SBC seminaries, a trust undergirded by not a few mites given by not a few widows. I hope that this book will be both faithful and profitable. May it honor the Lord and benefit his church.

The research for this book was completed in the spring of 2003. No one has read it more carefully than Dr. E. Ray Clendenen and I am extremely grateful for his editorial labors. I thank Ray and B & H Publishing Group for accepting this project into the NAC Studies in Bible and Theology. We have worked back over the manuscript to transform it from a dissertation into a book that we hope will benefit students, pastors, and interested laypeople, but other projects kept me from incorporating scholarship published since 2003. Thanks go to Jesse McMillan for his work on the subject index, and to my colleague, Miles Mullin, for proofing the manuscript under a tight deadline. So, for instance, while I have profited from many of Andreas Köstenberger's writings, his BECNT commentary appeared too late to be consulted in the writing of this project, and the same holds for

Craig Keener's two-volume commentary on John. Similarly, I think that many of my conclusions agree with the findings of Greg Beale's excellent book, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, but my research was done before his book became available.

Unless otherwise noted, all translations of biblical texts are my own. These are often intentionally very literal because I am seeking to make the force of the original available to the reader.

My sweet wife Jill made this project possible in more ways than I can enumerate. Her parents also supported us in many ways, and I wish to thank my mom for instilling in me a love for reading and my dad for teaching me how to focus and work.

“May the favor of the Lord our God be upon us. And the work of our hands, may he confirm for us; and the work of our hands, may he confirm it!” (Psalm 90:17).

Jim Hamilton
Christmas, 2005
Houston, Texas, USA

Chapter 1

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE OLD COVENANT REMNANT

Introduction

The Bible was written in three different languages, on three different continents, over a period of fifteen hundred years, by some forty different authors. The progressive nature of God's self-revelation given through the human authors during the unfolding of salvation history creates many interpretive challenges. Nevertheless, a Christian worldview entails the understanding that if God has spoken, and if the Bible is His word, then the Bible is not only entirely true in every respect since God is faithful and true in every sense, but it also exhibits a coherent system of thought because God is coherent.¹ We can expect to find in the Bible a unified, non-contradictory theology.²

To claim that the Bible possesses a coherent theology raises a host of questions. This investigation hopes to answer one of those questions, namely, were individual believers under the old covenant continually indwelt by the Holy Spirit? Certain statements in the Gospel of John suggest that believers would not be indwelt by the Spirit until Jesus was glorified (see 7:39; 14:16-17; and 16:7).³ Other

¹ For a philosophical defense of the Christian worldview, see A. Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford, 2000), on this point see esp. chap. 12, "Two (or More) Kinds of Scripture Scholarship," 374-421.

² This paragraph applies to the whole Bible what Adolf Schlatter applied to the New Testament when he referred to "the theology expressed by the New Testament itself" (*The History of the Christ*, trans. A. Köstenberger [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997], 18). For a large-scale exposition of the coherent theology to be found in the Bible, as well as a convincing argument that biblical theology is to be based on the 66 canonical books of the Bible, see C. H. H. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). On a smaller scale, and with the added benefit that he argues for a "center" of biblical theology, see G. Goldsworthy, *According to Plan* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002).

³ My colleague at Southwestern Seminary, John Taylor, points out that calling adherents to the Christian faith "believers" is a linguistic phenomenon that was new with Christianity ("Paul's Understanding of Faith" [Ph.D. diss., Cambridge University, 2004]). Nevertheless, as a shorthand, and for lack of a better term, I will refer to members of the old covenant remnant as "believers." Note that in Gal 3:9 Paul refers to Abraham as "the believer" (NASU, NET). I will

statements in John's Gospel indicate that apart from the Spirit's activity human beings are unable to become (John 1:13; 3:3,5-8; 6:63) and remain (3:20-21; 8:34; 16:8) children of God. These two observations—that John portrays the reception of the indwelling Spirit as beginning only after the glorification of Jesus, and that apart from the Spirit humanity is of the Devil (8:44)—prompt us to ask how believers who lived prior to Jesus' glorification became and remained faithful to God.

While the Gospel of John nowhere addresses the question of how Old Testament saints became and remained faithful, the question is implicit in the Gospel itself. If the Spirit is not received until Jesus is exalted (7:39), what did Jesus mean when He told Nicodemus that he must be born of "water and spirit" (3:5)?⁴ When we examine the biblical material that reflects what comes before and after the events recorded in the Fourth Gospel, this question becomes yet more vivid. The Old Testament does say that some have the Spirit (see e.g., Num 27:18), but it is by no means clear that this is the experience of every member of the old covenant remnant. The New Testament, on the other hand, indicates that the Spirit regenerates and indwells all believers (see Rom 8:9-11).

