

The Claim to Speak in Tongues and Perform Miracles

Considered in the Light of the Bible

The charismatic movement within religious circles is rapidly growing in popularity. At one time, the claim to possess the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, or to speak in tongues, was advanced almost only by Pentecostals; today most sects claim to have had similar experiences. With some religious groups, it is the criterion of truth whether or not one has had an "experience", and, in the absence of such, it is reasoned that the Truth itself is absent. Indeed, whereas for many years, some churches have vigorously rejected, and even ridiculed, the idea that miracles are being performed, today they have capitulated to the popular trend, and have joined the ranks of those who claim to have the miraculous and mystical powers of the Holy Spirit.

We have no doubt that some people have had experiences of an unusual nature. Nor do we doubt that faith is capable of effecting some cures. If a person believes a matter sufficiently strongly, it can have a remarkable effect upon the emotions, and even result in physical reactions.

And this can be thought and taught to be a manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit.

That there is such a thing as the "birth of the Spirit" taught in the Bible is without doubt. Indeed, the Lord himself declared that unless a person is "born of the Spirit" he cannot enter the Kingdom of God (John 3:5). But whilst that is acknowledged, what passes current today for the possession of the Holy Spirit is not the "birth" to which the Lord referred.

And as personal salvation is bound up in one's understanding of true Bible teaching (Romans 1:16; Ephesians 4:4-6), it is important

for us to know exactly if what we believe is in accordance therewith. Has God, in fact, promised to bestow the miraculous powers of the Spirit in these days?

Why The Spirit Gifts Were Given

On the day of Pentecost, fifty days after the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, the disciples were gathered "with one accord," in the city of Jerusalem, and, in fulfillment of the promise of Christ, they were "anointed with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:1-4).

The effect was instantaneous. "They began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). The great concourse of Jews assembled from all parts of the world to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost, not only heard the Gospel proclaimed, but proclaimed in the native tongues of those countries from whence they had come.

This was but the beginning of miracles performed by the disciples. As it was said of Jesus that he was "a man approved of God by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him" (Acts 2:22), so now of his followers it was recorded: "God bear them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will" (Heb. 2:4). The sick were healed; the blind had their sight restored; the disciples spoke in foreign tongues without having first learned them.

These miracles were performed by the "power of the Holy Spirit." They comprised the seal of God on the testimony of the Apostles, demonstrating that He was with them, and that the doctrines they pronounced were true.

Such an attestation was necessary in those times, for the preaching of the Gospel in the name of Christ Jesus, was something new. The pagan world opposed it because it challenged its heathen gods; the Jewish world opposed it because it required belief in the crucified and resurrected Jesus as Messiah. Some extraordinary Divine sign

was necessary to overcome the prejudices of the age, and demonstrate beyond all doubt that Christianity is true. The miracles performed by the disciples of the Lord provided this; they showed that the seal of God was on their teaching.

Christadelphians teach that this power to perform miracles of healing, and to "speak in tongues" is now withdrawn. They maintain this because the Bible teaches that the gifts of the Spirit were only designed as temporary helps; and that when they accomplished the purpose that God had in bestowing them, they would be withdrawn.

How The Spirit Gifts Were Given

We ask you, Reader, to carefully and patiently consider the evidence we now advance. It is vitally important that what we believe concerning God and the Bible is in accordance with the teaching of Scripture, because personal salvation is dependent upon such. We are told that "faith cometh by hearing the Word of God" (Romans 10: 17), and that "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6). Our emotions, our beliefs, and even our "experiences" must be analyzed in the light of Bible teaching, for otherwise it is possible to be led astray. The Bible speaks of the possibility of some being motivated by "a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie" (2 Thessalonians 2:11). That being the case, how important it is that we consider everything in the light of Scripture.

The modern world has become familiar with so-called evangelists - - men, women, and even children, claiming to possess miraculous gifts. Their stock-in-trade is usually a magnetic personality, carefully groomed for the purpose in hand, and highlighted by a well-prepared background of music and oratory. We have personally seen a ten-year-old child, claiming to have the gift of God, and the power of miracle, attracting a stream of deluded people marching forward to be "blessed" by her as she blew upon her bugle.

