



*Spirit
Manifestations
and the Gift
of Tongues*

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What does the Bible say about ...

MIRACULOUS GIFTS?

We live in a day of extravagant claims of the miraculous workings of the Holy Spirit. Every Christian must be prepared to evaluate these claims and determine reasonable expectations regarding the work of the Spirit in his or her own life.

Noted apologist **Sir Robert Anderson** considers history and searches the Scriptures to determine what is of God and what is of the great deceiver.

The days in which we live are intensely solemn. The stupid materialism of the science of yesterday has been exploded by the facts of spiritualism – vouched for by some of our leading scientists of today – and the blind infidelity of the past has thus given place to a craving to get into touch with the realities of the unseen world.

This morbid influence has invaded the sphere of religious thought and life, and even spiritual Christians are being corrupted by it. It creates a tendency to make the great facts and truths of the divine revelation of Christianity subordinate to subjective spiritual manifestations, and to the emotions and experiences which such manifestations are fitted to produce. Among the many phases of this movement none is more striking than that of which the distinctive characteristic is what is termed “the gift of tongues.” In many lands, our own included, there are coteries of earnest Christians who are reveling in the enjoyment of this “gift.” Under the compelling influence of an entirely preter-human power, men and women are inspired to utter thoughts which are not their own, in a language of which they are ignorant. The facts are indisputable, and the only question open to us is as to their significance.

The first inquiry which will suggest itself to the thoughtful is whether any light upon this subject can be derived from the history of similar religious movements in the past. We shall find what we seek in events recorded by men whom those of us who are getting on in life count as our contemporaries.

The beginning of the third decade of the nineteenth century was a time of religious revival. In some places the movement was characterized by the study of the Bible with increased earnestness and intelligence, and in others by united prayer for manifest tokens of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. A movement of this latter type centered around the picturesque personality of Edward Irving. At twenty-seven years of age this brilliantly gifted man became assistant minister in the great Dr. Chalmers’ Glasgow parish. Seven years later he was called to the principal Church of Scotland pulpit in London. His preaching took London by storm. His popularity was phenomenal beyond all precedent. The cultured classes of the metropolis thronged his church, but popularity did not quench his spirituality. When tidings reached him of spiritual manifestations among Christians in the West of Scotland, he was filled with longings for like “Pentecostal” blessing in his own congregation. He was surrounded by many God-fearing and earnestly devoted men and women who shared these aspirations, and meetings for prayer were frequent and prolonged. The burden of their cry was for a renewal of the Pentecostal gifts. Before long one and another among them became suddenly endued with a supernatural power, under which they uttered Spirit-given words, sometimes in an unknown dialect, but usually in their native tongue.

The following are extracts from a narrative penned at the time by one who took a leading part in the movement:

At this period I was, by professional arrangements, called up to London, and had a strong desire to attend the prayer-meetings which were then privately held by those who spoke in the power, and those who sought for the gifts. Having obtained an introduction, I attended; my mind fully convinced that the power was of God, and prepared to listen to

the utterances. After one or two brethren had read and prayed, Mr. T. was made to speak two or three words very distinctly, and with an energy and depth of tone which seemed to me extraordinary, and it fell upon me as a supernatural utterance, which I ascribed to the power of God; the words were in a tongue I did not understand. In a few minutes Miss E.C. broke out in an utterance in English, which, as to matter and manner, and the influence it had upon me, I at once bowed to as the utterance of the Spirit of God. Those who have heard the powerful and commanding utterance need no description; but they who have not, may conceive what an unnatural and unaccustomed tone of voice, an intense and riveting power of expression - with the declaration of a cutting rebuke to all who were present, and applicable to my own state of mind in particular - would effect upon me, and upon others who were come together, expecting to hear the voice of the Spirit of God. In the midst of the feelings of awe and reverence which this produced, I was myself seized upon by the power; and in much struggling against it was made to cry out, and myself to give forth a confession of my own sin in the matter, for which we were rebuked; and afterwards to utter a prophecy that the messengers of the Lord should go forth, publishing to the ends of the earth, in the mighty power of God, the testimony of the near coming of the Lord Jesus. ...

From this period, for the space of five months, I had no utterances in public; though when engaged alone in private prayer, the power would come upon me, and cause me to pray with strong crying and tears for the state of the Church. On one occasion, about a month after I received the power, whilst in my study, endeavoring to lift up my soul to God in prayer, my mind was so filled with worldly concerns that my thoughts were wandering to them continually. Again and again I began to pray, and before a minute had passed I found my thoughts had wandered from my prayer back into the world. I was much distressed at this temptation, and sat down, lifting up a short ejaculation to God for deliverance; when suddenly the power came down upon me, and I found myself lifted up in soul to God, my wandering thoughts at once riveted, and calmness of mind given me. By a constraint I cannot describe I was made to speak - at the same time shrinking from utterance, and yet rejoicing in it. The utterance was a prayer that the Lord would have mercy upon me and deliver me from fleshly weakness, and would graciously bestow upon me the gifts of His Spirit, "the gift of wisdom, the gift of knowledge, the gift of faith, the working of miracles, the gift of healing, the gift of prophecy, the gift of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues"; and that He would open my mouth and give me strength to declare His glory.

