

## 1. The Promise of the Evidential Measure of Spirit-Power

Lest someone should get the impression that I am trying to imposed limitations upon the operations of the Spirit of God, I wish to reaffirm positively that *the question now before us is not one of power but of fact*. I have no disposition to set limits to the power of the Spirit; to attempt to do so would be futile, even if I were so disposed. The power which the Holy Spirit exercises is Divine power, and Divine power is omnipotent; the Holy Spirit, therefore, operates as *He wills*. John 3:8—"The Spirit breathes where he pleases," 1 Cor. 12:11—"But all these worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally even as he will." As Milligan puts it: "It does not become such a being as man, whose breath is in his nostrils, and who has not yet learned the nature, constitution and capabilities of his own mind, to set limits to the power of either the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit. This the archangel himself would not presume to do."<sup>1</sup>

The God of the Bible, however, is a God of order, not of confusion. He acts according to eternal principles of Truth and Justice and along lines marked out by those principles. The same is true, of course, of the Spirit. Hence, the activities by which He manifests His various gifts, and the channels through which He exerts His powers, are clearly indicated in Scripture. The question before us, therefore, is not a question of the Spirit's power, but a question of how He has chosen to distribute His powers, gifts, and graces, for the accomplishment of various Divine purposes. Purposiveness—always an attribute of Person or Spirit—would naturally require such an adaptation of means to corresponding ends. The Spirit never issues a non-essential command; nor does He ever perform a useless or unnecessary operation. His operations are invariably determined by the ends sought, and are therefore directed toward the attainment of those ends. There is reason, order, beauty and perfection in His every work.

Now, we have already learned that God, in the unfolding of His Plan of Redemption, conferred different measures of Spirit-power upon different persons for different Divine ends.

1. R. Milligan, *Scheme of Redemption*, 271.

Moreover, these different measures of Spirit-power conferred upon different persons for different purposes, likewise carried with them diversities of special gifts and graces of the Spirit, so that there were not only diversities of the *measures* of Spirit-power bestowed, but also diversities of gifts, *as to kind*, connected with each of these measures. We have also learned that the greatest measure of Spirit-power ever bestowed upon human beings was the *overwhelming* measure, that is, Holy Spirit baptism; and that this measure was conferred upon the Jewish Apostles on the Day of Pentecost, and upon the Gentile Cornelius and his house several years later, for the purpose of incorporating the one Body of Christ of both Jews and Gentiles, thus breaking down forever the middle wall of partition which had existed between them from time immemorial (Eph. 2:11-18).

There was, however, another measure of Spirit-power, which was conferred upon Christians generally in the apostolic age, which, though extraordinary as to the gifts it produced, was, nevertheless, inferior in its powers and gifts to the baptismal measure of the Spirit. As we shall see, this measure of the Spirit was conferred, not directly by our Lord from Heaven as Holy Spirit baptism was administered, but *by the laying on of an Apostle's hands*. This measure of Spirit-power was conferred upon the early Christians, moreover, primarily for evidential purposes, endowing them with that class of extraordinary powers and works commonly designated, in the New Testament Scriptures, *charismata* or "spiritual gifts." Paul enumerates these *charismata* in the twelfth chapter of First Corinthians as follows: "the word of wisdom," "the word of knowledge," "faith," "gifts of healings," "workings of miracles," "prophecy," "discernings of spirits," "divers kinds of tongues," "interpretation of tongues," etc. (We have already noted that "wisdom," "knowledge" and "faith," as used here, have reference to wisdom, knowledge and faith of an extraordinary or "supernatural" kind.) These gifts were all primarily for the twofold purpose of attesting the Gospel message and confirming the early Christians—during the period in which they had to depend for guidance on the oral instruction of the Apostles—in the most holy faith. Hence, from the viewpoint of its function, this measure of Spirit-power may properly be designated the *evidential* measure. Although this measure of

the Spirit has been treated at some length in foregoing chapters of the present work, it became necessary at this point to look into the subject again, briefly, just to gather up the loose ends and to put it in its proper context, that is, in its proper relations to the other measures of Spirit-power. It should also be re-emphasized at this point that we are still in the general realm of *inspiration, revelation and demonstration.*

Jesus Himself, in conversation with His Apostles prior to His Ascension, promised this extraordinary measure of the Spirit. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that disbelieveth shall be condemned. And these signs shall accompany them that believe: in my name [by my authority] shall they cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall in no wise hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark 16:15-18). (This section of Mark, of course, is not found in the oldest known manuscripts. It does occur, however, in certain versions which are older than the extant manuscripts. Moreover, the teaching here is in exact harmony with that of the New Testament as a whole.) It should be noted that Jesus here, in promising these special endowments to accompany obedient believers in Christ, called them "signs." This is very significant. The term "sign," as used in Scripture, is uniformly connected with the Spirit's work of demonstration. These extraordinary endowments and powers thus promised by our Lord Himself to Christian believers were evidently to be for the purpose of attesting the Divine origin and authority of the Gospel message. This truth is further corroborated by the two verses which follow those quoted above: "So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken unto them, was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, *the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed*" (Mark 16:19-20).

## 2. The Case of Philip in Samaria

Let us now turn to the book of Acts and ascertain whether or not the "signs" promised by Jesus did actually "accompany them that believe."