

# Studies in Guidance: Donald Gee as an Interpreter of Saint Luke

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## Abstract

How to receive guidance from God remains one of the biggest issues of practical theology that Christians struggle with in their spiritual lives. This reflective article examines the subject of divine guidance as addressed by a leading Pentecostal Bible teacher from a previous generation, Donald Gee. The article begins with a case study concerning how the author was ‘guided’ to Gee and his writings. Because divine guidance is a major theme in the book of Acts, Gee in his volume *Studies in guidance* looks to Acts for numerous examples to illustrate his discussion. The majority of the article focuses on Gee’s exegetical development of this theme as he presents persons, situations, and outcomes in Acts related to divine guidance and their application both to individuals and to congregations. It assesses Gee’s effectiveness in exegeting these texts. The article concludes with an excursus that discusses briefly how Gee’s exegetical method contributes to the development of a pneumatic hermeneutic in Pentecostal/charismatic scholarship.

## 1. Introduction

By way of introduction, I would like to share a brief testimony about divine guidance in my own life. Soon after becoming Christians in 1974 while living on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in south-western South Dakota, USA, my wife Dindy and I became involved in the Pentecostal/charismatic movement. Although I had grown up in a mainline Protestant church (United Methodist), I had never heard about the baptism of the Holy Spirit or the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Our experiences in the Native American Church, which uses peyote as its sacrament, opened us up to the world of the supernatural. We had witnessed healings, seen visions, and experienced miracles in the context of this indigenous American Indian cult. After becoming believers, we naturally began to seek out a Christian environment that shared such an ethos. We

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were invited to meetings of the Full Gospel Businessmen’s chapter in nearby Rapid City, and in this context were introduced to the charismatic movement. Both of us were baptized in the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues in the following months. We moved off the reservation in the winter of 1975 and began to attend an Assembly of God church in north-western Nebraska. Although we had an excellent teaching pastor there, Dindy and I found ourselves heavily influenced by the Ft. Lauderdale Five, as they were known. Over a period of several years we listened to scores of hours of cassette tapes by Bob Mumford, Don Basham, Derek Prince, Ern Baxter, and Charles Simpson, and devoured their publication, *New Wine*. Yet certain dimensions of their teaching on authority troubled us; and when the controversy about the Shepherding movement broke out in 1975, we understood our hesitation regarding the direction such teaching was taking.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, we had gained much insight into the charismatic dimension of Scripture and had grown spiritually through our contact with these Fort Lauderdale teachers.

In 1979 we moved to Dallas, Texas, where I enrolled as a student at Christ for the Nations Institute, probably the leading charismatic theological school at that time. Because of my disillusionment regarding the Fort Lauderdale group, I began to look for other teachers who were grounded in Scripture but also had an understanding of the Holy Spirit. Scouring the shelves of CFNI’s library, I discovered a British Pentecostal teacher named Donald Gee. Struck by his scriptural insight and spiritual wisdom (he was known as the ‘apostle of balance’), I began to read his books. After learning that Gee had written a regular column in Gordon Lindsay’s *Voice of Healing* magazine, I located those issues and photocopied every column that Gee wrote. I also began to buy copies of his books, most of which were out of print. Back in the days BI (before the Internet), finding out-of-print books was extremely challenging. But working with both American and British booksellers, I managed to collect most of Gee’s extant writings.

As I conclude this personal recollection, I want to reiterate the significant influence Gee had on me as a young Christian and budding scholar.<sup>3</sup> Despite his lack of formal academic credentials (his highest degree was a diploma from Elim Bible School), Gee was keenly insightful regarding the pneumatic dimensions of biblical texts. For this reason I owe Gee a debt of gratitude for

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<sup>2</sup> For a scholarly review of the movement, see Moore 2004.

<sup>3</sup> The publication of an article about Gee in the *Evangelical Quarterly* in 1978 prompted me to write to F. F. Bruce. Bruce’s gracious, handwritten response to me an unknown student is a treasured keepsake.

pointing me in that direction. My attraction to Gee's writings is sustained by the opinion of Walter Hollenweger, the first non-Pentecostal scholar to examine his ministry from an academic perspective. Hollenweger (2000:391; also 1971:206–13), who was a friend of Gee, believed that Gee was the most significant writer in Pentecostalism up to the 1970s. This assessment is sustained by Ross (1994:267) who wrote that Gee's editorials in *Pentecost* were 'the most significant Pentecostal writing ever produced'. Since divine guidance in the book of Acts is one of my own research interests (Wilson 2005), I decided to re-examine one of Gee's classic writings and to see how he uses Acts hermeneutically. The following study is the fruit of that re-examination.

## 2. Studies in Guidance

In the late 1920s Gee wrote his classic *Concerning Spiritual Gifts*. One of his next books to be published was *Studies in Guidance* in 1936. In 1940 a revised edition was released, which included a fresh introduction written in January of that year. In his biography of Gee, Carter (1975:61–74) devoted the chapter 'World Traveller' to this period in Gee's life.<sup>4</sup> Kay (2007:142) notes that Gee 'was the best travelled Pentecostal in the world at that time', while Ross (1978:95) observes that 'he became the international pastor to an extensive revival, teaching its members, defending its distinctives, informing its participants'. The heading of Gee's introduction is entitled 'The Directed Path' and cites Proverbs 3:6 with the description: 'A personal testimony concerning Twelve Years of constant world Travel and Ministry that was quite unplanned'. In this brief testimony Gee reflects on a number of instances of ministry travel that began in 1928 with an invitation to speak in Australia. Reflecting on his global itinerary that also included visits to China, Korea, and Japan, Gee (1940:vi) writes, 'The writer never anticipated or planned such extensive travel, and it seems the more remarkable because invitations have never been sought'. Yet he acknowledges that his directed path 'has been almost entirely devoid of those elements of divine guidance which appear strikingly supernatural to the popular idea'. But how did Gee know that God was even involved in this ministry? He realizes that 'there has been a deepening witness to the providential leading of the Lord in these open