This prayer, short almost as I have now penned it, was forced from me by the constraint of the power which acted upon me; and the utterance was so loud that I put my handkerchief to my mouth to stop the sound, that I might not alarm the house. When I had reached the last word I have written, the power died of me, and I was left just as before, save in amazement at what had passed, and filled with thankfulness to God for His great love so manifested to me. With the power there came upon me a strong conviction - "This is the Spirit of God; what you are now praying is of the Spirit of God, and must, therefore, be the mind of God, and what you are asking will surely be given to you."

These events occurred in 1831. In the following January he again visited the metropolis. Could

a dozen Christians of any class be induced today to attend a prayer meeting at 6:30 a.m. on a winter morning? Yet scores of city merchants and professional men were then meeting daily at that hour to plead for Pentecostal blessings. At one of these meetings, the morning after his arrival in London, Mr. Irving called on him to read and pray. He tells that, while he was reading Malachi 4,

The power came upon me, and I was made to read in the power. My voice raised far beyond its natural pitch, with constrained repetitions of parts, and with the same inward uplifting which at the presence of the power I had always before experienced. When I knelt down to pray, I was carried out to pray in the power for the presence and blessing of God in the midst of the church; in all this I had great joy and peace, without any of the strugglings which had attended my former utterances in power.

He next describes an evening spent at a friend's house with Mr. Irving and others of the coterie. He says:

After prayer, Mrs. J.C. was made to testify that now was the time of the great struggle and power of Satan in the midst of us; that now we must take to ourselves the whole armor of God and stand up against him; for he was coming in like a flood upon the Church, and fearful was his power. The pastor observed that this utterance taught us our duty, as standing in the Church to wrestle against the enemy; and whilst he was going on to ask some question, the power fell upon me, and I was made to speak; and for two hours or upwards, with very little interval, the power continued upon me, and I gave forth what we all regarded as prophecies concerning the Church and the nation. ... These prophecies were mingled with others most glorious and gracious, as they appeared to us – declaring the Spirit should be abundantly poured forth, and a faithful and mighty people should be gathered in this land. ...

The power which then rested on me was far more mighty than before, laying down my mind and body in perfect obedience, and carrying me on without confusion or excitement. Excitement there might appear to a bystander, but to myself it was calmness and peace. Every former visitation of the power had been very brief; but now it continued, and seemed to rest upon me all the evening. The things I was made to utter flashed in upon my mind without forethought, without expectation, and without any plan or arrangement; all was the work of the moment, and I was as the passive instrument of the power which used me.

After narrating a number of similar experiences, he remarks,

To those who have been used to watch over the workings of their own minds, and who have never been visited with any power beyond the mere vagaries of excitement, it may seem inexplicable how persons can be brought to surrender their own judgment, and act upon an impulse, or under a power working in them, without daring to question that power. The process is, however, very simple, and the reasons supporting it are very plausible, and – the premises admitted – perfectly logical. My own case may be an example; accustomed to try the powers and weaknesses of my own mind in public and

in private; in business and in religious meetings; in speaking and in prayer; in reasoning and in exposition; I found, on a sudden, in the midst of my accustomed course, a power coming upon me which was altogether new – an unnatural, and in many cases a most appalling utterance given to us – matters uttered by me in this power of which I had never thought, and many of which I did not understand until long after they were uttered – an enlarged comprehension and clearness of view given to me on points which were really the truth of God (though mingled with many things which I have since seen not to be truth, but which then had the form of truth) – great setting out of Christ, great joy and freedom in prayer, and seemingly great nearness of communion with God, in the midst of the workings of the power; the course of the power quite contrary to the course of excitement. It was manifest to me that the power was supernatural; it was therefore a spirit. It seemed to me to bear witness to Christ, and to work the fruits of the Spirit of God. The conclusion was inevitable, that it was the Spirit of God; and if so the deduction was immediate, that it ought in all things to be obeyed. If I understood not the words I was made to utter, it was consistent with the idea of the utterances of the Spirit, that deep and mysterious things should be spoken. If I were commanded to do a thing of which I saw not the use, was I to dare to pause upon God’s command? If, indeed, the things were clearly contrary to God’s truth, it would have been clear God had not spoken it; but if it was a thing indifferent, surely (I reasoned) God is to be obeyed. If anyone is once persuaded that the Spirit of God speaks in him by any particular mode or communication, it will henceforth be his study only to discern that he does not mistake his own feelings or impulses for that communication; for, when the communication is decided to be from God, faithfulness to God steps in, and all the faith and love and simple reliance on God, which the Christian through faith possesses, will be enlisted to perform the command. Awful, therefore, is the mistake, if a seducing spirit is entertained as the Holy Spirit of Jehovah.

