

believers accept and use the gift of the Spirit. Whichever is the right reading of that disputed text, the emphasis is clearly on power. Some men in apostolic days, and since, have been given particular endowments of God's power within them, enabling them to do what they would otherwise never have been able to contemplate. One need only think of the effects of Christ's power in men like Martin Luther in the sixteenth century or Martin Luther King in the twentieth to take the point.

Dennis Bennett takes "the working of miracles" to mean the suspension of what are normally understood as the laws of nature. He not only maintains that Philip the evangelist was "physically and bodily picked up by the Holy Spirit and carried from Gaza to Azotus, a distance of 24 miles" (Acts 8:39), but tells us of a case when the well-known Pentecostal leader, David duPlessis had just the same experience . . .

I do not think that this sort of incident was in Paul's mind when he spoke of the gift of ENERGEMATA DUNAMEOS or DUNAMEON. I believe he may have been pointing to the singular effectiveness God gives to some Christians to impress man by their words and deeds. That is what Jesus was meaning in the passage in John 14. He tells the disciples that the demonstration available to them of the reality of a Father they cannot see, is the words (14:10) and the deeds (14:11) of Jesus. Similarly, he promises them that they will do greater works than this when he returns to his Father and sends them the Spirit. Their words and their deeds will be the evidence to men of all nations (not Israel only) of the reality of the Jesus who is preached to them, but whom they cannot see. It was this DUNAMIS, this powerful impact, which struck men about the teaching of Jesus and his behaviour. Hearing his teaching in the Nazareth synagogue, his fellow countrymen were amazed and asked, "Where does this man get his wisdom from, and his DUNAMEIS, his acts of power?"

I do not for one moment wish to minimise the supernatural power of which Paul is speaking. The word is certainly used in the Gospels to indicate the miraculous healings of Jesus and indeed the splendour of his Advent, as well as the impact of his words and deeds. I, for one, do not believe the Almighty is shackled by "laws of nature" (which are nothing more -- nor less -- than a massive series of observed uniformities). If levitation, for instance, to return to Bennett's interpretation of the Philip incident, can be practised in occultism and Eastern meditation, I see no reason why it should not be available to Christians through the Spirit. It is simply a question of exegesis. Does Paul mean that the Spirit enables some Christians to break what are normally taken to be physical laws? Or does it mean that the Spirit so takes control of the personalities of some Christians that their words and deeds have a particularly powerful impact for God?

If the singular, DUNAMEOS is the correct reading in I Corinthians 12:10, it is probable that we should accept the second of the above alternatives. This would accord well with Paul's claim that the Spirit empowers his words (I Thassalonians 1:5,