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<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, Carter fails to mention *Studies in guidance* in his discussion both in that chapter or his chapter on Gee as 'Writer and Editor' (1975:35-47).

doors'. Nevertheless, Gee provides several dramatic examples of supernatural direction, and his opening testimony ends with a facsimile of his elegant signature.<sup>5</sup>

## 2.1 Guidance as a miracle

Gee begins his study by examining the spiritual phenomenon of guidance and describing it as a miracle. Guidance is a miracle if 'we allow ourselves to mean something that transcends the natural, and enters into the realm of the supernatural' (1940:1). For Gee the notion of guidance implies a guide and the Guide for believers is the invisible God. He deprecates those who live the 'unguided life' and leave their circumstances to luck or chance. In a section in which he asks, 'Does God Guide?' Gee provides examples from both Testaments including two from the book of Acts. In Acts 10 Cornelius and Peter did not meet each other 'with such resultant Pentecostal blessings by sheer chance' (1940:4). Yet the specifics of their supernatural meeting—the visions given both to Cornelius and to Peter—go undeveloped by Gee. Interestingly Gee fails to provide chapter and verse for any of his examples. He seems to presume that his audience is so familiar with them that providing the text is superfluous.<sup>6</sup>

Referring to Acts 16:6–9 cited at the chapter's opening, he comments that 'neither did Paul and Silas quit Asia for Europe just because they wanted a change' (1940:4). But this facile comment ignores the complexities of the Spirit's two prohibitions that led Paul hundreds of kilometres out of his way before reaching Troas.<sup>7</sup> Gee reflects on how guidance is experienced supernaturally as 'the miracles of an audible voice, a heavenly vision, a prophetic utterance, an inward "witness", an emphasized Scripture, compelling circumstances, unified counsel, or striking opportunity' (1940:6). These specific ways of receiving guidance comprise the rest of the volume. Finally, Gee sees the miraculous dimension of guidance subordinated to the greatest miracle of all—the

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<sup>5</sup> Kay (2007:141-143) provides a comprehensive overview of Gee's travels along 'the directed path' during this period but fails to mention his theological reflections on these travels in *Studies in guidance*. Kay (2007:42 n. 35) only mentions an article that Gee published on the subject in *Redemption Tidings* 16.1 (January 1940): 406.

<sup>6</sup> Or perhaps the book is a transcription of sermons that he preached on guidance, but the scriptural quotations were later deleted. This tendency regarding citations can be observed in Gee's other publications.

<sup>7</sup> Further details regarding this pericope are discussed in my article, "The Role of the Holy Spirit in Paul's Ministry Journeys," *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* 87 (2005): 82:85. The geography related to these prohibitions is discussed in Wilson and Thompson, 'The Route of Paul's Second Journey in Asia Minor: In the Steps of Robert Jewett and Beyond', forthcoming.

redeeming grace that turns rebellious sinners into men and women washed in Christ's blood and who are now led by the Spirit of God. But even here an example from Acts could have been elicited: how a journey to Damascus in chapter 9 under orders from the high priest resulted in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, the primary subject of the second half of Acts.

## **2.2 Meekness in guidance**

In his second chapter Gee identifies a character quality that is a prerequisite for guidance—'Meekness'. In the section 'Yielded Purposes' he addresses the danger of personal bias entering into guidance given through prophecies, visions, or dreams. He suggests that it is possible to twist presumed 'revelations' when the speaker has dogmatic doctrinal views, extreme prejudice for or against an individual, or is strongly ambitious or desirous for a certain office or course of action. Personal prophecy given under such circumstances is potentially without value for guidance. Anyone involved in the Pentecostal/charismatic movement for long knows that much abuse exists in the area of supernatural revelation. Nevertheless, Gee never argues to eliminate revelation but affirms its relevance in the church. However, he provides an important caveat for such guidance: 'it comes to the entirely surrendered will that has known a deep cleansing of the human spirit by the blood of Calvary' (12). Yet complete sanctification is not a panacea for ensuring maturity in using the spiritual gifts; additionally, comprehensive teaching about the gifts must occur, perhaps with Gee's own *Concerning Spiritual Gifts* as a vade mecum.

Gee finds noteworthy that 'the guidance given by the Spirit nearly always clashed with personal prejudices and preferences' (12). To support this claim, he cites four passages from Acts. The first is Acts 8:26 where he suggests that Philip leaves a revival in Samaria to minister to the lone eunuch returning to Ethiopia. But Philip had already left Samaria before the Spirit directed him to the Gaza road. In fact, it was probably Philip himself who brought news to the apostles in Jerusalem that the Samaritans had received the word of God (Acts 8:14). The second is Acts 9:13 where Ananias is directed to meet Saul, the persecutor of the church.<sup>8</sup> The third example is Acts 10:14 where Peter is directed to eat unclean meat contrary to his personal prejudices. The apostle's heavenly vision prepares him to preach the gospel to the Gentile Cornelius and his household. While there is little explication for these two references, the point about personal

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<sup>8</sup> Gee cites only one verse although Jesus' direction encompasses verses 11–15.

prejudices being circumvented is obvious. Gee's final text is Acts 13:2, which shows the church in Antioch losing two important leaders, but his point here is a bit obtuse. Apparently Gee sees the sending out of Saul and Barnabas — two leaders who had an effective ministry teaching disciples in Antioch (Acts 11:26) — as contrary to human wisdom. He asks, Why break up the team that was bringing growth to the church there? Yet the Holy Spirit did exactly that because he had called them to other work (13:2), a point unstated in Gee's discussion. He concludes this section by noting that the church in Antioch heard the Spirit's guiding voice to separate Barnabas and Saul only after they searched their hearts deeply, ministered to the Lord, and fasted. Such advice is useful because experience in the spiritual disciplines of prayer and fasting confirms that such practices heighten one's sensitivity to hearing the voice of God.