Her audience imagined that it was witnessing the power of the Holy Spirit; but in the cold light of fact, supplemented by the teaching of the Bible, it was obvious it had been moved by a "strong delusion" to "believe a lie."

This is evident, when the manner in which the gifts of the Holy Spirit were bestowed in Apostolic times is considered.

Firstly, the recipient had to possess a sound knowledge of the Truth; and, secondly, the miraculous gifts were only bestowed by the imposition of the hands of the Apostles. The Bible narrates: "Through the laying on of the Apostles' hands, the Holy Spirit was given" (Acts 8:18).

This evidence is important. It shows that the Apostles alone had the power of bestowing the gifts of the Holy Spirit on others. This is clearly revealed in an incident recorded in Acts 8. Philip, the evangelist, was sent by God to Samaria to preach the Gospel, and this he did, "preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, baptising men and women" (v. 12). His preaching was accompanied by "miracles and signs" (v. 13) which he was able to perform. But the record clearly shows that though he could perform a miracle, he could not bestow the gifts of the Holy Spirit upon others! The Apostles had to travel from Jerusalem to Samaria that believers "might receive the Holy Spirit" (v. 15), for it was only "through the laying on of the apostles' hands that the Holy Spirit was given" (v. 17-18).

This fact should be very carefully pondered. Acts 8 clearly shows:

1. Believers were baptised in water when they came to understand the Apostolic teaching concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ.
2. Though they were baptised believers, they **DID NOT POSSESS THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

3. Though Philip taught and baptised them; though he performed miracles, he **COULD NOT BESTOW THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ON OTHERS.**

4. It required the physical presence of the Apostles to do so.

That being the case, what happened when the last of the apostles died? There being nobody capable of transmitting the gifts of the Holy Spirit, they gradually ceased, so that it is quite fallacious for modern preachers to claim they have these gifts.

Other parts of the Bible showing that the Holy Spirit gifts were imparted by the laying on of the hands of the Apostles, are as follows:

"When Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied" (Acts 19:6).

"Stir up the gift of God, which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands" (Paul to Timothy - 2 Tim. 1:6).

What Of Cornelius?

There was an exception to the rule referred to above. When Cornelius, the first Gentile convert, was taught the Truth in Christ, the Holy Spirit was given him direct from God, without the imposition of the hands of the Apostles (Acts 10:45-48).

Why was the general rule waived in his case? Because he was a Gentile, and previous to that time, the truth in Christ had been preached to Jews only. The Apostles did not believe it right to proclaim it to Gentiles on equal terms with the Jews, and they had to be taught that they should show no discrimination between the two classes of peoples. Peter made that abundantly clear when, in his preaching to this Roman Gentile, he declared:

"Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him" (vv. 34-35).

This truth was confirmed beyond all doubt by God bestowing the Holy Spirit upon Cornelius, as Peter later told his fellow-brethren in Jerusalem (see Acts 11:13-17).

The case of Cornelius was clearly exceptional, designed as a witness to show that God had opened the saving power of the Gospel to Gentiles equally as to Jews. It was, as Paul explained later, "a witness" that thence after in the preaching of the Gospel, Gentiles were to be treated on an equal basis with Jews. See Acts 15:7-9.

The example of Cornelius, therefore, cannot be pressed in support of the bestowal of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the absence of the Apostles, because, from thence onwards, any baptised were given the gifts of the Holy Spirit, only when an Apostle "laid his hands upon them" for that purpose (Acts 19:6).

Withdrawal Of The Spirit-Gifts Predicted

Seeing that the gifts of the spirit were only imparted by the laying on of the Apostles' hands, it is obvious that with the death of the last of these Apostles (John), the spirit-gifts would gradually cease to be manifested.

That is what happened.

The Apostles taught that this would be the case. Speaking of the bestowal of the Holy Spirit gifts, Peter declared:

"The promise is unto you, and your children, and to all that are afar off as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39).

The promise of the spirit-gifts are here made to three classes of people:

1. "You," or those Jews who heard the word Peter preached that day in Jerusalem.

2. "Those afar off," or those not present at Jerusalem but who subsequently heard the Gospel preached in their home towns, including Gentiles (see Eph. 2:17).
3. "Your children," or the generation following the Apostolic age.