At the appropriate point in this study I will seek to elucidate the distinctions between regeneration and indwelling seen in John's Gospel (see chap. six). Based on the conclusions reached there, I will use the word *regeneration* to refer to God's work of granting to humans the ability to hear, understand, believe, obey, and enter the kingdom. The New Testament's metaphor of "new birth" matches the Old Testament's metaphor of "heart circumcision." That is, I take circumcision of the heart to be the same experience as regeneration (Rom 2:29; Col 2:11-13). Apart from the enablement God gives in regeneration, men remain slaves of sin (John 8:34) and of the Devil (8:44), or as Paul puts it, dead in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1; Col 2:13). I will use *indwelling*, on the other hand, to refer to God's

take the liberty of referring to old covenant faithful as believers since Paul does so.

⁴ This consideration is often raised by those who think that old covenant saints were indwelt. See for example D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, vol. 2, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 360-61, and J. B. Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 241. See my discussion of this verse in chap. four.

abiding, positive, covenant presence in believers through the Spirit. This book seeks to understand and articulate the role of the Holy Spirit in the faithfulness of believers who live both before and after the exaltation of Jesus. This exercise in biblical theology will focus largely on the Gospel of John because it has so much to say on this question.⁵

John's Gospel, I believe, teaches that the continual indwelling of the Holy Spirit began to take place only after Jesus completed the work that the Father gave Him to do (17:4). When I first began to pursue this question, because of the Bible's clear teaching on mankind's sinful state (e.g., Gen 6:5; Jer 17:9; John 8:34; Rom 3:10-18), I was convinced that saving faith requires both regeneration and indwelling by the Holy Spirit. I have concluded, however, that in the absence of a clear affirmation in the Old Testament that the Spirit continually dwelt in the hearts of believers, passages such as John 7:39; 14:17; and 16:7 will not permit us to say that the Holy Spirit dwelt in ordinary members of the old covenant remnant on an individual basis.

What does the Bible say about how the Spirit relates to believers before and after the glorification of Jesus? I believe this question is answered by Jesus' statement in John 14:17: "He is with you, and he will be in you."⁶ Here Jesus encapsulates the Bible's teaching on God's dwelling in relation to believers in the old and new covenants. In the old covenant God faithfully remained *with* His people, accompanying them in a pillar of fire and cloud, then dwelling among them in the tabernacle and the temple. Under the new covenant, the only temple is the believing community itself, and God dwells not only among the community corporately (Matt 18:20; 1 Cor 3:16; 2 Cor 6:16), but also *in* each member individually (John 14:17; Rom 8:9-11; 1 Cor 6:19). This is the overarching thesis this book seeks to establish.

The assertion that old covenant believers were not indwelt raises the additional question of how they became and remained faithful.

⁵ J. Barr writes, "Selection among the facts, data, interpretations and interests is unavoidable, and is a perfectly correct academic procedure" (*The Concept of Biblical Theology* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999], 341).

⁶ For discussion of the text-critical problem in John 14:17c, see Appendix 2, "He Is with You and He Is in You? The Text of John 14:17c."

Previous arguments that old covenant believers were *not* indwelt have largely failed to address this critical issue. In seeking to explain how old covenant believers were empowered to live by faith (see Heb 11), I will argue that indwelling is not to be equated with regeneration. This distinction opens the possibility that old covenant believers experienced regeneration by the Spirit, even though the Spirit did not then take up residence within them. Some scholars hesitate to use the term “regenerate” in reference to old covenant believers because the Old Testament does not use the “new-birth” and “made-alive” language found in the New Testament. As noted above, the Old Testament metaphor for this is “circumcision of the heart.” Since both regeneration and heart circumcision refer to God enabling people who are dead in sin to believe and obey (see Jer 6:10; Rom 2:25-29), I will regard the two expressions as functionally equivalent. Thus old covenant believers may be described as regenerate though not indwelt. They became believers when the Spirit of God enabled them to believe, and they were maintained in faith by God’s covenant presence *with* the nation as He dwelt in the temple.

In support of this thesis, both Testaments speak of the word of God creating spiritual life.⁷ Further, we have evidence that before and after Jesus God’s word is made effective by God’s Spirit.⁸ Thus it seems that in both old and new covenants regeneration occurs when God’s Spirit creates the ability to believe the proclamation of God’s word (see Rom 4:16-18; 10:17).