### **2.3 Biblical Guidance**

In his discussion of 'Guidance from the Bible' Gee deprecates such practices as sticking a pin between the pages of a Bible or opening the Bible at random with closed eyes, a practice that most all of us have tried a time or two if we are honest. He cautions that treating Scripture as a promise-box giving random guidance by using texts chosen by chance is no way to receive real guidance from God. (Such promise boxes can still be purchased at any Christian bookshop or from Amazon.) Despite the occasional good testimony suggesting that such serendipitous guidance works, Gee refuses to sanction such superstitious practices. Rather he claims: 'Belief that the Bible is the inspired word of God does not lift it beyond the reach of the same intelligent use that we would accord any other book' (1940:16). Luke 24:45 is cited to illustrate his point. Jesus opened the minds of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus to understand scriptures about his prophesied death and resurrection. Another passage in Acts that could have been cited was the replacement of Judas. Peter based his decision to replace him on Psalm 69:25 and 109:8 with the result that Matthias was selected as the twelfth apostle. Gee concludes the section by observing that 'some methods of seeking presumed guidance from the Bible arise out of sheer mental and spiritual laziness' (1940:16). His prescient comment sadly characterizes the spiritual indolence even among some Christians today.

### **2.4 Spirit Guidance**

In his discussion of ‘Guidance by the Holy Spirit’, Gee begins to use texts in Acts more frequently. In fact, Acts 8:29 is quoted in the heading: ‘The Spirit said unto Philip, “Go near, and join thyself to this chariot”’. Gee (1940:24–25) suggests initially that the primary way the Holy Spirit assists Christians is to become their Personal Guide. Yet to receive such guidance, conditions must be met. The recipient must experience the new birth, delight in the Father’s will, and experience mutual confidence and unbroken fellowship. They also must not grieve or quench the Spirit. However, what these terms mean contextually in Ephesian 4:30 and 1 Thessalonians 5:19 is left unexplained. Apparently Gee assumes that his readers know their meanings. If these conditions are fulfilled, any Christian can experience the same intimacy and actuality of the Holy Spirit that the early church had. To illustrate this point, Gee cites four passages in Acts where the Spirit’s direct voice is heard: ‘The Holy Spirit said...’ (8:29; 10:19–20; 13:2; 16:6–7). Rather than being abnormal, these examples are paradigmatic and ‘stand out from a background of fairly common experience’ (Gee 1940:26). For Gee the guiding voice of the Holy Spirit is to be normal in the Christian life.

In this chapter Gee provides the most in-depth exposition of his texts thus far. He notices three things about revelatory guidance in Acts. First, he notes the personal background of each example. The Holy Spirit spoke to people of willing obedience like Philip, of prayerful character like Peter, and of devotion to the gospel like Paul. In speaking to the collective assembly at Antioch,<sup>9</sup> the context was one of waiting on God in prayer and fasting. Gee concludes that this example teaches that ‘hearing the voice of the Spirit demands spiritual qualifications in both individuals and assemblies’ (1940:26). Here Gee’s extensive experience in global Pentecostal circles eminently enabled him to make such perceptive observations.

The second feature Gee analyses is the method employed for guidance. He begins by noting that it is never explicitly stated in Acts. While Philip and Peter alone heard the Spirit’s voice, in

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<sup>9</sup> Acts 13:2–3 states only that it was the prophets and teachers who were worshiping and fasting, not the assembly. Barrett (1994:604) notes that ‘it would be very difficult to give αὐτοῖν a wider application than to the prophets and teachers of v. 1, though most commentators do this’. He then cites Haenchen (1971: 380) as one who says that, although the presence of the community is not mentioned, it is presupposed. Nevertheless, Barrett (1994:607) observes later that ‘since Paul and Barnabas returned and reported to the church in 14.26f. we may think of the whole church as sending and commissioning them’. I agree that the choice here is not either/or but both/and. Thus Gee’s application to a corporate setting has exegetical validity.