Peter's declaration at Pentecost limited the bestowal of the Spirit gifts to believers: "as many as the Lord shall call." Those, today, who claim to possess this power, and yet teach doctrines opposed to the basic message of the Bible cannot possibly possess God's power. What influence they assert is that of mind over matter, and not of God, not miraculous in the Bible meaning of the term.

Moreover, Peter limited the promise to "you and to your children." That obviously relates to a time period, for children of believers did not automatically receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Peter's words mean that the promise was limited to his hearers, and the generation following.

Why should Peter so limit the period during which the gifts of the Spirit would be given? Because he realised that with the death of the Apostles the medium appointed of God for the impartation of the gifts would not be available, and therefore they would cease to be manifested.

Peter's statement was confirmed by Paul. He wrote at length upon the subject, and devoted three chapters in his 1st Epistle to the Corinthians to this theme (chaps. 12, 13, 14). In chapter 12 he enumerated the various gifts, referred to the way in which they were manifested by the members of the community, spoke of their importance, and concluded by saying: "Covet earnestly the best gifts; and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way."

Those closing words form the preface to one of the most beautiful chapters in the Bible: Paul's wonderful discourse on charity, or love (I Corinthians 13). He commenced by declaring that love is the greatest power for good, far transcending the gifts of the Spirit.

The manifestation of faith, hope and love by the believer, demonstrates the in-dwelling of the spirit-word of God in him. On the other hand, the gifts of the Spirit: the power to perform miracles, to speak in tongues, to heal, and so forth, were so much "sounding brass, and tinkling cymbal" in the absence of these virtues (v. 6); whilst of the three, love is the most enduring virtue of all. Paul contrasted its influence and endurance with the gifts of the Spirit, which, he declared, were only temporary manifestations of Divine power, soon to be withdrawn. He wrote:

"Charity (i.e. love) never faileth; but whether there be prophecies (i.e. the gift of prophecy - see v. 2), they (the gift, not the prophecy) shall fail; whether there be tongues (the gift of speaking in tongues - v. 1) they (the gifts) shall cease; whether there be knowledge it (the gift of knowledge) shall vanish away."

Paul clearly predicted that the gifts of the Spirit were to be withdrawn, and taught that believers should not overstress their importance. Instead they should seek to develop faith, hope and charity, virtues which will gain for them an eternal inheritance in the Kingdom of God.

In accordance with Paul's teaching, the gifts of the Spirit are no longer available today.

Otherwise, why would Paul have taught that these gifts would "fail" or "cease"? Is it not obvious that, as the Bible teaches, these gifts would cease, so that what is claimed today to be the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not so? Otherwise the Bible is shown to be false.

The basic purpose of the bestowal of the Holy Spirit was to guide the Apostles "into all truth," to reveal "things to come," and bring "to remembrance" that which had been already accomplished but which had been overlooked (John 15:26; 16:13). By that means, the revelation of God to man would be completed, as it is in the

Bible. Thus the Bible concludes with a warning against any who should "add unto the things" recorded therein (Rev. 22:18).

An Objection Answered

In expounding the subject of Spirit gifts, Paul declared: "We know in part, and we prophesy in part" (1 Cor. 13:9). This can be better translated: "We know partitively (or "in parts"), and we prophesy partitively." The same Greek word (*meros*) is translated as "particular" in 1 Cor. 12:27: "members in particular," or as it signifies, different "parts" of the one body. In 1 Cor. 13:9, therefore, the Apostle was referring to the manner in which different Spirit-gifts were manifested by different members of the one congregation. Some had the gift of knowledge by the Spirit, and others the gift of prophecy. The congregation was dependent upon these Spirit-endowed men for divine guidance and revelation, for, at that time, the Bible had not been completed. Therefore, each provided a part for the benefit of the whole body, so that what was done was done "partitively."

Paul predicted that that state of things was not to continue, and that when the completed revelation of God had been made known to man through the power of the Holy Spirit, it would be withdrawn. He wrote:

"When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part (or in parts) shall be DONE AWAY" (1 Cor. 13:9).