The more devoted the Christian seduced, the more implicit the obedience to the seducing spirit. Statements of this kind are discounted by anyone who is inclined to skepticism – especially if he knows much of human nature, and, I must add, of religious revivals – but their significance will be appreciated by all who were acquainted with their author, the late Mr. Robert Baxter. Ecclesiastically he was not Scottish, but Anglican, and at this time he was a “high churchman.” He had been in the habit of teaching the poor in the parish where he lived; but, he tells us, he habitually refrained from praying at such meetings, “conceiving that the privilege of leading in public prayer belonged alone to the ordained minister.” I enjoyed his acquaintance for many years and often met him in Christian work. I had heard of his connection with Irvingism, but his “Narrative of Facts,” published in 1833 by Jas. Nisbet & Co. and long out of print, never came into my hands until a few weeks ago. The man, as I knew him, was a typical English Parliamentary lawyer, reserved, slow of speech, and noted for soundness of judgment. As I here read of his pouring out a torrent of unpremeditated words, sometimes for two hours at a stretch, and of his cramming a handkerchief to his mouth at private prayer, lest his “inspired” bellowings should disturb the household, my distress and amazement are unbounded that anyone could suppose that the spirit which energized him was divine. I must here add yet one more extract from his book descriptive of his Sunday services during this period:

The power came upon me in an exhortation to the people to lay aside their books, and bow themselves before the Lord, to worship Him in spirit and in truth; that the Lord was at hand; and as a witness to His people, God was now sending forth a ministry, not ministering in the flesh, but in the Spirit, who should teach and minister in the utterance of the Spirit, and, in due time, be endowed with all the mighty power of the Spirit. After some further opening the people were called to pray, and, kneeling down, the power of utterance continued with me for about an hour, in prayer and intercession for the Church and nation, King, ministers, and people; for the outpouring of the Spirit, the change of heart and life, and the exaltation of God in the earth. As the power ceased, I stayed, and while they sang, I went into the vestry to fetch a Bible. Here I was wholly impotent, and appeared to myself as though I had no strength to exhort the people. My sister, under the nervous excitement of anxiety, was seized with an hysterical fit. All my confidence in God seemed for the moment to desert me, and I felt as though my mouth was shut for ever. It was, however, but a moment; the power came down again upon me, and I read with great power the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah, and preached in the power for upwards of an hour; after which I dismissed the people with the customary benediction.

In the afternoon service I took the same course, and the power was with me in prayer and preaching as in the morning. ...

I have been much confounded by the fact occurring in this instance, as also in most others of the public testimonies on preaching; that Christ was preached in such power, and with such clearness, and the exhortations to repentance so energetic and arousing, that it is hard to believe the person delivering it could be under the delusion of Satan. Yet so it was, and the fact stands before us as a proof the most fearful errors may be propounded under the guise of greater light and zeal for God's truth. "As an angel of light" is an array of truth, as well as holiness and love, which nevertheless Satan is permitted to put on, to accomplish and sustain his delusions. It is yet more mysterious, and yet not less true, that the truth so spoken was carried to the hearts of several who, on this day, heard it, and these services were made the means of awakening them, so far as the change of conduct and earnest longing after Christ from that day forward can be an evidence of it.

The words "as an angel of light" recur as a refrain throughout the narrative. Many will exclaim, "How could a movement which denounces the devil and all his works, and which promotes piety and honors Christ, be satanic?" Yet this ignores the solemn warning of our divine Lord that "*if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect*" (Matthew 24:24). A moment's thought might satisfy us that the false could never deceive the elect if it did not simulate all the characteristics of the true: honor paid to Christ, a high tone of spirituality, and a beautiful code of morals.

The very existence of the devil is a subject for jesting with men of the world. The devil of "the Christian religion" has but little in common with the Satan of Scripture. Yet it is from Scripture alone that we can learn anything about his personality. Mentions of him in the Old Testament are few, but they are as significant as they are explicit. From the first page of Holy Writ to the last he is presented to us as "the deceiver." The story of the fall in Eden is

generally misread. Eve was thoroughly “*deceived*” (I Timothy 2:14). She was “*beguiled*” into accepting what he put before her (II Corinthians 11:3), because it seemed to be in the line of God’s purpose. She had misunderstood the words of the divine command and warning by taking them literally. The “*tree of knowledge*” was given to enable man to raise himself to a higher plane of being, and God would never damn His children for doing that which their own reason told them must be right. Such was Satan’s teaching, and it is precisely what is preached in numberless “*Christian*” pulpits today. The devil did not attack the morals of our first parents, but he undermined and corrupted their faith.

