

Discerning the Real from the False



Protection from Deception (Part 3)
by Derek Prince

Recently some ministers have moved from actually laying on hands to some other action of the hands, such as waving or pointing. However, this does not change the fact that something is being transmitted through the hands, otherwise there is no reason to use the hands at all. The important question, therefore, still remains—are those hands pure channels through which only the Holy Spirit can flow?

For instance, Ruth and I were in a meeting fairly recently where ministers deeply involved in the current move were speaking. We were sitting about two rows behind a woman who was having a terrible experience. She was like somebody continually trying to burp or trying to vomit, and she just went on and on and on. Eventually I said to Ruth, "I think we ought to try to help her." So although, it was not a meeting for which we were responsible, we went over quietly and started to talk to her. We discovered very quickly that she was speaking in a tongue, but for both of us it was evident that it was a false tongue—it was not a Holy Spirit tongue. We challenged her to confess that Jesus is Lord and she was not willing or able to say that. So I conclude that she had a false spirit.

Later on the people who were with her came over and talked to us, and asked us what they should do about it. I asked them, "How did it happen?" They said, "Well, she went to a church that's involved in this move and somebody laid hands on her, and this is the way she has been since then. But," they said, "she's convinced it's from God. We can't help her." That's just an example of rain that came through a cistern that was not pure.

Also, in the present move there is a great deal of emphasis on love. I agree that love is the greatest thing. But the trouble is that people are not always clear about the nature of love as it is described in the New Testament. First of all, love in us is expressed in obedience to the Lord. Any kind of love that does not result in obedience is unscriptural love. In John 14:15 Jesus said to His disciples:

> "If you love Me, keep My commandments."

Or in a perhaps better text, "...you will keep my commandments." In other words, what is the evidence that you love Him? The evidence is keeping His commandments. Then in verse 21, the first part, Jesus says:

> "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me..."

And in 1 John 5:3 it says:

> For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments..."

Therefore, any kind of love that does not result in the obedience to the will of God revealed in His word, it is not Scriptural love. It's a counterfeit, a substitute for the real thing.

Then we need to consider the way that God expresses His love toward us. True, God is our Father and He loves us. But as a Father, if necessary, He is prepared to discipline us. In the messages to the seven churches depicted in Revelation, I would say that Laodicea is probably the one that corresponds most closely to the contemporary church in the West. And to that church the Lord said:

> "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent."

So God's love is not sloppy. It's not sentimental. It is right down to earth. If we are straying from His ways and if we are disobedient, His love is expressed in rebuking us and chastening us, and He commands us to repent. Once again we have the problem of trying to get what God promises, but bypassing the basic condition of repentance which is a deception.

I recently read the following comment by a British Bible teacher. "Some Christians take the text "God is love" and turn it around to mean "Love is God." In other words, nothing can be wrong if it is rooted in love. However, any love that comes between us and God is an illegitimate love. Likewise, any love that diverts us from obedience to God's word is illegitimate.

In all of this that we are speaking about, this worldwide phenomenon, I believe there is one central underlying issue which is often obscured. In fact, very seldom do we really come to grips with this issue. This issue is the identity of the Holy Spirit. How do we recognize the Holy Spirit? How do we know what the Holy Spirit is like? How do we distinguish the Holy Spirit from other spirits?

I read a statement recently by some "New Ager" in which she said about the New Age, "When the Holy Spirit comes, then the New Age will be here." Of course I'm sure most of you would understand that when she talks about the Holy Spirit, she is not talking about the same Holy Spirit that the Bible speaks about. This is one of various indications that there is a counterfeit Holy Spirit. It's nothing new for Satan to produce a religious counterfeit. Since the time of Jesus, history records a whole series of counterfeit messiahs who have risen among the Jewish people. All of them had a following. Some like _(person's name)_? had a widespread and enduring influence. The latest of them died in 1994.

Another religious counterfeit is the being titled "The Blessed Virgin Mary." With all the claims that have been made for her and all the titles that have been ascribed to her, she bears no resemblance to the humble Jewish maiden who became the mother of Jesus and later of His brothers and sisters. Yet over the centuries this counterfeit has claimed the devotion of millions of sincere Christians. We need to be on our guard, therefore, that we do not entertain a counterfeit Holy Spirit.