It will be argued here that prior to Jesus’ glorification God sanctified believers by His presence *with* them rather than *in* them. Often the Old Testament describes God as *with* select persons.⁹ God declared to His old covenant people, “I am Yahweh, who sanctifies you” (Lev 20:8; 21:8,15,23; 22:9,16,32). God made His people holy

⁷ See Ps 119:25; Isa 53:3; John 5:24; 6:63; 1 Pet 1:23.

⁸ See Neh 9:20,30; John 6:63.

⁹ Enoch walked *with* God (Gen 3:22,24). Noah walked *with* God (Gen 6:9). Abraham walked *before* God, and God was *with* him (Gen 17:1; 21:22; 24:40). God was *with* Isaac (Gen 26:3), Jacob (Gen 28:15; 31:5), Joseph (Gen 39:2-3,21,23), Moses (Exod 3:12), Joshua (Josh 1:5,9), Gideon (Judg 6:12), David (1 Sam 18:12,14), and Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:7). See my articles, “God with Men in the Torah,” *WTJ* 65 (2003): 113-33, and “God with Men in the Prophets and the Writings,” *SBET* 23 (2005): 166-93.

as He indwelt the tabernacle and later the temple (Exod 25:8; 40:34-38; 1 Kgs 8:11,57-58), and thereby He remained near His people on an individual and corporate level (Deut 31:6; 1 Kgs 8:11; 2 Kgs 13:23; Hag 1:13; 2:5). After Jesus' glorification, in keeping with the coming of "that day" (John 14:20), God brought about new birth and obedience by regenerating individuals *and* indwelling them by His Spirit (John 3:3-6; 6:63; 7:37-39; 14:17; 20:22). So regeneration and indwelling remain distinct works of the Spirit, but they are simultaneously received by all who believe.

With Jesus' completion of the work the Father sent Him to do, a major salvation-historical shift took place. The Spirit takes up residence in a new temple. He dwells in those who believe, and He will do so until the end of the age (John 14:16-17). This is best seen when compared with the Spirit's work in the old covenant. Prior to the completion of Jesus' work, God dwelt in the temple.¹⁰ In the Old Testament, God is described as *with* and *near* His chosen nation and only *in* certain persons for extraordinary tasks. Jesus' proclamation of the new covenant ministry of the Spirit (John 14-16), and the disciples' reception of the Spirit (20:22), anticipate subsequent references to believers and the church as a temple built of living stones (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; Eph 2:21-22; 1 Pet 2:5). The indwelling of the Spirit is connected to the reality that Jesus has replaced the temple (John 2:13-22), with the result that worship is no longer centered at specific locations (cp. John 4:21 with Deut 12:5). A temple is no longer necessary because those who believe are "in" Jesus (14:20). Through His death on the cross, Jesus put an end to sacrifice (Heb 10:10-18; cp. John 19:30). The triune God no longer dwells in the temple in Jerusalem, but in believers who live all over the world (see John 14:23).

The Method of This Study

We will approach relevant texts with a particular question: what is the relationship between the Holy Spirit and believers before and after the glorification of Jesus? Through exegesis and synthesis

¹⁰ Note that when Jesus cleansed the temple, He referred to it as "My father's house" (John 2:16, HCSB).

of these texts, we will seek to trace the structure of thought that produces the statements found in the Bible. As Schlatter described the task,

The significance of New Testament theology today rests on the fact that it is not content simply to gather material like a statistician. It sees its main task in raising the question how the convictions found here in the New Testament arose. It is concerned not only to perceive but to explain... The enquiry concerns what gave rise to the ideas of the New Testament.¹¹

The approach taken here will seek to follow Peter Stuhlmacher: "A Biblical Theology of the New Testament which deserves this name must suit the biblical texts hermeneutically, i.e. it must attempt to interpret the Old and New Testament tradition as it wants to be interpreted."¹² Thus Stuhlmacher urges that if we are to understand the text correctly, we must read it sympathetically.¹³

Stuhlmacher's insight is similar to the principle articulated by Michael Horton, who advocates "an exercise in theology in which theological method is determined by the content of the system."¹⁴ We must, as it were, take the text on its own terms and let it speak for itself. In N. T. Wright's words, we must employ a "hermeneutic of love."¹⁵ This study seeks to understand the teaching of the Fourth Gospel as it now stands¹⁶ on the role of the Spirit in the lives of believers before and after the glorification of Jesus. That will be

¹¹ A. Schlatter, "The Theology of the New Testament and Dogmatics," in *The Nature of New Testament Theology*, ed. and trans. R. Morgan, SBT² 25 (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1973), 136.