So was it also in his dealings with Job. His effort was to estrange the patriarch from God by making him doubt the divine goodness. The Lord’s words in Luke 22:31 seem to throw light on this mysterious narrative. The Revised Version marginal reading gives it, “*Satan hath obtained you by asking.*” Dean Alford’s gloss is, “*Hath obtained you – his desire is granted.*” The disciples were to be given over to the evil one to be tempted and sifted, just as Job had been, but the Lord’s intercession and grace protected and restored them.

Certain other Old Testament passages might also deserve notice, such as Zechariah 3, where Satan sought to hinder the services of the high priest; but suffice it here to emphasize that in every case the sphere of his temptations was not morals but what is popularly called “*religion.*”

When we turn to the New Testament I would claim prominence for the eighth chapter of John. “*Ye are of your father the devil*” was the Lord’s scathing reply to the Jews when, in rejecting His teaching, they fell back upon that figment of apostates, the fatherhood of God. “*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it*” (John 8:44).

“*A murderer from the beginning*” – the beginning of what? Not of his own existence, for he was created in perfectness and beauty; nor of the existence of man, for, before the Eden fall, he had already dragged down others in his ruin. His being a murderer connects itself immediately with the truth which he refused, and the lie of which he is the father. These words of our divine Lord give us a glimpse into a past eternity when, to the heavenly intelligences, the great mystery of God (Colossians 2:2) was first made known – the purpose of the ages, that a firstborn was to be revealed and that “*in all things He might have the preeminence*” (Colossians 1:18).

The greatest of these heavenly beings, whom we now know as Satan, claimed that place and, rebelling against the divine counsels, he set himself from that hour to thwart them. Thus it was that he devised the ruin of our race. In view of the promise to Eve, he may possibly have thought that either Cain or Abel was his rival, and so he won Cain over to his side and contrived the death of Abel; but it is in the temptation of Christ that he and his lie are fully manifested. He claimed to meet the Lord on more than equal terms. Not one Christian in a thousand realizes the significance of the narrative. Having “*led Him up*” and given Him that mysterious vision of the kingdoms of the world, the devil said to Him,

“All this power will I give Thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If Thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine” (Luke 4:6-7).

This was not the raving of profanity or madness. It was the bold assertion of a disputed right. Satan claims to be the firstborn, the rightful heir of creation, the true Messiah, and as such he claims the homage of mankind. Men dream of a devil with horns and hoofs, an obscene monster who tempts the depraved to acts of atrocity or shame; but the Satan of Holy Writ himself is *“transformed . . . into an angel of light,”* as are *“his minister also . . . transformed as the ministers of righteousness”* (II Corinthians 11:14-15). Do angels of light or ministers of righteousness corrupt men’s morals, or incite them to commit acts of vice or crime?

Such is the Satan of Scripture, a very different being from the mythical devil of Christendom, who though omnipresent – for he is always at the side of every man and woman and child – devotes his powers to making children disobedient and adults vicious. The Satan with whom we have to do is *“that old serpent”* (Revelation 12:9; 20:2) of Eden, *“the power of darkness”* of the betrayal and crucifixion of the Son of God (Luke 22:53; Colossians 1:13) – that awful being whose divinely given title is *“the god of this world”* (II Corinthians 4:4) – not the instigator of its vices and its crimes, but the controller of its religion. Through ignorance of all this, people are deluded into assuming that any man who displays *“spiritual power”* and is a *“minister of righteousness”* must be a minister of Christ.

In these solemn days, when the Christian dispensation is drawing to a close and the professing church is drifting to its predicted doom, Satan is preparing the way for the supreme delusion of a travesty of the incarnation; for *“the man of sin”* (II Thessalonians 2:3) will be energized by him *“with all power and signs and lying wonders”* (:9) to impersonate the Christ and thus to command the worship of mankind. What wonder is it then if he feigns to honor Christ and bears testimony to His advent!?

In common with Christians generally, Mr. Baxter attributes all spiritual power either to God or Satan – demons are altogether ignored. Yet the Gospels testify to the activity of demons during the ministry of Christ on earth, and the Epistles warn us of a renewal of demoniacal activity in the *“latter times,”* before His return. *“All Scripture is inspired [God-breathed],”* but it would seem that sometimes the revelation was made with special definiteness, and this particular warning is prefaced by the words, *“the Spirit saith expressly.”* It relates not to any new development of moral evil in the world, but to a new apostasy in the professing church, a cult promoted by *“seducing spirits”* of a highly sensitive spirituality, and a more fastidious morality than Christianity itself will sanction (I Timothy 4).

The Gospel narrative indicates that some demons were base and filthy spirits that exercised a brutalizing influence upon their victims. Thus the Lord plainly indicated that these were a class apart (*“this kind,”* Mark 9:29). They were all *“unclean spirits,”* but in Jewish use the word *akathartos* connoted spiritual defilement. That it did not imply moral pollution is proved by the fact that demoniacs were allowed to frequent the synagogues. The crowning proof is the fact that the Lord Jesus was charged with having a demon though not even His most malignant enemies ever accused Him of moral evil. It was only by prayer that these filthy spirits could

be cast out, whereas pious demons acknowledged Christ and came out when His disciples commanded them to do so in His name.