Antioch his voice was heard in a corporate setting. Because there were prophets present in the church, Gee suggests that the Spirit probably spoke through one of them (Acts 13:1). This was also my own conclusion: ‘Because this word was spoken in a known language, Greek, it is clearly a manifestation of prophecy’ (Wilson 2005:81). To further illustrate this point, Gee suggests that it was through the prophet Silas that the Spirit forbade Paul to preach in Asia, although this is not explicitly stated in Acts 16:6. Stählin (1973:252) similarly suggests that the word was ‘spoken under inspiration by a prophet (probably Paul, or perhaps Silas)’ and discounts any thought that the guidance came through natural events, psychic impulses, a vision, or even an inner certainty inspired by the Spirit. Witherington (1998a:475), however, does suggest that an internal leading by the Holy Spirit might be the way the prohibitions were discerned.<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, Gee fails to note that Acts 16:7 provides a second example of the Spirit’s guidance or to discuss any possible theological difference between the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Jesus. Porter (2008:78) writes, ‘In the light of the context, where similar functions are performed by the two Spirits, and the presence and work of Jesus in the book of Acts (7:56; 9:5), it seems most likely that they are referring to the same divine Spirit’. In the next stage of the journey at Troas the vision of the Macedonian man came to Paul directly (Acts 16:10). Thus Gee concludes that the Spirit’s previous hindrances in Acts 16 had been conveyed to Paul personally as the team leader. While Luke is vague as to which opinion is correct, it seems that the presence of a prophet like Silas on this journey was providential, so the Spirit could speak through him when guidance was required.<sup>11</sup> Paul’s respect for Silas is evident in that he obeyed the prohibition and revised his itinerary on both occasions.

Gee next suggests two possible methods by which the Spirit spoke. In the case of Philip and Peter it could have been by an audible voice. He then allows as more probable that there was a ‘strong compelling inward urge and “witness” that became so unmistakable that it took on all the definite qualities of a “voice”’ (1940:27). Contradicting his previous assessment that Silas spoke the prohibition prophetically, Gee avers that most probably the prohibitions to enter Asia and

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<sup>10</sup> Miller (2007:92) notes that ‘the Spirit acts “negatively” for the first time, restraining characters from proclaiming the gospel in particular regions’. This departure from the Spirit’s typically positive empowering role thus demands our attention as readers.

<sup>11</sup> Bruce (1990:335) notes that ‘probably on both occasions the vehicle of the Spirit was prophetic utterance—Paul (13:1) and Silas (15:32) were both prophets....’

Bithynia were received by Paul through an inward restraining authority. Such equivocation is surprising when there is an unambiguous example in Acts 9:6 of the audible voice of Jesus instructing Saul: 'Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do' (NIV). Why Gee feels the necessity to back-pedal here is puzzling. Perhaps he is reacting to some teaching of his time that overemphasized the importance of an audible voice in guidance. Gee goes on to contend that this inward leading of the Holy Spirit has likewise been experienced by many Christians today. Since this type of guidance is more generally experienced by Christians, Gee probably placed his emphasis here. Inward guidance, according to Gee (28), is manifested subjectively by deep peace of the soul when walking in obedience to the Spirit and by spiritual restlessness when walking out of God's will. Yet in a congregational setting like Antioch, Gee suggests that it was through prophetic utterances that the Spirit spoke.

The final point Gee addresses using these examples from Acts relates to the objective of guidance. He concludes that each case involves the furtherance of the gospel: Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch, Peter to Cornelius and the Gentiles, Antioch to send out the first missionaries, and Paul to take the good news to Macedonia and Europe. Thus Gee anticipates the conclusion of Squires (1998:29) who observes: 'Guidance by the Spirit is central in each step taken towards the Gentiles'.

Gee makes the significant observation that guidance has a trinitarian dimension to it. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit speak in unison in their desire to redeem sinners and to reconcile them to God. He concludes with this cautionary comment: 'Presumed guidance from the Holy Spirit that is purely selfish or utterly trivial lacks the Calvary-mark of authenticity' (1940:28). While personal guidance need not have such dramatic consequences as the examples in Acts, Gee feels that any guidance wherein the Spirit speaks directly must necessarily have some redemptive purpose.

Because of the surfeit of fanaticism cloaked under the phrase, 'The Lord told me', Gee observes rightly that rational believers everywhere have become suspicious about guidance by the Holy Spirit, especially specific claims to hear his voice. To counteract such suspicions and to affirm biblical teaching, Gee (1940: 29) extracts three 'safeguards' from four examples in Acts. The

first relates to the character of the recipients of guidance. Philip, Peter, and Paul were all believers of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, prayerful, obedient, on fire with a sanctified zeal for the salvation of others, and of sound reputation. Gee challenges the modern church to examine the credentials of those who claim to speak for the Spirit. Is his or her character similar to that of the saints in the early church? If not, Gee cautions: 'It is wise to look with great suspicion on presumed guidance from the Holy Spirit if those who profess to have it do not fulfill the necessary qualifications as to Christian character and standing' (1940:29). In our day when even denominational leaders and pastors of megachurches experience moral failure, this charge is a welcome reminder.

A second safeguard relates to agreement within the body of Christ. As the whole assembly in Antioch was unanimous in sending out Paul and Barnabas, they obviously agreed that the Spirit had spoken a directive word. Paul's companions — Silas, Timothy, and Luke — likewise agreed with the vision received by Paul that they should go over to Macedonia: 'WE<sup>12</sup> endeavoured to go...assuredly gathering that the Lord had called US' (Acts 16:10). Gee concludes from these examples that any presumed guidance that fellow Spirit-filled believers find difficult to believe and accept 'should always be viewed with just suspicion' (1940:30). This author can speak from personal experience about a recent building project proposed in my home church. When prophecies and 'words' from the Lord were given that it should be implemented, a significant number in our congregation were doubtful that this was the right step. Nevertheless, the project proceeded, but soon some major financial supporters began to leave the church. The end of this never-realized building project, supposedly initiated and guided by the Spirit, was a split congregation one-third of its former size, which was now heavily in debt and led by an embattled pastor who later left to bring reconciliation to the tattered congregation.

