Appendix B
Spiritual Gifts Today

There are a lot of different beliefs about what the Holy Spirit does and doesn't do today. Many believe the Spirit is not God; they say He is just a force or one mode of existence God can take. Others who believe that the Holy Spirit is both God and a genuine person believe that all the miraculous things the Spirit did in New Testament times should be expected today, such as speaking in tongues, healings, and visions. Along the same line, there are many who say that the offices of apostle and prophet should not be restricted to just New Testament times, but they also are present today. How do we know who's right? We need to look at what *God* has said in His Word, *the Bible*. Here is what Orwell Bible Church believes about the Holy Spirit based upon Scripture:

> We believe in the eternal deity and personality of the Holy Spirit (2 Sam 23:2–3; Matt 28:19; 1 Cor 3:16; Heb 9:14). The Spirit convicts of sin through God's Word (John 16:8–11; 2 Thess 2:13-14), imparts spiritual life in the new birth (John 3:3, 5; Titus 3:5), and is the earnest of salvation (Eph 1:13-14). In believers He permanently indwells (Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 6:19), controls through their obedience to the Word (Eph 5:18; Col 1:9-11), assures of salvation (Rom 8:14, 16), illumines their minds to welcome, apply, and obey the Bible (1 Cor 2:14-16), and intercedes for them (Rom 8:26). The fruit of the Spirit evidences His control of a believer's life (Gal 5:22-23).
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> Since Pentecost the Holy Spirit incorporates every believer into the body of Christ (Acts 2:1-4; 11:15; 1 Cor 12:13) and distributes spiritual gifts to believers (Rom 12:6), God-given abilities for ministering to others in the local church (1 Cor 12:18; 1 Pet 4:10). Every believer receives one or more spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:7) for edifying believers and serving in ministry (1 Cor 14:12; Eph 4:11-12). Certain of the gifts (e.g., tongues, prophecies, miracles, healing) were by their very nature miraculous, serving as signs or confirmations of the apostles and their message until the canon of Scripture (Acts 10:45-48; 2 Cor 12:12; Heb 2:4) and the church's foundation were completed (Eph 2:20). With these established, miraculous gifts are no longer needed and thus are not given (1 Cor 13:8-10).

In Scripture, a ***miracle*** *is a supernatural act of God.* They occurred sporadically, that is, they were not the norm in believers' day-to-day lives. This is because miracles had definite purposes. Miracles were a special means by which God put His stamp of approval upon His messenger, showing without a doubt that the speaker was truly from God (Matt 11:2-6; Acts 2:22); they were the means by which God gave His attestation and testimony that the messenger was from Him. Miracles also occurred in conjunction with a divine message (Acts 4:29-30) for the same purposes: by them God demonstrated and proved that the message was from Him (attestation, authentication, accreditation). Now that the Scriptures have been completed, they being all that is needed (sufficient) for living a life of godliness (2 Tim 3:15-17; 2 Pet 1:4), there is no longer any need for miracles to demonstrate and prove that the Bible is God's written revelation to mankind.

In Scripture, the gift of ***tongues*** *was the Spirit-given ability to a believer to speak immediately and fluently in a foreign language (Acts 2:4-6) he did not previously know.* If what was spoken was not understood by the hearers it was to be interpreted, yet another Spirit-given ability (unlearned), so those believers who

were present could benefit from what was said (1 Cor 14:27-28). Tongues were a sign to Israel that they were under the judgment of God, that He was turning to the Gentiles. It was the speaking in tongues that was the sign, not what was said. In the OT, for Jews to hear foreign tongues in their own homeland meant God's judgment upon them. "In this light Isa 28:11-12 was warning of impending judgment. The 'stammering lips and another tongue' was God's judicial sign of judgment upon them, because they hardened their hearts against the simple truths His prophet had spoken. It is in this light that we must understand Paul's statement that tongues are a sign [1 Cor 14:22]. In Isaiah's day God summoned Assyria to be His instrument of judgment. The sign of the Assyrian language in the streets and throughout the countryside heralded the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. But in Paul's day the Jews are again an apostate nation. They have rejected their Messiah. Now once again the sign of tongues appears and, to Jews familiar with the OT Scriptures, this meant only one thing—judgment" (Baxter, *Charismatic Gift of Tongues,* p. 44). John MacArthur states, "tongues were intended as a sign to unbelieving Israel. They signified that God had begun a new work that encompassed the Gentiles. The Lord would now speak to all nations in all languages. The barriers were down. And so the gift of languages symbolized not only the curse of God on a disobedient nation, but also the blessing of God on the whole world. Tongues were therefore a sign of transition between the Old and New Covenants. With the establishment of the church, a new day had dawned for the people of God. God would speak in all languages. But once the period of transition was past, the sign was no longer necessary" (*Charismatic Chaos,* p. 232).

An ***apostle*** *was a man who was a witness of the resurrected Christ and chosen by Christ to spread the gospel, start and direct local churches, and be a channel of divine revelation. A* ***prophet*** *proclaimed God's specially revealed message; some prophets were moved by God in the production of written revelation (2 Pet 1:20-21).* The offices of apostle and prophet are no longer present today. These were given by Christ (Eph 4:11) for the establishment of the foundation of the church (Eph 2:20; 3:5). Once a foundation is laid, there is no longer any need to continue laying one.

What about the **experiences** one can have or **emotions** that one can feel? Neither emotions nor experiences must ever be the judge of the truthfulness of anything, whether a miracle allegedly occurred, some special gift or ability was given through the laying on of hands, or whether some unintelligible speech was from God. The truthfulness of anything is determined by objective, propositional statements. As God is truth, His Word is truth, and is therefore the standard by which all emotions and experiences must be measured as to their truthfulness (1 John 4:1-6). Dependence upon emotions and experiences can easily lead one astray from the truth of God's Word (2 Thess 2:8-15—note how *truth* is set against *experiences* and *emotions;* Rev 13:14—Satan *deceives* [leads astray] people by great signs and wonders). Therefore, emotions and experiences must be interpreted and understood by what the Bible says. It is unbiblical to interpret and understand what the Bible says by one's changing emotions and experiences.