The most mysterious fact about these demons was their eagerness to acknowledge the Lord and to pay Him homage. For we read, “*And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, ‘Thou art Christ the Son of God.’ And He rebuking them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that He was Christ*” (Luke 4:41). It is an incidental but most striking proof of His deity that while the Jews rejected Him and His own disciples halted in their confession of Him, the demons, under some strange compulsion, gave this clear, bold testimony to His divine character and mission. This was not an isolated incident. We read again that the “*unclean spirits, when they saw Him, fell down before Him, and cried, saying, ‘Thou art the Son of God’*” (Mark 3:11). The mystery of it all is immensely deepened by reference to I John 4:2-3; and Mr. Baxter tells us that it was the seeming failure of the test there indicated that confirmed Edward Irving and his followers in their delusion. The record adds, “*He stratily charged them that they should not make Him known*” (Mark 3:12). The Lord refused their homage, and it is impossible to believe that, at this time, Satan could have prompted it. Indeed, the facts disprove the figment that demons are mere puppets of Satan and that they act only under his orders. As fallen members of the heavenly hierarchy, they probably differ from one another not only in their capacities but in their idiosyncracies. If the present-day apostasies of spiritualism, Christian Science, and the new theology are winning more converts than Christianity, it is because the demons who inspire them are pure and, in a real sense, both pious and beneficent. No one but a professional skeptic will doubt that the spiritualists have real dealings with the unseen world; but the intelligent Christian will recognize that it is not the dead who appear to them, but demons who personate the dead.

The career of H.J. Prince, of the Agapemone, deserves a passing notice in this connection. There lies before me, as I write, a statement from the pen of his relative, the late Mr. A.A. Rees of Sunderland, whom I knew personally as a man of sound judgment and a true Christian minister. For five years, at Lampeter College, Prince and he were best friends. He adds:

Nor did I ever see or hear of an individual more thoroughly devoted to God than he was during that period. ... His private life, of which I was a perpetual eyewitness, was in harmony with what he appeared to be in public. ... He was unusually blessed, both in the edification of saints and the conversion of sinners, long before he entered the public ministry. He was a man of prayer and self-denial; and few were more deeply acquainted with the Scripture.

He then goes on to speak of Prince’s fall. A book he read about the ministry of the Holy Spirit led him to give himself up unreservedly to the Spirit’s guidance. From that time his desires deepened to do the will of God in all things. As he grew in this habit of yielding absolutely to spiritual guidance, the Bible became less and less his study, and he ended by neglecting it altogether. Being thus guided in every detail of his daily life, he no longer needed the written Word, and the total abnegation of his own judgment followed. This complete surrender of mind and will – his entire personality – to what he believed to be the

guidance of the Holy Spirit, left him a prey to the terrible delusions in which he was at last engulfed.

It behooves us to profit by these warnings – “Experience keeps a dear school, yet fools will learn in no other.” – but we are to walk “*not as fools, but as wise,*” while wisdom consists in “*understanding what the will of the Lord is*” (Ephesians 5:15, 17). Divine wisdom alone will avail us, for we have to do with beings “*greater in power and might*” than ourselves (II Peter 2:11).

The only unique element in Irvingism was its personnel. The leaders were of a very different caliber from the men who led in earlier movements of a similar kind. Irving himself was lacking in judgment; but the men who surrounded him – English lawyers, bankers, merchants – were in every way fitted to command confidence. They were eminent both as men and as Christians, yet neither their natural shrewdness nor their spiritual attainments saved them from becoming the dupes of “*seducing spirits.*”

We are right in judging the Irvingite movement by what we see of it today, but the story of its origin is most solemn, and it is pathetic in the extreme. As we read of the wonderful meetings in which these great and good men poured out their hearts in yearning prayer for Pentecostal blessing; as we read of the deep, deep peace, and the ecstasy of joy, which they experienced when “the power” fell on them, and “great signs and wonders” awed them – gifts of tongues, gifts of prophecy, gifts of healing – we share their aspirations, we emulate their faith, and we long for such experiences. Then when we turn the page to find that all these gifts, which seemed so heavenly, were counterfeits, our first impulse might well be to forsake the path of discipleship and to doubt the faithfulness of God. But such thoughts as these are evil. It behooves us rather to turn to the Epistle to the Ephesians and to read its concluding exhortations as not one in a hundred of us has ever read them before.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (Ephesians 6:10-13, RV).