The third and final safeguard relates to the outcome of guidance. Gee notes that in each case in Acts definite results were achieved from the guidance — the Ethiopian eunuch was converted, the Gentiles believed and received the Holy Spirit, Barnabas and Paul's first missionary journey was fruitful, and Paul and his party successfully planted the church in Europe. Thus presumed

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<sup>12</sup> Although the plural pronouns 'WE' and 'US' are emphasized here by Gee (1940:30), he has little interest in the narrative features of Acts, specifically that this is the first example of a 'we' passage in the book (cf. Wilson 2011:360–362).

guidance barren of good results or any fulfilment of predictive elements, even after a considerable time period, must be judged as not originating from the Holy Spirit. Especially when the results of so-called Spirit-led action are injurious, believers are doubly justified in doubting the authenticity of such guidance, as my personal example in the previous paragraph illustrated.

Although Gee does not cite them, Acts gives two examples of individuals who prophesied falsely: Bar-Jesus (Acts 13:6–8) and the Philippian slave girl (Acts 16:16–18). But these did their fortune-telling within a pagan context. Perhaps Simon, previously a sorcerer, could be claimed as a false prophet functioning within a nascent Christian community (Acts 8:18–24). Only in the later New Testament letters does this phenomenon of false prophets/teachers develop (2 Cor. 11:13; 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 John 4:1). Thus even today Christians who claim to be channels of the Spirit but spew only toxic guidance should be avoided so their effect within a congregation can be minimized. Gee closes the chapter with an exhortation for all believers to seek a vital experience of being led by God. Gee's explications are more than pedagogy, but characterised by a continual call for balanced application of the biblical text, so that the body of Christ might be a stable and healthy community. It is Gee's common-sensical directions in examples like this that make his volume commendatory for believers today.

## **2.5 Guidance by spiritual gifts**

Although the relationship of spiritual gifts to guidance has been addressed marginally, Gee next specifically addresses the topic in depth. He heads the chapter with scriptural quotations from Acts 11:28–29 and 21:4. He calls this a subject of 'fascinating interest' and states that 'it raises many questions that need facing courageously' (1940: 33). Fanaticism regarding this topic has caused some to neglect spiritual gifts as a rich vein of spiritual truth. In his discussion of which gifts are specifically useful for guidance, he identifies prophecy, the word of wisdom, and the word of knowledge, drawing on Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 14. Acknowledging that dreams and visions are not gifts per se, Gee nevertheless deems these so closely related that principles related to their use are equally applicable. Yet it can be argued that visions are an aspect of revelation when Paul distinguished it from prophecy (1 Cor. 14:6). As Fee notes (2014:734, n. 476), the list here is very *ad hoc* compared to the nine-fold list in chapter 12 and Paul uses

‘revelation’ in a variety of ways in his writings including to describe his visionary experiences in 2 Corinthians 12:1, 7. In 2 Corinthians the revelations are the content of what Paul has heard in the vision, which he was not permitted to tell. In the case of Troas the revelation within the vision was the Macedonian man saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us,’ which was the impetus for their crossing to Macedonia.

Gee next presents various Old and New Testament texts on the topic of spiritual gifts, but settles in Acts again for his most vivid examples. After Agabus gave his prophecy about the famine (Acts 11:29), the church in Antioch determined a course of action that utilized the prophecy. As I wrote about this example, ‘In fact, the prophecy was potentially open to charges of being self-serving, with the Judean prophets speaking prophetic words that would profit their church back home. Nevertheless, the Antiochian Christians accepted its veracity. The disciples in Antioch responded by sending a financial gift to the believers in Judea. Whether this offering was spontaneous or gathered over a period of time, as Paul’s later Macedonian collection was, is not said’ (Wilson 2005: 79–80). Paul also made important decisions related to the predictions concerning his future bondage in Jerusalem (Acts 21:11). This is a prime example where Gee’s allusions are frustratingly brief. He fails to quote Paul’s words in his speech to the Ephesian elders at Miletus that in every city “the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me’ (Acts 20:23 NIV). Two further examples of the Spirit warning Paul can be found in the verses that follow: by believers in Tyre (21:4) and by Agabus in Caesarea (21:10–11). This pericope is fertile for a nuanced discussion of how prophecy should and should not work, yet Gee is silent. Finally, Gee again cites the vision of the Macedonian man as an example of how the apostolic party determined that they should preach in Europe (Acts 16:10). Gee draws this conclusion from these examples: ‘Arbitrary directions by a prophetic gift seem quite foreign to the spirit of the New Testament’ (1940:37). What he might mean by ‘arbitrary’ in a contemporary context is unstated. Does he mean directive prophecy about whom to marry, what to name a child, or what job to take? All of these occur in Pentecostal/charismatic contexts where the gifts of the Spirit are utilized, and I suspect that Gee would concur that such prophecies are foreign to New Testament practice. Gee rightly affirms that while the gifts are a revelatory vehicle concerning future events or the mind of the Lord, they must assume a place within the broader context of the Spirit’s guidance so that others may pass judgment. In this verdict he

agrees with Paul's instructions: 'Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said' (1 Cor 14:29 NIV).