¹² P. Stuhlmacher, *How To Do Biblical Theology*, trans. J. M. Whitlock, Princeton Theological Monographs 38 (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1995), 1.

¹³ Unfortunately, Stuhlmacher violates his own principle by giving the synoptic tradition priority over the Johannine, since in his view the Fourth Gospel's "language and contents bear a stamp which they received only after Easter in the Johannine school." There is strong evidence against this conclusion. The Gospel of John purports to be an account of the things Jesus said and did, and, according to Stuhlmacher's principle, it should be interpreted as such. The Gospel alerts its audience when post-resurrection insights are given (e.g., 2:22; 12:16; 20:9), but aside from these places John's Gospel presents itself as an account of things Jesus said and did. The contents have been selectively chosen (see 20:30; 21:25), but John claims that the testimony is true (21:24).

¹⁴ M. Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 1.

¹⁵ N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God 1 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 64.

¹⁶ See the comments of U. Schnelle, "Johannes als Geisttheologe," *NovT* 40 (1998): 17.

best accomplished by reading the Gospel of John “as it wants to be interpreted.”¹⁷

A Preview of What Follows

Chapter two surveys the ways that scholars have sought to answer the question posed by this study.¹⁸ These observations on what has been said and how the texts have been treated provide important clarity as we seek to untangle this particular knot.

Chapter three seeks to show that the Old Testament does not explicitly claim that each member of the old covenant remnant was indwelt for the duration of his or her earthly sojourn. References to the Spirit being *upon* or *in* Israel’s leaders are examined, then God’s presence with the nation in the tabernacle and temple. The chapter concludes by discussing two new covenant passages, Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36.

Chapter four surveys statements regarding the Holy Spirit in John 1–12 and then examines the Paraclete passages in more detail. The goal of this chapter is to establish exegetically this Gospel’s teaching concerning the Spirit. This exegetical work is foundational for the biblical-theological conclusions of chapters five and six. Chapter four is the most technical section of this study, and I hope the reader will not get bogged down in it. The non-technical reader should feel free to move quickly through, i.e. skim, or even skip parts of this chapter rather than put the book down altogether. The last section of chapter four along with the final three chapters are the most important part of the study.

Chapter five argues that the evangelist’s comment in John 7:39 means that old covenant believers had not received the indwelling

¹⁷ This study does not set out to prove the reliability of John. I am building on the “spate of recent, article-length studies and fully fledged commentaries on John [that] have appeared, all defending a substantial amount of historicity in the Fourth Gospel” (C. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John’s Gospel* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001], 21; Blomberg cites 24 studies published between 1981 and 1999). After entering the standard discussions and examining the historicity of every relevant passage in John, Blomberg concludes, “One may affirm with considerable confidence that John’s Gospel is true—not merely theologically (as, e.g. for Barrett and Lindars) but also historically” (ibid., 294).

¹⁸ Summarizing my article, “Old Covenant Believers and the Indwelling Spirit: A Survey of the Spectrum of Opinion,” *TJ* 24 (2003): 37-54.

Spirit. The aim here is to show that the Old Testament prophets described a Spirit-anointed Messiah and a future day when the Spirit would be poured out on the people of God. The Gospel of John describes Jesus as the fulfillment and fulfiller of these prophecies. According to John, only after the cross would God dwell in all believers (see John 4:21-24; 7:39; 14:17, 23; 20:22). Chapter five concludes by comparing John's teaching with statements about the Spirit's indwelling in the rest of the New Testament.

Chapter six argues that from what John says about regeneration and indwelling, these two ministries of the Spirit can be distinguished. Having argued that regeneration is not to be equated with indwelling in the Gospel of John, I contend that John presents Jesus as the replacement of the temple. Jesus then confers upon His disciples the authority to administer the blessings of the temple when He gives them the indwelling Spirit. Thus, when Jesus goes away, the disciples replace Him as the replacement of the temple. The indwelling of the Spirit is to be understood in terms of believers replacing the temple, God's new dwelling place.

After summarizing the book in Chapter seven, its conclusions are applied to the life of the church today with respect to church discipline and the priesthood of all believers.

If the assertions made in this introduction can be verified, it will also be indirectly shown that despite the diversity reflected in the Old and New Testaments, the Bible presents a coherent view of the Spirit's role in the life of the believer before and after Jesus' glorification. If this study is successful, we will be closer to understanding the Bible's theology of the Spirit.