To master the baser passions of our nature is commonly supposed to be the normal effort of the Christian life; but these have to do with “flesh and blood,” whereas “*we wrestle not against flesh and blood.*” “*Put off all these*” is the divine exhortation (Colossians 3:8); be done with them once for all, and thus the ground is cleared for the true conflict of the life of faith. Men do not need the panoply of God to enable them to lead a clean and honest life. Esoteric Buddhism or even the new theology will avail for that. If men had not this power, the coming judgment would be an outrage upon justice; but the path of true discipleship lies across the battlefield on which the supreme conflict of the ages is in progress. God’s great purpose is to exalt Christ, and, as Luther writes, “The devil hath no other business in hand but this only, to persecute and vex Christ.” His aim is not to degrade men but to draw them away from

Christ, not to corrupt their morals but to blind their minds to the light of the gospel of Christ (II Corinthians 4:4). And “the day” will declare it that, just as prairie dogs will drive the straying sheep to the shelter of the fold, multitudes of the redeemed have fled to the cross to escape from temptations to moral evil, while the snares of false religion have engulfed untold millions of men in everlasting perdition.

If then the supreme purpose of God is the exaltation of Christ, “*that in all things He may have the preeminence,*” the startling question suggests itself whether the disasters which sometimes befall the best of men when they take up the cult of the Holy Spirit may not be due to the fact that this is a departure from the line of that divine purpose. The Holy Spirit is “the power behind the throne.” “*He shall not speak of Himself,*” the Lord declared (John 16:13), but His mission is to reveal and glorify Christ (:14). In proportion therefore as mind and heart are fixed on Christ we may count on the Spirit’s presence and power. Yet if we make the Holy Ghost Himself the object of our aspirations and our worship, some false spirit may counterfeit the true, and take us for a prey.

Nor should we forget the exhortation, “*Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom*” (Colossians 3:16). Those who turn aside to the cult of the Holy Spirit use the Bible merely as a book of texts, and the temptation of our Lord might warn us of the subtlety of the evil one in handling texts. Charlotte Elizabeth tells how she escaped from Irvingism. She almost yielded to the overwhelming spiritual power of the movement, but she shut herself up and read the New Testament through, from cover to cover, and thus the spell was broken.

Does Scripture afford any warrant for the expectation of a second Pentecost? Are we not to learn from the record of God’s ways in the past? The Mosaic dispensation, like our own, was ushered in and accredited by a great display of divine power in public miracles. But Israel was never to have a second Sinai, and even the manna and the cloudy pillar were withdrawn when the purpose for which they were given had been accomplished. So also we might expect that the evidential miracles of Pentecost would cease; proof of this is full and clear. The miracles were not given as a bait to attract the unbeliever but as a beacon to guide the seeker after truth. Their purpose was to prove “that Jesus was the Christ”; therefore they were intended especially for those who had the preceding revelation, for those who had the Scriptures which foretold His coming. They were the sign for those who knew the countersign.

So long as the gospel was being proclaimed especially to the covenant people, miracles abounded. For it was primarily to the covenant people that Christ came. “*Salvation is of the Jews*” the Lord declared (John 4:22). “*I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*” (Matthew 15:24). “*Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers*” (Romans 15:8). That ministry, therefore, had special reference to the Scriptures which testified of Him and which it was His mission to fulfill.

When a woman who has been the object of a husband’s love proves false and is driven forth an outcast, the tragedy is but a poor illustration of that stupendous crisis when the God of Abraham cast away the people of His choice. The destruction of Jerusalem was the public

fact which proclaimed their rejection, but the hidden history of the crisis is revealed in the Acts of the Apostles. The New Testament is not a chance collection of pamphlets as some suppose. To the spiritually intelligent its unity is apparent – not merely the unity of the whole but the purpose with which every part of it was written – and the purpose of the Acts is clear: it bridges the gulf which separates the records of Messiah’s earthly ministry to the covenant people from the apostolic writings addressed to Gentile communities. That book is the history of the Pentecostal dispensation, and if it were missing the transition from the Gospels to the Epistles would be an insoluble mystery.

It is a matter not of opinion but of fact, that whereas Pentecostal gifts and evidential miracles hold a prominent place in the narrative of the Acts and in the teaching of Epistles written during the period historically covered by the Acts, the later Epistles are silent with respect to them. The natural inference is that the miracles and gifts had ceased, and the Epistles of the apostle Paul’s last imprisonment give proof that this inference is right. “*In nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles,*” he declared, when appealing to the “*signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds*” which were the outward credentials of his ministry (II Corinthians 12:11-12); for “*God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul,*” so that even handkerchiefs carried from his body brought healing to the sick (Acts 19:11-12). Why then was it that he could not heal Epaphroditus when he lay “*sick nigh unto death*” by his side at Rome (Philippians 2:25-27)? How was it that, at a still later date, he had to leave Trophimus lying sick at Miletum (II Timothy 4:20). A miracle at the court of Nero might have shaken the world. Never was an evidential miracle more needed, if beliefs and theories about miracles be true. But no miracle occurred.