Gee cites two examples of the word of wisdom being used to give guidance to the early church. First, seven deacons were chosen in the Jerusalem church, one of the early church's first exercises in government (Acts 6:3–6). Then in Acts 15 the church was given wisdom on how to resolve the issue whether Gentile believers should be circumcised. A key observation not made by Gee is that in both instances the dispute was among believers presumably filled with the Spirit. Yet concerns related to their ethnic identities became prioritised over the unity of the diverse community of believers. Since the role of social, economic, and racial identification remains a 'hot-button issue' in churches around the world, it must be addressed as a factor in how guidance is received. Gee sees evidence of the Spirit's touch in both instances not only through the perfection of their counsel, but also 'in the peace and general acceptance which the ruling immediately received from the main body of believers' (1948:37–38). He urges believers not just to look to spectacular manifestations in guidance but to recognize more subtle ways that the Spirit can guide in matters of church life and governance. Finally, Gee again feels an acute need to discuss safeguards related to the operation of the gifts. Clearly his experience in global Pentecostalism had alerted him to abuses regarding the gifts and guidance. Acts 15:15 is one example he cites whereby certain tests are evident — discerning of spirits, the witness of the Spirit's anointing, agreement with Scripture, and the fruit and character of the individual. In the view of Gee 'the main purpose of the gifts of the Spirit is to provide a basis for ministry in the Church' (1940:40). On a practical note he ends by affirming that guidance through spiritual gifts is scriptural and should be part of the experience of believers today. Half of century later there are still cessationists in the church who, because of their theological stance, unfortunately lose the benefit of the spiritual gifts for receiving guidance in their lives.

## **2.6 Guidance through circumstances**

Gee next addresses the challenging topic of receiving guidance through circumstances. He first helpfully suggests that there is a path of duty through life whereby Christians have basic duties to family and vocation as well as to civic and church life. In a strongly worded statement Gee writes, 'There is scarcely anything more nauseating than professing to receive some personal

“revelation” that flatly contradicts the ordinary, decent, and scriptural duties of everyday life’ (1940:44). Here Gee shines as an interpreter as he touches on a dimension of guidance often sadly lacking in contemporary counsel and practice. He notes that God provides traffic signals such as money and health that may help us to determine the divine will in certain situations. Gee then addresses the ambivalent issue of open doors. He uses the example of the apostle Paul who had a ‘great door’ open to him in Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:8–9; cf. Acts 19:11). In such a situation no additional special sign is necessary; the circumstances dictate the course of action. But do they always do that? He omits Paul’s perplexing reference to an open door in Troas on the third journey (2 Cor. 2:12). Paul did not go through this open door then because Titus had not arrived, thus bringing him ‘no peace of mind’. Guthrie observes that the Lord’s leadership and the demands of gospel ministry are not guarantees of emotional peace, writing, ‘Thus we should not read a lack of emotional peace as an indication that God has not led us in our ministries’ (2015:148). The role of the emotions in receiving guidance is a Pandora’s box opened by this text. Its necessary discussion, however, is lacking in Gee’s exposition.

Instead of exploring that dimension, Gee next speculates whether Paul might have taken a mistaken path that ended with his imprisonment for two years in Caesarea. He muses that the apostle perhaps missed the Spirit’s guidance when ‘he allowed restlessness of spirit over Titus to keep him from entering the door the Lord had opened for him at Troas, and, instead of tarrying there to preach Christ’s gospel, he hurried over into Macedonia’ (1948: 47). In a survey of major commentaries on 2 Corinthians I failed to discover any similar comments about a supposed ‘mistake’ by Paul in Troas when he failed to pursue the open door set before him. Perhaps this was Gee’s own insight, albeit flawed, or a teaching prevalent in Pentecostal circles at the time. Indeed Gee fails to note any context for Paul’s restlessness: that he was in the midst of dealing with the Corinthian church regarding several issues including the Jerusalem collection, and was thus focused on the resolution of those issues rather than utilizing the open door at Troas. In my view this is another of Gee’s exegetical lapses wherein he fails to see the bigger picture of what the Spirit was doing with Paul. Thus a more nuanced discussion of the text is lacking. The lesson that Gee draws from this example is that believers need to think twice before deliberately leaving a place of opportunity and usefulness unless some greater door is opening. A further lesson that I see is that divinely opened doors do not necessarily mean freedom from difficulties and worries.

Paul had many adversaries in Ephesus; nevertheless, his opportunities there were so great that he did not allow his opponents to scare him away.

The book of Acts is replete with examples of circumstantial guidance that Gee fails to develop.<sup>13</sup> As I have suggested elsewhere (Wilson forthcoming), the meeting with Sergius Paulus in Paphos (Acts 13:7) apparently changed the direction of the first journey from North Africa to Pisidian Antioch. A visit to Derbe was probably not on their itinerary, but Paul's stoning in Lystra forced them to retreat there (Acts 14:19–20). The return of the apostles through Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch, where they had previously been run out of town, was dictated by the need to appoint leaders in the fledging congregations there (Acts 14:21–23). The directive to read the results of the apostolic council to the Gentile churches along with a sense of pastoral responsibility motivated Paul to make a second journey to the churches in south Galatia (Acts 15:30, 36; 16:4–5). The circumstances of persecution also caused Paul to leave Philippi and Thessalonica on the second journey (Acts 16:40; 17:10) and Ephesus on the third journey (Acts 20:1). And finally, a threat against his life forced Paul to return to Jerusalem by land rather than by ship (Acts 20:3). While guidance through such circumstances may seem mundane and not at all supernatural, such guidance facilitated the plan of God westward as the gospel moved from Jerusalem to Rome (Acts 1:8; 28:14).