What is meant by "that which is perfect?" Some claim that this has relation to the perfection of nature, immortality, which will be bestowed upon the righteous at the return of Christ (1 Cor. 15:23,53), and therefore the Spirit-gifts would continue until then. But that would mean that the Holy Spirit would be withdrawn at Christ's coming, which will not be the case. Instead, it will be manifested in greater power.

The Greek word *teleios* rendered "perfect" in this verse, signifies complete," "having reached its end." The noun of the same word

occurs in Luke 1:45, where it is rendered "performance," or, in the Revised Version, "fulfillment." It occurs again in 1 Cor. 2:6 where Paul declared that he taught the deeper things of Divine wisdom to "them that are perfect" or who were mature in spiritual understanding. In Ephesians 4:11-12, he wrote:

"He (God) gave some, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers; for the PERFECTING OF THE SAINTS, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

Weymouth renders the word "perfect" in this place as "fully equip": "to fully equip his people for the work of serving." The "perfecting of the saints" is something that takes place now, and not something that awaits the future. They are "perfected," "brought to maturity" in understanding or "fully equipped" for preaching by the complete revelation of God in the Bible. Until Apostolic times, only the Old Testament existed, but subsequently, God's revelation was brought to completion or perfection by the recording of the New Testament. This was accomplished through the inspired writings of Spirit-endowed men of the first century; apostles like Paul and John; evangelists like Luke; pastors and teachers like James and Jude. By the ministry of such men, the final revelation of God was made and incorporated in the Bible.

The complete or perfect revelation of God "having come," that which was manifested in parts (Holy Spirit power) was "done away" (1 Cor. 13:9). The Apostles passed off the scene, and no one remained capable of transmitting the Spirit-gifts to others.

However, the completed Bible remained, and is adequate to provide all that is necessary to fully equip God's people for the work of serving. It is a work of the Holy Spirit moving through the men who wrote it (Heb. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:21).

God's revelation to man was completed when John, the last of the Apostles, received *The Revelation*. He alone remained of that small company of men (the Apostles) who had the power to transmit the

gifts of the Holy Spirit to others. With his death, some time after A.D. 96, the gifts of the Spirit as manifested by believers, waned and finally ceased; for there remained no one to transmit them to the new generation of disciples. Peter's words at Pentecost had been fulfilled in that the Holy Spirit gifts had been manifested by those who accepted the Gospel in his day, and by their children. Now the gifts ceased, as Paul had predicted they would. Believers had the complete revelation of God in the Bible, and by absorption of its message, could develop the virtues of faith, hope and love, which Paul taught comprised "a more excellent way" of pleasing the Father.

Pentecostal Speaking In Tongues

The Apostles were anointed with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and immediately began to proclaim the Gospel in the name of Christ. To their amazement, the people gathered from all parts of the world, heard it proclaimed in the various languages of the countries from whence they came. In explanation of the miracle, Peter drew attention to the prophecy of Joel 2:28 where the prophet, in predicting the outpouring of God's spirit, likened it to the giving of rain.

"For He (God) hath given you the former rain moderately, and He will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain" (v. 23).

In Hebrew, "former rain" can be rendered "teacher," and thus the margin of the A.V. provides the following alternative rendition:

"For He hath given you the Teacher of righteousness, and He shall cause to come down for you the rain; a teacher and a latter rain..."

The "teacher of righteousness" is the Lord Jesus. The "rain" that the Prophet predicted would descend, was the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in Apostolic times, as is shown by Peter's application of this chapter to the preaching at Pentecost (Acts 2:16). Now the prophet spoke of a "latter rain" in addition to the former rain. In

other words, he predicted two outpourings of Spirit: one at the first advent of the Lord, and the second at his second advent. Between these two outpourings there would exist a period of "drought" as far as the Spirit-gifts are concerned.

That period of "drought" commenced with the death of the Apostles and the consequent cessation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and it continues to the present.

At the return of the Lord Jesus to the earth, the power of the Holy Spirit will again be in evidence, and in greater measure than in the first century. It will result in the resurrection of the dead, and a change of nature for those who have lived in accordance with the precepts of Christ, for "this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruptible will put on incorruption" (1 Cor. 15:53). Then will be fulfilled the words of the Lord Jesus: "Unless a man be born of water and the spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). To be "born of water" is to be baptised into Christ (Gal. 3:26); to be "born of the spirit" is to be granted immortality (see 1 Cor. 15:46; Phil. 3:21; 2 Pet. 1:4).