If with an open mind we peruse the Acts of the Apostles and then turn to II Timothy, we shall find proofs of a tremendous change. When the magistrates at Philippi thrust the apostle into the dungeon, a great earthquake shook the foundation of the prison, heaven came down to his deliverance, and his persecutors were brought as suppliants to his feet. Yet now the days of earthquakes and “*mighty signs and wonders*” were past, and as “*a pattern to them that should afterward believe*” (I Timothy 1:16), the lonely and despised prisoner in Rome was to learn the deeper mysteries of the life of faith beneath a silent heaven.

The closing verses of Mark are often quoted as though they decide the question here at issue; but even if the genuineness of these verses were certain, the spiritually intelligent would read them in the light of the Epistles. The use made of them in this controversy is wholly unwarranted.

What of the prophecy of Joel? It seems to be a canon of interpretation that Scripture never means what it says, and this perhaps explains how people can read the second chapter of Joel and fail to see that its fulfillment awaits the restoration of Israel. Its burden from first to last is the land and people of the covenant. “*I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen [nations] ... Ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel ... And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh*” (Joel 2:19, 27-28). As it has been in the past, so will it be then: a new “dispensation” will be inaugurated by a public display of divine power upon earth.

None surely but the superstitious can imagine that the Lord will thus honor and accredit the professing church of Christendom at this stage of its deepening apostasy. “*I will spue thee out of My mouth*” is His prophetic warning for this present age (Revelation 3:16). His message of cheer is, “*To him that overcometh will I give*” (Revelation 2:7, 17; 3:21). So has it ever been. In days of apostasy He turns to individual faithfulness. While no one may limit what He will do in response to faith, a claim to corporate blessing is a denial of the failure, and this shuts out blessing altogether.

The question here, remember, relates to evidential miracles. A miracle is an event which gives proof of the operation of some supernatural agency. Spiritualism and Christian Science can boast of real miracles; hence the advance that these cults are making in our day, for what wins to them adherents among the devout is not the element of imposture which leavens them, but the spiritual power by which they are seemingly accredited. Owing to the ignorance and error with which our minds are saturated on these subjects from our very infancy, people assume as a matter of course that miracles must be divine.

The amazing satanic miracles of the temptation (Matthew 4:5, 8) ought to kill that error once for all. If people will not accept the teaching of Scripture about Satan, the standard textbooks of Christian Science and the new theology might enlighten them. His temptations are fitted not to repel but to deceive the pure and upright. As Luther declares, “He setteth forth and decketh all his words and works with the colour of truth and with the name of God.” He fashions himself as “*an angel of light.*” He will leave us everything of Christianity except only what he knows to be vital. The ministry of demons is the counterpart of his own. Scripture will not warrant the suggestion that, having “*the power of death*” (Hebrews 2:14), the devil has also the power of life; but we need not doubt that if he has the power to inflict disease, he has the power to heal. This may explain the fact that demoniacal miracles are generally beneficent. Hume admitted that the evidence for certain Jansenist miracles fully satisfied the tests which he had applied to the evidence for the Gospel miracles, yet he refused to accept them because, he declared, miracles are impossible. Such is the stupidity of systematized unbelief. This must account for the refusal of “superior” persons to recognize that miracles occur in our midst today. Miracles occur, and what concerns us is to guard against being deluded by them. For they may be the first droppings of the coming rainstorm of “*all power and signs and lying wonders*” (II Thessalonians 2:9). I would emphatically repel the inference that present-day miracles are all of this sinister kind; but I maintain that what may be called evidential miracles have no place in this Christian dispensation. Anyone who considers even the simple problem of prayer must understand how and why the people of God, in the days before Christ came, craved such proofs of His presence and power. Yet in the ministry and death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, God has openly manifested not only His power but His goodness and love toward man, and to demand an evidential miracle now is to reopen questions which have been for ever settled.

No one may limit what God will do in response to faith. But we may dogmatically assert that, in view of the revelation He has given of Himself in Christ, He will yield nothing to the petulant demands of unbelief.¹

1. Sir Robert Anderson, *The Silence of God*.

Now the difficult and delicate task remains of forming a judgment upon the revival of speaking with tongues. In the light of the facts recorded in these pages, and of the truths to which appeal has been made, there are certain preliminary conclusions which we can accept with confidence. As we have seen, neither the enjoyment of feelings which seem most blessed nor the possession of powers which are certainly supernatural can be taken as proof of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. A Christian is not one who has certain feelings or experiences, nor even one who believes in the Holy Ghost; he is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the Word of the truth of the gospel which brings us the knowledge of Christ. Men once saw Him with their eyes and their hands handled Him; but ours is the blessedness of those who have not seen and yet have believed. For He is now "*within the veil*" (Hebrews 6:19), and if our anchor is "*both sure and stedfast,*" it is because it "*entereth into that which is within the veil.*" God's written Word is our only cable. The craving to get "*within the veil*" by means of spiritual gifts and manifestations smacks of unbelief and not of faith, and may lead to disaster. Let us take earnest heed to the solemn warning spoken by the Lord:

Many will say to Me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy Name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy Name done many wonderful works?" And then will I profess unto them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:22-23).