I want to suggest to you three ways to identify the Holy Spirit, to recognize who the Holy Spirit is. The first way I refer to in my little booklet Uproar In The Church, which I wrote about two years. I'll just quote a few paragraphs.

> "Another danger that threatens those who minister in the supernatural realm is the temptation to use spiritual gifts to manipulate or exploit or dominate people. At one period in my ministry I found myself casting spirits of witchcraft out of church-going people. Eventually I asked the Lord to show me the true nature of witchcraft. I believe the Lord gave me the following definition. 'Witchcraft is the attempt to control people and get them to do what you want by the use of any spirit that is not the Holy Spirit.' After I digested this, the Lord added, 'And if anyone has a spirit that he can use, it is not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God and no one uses God.' That is very important. The Holy Spirit is God and no one uses God."

Then I went on to say in the booklet:

> "Today I tremble inwardly when I see or hear of a person who claims that he has spiritual gifts which he is free to use just as he pleases. It is surely no accident that some of those who have made such claims have ended in serious doctrinal error."

It's important to see that there is a difference between the Holy Spirit Himself as a person, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In Romans 11:29 Paul tells us that the gifts of God are irrevocable. In other words, once God has given us a gift He never takes it back. We are free to use it, not to use, or to misuse. But even if we misuse it, God does not take it back. Otherwise it would not be a genuine gift. It would only be a conditional loan.

It is a fact that people do misuse the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Paul provides a clear example in 1 Corinthians 13:1:

> "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal."

Obviously the Holy Spirit Himself does not become a clanging cymbal. But the gift of speaking in tongues, when misused, can become an empty, discordant noise. Unfortunately this often happens in Pentecostal and Charismatic circles. I believe it is possible to misuse other spiritual gifts, such as a word of knowledge or a gift of healing. This can happen when a person uses a spiritual gift to achieve a result or promote a movement which is not in harmony with the will of God. One obvious misuse would be for personal gain. In such a situation our safeguard is to be able to recognize the Holy Spirit as a Person and to distinguish between Him and His gifts. This then is the first and most important fact about the Holy Spirit—He is God, and we need to relate to Him and treat Him always as God.

The second fact about the Holy Spirit is that He is the servant of God the Father and God the Son. This is an exciting revelation because it gives such a high value to servanthood. Many people today despise the idea of being a servant. They feel it is demeaning and undignified to be a servant. But I think it's wonderful that servanthood did not begin on earth. It began in eternity and it began in God. God the Holy Spirit, is the servant of the Father and the Son. This does not demean Him or make Him less than God, but it is a fact that we have to recognize about Him which directs His activities and the things He does.

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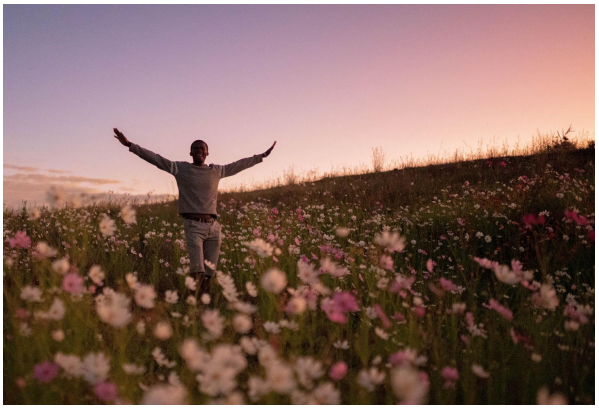
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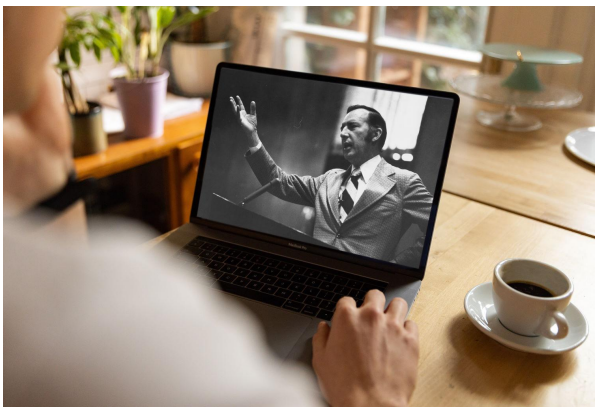
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