## **2.7 Guidance through counsellors**

Gee also addresses the important topic of how God can use counsellors to give guidance. According to him, the special province of counsel is twofold: to direct collective actions and decisions in a wise way, and to help in the guidance of youth and inexperienced believers. Acts 15:28 serves as an example of how an important decision was made in the early church by means of a council. Gee claims that the Holy Spirit 'has set His seal upon this method as His chosen channel for guiding the Church in her corporate decisions and activities' and particularly calls it a dangerous mistake when Christian leaders turn personal revelations given for their own inspiration 'into an assumed method by which, as dictators, they seek to direct and control the Church' (1940:52). To counter such presumptive behaviour, the church in Antioch demonstrates

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<sup>13</sup> I wish to thank the blind peer reviewer, whom I later learned was Barry Chant, for his suggestion to include some of these examples in this section.

how unified action can be guided by a collective revelation of God's will (Acts 13:2). Gee's warning seems especially relevant today when some Christian leaders have used personal revelations to bolster their claims of authority and to control a congregation or ministry in an authoritarian manner. This even occurs with the acquiescence of a legally constituted board that is chosen to serve as 'yes' men and women who never challenge the leader when unethical or immoral decisions are being made.

For Gee the example of Timothy linking himself to a seasoned minister like Paul demonstrates how the young and inexperienced can benefit from available counsel (Acts 16:1–3). This practical suggestion is often neglected in contemporary churches where the gap between young and old is accentuated by the establishment of contemporary and traditional services that divide congregations by age. Gee then tackles the difficult case of the young Saul who seemingly forsook spiritual counsel by stating, 'Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood' (Gal. 1:16). Citing Paul's example, Gee notes that some Christians have ignored counsel and 'made shipwreck of their life-work, if not their very souls, and have dragged others with them' (1948:57). Witherington suggests that the real issue was 'that the distinctive aspects of Paul's Gospel were not received in consultation with any human beings...only God in the giving of this Gospel' (1998b:116). A salient feature of Paul's decision based on a personal revelation was that it affected him only and not others. Importantly, this personal revelation was later to find corporate endorsement from the whole church in Antioch with a confirmation by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:2). And at the Jerusalem council in Acts 15 Paul is portrayed as respectful and appreciative of the counsellors who have influenced his public ministry.

Gee concludes by providing an important caveat stressing that, while there is wisdom in seeking guidance through counsellors, 'we must always leave room for the place of a personal vision that may, momentarily, find no counsellors prepared to agree with it' (1940:58). Gee's point resonated with me by way of a personal application. In a devotional reflection on Acts 20:22, I (Wilson 2012:54–55) share a personal example whereby our decision to move to Turkey, one preceded by much reflection, prayer, and fasting, was greeted with scepticism and fear by many of our family members and closest friends. Yet we obeyed the leading of the Holy Spirit, and have now had a decade of productive ministry here.

## **2.8 Guidance through inward witness**

Gee next discusses the role of inward witness in guidance. In the heading he cites Acts 20:22–23 as an example of this principle. He calls inward witness one of the most common methods by which believers profess to receive direction from the Spirit and then takes on the difficult task of defining what this subjective principle entails. He believes that any definition reckoning inward witness as simply the function of a normal, healthy conscience should be discounted. Instead inward witness provides a strengthened sense of fellowship with God along a correct and proper line. Such witness is more than whims and feelings since generally the Spirit's inward witness is not transitory but persistent. Nevertheless, Gee allows that a sudden impulse through an inward witness may occasionally be given by the Spirit and cites Philip being directed to join the chariot of the Ethiopian eunuch as a probable case in point (Acts 8:29).

But there was nothing impulsive about Philip's actions here. He had already been directed by an angel to leave Jerusalem and go south along the road to Gaza to await further directions. As Barrett notes, 'The conversion of the Ethiopian was planned not by Philip but by God, who used his messenger to bring together the evangelist and the Gentile already interested in the Scriptures' (1994:422). What is mercurial in the account is the Spirit's sudden transport of Philip from a pool in the desert to Azotus near the Mediterranean Sea (Acts 8:39). This is perhaps the best example of 'extreme' guidance found in the book of Acts. Gee, however, concludes 'that immediate guidance of this nature is normally given only to mature believers (like Philip) who, by continued walking with God, have formed habits calculated to perceive immediately the true from the false' (1940:63). What Gee means by a 'mature' believer is unstated, but it would be someone who is full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, prayerful, and obedient — traits that he outlined earlier. Gee concludes by observing that Christians can 'become so accustomed to the witness of the Holy Spirit within that their own spirits become a spiritual "barometer" to tell them continually whether the will of God is being fulfilled, or not' (1940:67). Teaching such a subjective dimension of guidance in a local church is difficult. But discipleship training can produce mature believers who are able to detect such spiritual atmospheric changes through inward witness so as to receive guidance from the Holy Spirit.

## 2.9 Unconscious guidance

Gee's final chapter 9 focuses on how guidance may go unrecognized at the moment, but often becomes evident only through the hindsight of advancing years. Critical turning points of life may be passed without any consciousness of their importance at the time. This observation bears out the proverbial expression that 'hindsight is better than foresight'. For scriptural examples, the lives of Eliezer, Ruth, and Jesus are cited with no examples drawn from the book of Acts. A ready example Gee could have chosen is Silas. This prophet first came to Antioch representing the Jerusalem church when the letter reporting the results of the council was read (Acts 15:22). After Silas returned to Jerusalem with Judas (Acts 15:33), he came back to Antioch for some unstated reason. Thus when Paul and Barnabas clashed over taking John Mark along, Silas was available to accompany Paul on his second journey (Acts 15:39–40).<sup>14</sup> Little did he know that his life would be totally changed by his decision to return to Antioch.