Let us again remind ourselves that the question is not what God can or may do in response to faith, but what Scripture warrants us to claim from Him. Are we warranted in claiming Pentecostal gifts today? The special gift which is the boast of this new "revival" is that of tongues. In the Irvingite movement tongues were not wanting, but they were thrown into the shade by the higher gift of prophecy. The supernatural character of the utterances, the fullness and fervor with which testimony was borne to Christ, and the peace and joy experienced by those on whom the power fell, seemed clear proof that all was divine; yet it was from beneath. This does not prove that similar manifestations today are counterfeits, but it is an overwhelming reason for vigilance and care in testing them. The more closely we study the movement in the light of Scripture, the more our suspicions of it will deepen.

Its physical phenomena are well fitted to excite distrust. To attribute to mere hysteria the bodily paroxysms which are common in the prayer meetings is perhaps to take too kindly a view of them. The Holy Spirit, moreover, does not promote hysteria, and what have the silent sighings ("*groanings which cannot be uttered*") of the Spirit's intercession (Romans 8:26) in common with the shouts and screams which disturb the neighbors? Still, this is only the fringe of the subject; the movement must be tested and judged in the light of I Corinthians 14.

The following points are definite and clear.

First, spiritual gifts were "distributed," and the gift of tongues was bestowed only upon some of the saints, not upon all.

Second, the gift of tongues was inferior to other gifts, both in dignity and in practical value. This at once refutes the theology of the movement, which represents the gift of tongues as

the hallmark of the Holy Spirit's baptism, and as raising those who possess it to a position of peculiar privilege and glory.

Third, the exercise of divine spiritual gifts is entirely under control. It was not for personal gratification nor for mere display that these gifts were bestowed, but for the edification of the church. The apostolic precepts to guide their use are as practical as the chairman of any public meeting could desire. Gifts are to be subordinated to the purpose for which they are bestowed, which is the edification of the saints; decency and order are to regulate the exercise of them (I Corinthians 14, 26, 40).

In contrast with this, much that is witnessed in the gift of tongues revival today seems to appear like the demoniacal possession of heathen cults, which is the veiled reference of the second verse of the chapter. Some of the accounts which reach us remind us of Isaiah's words about "*wizards that peep, and that mutter*" (Isaiah 8:19). This view, moreover, is confirmed by the judgment of some who have been led by personal investigation to conclude that the "gifts" are an entirely sinister element in a movement which is of God. Such was undoubtedly the case in the Irvingite movement. Irving and his devoted band of fellow Christians were drawn away by the cult of the Spirit from the simplicity of faith in the living and the written Word of God. The Agapemone movement tells the same tale. In lesser degree the story of the Irish revivals points to the same moral. The physical phenomena which marked the Ulster revival of 1859 were generally accepted at the time as divine. Some, though, doubted even then, and afterwards, among thoughtful Christians, a different view prevailed.

In the more general and far deeper revival of the sixties this element disappeared altogether. That revival has had results more widespread and lasting than any similar movement of modern times, and the secret of its success and power was the prominence given to God's written Word. Christ and the Scriptures were everything. This was possibly a legacy from the movement of thirty years before. In that earlier revival the difference between the movement on that side of the channel, and on this, may be expressed by saying that while in Britain the Christians took to prayer and the Scriptures, in Ireland they took to the Scriptures and prayer. Such is the subtlety of the evil one that, in days of revival, if spiritual excitement is not controlled by sound doctrine, even prayer meetings may become a peril.

The theology of this gift of tongues movement displays ignorance and perversion of Scripture. As already noted, it subordinates the great facts and truths of the Christian revelation to the subjective experiences of the Christian life. More than this, in its teaching about the Holy Spirit it subordinates what was primary and essential in Pentecost to what was incidental and altogether secondary. The supreme fact was the fulfillment of "the promise of the Father"; this was abiding. The "rushing, mighty wind," the "cloven tongues," and the distributed "gifts" were but outward manifestations of His presence; these were transient.

The essential element was corporate blessing. The baptism of the Holy Spirit created the church: not a church within the church, but an election within the election of grace – it was for all, so that even to the Corinthians, albeit their heresies and sins called for warning and

rebuke, the apostle wrote, “By one Spirit are we all baptized into one Body ... and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (I Corinthians 12:13).

The coming of the Holy Spirit is now as definitely a matter of faith as is the coming of the Son of God. While to seek subjective proofs of His baptism as a condition of believing in it may be plausibly described as “seeking a second Pentecost,” it is, in fact, sheer unbelief. It throws discredit upon that first and only true Pentecost, and calls in question the fulfillment of “*the promise of the Father.*”

Spirit Manifestations and the Gift of Tongues

by Sir Robert Anderson (1841-1918)

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