Thus the "latter day" outpouring of the Spirit will be greater than that of 1900 years ago, when it was given moderately" (Joel 2:23). By its means judgments will be poured out upon the world of the ungodly, and those who are prepared to heed will have "the everlasting gospel" preached to them (Revelation 14:6-8; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10). The resurrected and immortalised believers of the Lord will co-operate in that work of judging and preaching (Psalm 149:4-9).

That being the case, Paul's teaching that the Holy Spirit would be withdrawn (1 Corinthians 13:10) cannot apply to the future (when it will be outpoured in greater measure than ever before) and so must apply to the past.

At Least Nine Different Gifts

It appears that the Apostles not only had the power of transmitting the Spirit-gifts to believers, but also that they alone manifested all the various gifts, whereas other believers received one gift (see I Tim. 4:14) In 1st Corinthians 12, Paul enumerated nine different gifts, including healing, working miracles, speaking in foreign tongues, interpretation of tongues, and, significantly, the discerning of spirits.

This latter gift suggests that some were falsely claiming Holy Spirit power, and probably were even supporting their claim with "miracles" of healing; whereas they were not in possession of the Spirit. Their claims, however, could be shown to be false by others who possessed the "gift" that enabled them to detect pseudo-miracles from the genuine ones.

This prevented men arising and by imitating the spirit gifts, leading others astray by false doctrine. John warned: "Test the spirits whether they be of God; for there are many false spirits in the world" (1 John 4:1). The gift of "discerning the spirits" guarded against charlatans and fakes arising, claiming powers they did not possess. It restrained those whose magnetic and hypnotic power exerted an influence upon others, causing them to imagine that such was a manifestation of Spirit power. It discriminated between so-called "faith" healing due to mere excitation of the mind, and genuine miracle such as the Apostles performed (Acts 3:7-8).

Gifts Of Tongues The Least Important

In discoursing upon the Spirit-gifts, the Apostle showed that some were esteemed of greater value than others (1 Corinthians 12:31). He taught, "greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues" (1 Corinthians 14:3), and he interpreted the former as "speaking unto men to edification, exhortation and comfort" (v. 3).

The gift of "speaking in tongues" was given that Christianity might be proclaimed in foreign parts, as it was (Mark 16:15; Colossians 1:23). The "tongues" they spoke were foreign languages, for "every

man heard them (the Apostles) speak in his own language" (Acts 2:6). The people who witnessed this miracle were amazed:

"Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And now hear we every man IN OUR OWN TONGUE, wherein we were born" (vv. 6-7).

Today men claim to "speak with tongues," and gobble a meaningless jargon as demonstration of this power. That is not the gift spoken of in the Bible!

But these latter-day claimants for the gift point to the term "UNKNOWNtongue" (1 Corinthians 14:2) as explanatory of the gibberish they speak. The term however, denotes a foreign language, not a tongue that nobody understands. This is shown beyond doubt by the citation from Acts 2:6 above. [The word "unknown" is rendered in italics in the Bible to indicate that there is no equivalent word in the original. Literally it should be rendered "a tongue", but some translate according to the idiom: "a foreign language" (See Diaglott).]

There were some, in the early congregations, who were vaunting this gift to no profit. They were praying and speaking in foreign tongues merely to demonstrate their ability to do so, though nobody profited by such talk. The Apostle condemned this practice, stating:

"I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown (i.e. foreign) tongue" (2 Corinthians 14:19).

Yet some today, in defiance of Apostolic precept, and falsely claiming Holy Spirit gifts, emotionally shout out a jargon unknown and unedifying to anybody.

Paul condemned such a practice, even on the part of those who did have the gift, because it brought confusion to the congregation and ridicule on the Truth:

"If therefore the whole congregation be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?" (1 Corinthians 14:23).