## 3. Conclusion

Gee's pioneering scholarship on a number of pneumatological issues has laid a foundation for Pentecostal/charismatic scholars to build on. One such topic is guidance, the subject of this article. Several features of Gee's hermeneutical approach to the book of Acts must be noted. First, his exegetical style was simple and uncritical by modern academic standards. Thomas identifies writers like Gee as 'pre-critical interpreters' (2012:119). Gee has little interest in the literary or historical issues related to the passages.<sup>15</sup> Although Gee does not fall into the first generation of Pentecostal interpreters examined by Archer, his description of their exegetical method as the 'Bible Reading Method' fits Gee likewise, whose approach is 'pietistic and practical' (2004:73).<sup>16</sup> Gee's focus is on the pneumatic significance of the texts. His work in Acts anticipates the observation of Hur (2001:275) that the most discernible narrative function of

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<sup>14</sup> See also Wilson 2011:361–62. This interpretation, of course, is based on the premise that 15:34 (ἔδοξε δὲ τῷ Σίλα ἐπιμεῖναι αὐτοῦ) has been added to later Greek texts and adopted by the Textus Receptus 'to ease the transition to v. 40' (Bruce 1990:348).

<sup>15</sup> Archer notes that early Pentecostals 'were concerned in a limited sense about the historical cultural context' and that 'the cultural and historical concerns were only analyzed when there was some sort of apparent difficulty in understanding a passage' (2004:91, 92).

<sup>16</sup> Archer defines this method as 'a commonsensical method that relied upon inductive and deductive interpretative reasoning skills. Once the biblical data was analyzed, it was then synthesized into a biblical doctrine. Harmonization was the acceptable and necessary way to synthesis (sic) all the biblical data on a particular subject' (2004:74). Unfortunately, no mention of Gee is found in Archer's book either.

the Holy Spirit in Acts is to empower and guide its characters, especially in the second half of the book. However, for a scholar like myself engaged not only with the pneumatological scope of the text but also its socio-rhetorical and geo-historical dimensions, Gee's exposition is more like a starter than the main course.

Second, Gee's insights into Acts stems from his existential engagement with the same Spirit working in its narrative. Even as Paul learned about the Spirit's guidance during his extensive ministry journeys, Gee's interest in divine guidance similarly began with a traveling ministry to places such as Australia where he began to exercise faith in unfamiliar and uncomfortable surroundings. The comment of Thomas, written generally about the Pentecostal narrative worldview, substantiates this observation about Gee: 'The transformation of the one who experiences this narrative way of life results not simply in a different perspective from which to read texts...but also in the transformation of the affections of the interpreter' (2012:117). This mirrors my own interest in the subject of guidance that developed as I began to travel in Turkey with limited knowledge of the Turkish language and culture. Numerous times I experienced supernatural guidance from the Spirit, sometimes in the very places mentioned in Acts. So for Paul, Gee, and this author, traveling in strange places became a common denominator wherein the Spirit's guidance could become manifest.

Third, always mindful of the spiritual needs of his Pentecostal constituency, Gee strove to convey to them the practical application of his scriptural insights. He viewed the book of Acts as accessible and its text eminently applicable to Christians seeking to live a life guided by the Spirit. This is why his volume on guidance, although over seventy years old, still yields many practical insights for Christians today. Although the Pentecostal/charismatic movement today exists in a very different world than Gee's, his Spirit-inspired interpretation of key biblical texts continues to assist believers to hear God's voice and to determine the divine plan for living the Christian life. Yet as the various comments made in this article have demonstrated, Gee's exposition of these texts has generally been tantalizingly brief. Many additional dimensions were left unexplored that would have clarified for his readers how divine guidance works. Perhaps the word "Studies" in the title overpromises what the book delivers; rather "Outlines" would be a more realistic expectation for the reader.

#### **4. Excursus: Gee and a pneumatic hermeneutic**

In recent years there has been much discussion in Pentecostal/charismatic circles about a pneumatic hermeneutic that attempts to account for the role of the Holy Spirit in biblical interpretation. Spawn and Wright (2012:3–4) begin their historical survey of Pentecostal/charismatic scholarship in the 1960s, well within the final years of Gee’s life. Yet in a section of the opening chapter, ‘Renewal Reading of the Holy Spirit in Luke/Acts’, Gee’s name is never mentioned. Instead, their discussion (2012:16–19) focuses primarily on the classical Pentecostal understanding of Pentecost as empowerment and vocation versus broader pneumatological perspectives that see the Spirit’s coming related to soteriology and conversion/initiation. In his essay in the volume, Thomas declares that ‘the only appropriate place to begin a conversation about a Pentecostal hermeneutic is with the Pentecostal community’ (2012:116). He goes on to note the significance of listening to and learning from the first generation of Pentecostal interpreters, and is ‘amazed by the clarity and depth of insight into the biblical text, even when compared to various historical critical commentaries on a given passage’ (2013:119). Gee interestingly falls into the historical crack between those interpreters that Thomas alludes to and the modern generation of interpreters that Spawn and Wright begin with. One outcome of this article on Gee is to highlight the important role he plays in bridging these generations of Pentecostal/charismatic interpreters. Thus Gee offers a significant interpretative voice that must be accounted for in ongoing discussions regarding a pneumatic hermeneutic.

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Donald Henry Frere Gee (10 May 1891 – 20 July 1966) was an English Pentecostal Bible Teacher. He wrote the book *Wind and Flame*, which is the story of Pentecostalism in Europe in the 20th century. He was called "The Apostle of Balance.". Donald Gee was born in London in 1891. His father died of tuberculosis when he was 9. In October 1905, Seth Joshua, the Welsh revival preacher, was invited to his church to hold a mission. Joshua had a great influence upon the young Evan Roberts and the Welsh Revival