Attend a Revivalist Meeting where it is claimed that the gifts of the Spirit are in evidence, and observe how true are Paul's words! Meaningless jargon is uttered on the claim that it is "speaking in tongues"; uninhibited paroxysms of emotionalism, intermixed with hysterical shoutings of "Hallelujah" are interpreted as the influence of the Spirit. But the reaction of an unbiased onlooker is exactly as described by Paul! Where are the sober words and influence of Truth in such exhibitionism? It is not a manifestation of the Spirit, but the mere excitation of the flesh.

On the other hand, Paul taught:

"But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all" (v. 24).

The proclamation of the Truth will convince an unbeliever, causing him to judicially examine himself; and as the "secrets of his heart" are revealed, he will be induced to accept the way of salvation in Christ, and so worship God (v. 25).

In the days of the Apostle, the gift of the Spirit was required before any could prophesy, for the complete revelation of God had not been given. Today, however, the gift of the Spirit is not needed for that purpose, because all can prophesy in the sense of taking from the Bible that message of "comfort and edification" which it supplies. The New Testament declares:

"The revelation of the secret kept hid since the ages began, but now made manifest . . . and made known to all nations for the obedience of faith" (Romans 16:25).

Modern "Faith" Healing Is Not Miraculous

Christadelphians do not deny the fact of modern, so-called "faith" healing. But this is quite different to the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit manifested in the early years of the Christian era. Most doctors acknowledge the need of "faith" in effecting cures, for they realize the power of mind over matter. "Faith" in their vocabulary, however, does not necessarily mean acknowledging God in truth (Ct. Romans 10:17), but rather manifesting complete confidence in the one who is to effect the cure, whether he be doctor or so-called "divine". Given sufficient "faith," and "miraculous" cures are not impossible; but such "faith healing" is not a testimony to the power of God, but to the credulity of the patient.

For example, the religious world presents the spectacle of differing sects, antagonistic to each other, mutually accusing one another of being apostate, yet both claiming "miraculous" cures. It is obvious that God cannot be with both systems; the opposing sects, themselves, declare that! Who then is responsible for the miracles? The answer is that they are not genuine miracles at all, but a manifestation of the power of mind over matter. And let it be understood that for every "genuine" cure thus recorded, there are many thousands who fail to be cured, and who are plunged into despair, and often into utter faithlessness and unbelief as a result.

We do not deny that cures may be affected, for deep-seated emotion such as fear, pleasure or fright can have a physical reaction for good or ill. It can cause the hair to turn white, induce perspiration or palpitation of the heart, drive away pain, or even result in death. Fear can have such physical reaction, that animals about to be slain for food must be pacified, otherwise it will adversely affect the quality of the meat.

Science is still largely ignorant of the extent of such psychological influences, but it recognizes that they can play a large part in effecting some cures. Consider hypnotism, as an example. It has been used with some success in certain nervous disorders; and, as

is well known, people can be induced to do all sorts of strange things, even becoming insensible to pain, whilst mesmerized.

Similar psychological reactions can be induced by the dramatic stimulus of an emotional, revivalist meeting in which mass hysteria is deliberately encouraged. Under the influence of enthusiastic singing, or roused oratory, the emotions of the audience are whipped up until a high degree of excitement is developed, and may find themselves en rapport with the speaker, though often ignorant of the import of his speech. By such means, inhibitions are released, and the mind can become so excited as to dull pain or effect minor, temporary "cures." However, the delayed reaction is frequently bad.

Such meetings, however, are designed to induce the "feeling" of well-being on the part of the audience. Members of it "feel" as though they have "received something," and in explanation they fly to theology, and claim that they have felt the power of the Holy Spirit.

We deny this, and maintain that such emotionalism is of the flesh, and not of God, and that the "miracles" claimed are not genuine ones. We do not call in question the sincerity of those claiming to have the "gifts of the Spirit," but draw attention to the teaching of the Bible, which shows that these are not in evidence today.

The Bible Warns Against False Claims

Even in Apostolic times, when miracles were undoubtedly performed, the Bible warned true followers of Christ to be careful lest they be led astray by that which was false, though it had the appearance of miracle.

"Believe not every spirit," wrote John, "but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

An example of what is meant is shown in the Old Testament. Moses was told to go before Pharaoh with a number of miracles as signs authenticating his God-given message and status as Israel's leader. But the magicians of Egypt faked those miracles in such a way as to deceive many that they could perform them as well (Exodus 8:18-21). Paul quoted this incident to warn true Christians to be on their guard lest they, too, be similarly taken in by some falsely claiming to have the Spirit gifts. Speaking of certain ones whom, he declared, would "lead captive silly women," and would be found "ever learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth," he continued: "Now as Jannes and Jambres (the magicians of Egypt) withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth . . ." (2 Timothy 3:8).

Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses by imitating the spirit-gifts he possessed; and Paul warned lest Christians be similarly led astray to embrace false teaching, on the grounds that the teacher possessed the Holy Spirit.

A person cannot possess the gifts of the Holy Spirit whilst failing to correctly understand Bible truth. The first essential to salvation is a true understanding of the Gospel. Truth is to be established by the teaching of the Bible, not the claim of some to possess supernatural powers! The power of the Holy Spirit was only given to those who believed the truth and embraced it in the correct manner (Acts 2:38-39), and Bible-truth is not consistent with immortal soulism, Trinitarianism, and heaven-going as the reward of the righteous. Nowhere in the Bible are these doctrines set forth as truth [refer to the booklet "The Gospel Explained and Expounded"] but the very contrary; so that those embracing them, or teaching them, are in error. These doctrines being false, those endorsing them cannot possibly have the gifts of the Holy Spirit, no matter what they might claim. There were some, even in the days of the Apostles, who though they were in error falsely claimed that they possessed the Holy Spirit, because of certain magnetic powers that they manifested. Acts 19:13 states:

"Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying: We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth..."

This is still done today by pseudo-religionists claiming to have the power of the Holy Spirit. They may be sincere (this we do not doubt), but they are certainly self-deceived!

A case of this was recently brought to our attention. A prominent TV personality in Australia claimed to have "spoken in tongues". He did not understand what he said, but another party interpreted it as being in Cantonese dialect, which, he declared, he did not know, and could not understand! Would a God of wisdom and order speak thus through a member of an Australian audience? What the claimant did not realize was that if he spoke through the Holy Spirit, his utterance was as inspired as the Bible (see Hebrews 1:1)! Yet he did not know what he said, nor could he remember what the message proclaimed! This in spite of the fact, that the bestowal of the Holy Spirit was designed to "bring all things to remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26).

That man appeared to us to be thoroughly sincere, but he was sadly mistaken. God is "a God of order" not "of confusion" (1 Corinthians 14:33), and would speak plainly and simply to anybody to whom He desired to dictate a message.

A Spirit We Must Manifest

But though the power to perform miracles is not available to men today, there is that which is called "the spirit" in the Bible that we must manifest. By its help, we can speak unto others to "edification, comfort and exhortation," and it will assist us to walk in the path of the truth and peace. Paul taught:

"Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh ... the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:16,22).

What is that Spirit?

It is not the power to perform miracles.

It is not an effluence from heaven which compels us to act apart from our own volition.

It is not something which can be obtained without any conscious effort on our part.

The Bible clearly shows what it is. Jesus taught: "The words I speak, they are Spirit and they are life" (John 6:63). The Spirit, therefore, comprises the power of the teaching of the Lord Jesus. If we walk in accordance with this, we shall "not fulfil the lust of the flesh," and we will manifest its fruit: "love, joy, peace" and so forth. The Apostles likewise taught that the power of the truth believed comprises the Spirit available today. They declared:

"The Spirit is Truth" (1 John 5:6).

"The sword of the Spirit is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17).

An understanding of the teaching of the Bible thus comprises the Spirit available today, and it can be the most powerful influence in our lives. It is termed "the spirit" because it came to man from God through the Spirit (Hebrews 1:1; Nehemiah 9:20). Through it man can conquer the power of sin and ultimately death; by it he can develop faith (Rom. 10:17), and gain the victory over self and the world (1 John 5:4). God's truth is the medium designed by Him for the sanctification of His servants (John 17:17; 15:3). It can change a person's outlook, create in him the mind of Christ, and this, finding expression in his life, will make him acceptable to Christ at His coming.

To that end, we exhort the reader to give himself to the study of the Bible, that he might understand and accept its life-giving message, in anticipation of attaining unto life eternal at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to reign on the earth (Acts 1:11; Revelation 5:9-10).